



Lehigh Valley Research Consortium Newsletter

Summer 2011

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Community Member:

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It's been a busy summer at the Lehigh Valley Research Consortium. As you will see from this addition of our newsletter, the St. Luke's Community Health Study team is collecting detailed health information from area residents in order to better understand current health conditions and access to care needs. This research team is focusing on a portion of the study on older adults, sponsored by the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley. Another researcher team is working with the Northampton County Department of Human Services to evaluate a new intervention strategy for youth involved in the County's network of services. Additionally, faculty and students from our institutions are also engaged in an examination of the newly available Census data to understand how changes in our demography and economy affect the quality of life in our region. We'll be reporting these results in our next *State of the Lehigh Valley* report due out in early 2012.

Our newest initiative is our partnership with the Children's Coalition of the Lehigh Valley. The goal of this partnership is to strengthen the collaborative efforts of this Coalition through the use of a new Community Platform, which is a web-based information source administered through the Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics. This Platform will allow the community better access to information about nonprofits in the region that focus on issues related to families with children. For more information about these projects visit our website www.lehighvalleyresearch.org.

Regards,

Michele

Michele Moser Deegan, Ph.D.

Associate Professor Muhlenberg College

Director LVRC

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT - DR. EIKE REICHARDT

Dr. Eike Reichardt is an Instructor of Social Sciences at Lehigh Carbon Community College and serves on the LVRC Executive Board. At LCCC Dr. Reichardt regularly teaches the Western Civilization sequence and a cultural geography course. Other courses he has taught at LCCC include 20th-Century World History, World War II, History of Russia, and Honors Cultural Geography. He has also taught courses at Stony Brook University and Long Island University C.W. Post Campus.



Fluent in German, Dr. Reichardt received his M.A. in German Studies from the California State University Long Beach and his Ph.D in History from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Dr. Reichardt's dissertation examined Germany's history of public health and popular science during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Before coming to the Lehigh Valley, Dr. Reichardt was an adjunct instructor at both Hofstra University and Long Island University. He holds memberships in the American Historical Association and the Association of American Geographers. Dr. Reichardt is also a member of the Lehigh County Historical Society and Wildlands Conservancy. Contact Dr. Reichardt at ereichardt@lccc.edu.

BUILDING COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY

The Lehigh Sociology class in Advanced Research Methods for graduate students spent much of this past year working on a study of access to food in South Bethlehem as part of their learning how to design, carry out, and analyze research. Following a participatory action research model, they worked with Judi Maloney, director of the Bethlehem Health Bureau, and her staff to develop a study that would examine the prevalence, causes, and consequences of food insecurity in the South Bethlehem neighborhood. The students and BHB distributed a survey in English and Spanish, at a multitude of sites in the neighborhood; it was also made available online in both languages. Additionally they interviewed community stakeholders about their views of food insecurity, how it has changed, and what steps might be taken to ameliorate the situation.

In a sample of 170 residents, 64% responded yes to at least one of three questions intended to measure insecurity, by asking about trouble affording healthy meals, cutting meal sizes due to affordability, and going hungry, and 19% responded yes to all three. 23% had gone hungry at some point in the past six months due to the inability to afford food. This is a much higher level of insecurity than has been identified nationally, or for Pennsylvania. Food insecurity was related both to income and to difficulty in accessing supermarkets, with most of those having access to cars shopping outside the neighborhood. Geographic Information Systems software was employed to map the location of participants' homes in relation to where they shopped and to investigate geographic patterns in key variables. No clear pattern of food insecurity was found; residents from all parts of the neighborhood reported some level of insecurity.

The class, taught by Prof. Matthew Sanderson fall semester and Prof. Judith Lasker spring semester, presented its results at a public forum attended by residents and staff members from local organizations, and again to the staff of the Bethlehem Health Bureau. It is their hope that it will help to guide discussions of policy-making with regard to food access in South Bethlehem. For more information contact Judith Lasker at jnl0@lehigh.edu.

CURRENT RESEARCH

EVALUATION OF THE CHILDREN'S INTEGRATED SERVICES UNIT IN NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

Starting in May of 2011, the LVRC began a study within Northampton County's Department of Human Services to evaluate the efficacy of the Children's Integrated Services Unit (CISU) program. This program streamlines the number of case workers that a child in the welfare system may have, so that there is only one case worker for each family. This is different from traditional child welfare programs, where there may be multiple case workers for one child or family.

The overall goal of the study is to measure the success of this program using subjective and objective markers of such success. The evaluation will determine whether families involved in the CISU program show greater benefits and success than those who are involved in a traditional child welfare program. We will use data collected via case files and responses to a telephone survey to assess differences between families in the CISU and traditional services groups on multiple success markers. In addition, the evaluation will include qualitative interviews with case workers and service providers assigned to families in the CISU. These qualitative interviews will assess staff experiences related to case delivery across the CISU and non participant groups.

The study will be completed in August and a report on the efficacy of the CISU program will be provided to Northampton County's Department of Human Services. For information regarding the study, you can contact Dr. Amy Saborsky at amy.saborsky@desales.edu or Dr. Jamila Bookwala at bookwalj@lafayette.edu.

PROBLEM GAMBLING NEEDS ASSESMENT NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

The Lehigh Valley Research Consortium completed a Problem Gambling Needs Assessment for Northampton County's Drug and Alcohol Division earlier this year. This study was part of a state wide effort by the PA Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs in the Department of Health to understand emerging human service issues related to the opening of casinos in Pennsylvania.

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COMMUNITY HEALTH STUDY

Under the Project Directorship of Dr. Lanethea Mathews, Muhlenberg College, the LVRC is conducting a Community Health Study under the auspices of the St. Luke's Hospital Network. In addition, the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley is sponsoring a portion of the study that focuses on the health related needs of the aged. This summer, the study is surveying 5000 residents of the Lehigh Valley, including portions of the Quakertown areas. The survey is collecting data on residents' perceptions of community health needs, as well as information about residents' health related behaviors – such as smoking, nutrition, and exercise – and access to health insurance and care. The Community Health Study is being conducted at an auspicious moment, providing a models for communities and hospitals throughout the state of Pennsylvania in responding to new mandates passed with the Affordable Care Act. For more information contact Dr. Lanethea Mathews at mathews@muhlenberg.edu

PROBLEM GAMBLING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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The study utilized a key representative survey, key representative interviews, community survey of residents of Lehigh and Northampton counties, and collection of available data to assess the readiness of the County to address problem gambling. Here we highlight a few findings from the community survey.

- ◆ The community survey was completed by 505 randomly selected residents of the Lehigh Valley in November and December 2010. The telephone survey was conducted by staff from the Muhlenberg College Institute for Public Opinion and has a margin of error of +/-4. For the purpose of this study, we oversampled residents living in Northampton County. This is the third time that the LVRC has surveyed the community about their gambling behaviors and perceptions of gambling. We also completed studies in 2007 and 2009.
- ◆ Regarding current gambling behavior, of the people responding to the current survey, 71% claimed to have gambled at a U.S. casino in their lifetime, but only half of them have done so between December 2009 and December 2010. In 2010, almost 60% of the respondents in Northampton County said they had gambled at a casino in the US compared to only 46% in Lehigh County.
- ◆ Most people (86%) who have gambled at a casino in the past year stayed within the state of Pennsylvania, and only 14% traveled out of state. Additionally, 90% of those who have gambled within the past year said that they have made a trip to the Sands Casino in Bethlehem.
- ◆ Even though most of those who reported gambling at a casino in the past year were from the middle and upper income levels, those making less money tended to spend more time at the casino and go more often. Out of all three income ranges, 10% of those making less than \$40,000/yr said they spent more than 5 hours at a casino, compared to 5% and 8% of middle and upper income people, respectively. Of our respondents between the ages of 18 and 29, 70% said they have gambled at a casino within the past year, while only 45% of those over the age of 65 claimed to do the same.
- ◆ We also asked residents about their perceptions of how the casino would affect their quality of life. In 2007, 79% of respondents felt that crime would increase after casino gambling was introduced to the community. By 2010 the percentage agreeing that crime would increase dropped to 69%. In 2010, Northampton County residents were more optimistic about the affects of the casino on crime; 66% of residents agreed that crime would increase, compared to 73% in Lehigh County (see Tables).
- ◆ Perceptions of the affects on economic development, another key goal of bringing a casino to the region, appears to remain the same in the aggregate as 83% of respondents in 2007 felt that the casino would increase economic development compared to 85% in 2010.
- ◆ Residents were initially very pessimistic about the casino's impact on traffic but by 2010 fewer survey participants believed that traffic congestion will increase (91% vs. 87%). Respondents believing that traffic would "greatly increase" fell from 52% to 38%. However, more residents in Northampton County than Lehigh County believed that traffic will "greatly increase" (44% vs. 33%).

To view the full report visit our website at www.lehighvalleyresearch.org or contact Dr. Michele Moser Deegan at deegan@muhlenberg.edu or Scott Hoke at SAHoke@cedarcrest.edu.

PROBLEM GAMBLING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

What effect will the opening of a slots casino have on crime? Will it...

Rating	2007	2009	2010
Greatly increase crime	25%	13%	17%
Somewhat increase crime	54%	60%	52%
Somewhat decrease crime	3%	5%	4%
Greatly decrease crime	1%	1%	1%
No effect/Not sure	17%	21%	26%

Note: Percents rounded to nearest whole number.

Next, economic development - that is, bringing new businesses and jobs to the area? Will it...

Rating	2007	2009	2010
Greatly increase econ. Development	32%	22%	23%
Somewhat increase econ. Development	51%	67%	62%
Somewhat decrease econ. Development	5%	4%	7%
Greatly decrease econ. Development	2%	1%	2%
No effect/Not sure	9%	6%	6%

What about traffic congestion in the Lehigh Valley. Will it...

Rating	2007	2009	2010
Greatly increase traffic congestion	52%	41%	38%
Somewhat increase traffic congestion	39%	53%	49%
Somewhat decrease traffic congestion	1%	1%	3%
Greatly decrease traffic congestion	1%	0%	1%
No effect/not sure	7%	6%	9%

* totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

The LVRC operates within the administration of the Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges. For more information about LVIAC visit lviac.org

ADVISORY BOARD ORGANIZATIONS

LVAIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Cedar Crest College	www.cedarcrest.edu
DeSales University	www.desales.edu
Lafayette College	www.lafayette.edu
Lehigh University	www.lehigh.edu
Moravian College	www.moravian.edu
Muhlenberg College	www.muhlenberg.edu

Affiliates:

Lehigh Carbon Community College	www.lccc.edu
Northampton Community College	www.northampton.edu

- ◆ Children's Coalition of the Lehigh Valley
- ◆ City of Allentown
- ◆ City of Bethlehem
- ◆ Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley
- ◆ Discover LV
- ◆ Intermediate Unit 20
- ◆ Intermediate Unit 21
- ◆ Lehigh County
- ◆ LV Arts Council
- ◆ LV Chamber of Commerce
- ◆ LV Economic Development Corporation
- ◆ LV Planning Commission
- ◆ LV Workforce Investment Board
- ◆ Network of Young Professionals
- ◆ Northampton County
- ◆ PPL Corporation
- ◆ St. Luke's Hospital and Health Network
- ◆ Wildlands Conservancy

