

# Latino Immigrants, Meatpacking, and Rural Communities: A Case Study of Lexington, Nebraska

Lourdes Gouveia and Donald D. Stull

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## ABSTRACT

The authors examine the changes associated with the opening of IBP, a large meatpacking plant, and the arrival of Latinos in Lexington, Nebraska. The study draws on multiple sources of data, including interviews of many community stakeholders and various secondary sources. The authors found that the costs associated with the arrival of IBP in Lexington include overcrowding and increased turnover in the schools; rising crime; shortages in adequate housing; declines in community health; increased demand for healthcare and other social services; the emergence or reemergence of racism and isolated instances of discrimination, the need to expand and upgrade community infrastructure; tax abatements and holidays provided to the new employers; and negative impacts on small producers. On the positive side, they found that the arrival of these new immigrant laborers and their families, most from Mexico and Central America, made Lexington a much more diverse community than it was before IBP opened its plant. This also brought an assortment of ethnic shops and restaurants, making downtown Lexington far more lively and economically sound than it was in the late 1980's. These new businesses expanded the tax base because of Latino newcomers. New community organizations were also founded to help families. The authors recommend to: 1) create a "positive context of reception for new immigrants; 2) create economic development beyond IBP; and 3) build for the second generation.