



The New Latino Workforce: Employers' Experiences in Memphis

**A Joint Report by the Center for Research on Women
at The University of Memphis and The Work Place, Inc.**

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A Total Approach To Workforce Development

The New Latino Workforce: Employers' Experiences in Memphis

By

Marcela Mendoza, Barbara Ellen Smith, Ying-Ying Yu,
Shelby Mallory, Mario Petersen, and Blair Taylor

Research Teams:

The Work Place, Inc.

Shelby Mallory
Jennifer Poe
Blair Taylor

Center for Research on Women

Gerise Guy
Marcela Mendoza
Mario Petersen
Barbara Ellen Smith
Peter B. Walls
Ying-Ying Yu



The Center for Research on Women at The University of Memphis is an interdisciplinary unit whose mission is to promote, conduct and disseminate research on women and social inequality.

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A Total Approach To Workforce Development

The Work Place, Inc.—an affiliate of Bridges—is a not-for-profit workforce development organization that helps unemployed and underemployed individuals achieve sustained employment success while simultaneously helping businesses achieve higher returns on investment in their human resources.

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I. Introduction

Latino immigrants represent a rapidly growing segment of the Memphis-area metropolitan population and labor force. The U.S. Bureau of the Census calculates that the Hispanic population grew by 239 percent between 1990 and 2000, and that Hispanics in the five-county metropolitan area now number 27,520.¹ Other researchers, utilizing vital statistics, school enrollment data and other records, estimate that the number of Latinos in Shelby County may be more than double the official count.² Whatever figure one favors, it is clear that people of Spanish-language heritage are a significant and growing part of the Memphis community. (For a discussion of the terms “Latino” and “Hispanic,” please see Appendix 2).

This research project arose from the desire to understand better the processes whereby these new residents are being incorporated into the local labor force, and the challenges that employers confront as they hire Spanish-speaking workers. Initiated by The Work Place, Inc. in the fall, 2000, the research was undertaken as a joint project with The University of Memphis’ Center for Research on Women (CROW). CROW contributed expertise in research methodology and statistical analysis to the joint effort, while The Work Place provided expertise in workforce development and knowledge of/access to local employers in Memphis.

The project was an outgrowth of larger initiatives at both CROW and The Work Place. For the latter, frequent requests from business clients for help with integrating Spanish speakers into their workforces prompted staff to begin adapting their English-only programming for Spanish-speaking workers. In November 2000, The Work Place launched Project *Adelante*, an initiative to research workforce development needs related to new Spanish-speaking residents, and to design new programs and services for both Spanish speakers and the businesses that hire them. Within CROW, several faculty members and students were already engaged in research projects designed to illuminate the needs, circumstances and economic impacts of local Latino immigrants, both women and men. This new initiative enabled CROW researchers, through their partnership with The Work Place, to investigate employers’ perspectives on Latino workers.

Our joint research project consisted of a confidential survey, administered primarily over the telephone, to a sample of Memphis-area businesses whose names were drawn from *The Book of Lists, Who’s Who in Memphis Business* and other sources. We focused on employers in industries such as distribution and construction, where we anticipated that Latino employment would be most likely. (For more information about the methodology, please see Appendix 1.) In addition, the Society of Human Resource Managers posted the survey form on its web site and allowed staff from The Work Place to distribute copies at membership meetings, from which we received additional self-

¹ The five counties in the Memphis metropolitan area are Shelby, Tipton and Fayette Counties in Tennessee, DeSoto County in Mississippi, and Crittenden County in Arkansas.

² See Burrell, Luchy S. *et al*, 2001. “New 2000 Estimates of the Hispanic Population for Shelby County, Tennessee.” Memphis, TN: Regional Economic Development Center and Center for Research on Women, The University of Memphis

administered questionnaires. Multiple contacts with 264 employers during the spring and summer of 2001 eventually yielded 175 completed survey forms, of which 174 are reported on here. (One employer was omitted from the sample due to its extremely large size.)

This report presents a descriptive summary of these 174 employers' responses to the survey. It should be considered preliminary in the sense that further statistical analysis will be required to identify correlations among the various findings. When reading this report, it is important to keep in mind that the experiences and viewpoints are those of employers; we did not survey either Latino employees or their non-Latino co-workers. Moreover, those who responded to the survey tended to be human resource managers (especially in larger companies) or CEOs. They typically were able to provide an overview of their company's employment of Latinos, but were in some cases hard pressed to respond to questions regarding Latino employees' interactions with other workers. Had we surveyed front-line supervisors in the same companies, the responses we received to certain questions might have been different.

Our focus in this research was on nonprofessional, hourly workers. This is important to clarify because there are many people of Spanish-speaking heritage in the Memphis area who are employed in managerial and professional positions. Typically, these individuals have either lived in the United States all their lives or entered the country as students or on H1 visas (for those with highly desirable technical and professional skills). Many are permanent residents and some are U.S. citizens. Their educational, legal and employment circumstances are quite different from the majority of recent arrivals who are monolingual and employed in nonprofessional jobs. When surveying employers, we asked them to respond regarding their hourly employees only, in order to distinguish these workers from those who have been able to access more professional employment.

Finally, it is important to stress that all of our findings regarding "Latinos" could apply to most workplace settings involving non-English-speaking workers and to virtually all immigrant groups. As the next chapters detail, most of the challenges that businesses reported in employing Latinos involve communication, which would emerge in any work force composed of people of different languages. Similarly, the many favorable comments from employers regarding Latinos' productivity and apparent commitment to work involve characteristics observed in all immigrant groups. People who uproot themselves and migrate across national borders to entirely new contexts are a self-selected group—regardless of their national origin, ethnicity, educational level or classification within the U.S. racial system—who are motivated above all by the desire for economic opportunity and security. Moreover, their financial support of family members in the country of origin, in addition to responsibility for their own living expenses, creates a pressure to maximize earnings that is not experienced by native workers whose lives do not necessarily revolve around their jobs. These considerations are important to remember in order to avoid ethnic stereotyping of Latinos while at the same time recognizing the significant contributions of immigrants to the American economy.

II. Overview of Findings

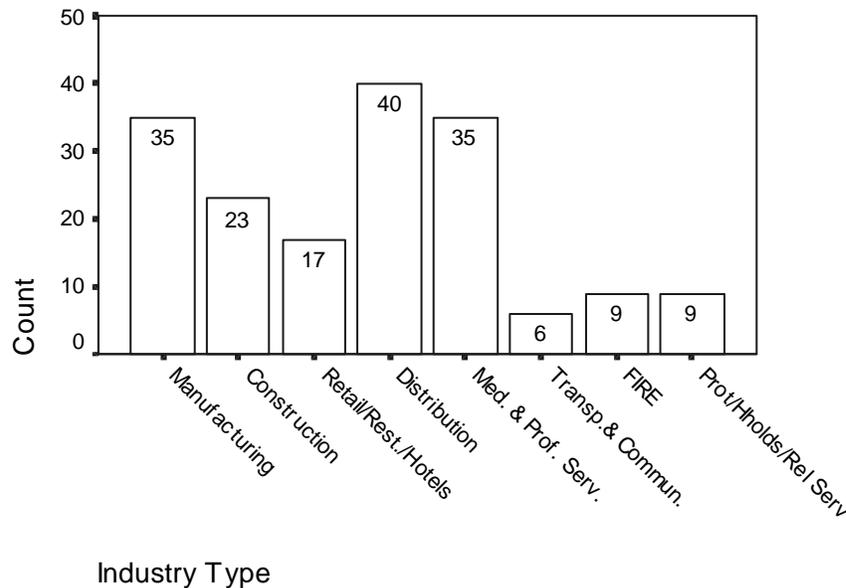
Employers across the spectrum of the Memphis economy—from distribution warehouses to nursing homes—have sought to hire the new Spanish-speaking immigrants who entered the local labor market during the past decade. Within our sample of 174 employers, 48 percent (84 companies) had already hired a total of 882 Latino hourly workers. Moreover, their total Latino workforce is in all likelihood much larger, as most employers were unable to provide data on temporary, subcontracted or contingent workers. Of the remaining 90 employers without Latino employees, all but one very small company (with three employees) indicated an interest in accessing these new workers.

The survey encompassed employers from a wide range of firm sizes (as measured by number of employees) and industry types. The smallest firm in the sample had only one employee and the largest employed over 3,000; the median size was 66 employees. Reflecting the economic structure of Memphis, the largest number of employers in the sample was from the distribution sector, followed by medical/professional services and manufacturing. (The latter included several printing companies that may not be conventionally perceived as “manufacturers” but are so classified in the Standard Industrial Code.) Table 1 and Graph 1 below depict the total number of employers in each industry group in the survey.

Table 1: Number of Employers Surveyed, by Industry Type

<i>Employers Surveyed, by Industry Type</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Distribution	40	23%
Manufacturing	35	20%
Medical and Professional Services	35	20%
Construction	23	13%
Retail, Restaurants, and Hotels	17	10%
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	9	5%
Protective, Household, and Other Services	9	5%
Transportation and Communication	6	3%
Total	174	100% (rounded)

Graph 1: Number of Companies
by Industry Type



Not surprisingly, there was a strong correlation between firm size and the tendency to employ Latinos. (The larger the work force, the greater was the tendency to employ Latinos). Latino employment also varied significantly by industry, which is the focus of the analysis presented here. In general, employers in service sector activities that do not involve a high proportion of professional employees were most likely to employ Latinos as hourly workers. Within our sample, this included two groups above all: retail trade, restaurants, and hotels; and FIRE—finance, insurance and real estate. In retail trade and related activities, for example, 65 percent of the employers surveyed had hired Latinos, and in FIRE 66 percent had done so. Trailing these two leaders was another nonprofessional service sector, protective/household and related services, where 56 percent of firms employed Latinos. By contrast, only 26 percent of medical/professional service firms were employing Latinos as hourly workers.

One may reasonably speculate that this variable tendency to hire Latino workers in the service sector is due at least in part to the different clientele and language-related job requirements in each service industry group. In finance, insurance and real estate employment, which in our sample was dominated by banks, companies have sought to capture the burgeoning market of Latino wage earners by hiring bilingual tellers and customer service agents. (In our sample, these were the predominant job titles in which Latinos were employed in FIRE.) However, in nursing homes and other medical facilities (which are classified in medical/professional services), the clientele is effectively “screened” by health insurance coverage, legal status and socioeconomic class: paying,

Medicaid-eligible and privately insured patients are overwhelmingly English-speaking. Moreover, it may be necessary even for nonprofessional workers to read instructions in English and communicate verbally with English-speaking residents and staff. In yet a third service-related sector, retail/restaurants/hotels, workers might perform exactly the same activity as in the medical/professional sector (e.g., food preparation and service), yet English language skills are likely to be less necessary.

Employers in the sizeable distribution, manufacturing and construction sectors have also moved to hire Latino hourly workers, but at slightly lower rates than in the two leading service-related sectors. In distribution and manufacturing, 58 and 49 percent of employers, respectively, had hired Latino workers, while in construction 48 percent had done so. However, the prominence of these industries in the sample meant that, together, they represented 61 percent of all Latino-employing firms. Table 2 and Graph 2 below illustrate the number of employers, by industry, who have hired Latinos as hourly workers. Table 3 shows the total number and percentage of Latino workers in each industry (see also Graphs 3 and 4).

Table 2: Companies' Employment of Latino Workers, by Industry Type

<i>Companies' Employment of Latino Workers, by Industry Type</i>	<i>Employ Latinos</i>	<i>Do Not Employ Latinos</i>	<i>Total Number of Companies</i>
Distribution	23	17	40
Manufacturing	17	18	35
Medical and Professional Services	9	26	35
Construction	11	12	23
Retail, Restaurants, and Hotels	11	6	17
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	6	3	9
Protective, Household, and Other Services	5	4	9
Transportation and Communication	2	4	6
Total	84	90	174

Graph 2: Companies' Employment of Latino Workers,
 by Industry Type

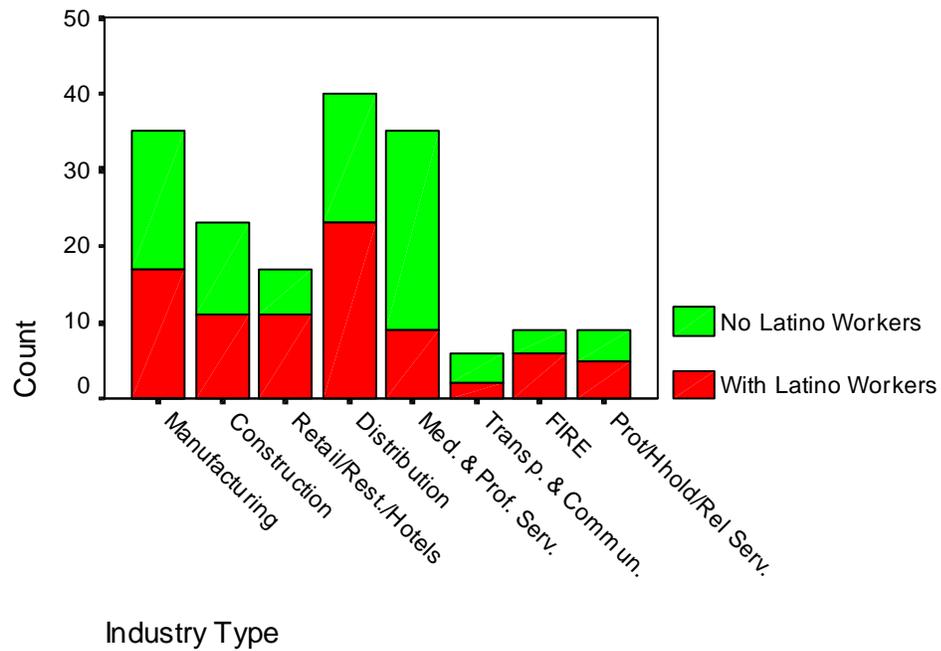
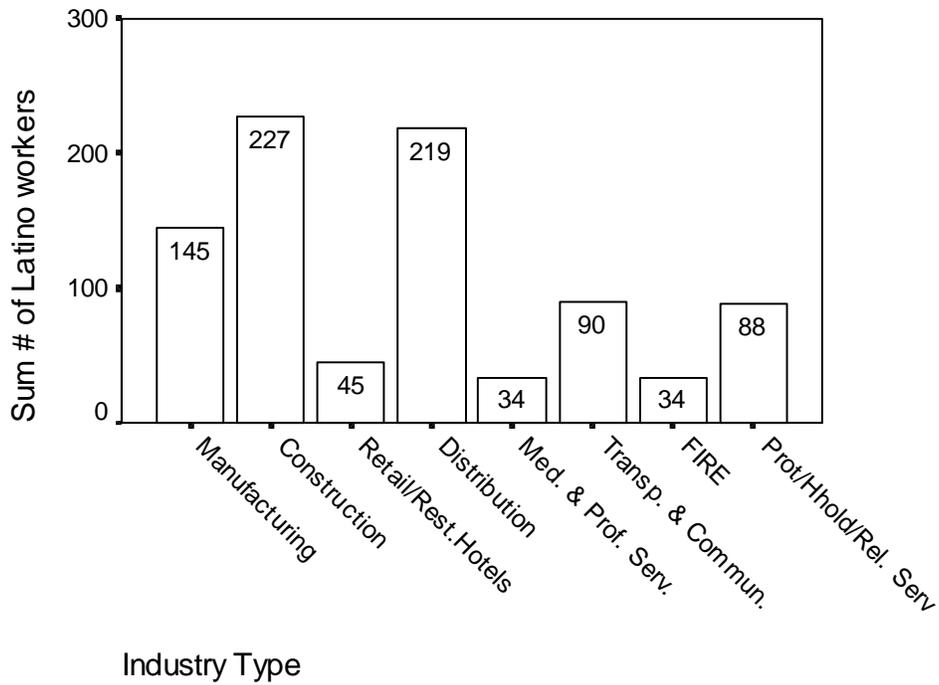


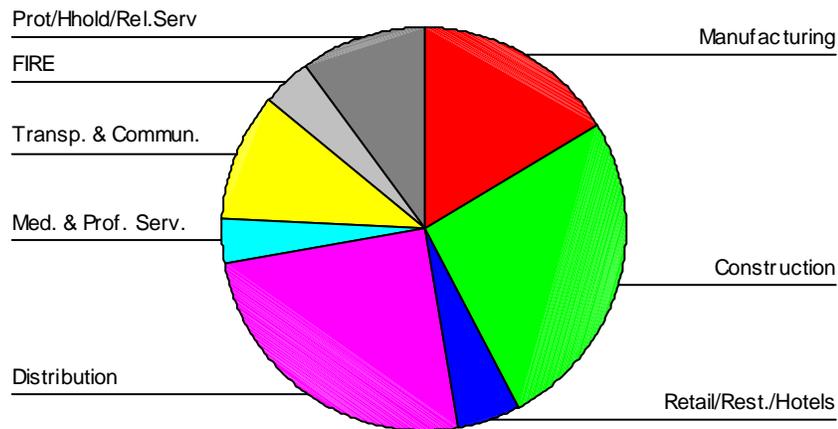
Table 3: Total Number of Latino Workers, by Industry Type

<i>Employers Surveyed, by Industry Type</i>	<i>Sum of Latino Workers</i>	<i>Percent of Total Sum</i>
Distribution	219	24.8%
Manufacturing	145	16.4%
Medical and Professional Services	34	3.9%
Construction	227	25.7%
Retail, Restaurants, and Hotels	45	5.1%
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	34	3.9%
Protective, Household, and Other Services	88	10.0%
Transportation and Communication	90	10.2%
Total	882	100%

Graph 3: Number of Latino Workers
by Industry Type



Graph 4: Distribution of Latino Workers,
by Industry Type



In general, employers who have hired Latinos reported a high level of satisfaction with these relatively new entrants into the local labor market. There was a widespread perception that Latinos work hard, and that they are readily available for weekend and overtime work. Complaints regarding work performance and job skills—e.g., low productivity, high turnover, lack of relevant skills—were few. Not surprisingly, the primary challenge employers reported involved language and communication issues in a variety of contexts: new employee orientation; on-the-job training; supervision; and communication among workers. The latter was mentioned more frequently than any other concern. One-third of the respondents who employed Latinos said that “communication between workers” was a major challenge. This appears to have been a reference to the mechanics of communication—in this case, language differences—rather than to the content of communication (e.g., hostile exchanges). In response to the query whether “tensions between Latinos and other workers” was a major challenge, a much smaller proportion (12 percent, or ten employers) replied affirmatively.

Interestingly, employers who had no Latinos in their work force *anticipated* the same major language-related challenges, were they to hire Latinos, as those who were experienced with Latino employment actually reported. However, they anticipated challenges at much higher rates, which may indicate apprehension regarding employment of people with whom they were unfamiliar. Among those who employed no Latinos, 63 percent identified communication among workers as a likely challenge, were they to hire Latinos as hourly workers. Forty percent anticipated that understanding on-the-job training would be a challenge for their Latino workers. It is important to note that, despite these apparently language-related concerns, fully half of this group (45 employers) cited lack of access to workers as the reason they had not employed Latinos; only 11 percent cited a work-related need for English language skills as the reason they had not employed Latinos.

This group of 90 employers also expressed strong interest in an array of services and programs that could assist them in incorporating Latinos into their work force. Most of their preferences related to language training or translation, and included not only English classes for Latinos but also Spanish classes for non-Latino managers and workers. Half of the 90 employers expressed interest in classes on workplace English for Latinos, and 46 percent were interested in classes on workplace Spanish. This willingness to accommodate the language-related challenges of employing Spanish-speaking workers was apparently shared by those 84 firms that employed Latinos. One-fourth had already hired managers who spoke Spanish. The overwhelmingly majority (89 percent) also stated that advanced jobs would be available for Spanish-speaking workers if they were fully bilingual. In sum, most employers in the sample—although many experienced or anticipated communication difficulties and other challenges in employing Latinos—were taking action and/or were interested in programs to help them incorporate these newcomers into their labor force.

III. Employers' Experiences with Latino Workers

Insurance companies, banks, laundries, warehouses, building contractors, restaurants—a diverse array of employers in Memphis has hired Latino workers. This chapter reports our findings regarding the 84 businesses in our survey that have employed Latinos and their experiences with this relatively new work force.

As noted in the previous chapter, the tendency to hire Latinos as hourly workers was greatest in certain nonprofessional service-related businesses, such as restaurants, retail stores, banks and insurance companies. However, companies in the two sectors with the greatest tendency to employ Latinos (retail/restaurants/hotels and FIRE, two-thirds of which had Latino workers) did not necessarily employ them in large numbers. Indeed, the average number of Latinos that they employed per firm (fewer than six) was the smallest in the sample. (This was not a function of smaller overall labor forces in these firms.) In the third nonprofessional service sector—protective, household and related services—the employment of Latinos was far greater: although only 56 percent of these firms hired Latinos, those who did so averaged almost 18 Spanish-speaking employees per firm.

Despite their tendency to hire Latino workers, the total number of Latinos employed in all nonprofessional services was dwarfed by Latino employment in the “Big Three”: distribution, construction and manufacturing. Together, they accounted for two-thirds of all 882 Latinos reported in the survey. This was due in part, but by no means entirely, to the heavy representation of these sectors in the sample. Moreover, the large number of their Latino employees was in all likelihood an underestimate. This is because subcontracting is common in all three industries and, particularly in distribution, employment through temporary agencies is a standard practice. Although we inquired about employment through these more indirect methods, most respondents were unable to provide data regarding workers employed by subcontractors or through temporary agencies.

Among the Big Three, construction stood out on many counts. Not only did it employ more Latinos than any other sector (227 workers), it also had the highest number of Latinos per firm (just over 20 workers, on average). This was especially striking in view of the industry's relatively low reported employment overall: with 1,049 total employees, an average of 46 workers per firm, these construction companies that responded to our survey reported the smallest work force of any industry in the sample. Nonetheless, the eleven construction firms that employed Latinos did so far more extensively than any other employers: 29 percent of their combined labor force of 792 workers was Latino.

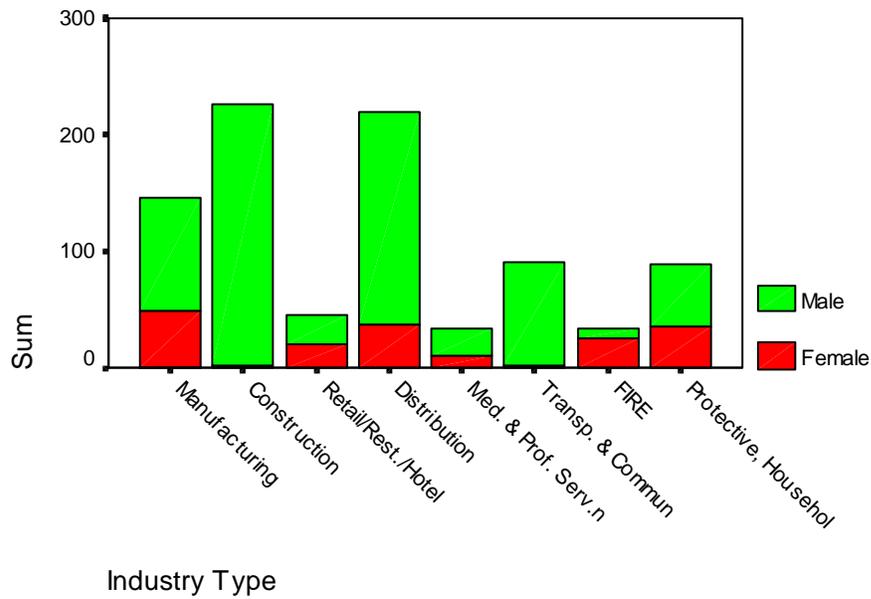
Employment of Latinos also varied considerably by gender across the sample. Not surprisingly, the pattern of employment of Latino men and women (or “Latinas”) largely mirrored the occupational segregation that may be observed in the U.S. labor force as a whole. The largest employers of Latinos, the construction industry, included only one Latina in their combined work forces. Similarly, in the transportation sector (which was dominated by trucking companies in our sample), only 2 of the 90 Latinos were female.

By contrast, Latino employment in the finance, insurance and real estate sector was 74 percent female, and in retail/restaurants and hotels it was 44 percent female. Table 4 and Graph 5 below illustrate Latino employment, separated by gender, for each industry in our sample.

Table 4: Total Number of Male and Female Latino Workers and Gender Ratio by Industry Type

<i>Employers Surveyed, by Industry Type</i>	<i>Total Num. Latino Workers</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male/Female Ratio</i>
Distribution	219	182	37	4.91
Manufacturing	149	96	49	1.95
Medical and Professional Services	34	24	10	2.40
Construction	227	226	1	226.00
Retail, Restaurants, and Hotels	45	25	20	1.25
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	34	9	25	0.36
Protective, Household, and Other Services	88	53	35	1.51
Transportation and Communication	90	88	2	44.00
Total	882	703	179	

Graph 5: Number of Male/Female Latino Workers,
 by Industry Type

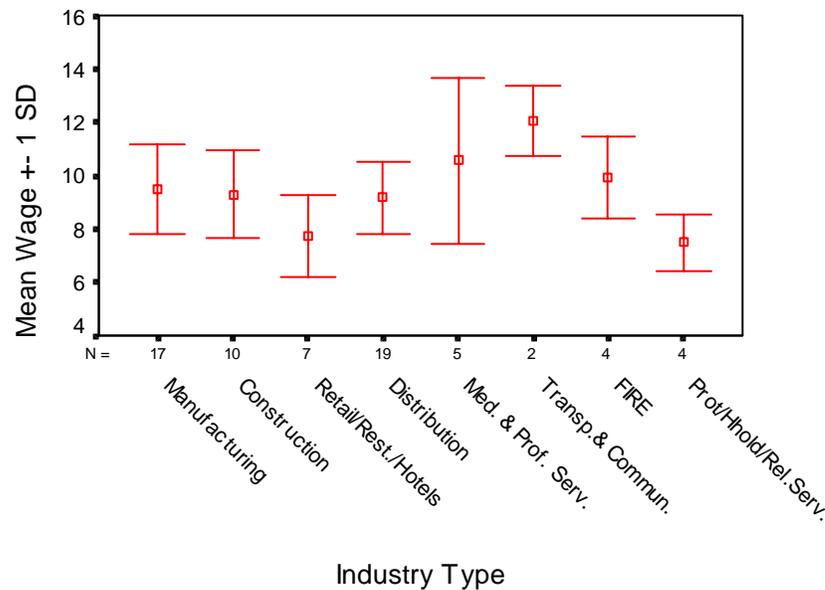


The wages paid to these Latino workers also varied considerably across the industry groups. The average wage for the job titles in which Latinos were employed was \$9.25/hour, but there was wide variation both within and across different industries. In general, the pattern once again mirrored tendencies within the labor force as a whole in the United States. The retail, restaurant and hotel sector included the lowest wage in the range (\$5.75/hour), while medical and professional services offered the highest (\$15.00/hour—however, this single wage was far above others within this group). On average, employers in the transportation and communication sector paid the highest hourly wages. Table 6 on the next page illustrates the average wage that Latino employees received in each sector. Graph 6 shows the range of wages paid by employers in each group.

Table 5: Average Hourly Wage for Latino Workers (Mean, Median, Minimum, Maximum, and Standard Deviation), by Industry Type

<i>Industry Type</i>	<i>Mean of Average Wages</i>	<i>Median Average Wage</i>	<i>Minimum Reported Wage</i>	<i>Maximum Reported Wage</i>	<i>Std. Deviation of Average Wage</i>
Distribution	\$ 9.18	\$ 9.00	\$ 7.50	\$12.00	1.35
Manufacturing	\$9.47	\$9.75	\$6.20	\$13.00	1.69
Medical and Professional Services	\$10.55	\$9.00	\$7.50	\$15.00	3.1
Construction	\$9.27	\$9.75	\$6.20	\$13.00	1.69
Retail, Restaurants, and Hotels	\$7.74	\$7.25	\$5.75	\$10.30	1.51
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	\$9.92	\$10.05	\$8.00	\$11.60	1.52
Protective, Household, and Other Services	\$7.48	\$7.62	\$6.20	\$8.50	1.08
Transportation and Communication	\$12.07	\$12.07	\$11.15	\$13.00	1.30
Total	\$9.25	\$9.00	\$5.75	\$15.00	1.82

Graph 6: Average Hourly Wage
 for Latino Workers



When asked about the “major challenges your company has faced in employing Latino workers,” 28 of the 84 respondents cited no challenges at all. However, the remaining 56 cited an array of challenges in which language and communication-related difficulties were foremost. Table 6 below summarizes their responses.

Table 6: Ranking of Challenges in Employing Latino Workers, All Industries

<i>Type of Challenge in Employing Latino Workers</i>	<i>Count of Responses, All Industries</i>
Communication Between Workers	28
Difficulties Training and Supervising Due to Language Barrier	22
Tensions Between Latinos and Other Workers	10
High Turnover	7
Skills Deficit, Other Than Language	7
Lack of Access to Latino Workers	5
Applicant’s Inability to Provide Documentation	5

There were intriguing variations by industry in the types of challenges reported. Employers in distribution, manufacturing and protective/household and related services were most likely to cite both communication between workers and language-related difficulties in training and supervision; 35 percent or more of the companies in these sectors mentioned these as challenges. This same group of employers was also most likely to mention tensions between Latinos and other workers as a challenge, although at much lower rates. For example, 26 percent of all distribution sector employers (the highest rate across industry groups) reported tensions among workers.

In the construction industry, there were fewer reported difficulties with training and supervision or worker tensions, yet 54 percent of construction companies, the highest proportion in the sample, cited problems with communication between workers. One may speculate that this discrepancy is due in part to the organization of the construction industry, in which crews with specific skills (e.g., bricklaying, drywall installation) may work somewhat autonomously on their task assignments within an overall project. Increasingly, these crews are composed entirely of Spanish-speaking workers, headed in some cases by a bilingual leader. (Indeed, the construction industry reported the highest proportion of bilingual supervisors of any group in the sample; see below.) Although this may minimize language-related difficulties with supervision and training, it also seems likely to produce communication problems among workers across an entire construction site.

Challenges related to job performance, specifically skills deficits and high turnover, were more common among employers in the nonprofessional service sector. At

least 20 percent of employers in both retail trade, restaurants and hotels and in protective/household and related services reported high turnover as a problem. This may be due at least in part to the fact that these are also the lowest wage sectors in the sample.

When probed further about language-related difficulties in employing Latinos, only 25 companies cited challenges. Once again, those who did respond emphasized issues related to verbal communication, most commonly on-the-job training and new employee orientation. Not surprisingly, the same groups of employers that previously cited language-related challenges also predominated in reports of these additional problems. Among distribution sector employers, 26 percent—the highest proportion in the sample—mentioned language-related problems with on-the-job training, while 18 percent of manufacturers and 20 percent of businesses in protective/household and related services cited language problems in the context of new employee orientation. Table 7 summarizes employers' responses regarding problems related to limited command of English among workers.

Table 7: Ranking of Language-Related Problems, All Industries

<i>Type of Language-Related Problem</i>	<i>Count of Responses, All Industries</i>
On the Job Training	11
New Employee Orientation	8
Safety	6
Productivity	5
Work Scheduling	5
Understanding Workplace Signage	3

In order to meet these challenges and problems, many employers were taking steps to promote communication and reduce the language barrier. At least 17 percent of the employers in all industries except manufacturing and retail had hired bilingual supervisors. However, in manufacturing, three of the 17 companies had hired supervisors who spoke only Spanish; in this sector, a relatively high proportion of employers (29 percent) also reported clustering their Latino workers, presumably with these Spanish-speaking supervisors. As noted previously, bilingual supervisors were especially common in the construction industry, where 64 percent of employers had hired them. In sum, 29 percent of the companies in the sample had hired either bilingual or Spanish-speaking supervisors.

Businesses were also seeking and in some cases had already implemented new training and other programming in order to meet the challenges posed by Spanish-speaking workers. These initiatives included contacting The Work Place, Inc. and other training organizations in search of assistance, translating employment documents into Spanish, and promoting Spanish classes for employees.

A final group of employers had done nothing, in some cases because they experienced no problems and felt no action was necessary, or engaged in ad hoc solutions. Most of the latter instances involved identifying Latino workers who understood at least some English and utilizing them as interpreters. “We use a worker in the field to explain when it’s needed,” commented one employer. Another noted, “We pull someone from the line to translate.” One said simply, “We just try to communicate.”

In conclusion, the survey indicates that employers across the spectrum of the Memphis economy have moved to employ Spanish-speaking workers. In general, these employers appear satisfied with the skills and work performance of Latinos. By far the most common challenges and problems they report involve the human relations aspects of the workplace, specifically language barriers in verbal communication. Their responses suggest that far more widespread availability of classes in English as a Second Language and, for that matter, Spanish for English speakers would be of great benefit to both Latino workers and their employers.

IV. The Concerns of Employers without Latino Workers

The majority of companies in our sample did not employ Latino workers, but expressed strong interest in doing so. This chapter summarizes the responses from these 90 companies regarding their reasons for not employing Latino workers, their concerns about doing so, and the types of services and programs they envision as most helpful should they move to incorporate Latinos into their work forces.

Two-thirds of the 90 companies that did not employ Latinos are in three industry groups—manufacturing, distribution and medical/professional services. However, this is largely a consequence of these industries' heavy representation in the overall sample. (Please refer to the tables in Chapter II for additional details.) More significant for the analysis here is the *tendency* to employ Latinos (as measured by the percent of Latino-employing companies in each industry group), which varied considerably. Two sectors—medical and professional services, and transportation/communication—were least likely to employ Latinos as hourly workers. Only 26 percent of medical and professional service companies and 33 percent of companies in transportation/communication employed Latinos.

In medical/professional services, this tendency may be due in part to language-related job requirements. Nineteen percent of such companies, the highest proportion in this group of 90 employers, cited the need for English skills as the reason they had not employed Latinos. The potential reasons for this tendency among transportation/communication sector businesses are harder to identify, in part because of their small number in the sample (six total, with four not employing Latinos), which renders the pattern of their responses more subject to chance.

When asked whether they would be “interested in hiring qualified Latino workers,” 89 of the 90 employers responded affirmatively. The single exception was a very small company with only three employees. This overwhelmingly positive response may reflect in part businesses' awareness of employment-related civil rights laws and a concern not to appear discriminatory, rather than sincere interest in employing Latino workers. This interpretation gains some credence from the responses to a subsequent question: “What has prevented you from hiring Latinos?” 28 percent of respondents acknowledged that they had no need for or interest in this labor force.

However, lack of access to Latino workers, rather than lack of interest or other factors, was by far the most frequent reason that businesses cited for not employing Latino workers. Every single employer in retail, restaurants and hotels—the highest proportion in any industry group—identified lack of access as a barrier to Latino employment. Table 8 on the next page summarizes employers' reported reasons for not hiring Latino workers.

Table 8: Ranking of Barriers to Hiring Latino Workers, All Industries.

<i>Type of Barrier</i>	<i>Count of Responses, All Industries</i>
Lack of Access to Workers	45
No Need or Interest	26
Lack of Workers with Relevant Skills	14
Lack of Spanish-Speaking Management	11
Work Requires English Language	10

Communication-related problems in on-the job training, occupational safety, and new employee orientation topped the list of challenges that these companies anticipated Latino workers would face if they were hired. These *anticipated* challenges were more widespread both within and across industry groups than were the challenges reported among employers who had actually hired Latino workers. For example, 26 percent of distribution sector companies that employed Latinos identified on-the-job training as a challenge, but 58 percent of the distribution companies without Latinos in their work forces anticipated that this would be a challenge, should they hire Spanish-speaking workers. Within the sample as a whole, 11 Latino-employing businesses across four industry groups reported on-the-job training as an actual challenge, whereas 36 non-Latino-employing companies across seven industry groups anticipated that it would be a challenge. In most cases, companies that had not employed Latinos anticipated challenges at rates at least twice as high as what the employers of Latino workers reported. Table 9 below summarizes the challenges that employers anticipated Latinos would face at their companies:

Table 9: Ranking of Anticipated Challenges for Latino Workers, All Industries.

<i>Type of Expected Challenge for Latino Workers</i>	<i>Count of Responses, All Industries</i>
Understanding Job Training	36
Following Safety Procedures	21
Receiving/Understanding New Employee Orientation	15
Understanding Workplace Signage	12
Work Scheduling	9

In general, the types of challenges that these companies anticipated mirrored those that the employers of Latino workers reported. Once again, language-related issues were foremost. “Communication between workers,” for example, was by far the most common challenge mentioned by both groups, albeit at different rates. Among those without Latinos in their work forces, 57 companies (63 percent) across all eight industry groups anticipated a communication challenge; by contrast, 28 of the Latino-employing companies (33 percent) across six industries reported this as a challenge. The one exception to this pattern of similar challenges identified, albeit it at higher rates among those companies that did not employ Latinos, involved the issue of tensions between Latinos and other workers. Ten of the Latino-employing companies (11 percent) reported this challenge, but only four of those without Latino employees anticipated it. Moreover, those who reported experiencing tensions between workers were concentrated in the distribution sector: 26 percent of Latino-employing distribution sector companies cited this as a challenge, yet none of their non-Latino-employing counterparts in the same industry did so. Table 10 below summarizes the challenges that companies without Latino workers anticipated.

Table 10: Ranking of Anticipated Challenges for the Company, All Industries.

<i>Type of Expected Challenge for the Company</i>	<i>Count of Responses, All Industries</i>
Communication Between Workers	57
Need for Bilingual Supervisor	28
Following Safety Procedures	7
Tensions Between Latinos and Other Workers	4
Different Work Ethic Between Latinos and Other Workers	3

When interpreting the tables above, it is important to keep in mind two considerations. First, the questions posed to employers without Latinos in their work forces were, in effect, hypothetical. That is, the survey required them to speculate about challenges that they had not actually experienced. What they anticipated of course might differ from what they would report based on direct experience with Latino employees. Second, companies that had not hired Latinos tended to have difficulty envisioning a work force composed of people of different languages. In telephone interviews, they often responded with statements such as, “If the Latino workers were fully bilingual, then there would be no problems.” When encouraged by the interviewer to imagine hiring Spanish-speaking workers who were not necessarily bilingual, they responded, as noted above, with generally much higher rates of anticipated challenges than did employers who had actually employed Latino workers.

Despite apparent apprehensions about hiring Spanish-speaking workers, these employers identified several types of assistance that they would “find useful as [they]

seek to recruit and assimilate Latino workers.” First and foremost, 50 percent of these companies were interested in classes on workplace English for Latinos, and 45 percent indicated interest in workplace Spanish for managers and workers. Table 11 below summarizes the types of services that companies would find useful in seeking to incorporate Latino employees into their work forces.

Table 11: Ranking of Type of Useful Services for Employers Seeking to Recruit and Incorporate Latino Workers, All Industries

<i>Type of Assistance</i>	<i>Count of Responses, All Industries</i>
Workplace English for Latinos	45
Workplace Spanish for Management and Workers	41
Translation of Workplace Signage and Forms	38
Job Training for Latinos	34
Workers Orientation (in Spanish) for Latinos	34
Job Readiness for Latinos and/or Other Workers	27
Multicultural Management Training for Supervisors	25

In sum, despite their high rates of anticipated challenges, employers appear to be interested in an array of services that could assist them with incorporating Spanish-speaking workers into their labor forces. Their expressions of interest in not only workplace English for Spanish speakers but also Spanish for English-speaking managers and workers seem especially note-worthy. This interest was not confined to employers in service industries with a potential Spanish-speaking clientele (e.g., retail, restaurants and hotels, for whom such training could expand their market), but was evident across industry groups. Many employers apparently do not simply expect Latino workers to adapt to their English-only workplaces, but are willing to expand their own linguistic capacity and learn to communicate across the barrier of language.

V. Conclusion: Implications for Employment Policies and Programs

Language-related workforce development programs are clearly needed if employers in the Memphis area are to incorporate Spanish-speaking workers into their labor forces. Based on the survey results, it appears that programs and services in four broad areas would be beneficial: access to Latino workers; language training (both Spanish and English); translation and interpretation; and specialized training and consultation with managers regarding language-related human resource and workforce development needs.

Gaining access to Latino workers is an obvious first step toward their incorporation into the labor force. Although the survey did not inquire how employers with Latino workers accessed them, other CROW research indicates that some employers make use of three local Spanish-language newspapers to advertise their job openings. Employers also draw on temporary labor supply agencies, some of which have bilingual staff, to locate Latino workers. Extensive social networks among Latinos serve to spread the word further regarding employment availability once a company has begun to hire from this group. Workforce development organizations like The Work Place can also identify specific groups of workers (e.g., Spanish speakers), provide them customized job preparedness training, and coach them during the initial phase of employment when an employer decides to hire them in sufficient numbers.

The most obvious and widespread need, based on the survey results, appears to be language training. As noted previously, employers indicated interest in not only workplace English for Spanish-speaking workers, but also workplace Spanish for English speakers. The effectiveness of such training is typically dependent not only on its quality and duration but also on the context in which it is offered. Employers who are serious about expanding the language capacity of their work force should consider on-site training programs during work hours. This is especially true for programs that target Spanish-speaking hourly workers, who, according to many employers' anecdotal comments, are working long hours every day. Even if they are highly motivated to study English, their time for such classes during non-work hours may be extremely limited.

In view of the widespread interest in Latino workers and the numerous language-related challenges involved in employing them, bilingualism emerges as a significant job-related skill that companies should consider rewarding. The evident need for bilingual employees across industry groups—whether to facilitate internal communication among workers or, in certain service-related industries, to access the Latino market—argues for recognizing and rewarding bilingual capacity as a valuable job-related skill.

Translation of written documents and interpretation of verbal communication are additional language skills that are distinct from basic bilingual capacity. Translation and interpretation require a level of precision, accuracy, attention to detail, and understanding of linguistic nuance that are not part of ordinary bilingual training or knowledge. Employers who seek translation of written documents—from safety procedures to employment applications to legal contracts—would do well to hire specially trained translators. Translation services need not be confined to existing employment-related

documents. The specialized terminology and job-related slang terms that are found in every work site suggest that customized workplace dictionaries (Spanish/English) would be a useful investment, especially for larger employers.

The need for specially trained personnel is also true of contexts requiring verbal interpretation. Slight variations in even the smallest preposition can change the entire meaning of a communication. (For example, “Take this medicine twice a day” / “*Tome este remedio dos veces al día*” vs. “Take this medicine every two days”/ “*Tome este remedio cada dos días.*”) The need for skilled interpretation would seem particularly acute in certain professional contexts—e.g., law and medicine—where inaccurate interpretation may have quite serious consequences. This industry (medical and professional services) had the lowest rate of employment of Latino workers of any group in the sample, but would seem to have a special need for Spanish-speaking interpreters and, in certain job titles, fully bilingual employees. (It should also be noted that, according to local service and advocacy organizations such as the Latino-Memphis Connexion, Latinos themselves cite bilingual health care provision as a major need and priority.)

Finally, wide diversity among the dominant employers in the Memphis economy—from health care clinics to warehouses—suggests the need for specialized training and consultation in language-related workforce development for specific contexts. Several employers expressed interest in on-the-job training, new employee orientation, and job readiness training for Spanish-speaking workers, much of which would need to be customized to specific employers and work sites. Although occupational safety did not arise as a widespread concern in the survey, reports of communication challenges in industries with relatively high rates of occupational injuries (e.g., construction) argue for specialized language training and other safety-related services (e.g., translation of safety procedures and data sheets).

In sum, this survey suggests that a wide range of language-related workforce development services and programs would be beneficial to the many companies in Memphis that seek to employ the new Latino work force. Further research to identify the employment-related needs and priorities of Latino workers from their own perspective would also be desirable. Language differences have clearly not stopped employers in Memphis from accessing monolingual Latino workers, but language-related training and services would promote the communication among employees that is necessary for any workplace to function effectively.

Appendices

Appendix 1

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The initial group of employers targeted for the phone survey was composed of a randomized sample of local businesses drawn from the 2001 edition of *The Book of Lists*. (This is a compilation of local businesses published annually by the *Memphis Business Journal*). Guided by previous research on the employment of Latinos in Memphis conducted by CROW and The Work Place, we selected fifteen categories of businesses that were most likely to hire Latino immigrant workers. This group included Proprietary Distribution Operations, Third Party Distribution Operations, Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning Contractors, Manufacturing Companies, General Contractors, Banks, Hospitals, Hotels, Day Care Centers, Assisted Living Facilities, Home Health Agencies, Managed Care Plans, and Printing Firms. We also randomized a sample of Black-Owned and Female-Owned businesses from the same lists. Additionally, we composed a non-randomized sample of employers from *The Book of Lists* (the rest of those listed as Proprietary Distribution Operations), the 2001 edition of *Who's Who in Memphis Businesses*, The Work Place clients, and the 2001 edition of the local *Spanish Yellow Pages*.

In total, we contacted 264 employers and completed 175 surveys. (Thirteen employers refused to participate, and an additional seventy-six were omitted due to geographic location outside Memphis-Shelby County or incomplete responses). The final randomized sample included 77 employers. The non-randomized sample included 98 employers. We omitted one employer because of its extreme size, which brought the total number of respondents to 174.

After entering the data on SPSS, we applied the T-Test and Spearman's correlation to all the variables in both samples and found that the difference between them was not statistically significant. The non-randomized sample involved a larger number of Latino workers, but their employers responded to our questions in a manner similar to those in the random sample. Therefore, for the rest of the analysis, we combined both samples. The results presented in this report represent a preliminary descriptive analysis of the employers' self-reported information contained in 174 survey forms.

Appendix 2

AFTERWORD ON TERMINOLOGY

Hispanics/Latinos in the United States are a diverse population, composed of people whose ancestors settled in the Southwest centuries ago, others who were incorporated in this nation at the beginning of the twentieth century, and still others who have immigrated more recently from Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean.

Until the mid-1960s, Hispanics/Latinos as a group had limited visibility in U.S. society as a whole, and the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” were still not widely known. The upsurge of a Chicano (Mexican American) movement in the wake of the civil rights movement affirmed a distinctive Latino presence in the U. S. In 1970, the Bureau of the Census used the label “Spanish” for the first time as an option that people could draw on to define their own identity. In 1978, a decision of the federal Office of Management and Budget, with advice from the King of Spain, adopted the term “Hispanic” for use in the 1980 decennial census and in all other official documents. The Office of Management and Budget Statistical Directive 15—which regulates all federal record keeping and data presentation—defined Hispanic as “A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.”

Although Latinos are popularly thought of as a fifth “race” (along with Asian Americans, Native Americans, African Americans, and European Americans), “Latino” and “Hispanic” are ethnic references that denote a culture of origin. By allowing individuals to self-identify with an ethnic category (Hispanic or non-Hispanic) as well as by race, the U. S. Bureau of the Census assumes that persons of Hispanic origin or ancestry are also white, black, Asian or Native American.

In the 2000 census form, the Bureau of the Census introduced the options Spanish/Hispanic/Latino to answer the question about Hispanic origin or ancestry. The introduction of the label “Latino” in the census form legitimizes a term that is widely used in some political circles and certain regions of the country (e. g., California and the Southwest). “Latino” has a connotation of populist inclusivity, while “Hispanic” has a more established connotation. Sometimes “Latino” is written as “Latino/a” to avoid excluding women (Latinas) from the political discourse. Second generation Latinos in the U. S. who have internalized the rules of the English grammar sometimes prefer the “Latino/a” expression. Although this report uses primarily “Latino,” we consider “Latino” and “Hispanic” as interchangeable terms.

Appendix 3
SURVEY FORM



The University of Memphis
Center for Research on Women

This form approved for use on 03/07/01 by The University of Memphis Institutional Review Board # H01-188

Name of Business: _____

Industry Type (check all that apply to your company's Memphis facilities):

- Manufacturing Construction Retail, Restaurants, Hotels
 Distribution Medical and Professional Services Transportation
 Other Services (please specify) _____

Name and title of respondent: _____

Number of Memphis employees (include temporary and contract labor): _____

What percentage are hourly? _____

1. Do you currently employ Latino workers? Yes No **If no, please go to page 3.**

How many? _____ What percentage of Latino workers are hourly? _____ %
How many of your Latino workers are women? _____

ALL OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS REFER TO HOURLY WORKERS:

- How many Latino workers are employed
 - a. directly by the company? _____
 - b. by a subcontractor? _____
 - c. through a temporary agency? _____
- How many Latino workers are regular, full-time employees? _____

2. What are the most common job titles of Latinos working at your business?

3. What is the average hourly wage paid to Latinos in these positions? _____

4. What are the major challenges your company has faced in employing Latino workers?
- Difficulties training and supervising them due to language barrier
 - Communication between workers (Please be specific about how this negatively impacts your company, e.g. reduces productivity, increases safety risk, etc.) _____

 - Tensions between Latinos and other workers
 - High turnover
 - Lack of knowledge about how/where to access Latino workers
 - Applicant inability to provide appropriate proof of legal documentation
 - Skills deficits other than language (Please explain) _____

 - Other (Please, explain) _____

5. Do you have separate managers responsible for supervising the Latino workers?
 Yes No
6. Does the manager of your Latino workers speak:
 Both English and Spanish?
 Just English?
 Just Spanish?
7. Due to supervision and language considerations, do you cluster Latinos in:
 certain shifts?
 certain areas or tasks?
 no.
8. Are Latino workers required to use English on the job? Yes No
9. Would advanced jobs be available to Latinos if they were fully bilingual? Yes No
10. Does limited command of English among your Latino workers create problems with:
- Productivity Safety. Understanding workplace signage
 - New employee orientation Work scheduling On the job training

Other (please, explain) _____

11. Would you be willing to talk with us further about integrating Latino workers into your workforce?
 Yes No

You can contact Shelby Mallory at The Work Place # 260-3719
You can contact Drs. Barbara Smith or Marcela Mendoza at CROW # 678-2770

Would you like to receive a copy of the report? Yes No

Via email or through the mail? Email _____

Address _____

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE FOR COMPANIES THAT DO NOT CURRENTLY EMPLOY LATINO WORKERS:

1. Would you be interested in hiring qualified Latino workers?
 Yes

If no, would you please talk a little bit about why not?

If no, then after explanation, thank you for your time.

2. If yes, what has prevented you from hiring Latinos?

- Lack of Spanish speaking management Lack of access to workers
 No need or interest Lack of Latino workers with relevant skills
 Job Requires workers to speak , read, write, and understand English.
 Other _____.

3. What challenges do you think Latinos would face if employed at your company?

- Understanding on-the-job training Following safety procedures
 Work scheduling Ability to understand workplace signage
 Receiving and understanding new employee orientation
 Other (please explain) _____

4. What challenges do you think your company would face employing Latinos?

- Need for bilingual supervisor Communication between workers
 Tensions between Latinos and other workers Following safety procedures

- Different work ethics between Latinos and other workers
- Other (please explain) _____

5. What specific jobs could an individual with limited command of English perform at your company? (Please, explain)

6. What is the average hourly for these positions? _____

7. What type of assistance would be useful to you as you seek to recruit and assimilate Latino workers into your workforce?

- Workplace Spanish language for management and workers
- Workplace English for Latinos
- On the job training for Latinos _____
- Translation of workplace signage and employment documents
- Multicultural management training for supervisors
- Workers orientation (in Spanish) for Latinos
- Job readiness training for Latinos and/or other workers
- Other (Please, explain) _____

8. Would you be willing to talk with us further about how to recruit and integrate Latino workers into your workforce?

- Yes No

You can contact Shelby Mallory at The Work Place # 260-3719

You can contact Drs. Barbara Smith or Marcela Mendoza at CROW # 678-2770

Would you like to receive a copy of the report? Yes No

Via email or through the mail? Email _____

Address _____