

The Place of Colorado Springs and Denver: A Comparison of Hispanic Immigrant  
Experiences

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On my honor  
I have neither given nor received  
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I have upheld the Colorado College Honor Code.

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## ABSTRACT

No two cities are alike: differences in demographics, such as ethnic populations, socioeconomic class, and population density can have extensive impacts on the city's character and how citizens experience the area. This study investigates the effect of the different compositions of Colorado Springs and Denver on how the two Hispanic immigrant communities experience the assimilation and integration process. Hispanic immigrants form the largest ethnic communities in both Colorado Springs and Denver, and the two cities differ in several critical measures. Sample subjects were chosen through contacting personal contacts and Hispanic stores, restaurants, organizations, and businesses in Colorado Springs and Denver. The levels of assimilation and acculturation found in Denver participants were higher than those of Colorado Springs participants, and this study connects these differences with each city's demographics. The higher levels of integration with Denver's Hispanic community correlates with a larger population, less residential segregation, a larger Spanish-speaking and Latin-American-born community, a less conservative population, and more exposure to other ethnicities. Despite the differences, several similarities were found as well, including language-use, the participant's well-being, aspirations for one's self or one's family, one's perception of their identity, and the importance of family. This study also investigates the significant role of Hispanic shops and restaurants. The composition, characteristics, and demographics of a city can hold huge consequences for a city's planning projects, economy, development, and, as this study investigates, a city's character and community structure.

## INTRODUCTION

From 2000 to 2010, 12.17 million people immigrated to the United States and experienced the transition to American society (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). The immigrant transition experience is complex, involving multiple individual and structural factors, but the environmental and contextual factors of the city one moves to are often overlooked as significant elements of this experience. The size, population, population density, the population sizes of ethnic groups, diversity, residential segregation, political leanings, religious affiliation, and other characteristics affect immigrant communities in numerous ways, such as who one interacts with, how they interact, one's well-being, and the integration level of the community in the overall city. In order to fully understand the experiences of immigrants in the United States today, these demographic and contextual aspects of each individual city need to be taken into consideration.

Previous literature covering immigration, demographics, and community is extensive, but there has been a lack of research into how the composition of a city can affect how an immigrant community assimilates or integrates into the surrounding community. This study will connect these three topics in order to understand how external and contextual factors affect how communities integrate into the larger society. The cities of Denver and Colorado Springs were chosen for their significant differences in demographics and character, while the Hispanic community was chosen as Hispanics compose a significant proportion of both cities' populations. I employ both more traditional and modern theories of immigrant assimilation and acculturation, as well as community and network theory to gain a multi-faceted understanding of the transition process for Hispanic immigrant communities. The aim of this research is to not only

understand this process, but also to highlight how demographics and contextual factors affect communities and to open up this specific topic of study to the larger sociological community.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several facets of the theory of immigration and assimilation that will lay the foundation of this research. The early understanding of assimilation portrayed a process that seamlessly incorporated immigrants and immigrant culture within American society, one that did not require the omission of ethnic culture and tradition (Alba, Richard, and Nee 1997; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Baolian Qin 2005). Immigrant assimilation theory then shifted to the “classical” assimilation theory, which holds that cultural assimilation to the mainstream, “white” norm is necessary for immigrant assimilation in social and economic institutions. Gordon Milton documented the three basic stages of assimilation in his 1964 *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*. The first stage, acculturation, occurs when an immigrant adopts the beliefs, values, and language of the society. Immigrants enter the second stage, structural assimilation, once the first and second generations of immigrants enter the social sphere of the society. The last phase, marital assimilation, consists of intermarriage becoming socially acceptable. Other researchers also insist on differentiating between acculturation and assimilation, with acculturation referring to language and values, and assimilation pertaining to social relationships outside of their ingroup and economic opportunities, while both refer to the diminishing of ethnic differences between groups. (Suárez-Orozco 2000).

Though this was the traditional understanding of immigrant integration, a recent theory, *segmented assimilation*, has come to shape immigrant assimilation theory.

Segmented assimilation essentially takes into consideration how context influences identity and assimilation (Altschul 2008; Suárez-Orozco 2000). The theory argues that different societies offer different resources and opportunities to different immigrant groups, and that different immigrants integrate into various segments of U.S. society, depending on individual, structural, and contextual factors such as education, career aspiration, and English-language ability (Iceland 2009).

Further, spatial assimilation refers to physical proximity and segregation of residential patterns. According to this theory, immigrants are more likely to move out of ethnic neighborhoods after acculturation and socioeconomic upward mobility, moving towards “white American” culture. In addition, immigrants tend to stay within their ethnic communities to achieve upward mobility if there is a significant lack of opportunity. The ethnic disadvantage model argues that the drawbacks and difficulties immigrants often encounter can prevent assimilation. In terms of residential patterns, the ethnic disadvantage model extends to *place stratification*, which holds that racial and ethnic discrimination inhibit spatial integration (Iceland 2009).

Lastly, in Steve Rytina and David L. Morgan’s “The Arithmetic of Social Relations: The Interplay of Category and Network,” the authors combine the qualitative theory of Blau’s social structure with quantitative network analysis to understand how the size and density of a network affects relationships (1982). The authors find that the more segregated a group is, the more ingroup contacts that group will have and the higher the social density of the group. Likewise, the smaller a group is, the higher the social density

of the group. The less segregated a group is from the outside society, the more outside connections that group will have. This article forms the foundation of this research, as the size, population, and the amount of segregation in Colorado Springs and Denver affect the Hispanic communities in exactly these ways.

In order to understand assimilation experiences in Colorado Springs and Denver, my research will utilize several variables that indicate, measure, or predict how well immigrants will integrate and assimilate into American culture, including identity, relationships and social ties, occupational segregation, religion, and overall quality of life. The following will discuss each variable in depth and how the variable has been used to indicate assimilation in the past. Other indicators and measures will be used, such as percent English-speaking, intermarriage rate, and socioeconomic status, but these do not require further explanation.

### *Identity*

Previous research indicates that identity can often play a significant part in immigrant assimilation. In Inna Altschul's 2008 article "Racial-Ethnic Self-Schemas and Segmented Assimilation: Identity and the Academic Achievement of Hispanic Youth," she utilizes both segmented assimilation and another theory, *racial-ethnic self-schema*, to compare how closely minority youth identify with their in-group and American society with their academic success. Racial-ethnic self-schema theory argues that one's perception of their racial-ethnic identity affects their academic achievement. Altschul finds that one's racial-ethnic identity is a strong predictor of immigrant adolescent success; immigrant adolescents with thick in-group identities achieved lower end-of-year



GPA, while bridging groups and making broad connections correlated with higher GPA.

Further, immigrants face a redistribution-recognition dilemma in their perception of identity. Nancy Fraser identifies two orientations of social change movements that aim to correct economic and cultural injustices: redistribution, that which involves money resources and worker/labor issues, and strives to “dedifferentiate” the particular group from society; and recognition, a goal of societal acknowledgment and acceptance, and attempts to differentiate the group from society. When both socioeconomic and cultural injustices plague a society, this is known as bivalent collectivity, and both redistribution and recognition are required. Fraser calls the contradiction between the differentiation of recognition and the dedifferentiation of redistribution the *redistribution-recognition dilemma* (Fraser 1997). Immigrant identity is therefore muddled by this dilemma – though immigrants attempt to de-differentiate from and integrate themselves into American society, they also desire recognition and acknowledgment of their culture. Furthermore, acculturation is expected of immigrants, but the diversity in the U.S. makes it difficult. Since most immigrants end up in poor urban settings, the culture that emerges is ambivalent, pessimistic, and indifferent. When American society perceives immigrants negatively, acculturation is nearly impossible (Suárez-Orozco 2000). Hispanics have also been shown to have higher suicide rates when they are more culturally similar to whites:

Cultural assimilation may contribute to suicide by attenuating ethnicity-specific protective factors. As individuals and communities become more “Americanized” they may let go of shared belief systems, rituals, and social networks that promote integration into ethnic communities and strengthen group solidarity. The dissipation of these protective factors may increase isolation and alienation (Kubrin 2007).

Social integration has long been seen as an important factor of well-being, as Durkheim noted in his *Suicide*. Durkheim held that both integration and regulation were

necessary for a healthy society, and that excessive or insufficient levels of either integration or regulation causes suicide, which Durkheim saw as an indicator of societal disfunction. He examined the differences in suicide rates and integration and regulation levels between Catholics and Protestants, and determined that Protestants hold lower levels of integration and regulation, leading to lower level of society well-being and a higher suicide rate (Durkheim 1897). One needs some sense of belonging within society without being completely controlled by society, as total acculturation would do, in addition to the moral regulation that the society provides.

Globalization further complicates the issue, as this phenomenon has facilitated communication and maintained connections between the U.S. and the immigrant's home country. This continuous flow "replenishes" cultural traditions, practices, beliefs, and languages that would otherwise be forfeited during assimilation. Modern immigrants, particularly Spanish-speaking Latino immigrants, are increasingly refusing to join the middle-class "white American" society, and, instead, forming their own community of Spanish-speaking Latinos (Suárez-Orozco 2000.)

### *Relationships and Social Ties*

Relationships and social connections also significantly affect immigrant assimilation, as they often facilitate the transition process. Mary Curry and Helen Rose Ebaugh examined the influence of "fictive-kin," or family-type relationships such as a close friendship or a religious tie, on assimilation. The authors found that these relationships act as social capital, facilitating the integration process. Furthermore, systems of fictive kin expand the network of individuals that can provide economic and social resources, support, and capital. This study also supports segmented assimilation,

which emphasizes the importance of both contextual factors and individual ones, such as social capital. In addition, other research has supported the idea that integration programs that focus on building both bonding networks and bridging social capital will be the most successful (McGrath 2009).

Furthermore, other researchers have shown how various types of social ties provide different types of supportive resources. In Wellman and Wortley's 1990 study, "Different Strokes from Different Folks: Community Ties and Social Support," the authors investigate the East York neighborhood and how characteristics of a relationship dictate the type of support the relationship provides. For example, strong personal connections offer emotional support, small favors, and friendship. Parents offer financial aid as well as emotional aid, and both large and small favors. Proximity was also an indicator, as close ties were more likely to offer services, such as babysitting. Immigrants likely utilize different ties for different resources, especially with the transition process.

Social networks highly influence where immigrants chose to settle, and many feel more comfortable living in a neighborhood of their coethnics. Furthermore, the low socioeconomic status of most immigrants often prevents infiltration of white neighborhoods, and those with low human capital are often more dependent on their ethnic community than others. Professional immigrant workers usually rely less on this community and more on the ties they develop with their employers (Iceland 2009). Examining the spatial residential patterns is another measure of immigrant assimilation. There are three common theories pertaining to ethnic residential patterns: spatial assimilation theory, place stratification theory, and the theory of ethnic retention. The traditional assumption that immigrants, including Latinos, settle close to one another

because of shared culture and language, has been supported several times (Rosenfeld 2001; Duany 2003). Despite the heterogeneous nature of Latino culture, Latinos are generally less segregated from one another than other ethnic groups. Further, ethnic groupings are the consequence of self-identification as well as the societal context (Kim and White 2010). Often, immigrants are more likely to be segregated than their native-born counterparts, and Hispanics in particular have low levels of segregation between Hispanics of their own race, which suggests the significance of pan-Hispanic identity. These findings support racialized spatial assimilation theory, in which ethnic groups that share a panethnic classification do exhibit greater residential proximity than those who do not share a panethnic boundary. Further, immigrants with higher socioeconomic statuses and better English-speakers are more likely to settle in neighborhoods that are not Hispanic-dominated (Iceland 2009).

### *Institutions*

Religion can also play a large role in immigrant assimilation, and can facilitate social ties, a sense of community, and fictive kin relationships as discussed earlier. The church and other religious institutions often play a large role in immigrant experience, and can often create a supportive surrogate family, even compensating for an absent or weak real family (Cao 2005). In comparison, other studies have shown that religious Latino immigrants undergo the same level of suffering and stress as nonreligious Latino immigrants, and that nonreligious Latinos are the most integrated into the outside community (Cavalcanti and Schleef 2005).

### *Place, Neighborhood, and Community*

Quality of life can also measure immigrant integration. In Shinew and Stodolska's study, they examine the Little Village of Chicago, a mostly Latino urban gateway community, and the influences upon the residents' quality of life. The authors concluded that a variety of interrelated factors, including environmental degradation, insufficient access to open spaces, low sense of community, fear of crime, and undocumented status of many residents, plagued the immigrant residents' quality of life. Further, specific services and resources such as computer learning courses, ESL workshops, and employment search help, have been shown to facilitate the assimilation process and improve quality of life (McGrath: 2009).

It has been noted that immigrants are increasingly assimilating into American society along four typical facets of assimilation: socioeconomic status, spatial concentration, language assimilation, and intermarriage (Jiménez 2005). In addition, More and more Mexican immigrants are increasingly settling in places with no history of immigration of existing Latino population. One study finds Denver with a moderately low level of assimilation according to the following indicators: percent self-employed, occupational attainment, percent diploma, percent U.S. citizen, and percent of English speakers (Bohon 2009). "Global neighborhoods" are also emerging, particularly Hispanic and Asian neighborhoods, despite persisting region-wide segregation and whites' avoidance of minority-dominated areas, and Denver is identified as one of these global neighborhoods (Logan and Zhang 2010). To my knowledge, there have been no published studies comparing immigrant assimilation and transition experiences between cities or based on demographics.

Through this study, I hope to gain a better understanding of how Hispanic immigrants experience the transition process to the United States, and Colorado Springs and Denver in particular, and how contextual factors and the characteristics of the city they reside in affect that experience. I set out to investigate questions such as: Why do Hispanics choose Colorado Springs and Denver? How are the assimilation and acculturation processes different in Colorado Springs than in Denver? What classical immigration theories can be applied to these communities – segmented assimilation? Overall, the goal of this study is to reveal how demographics and contextual and structural factors affect the Hispanic immigrant community, particularly their assimilation and integration levels, in Colorado Springs and Denver.

#### METHODOLOGY

To recruit participants for my study, I identified local businesses in the Colorado Springs and Denver areas with “Hispanic,” “Latino,” “Latina,” or any Spanish in the business’ title, and contacted the employees. I also determined the locations of Hispanic neighborhoods, streets, and areas in order to find other stores and restaurants that may not be listed publicly. I also called other businesses and organizations that I thought may be able to help me, but I found that the most efficient and effective way to recruit participants is to ask them in person at the store where they are employed. The primary form of data collection utilized was formal interviews with Hispanic immigrants residing in the Colorado Springs and Denver areas. I conducted a total of ten interviews, with five in Colorado Springs and five in Denver. The interviews ranged from thirty minutes to ninety minutes, and all were conducted in the participant’s place of work with the exception of two phone interviews. The interview questions spanned the broad topic of

their experiences in Denver and Colorado Springs as immigrants, and immigrant integration, acculturation, and assimilation (See Appendix for Interview Schedule). The questions fell under the following categories: identity, place and neighborhood, institutions, religion, and relationships and social ties.

In Colorado Springs, I spoke with a male auto repair shop owner and mechanic, the son and daughter of an apothecary shop owner, a male college professor, and the daughter of a wedding shop and salon owner. The sons and daughters are all 18-25 years old and were born in the U.S., and the other two males are both at least 45, and have been in America for at least 20 years. In Denver, I spoke with an insurance saleswoman who owns her own insurance company, a male clothing storeowner, a female owner of a leather boot store, the daughter of a panaderia owner, and the son of a restaurant owner. The son and daughter are both between the ages of 18 and 30, while the others ranged from 35 to 45.

This research is based on a small group of Hispanic immigrants in Denver and Colorado Springs, and due to time constraints, the interviews were limited to ten total. Therefore, this study is not representational of the Hispanic community in either city, and its findings cannot be used to generalize about the Hispanic community as a whole. In addition, because I am not ethnically Hispanic and I am not fluent in Spanish, many of the people I approached seemed suspicious of the study and my motivations, perhaps because they assumed I would be asking about citizenship status. Because the respondents were not familiar with me, the interviewed participants were probably not as open or as deep as they could have been, and may have viewed me negatively as an outsider. Many potential participants directly stated that they did not want to discuss their

experiences, and that I might have difficulty finding those that did. However, finding participants did not prove to be difficult, and the majority of the Hispanics I spoke with were fluent in English; thus the language barrier was not a problem. Another flaw in my research was the method of recruiting participants. Since contacting Hispanic store employees was the main method, the participants are likely Spanish speaking, have closer relationships with local Hispanics, be more involved with the Hispanic community, and place more significance on their heritage and culture than Hispanic citizens that are not employed by Hispanic/Latino stores or restaurants. Despite these limitations, I discovered several themes concerning immigrant transition experiences in Colorado Springs and Denver.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

Many of the factors involved with immigrant assimilation and integration discussed in the literature review were similar between participants from both Colorado Springs and Denver. All of the participants had attained relatively similar levels of assimilation according to several measures, but some differences were apparent: the “place,” character, and demographics of Colorado Springs and Denver, the level of integration of the Hispanic community within the larger cities, and the role and significance of institutions such as churches and Latino/Hispanic organizations. The traditional character of Colorado Springs is consistent with its tighter Hispanic community, and the modern character of Denver corresponds to its looser, but more integrated, Hispanic community. Lastly, Hispanic stores and restaurants played significant roles in building and maintaining community in both cities.



### *Place, Neighborhood, and Community*

One significant area of difference between Colorado Springs and Denver Hispanic immigrant transition and assimilation is one of place, neighborhood, and community. This study links immigrant experiences to the various demographic and other differences of Colorado Springs and Denver (See Table 1 for descriptive statistics for the populations of Colorado Springs and Denver).

There are several differences in population composition that will help explain this research. First, Denver is a much larger city, with a population of 2,073,270, while Colorado Springs' population is only 397,913; Denver has 817,587 households, while Colorado Springs only has 158,247. Colorado Springs has a larger military population, consisting of 13.1% of Colorado Springs' population and only .08% of Denver's, and a smaller Hispanic population, 14.5% compared to 23.5%, while more Denver residents speak Spanish at home, 14.7% compared to 7.2%, and more were born in Latin American, 59.1% compared to 40.9%. This indicates a more urban Denver and a more military-focused Colorado Springs. In addition, the number of individuals and families who fall under the poverty line is also much higher in Denver, perhaps indicating a lower quality of life. Figures 1 through 4 (p. 15-18) display the discrepancies between Colorado Springs and Denver regarding the percent of people born in Latin American, percent of those 5 years and over who speak English less than "very well," the percent of people who speak Spanish at home, and who are foreign-born (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009). Figure 5 displays the difference in population density, in which the Denver area is much more dense than Colorado Springs (p. 19). Lastly, Figures 7 and 8 portray the differences in "exposure indices" of the two cities (p. 20). Exposure indices measure the average

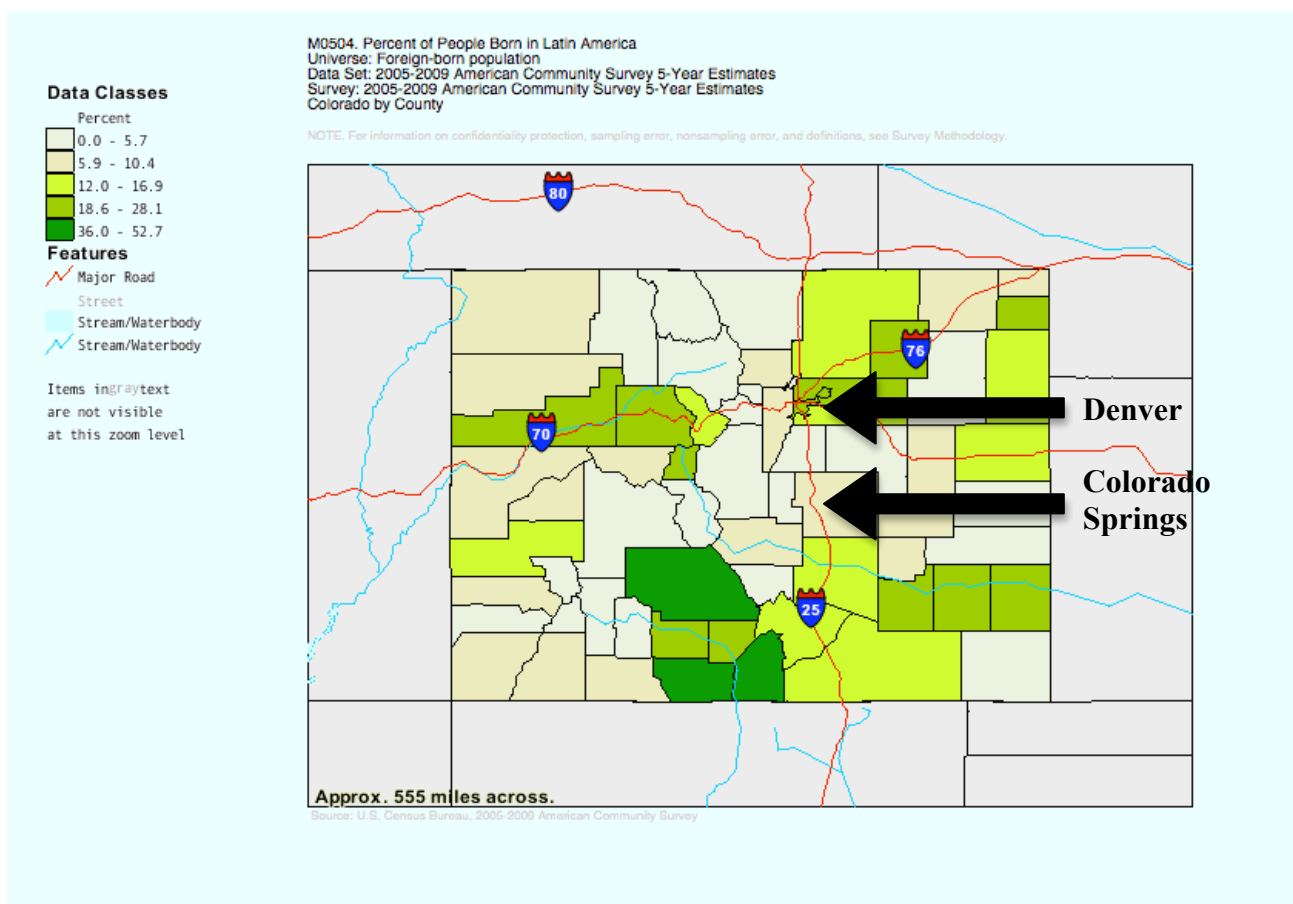
racial composition of neighborhoods experienced by each racial/ethnic group. The graphs display the “exposure” each group experiences with members of their ingroup and other groups. Each group in Denver experiences a much higher level of exposure than Colorado Springs’ groups. These demographic differences can affect the character, attitude, and behavior of a city’s population, and they will play a significant part in how immigrants experience both of the cities.

*Table 1: Denver and Colorado Springs Population Descriptive Statistics (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009)*

	Colorado Springs	Denver
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>397,913</b>	<b>2,073,270</b>
<b>Households</b>	<b>158,247</b>	<b>817,587</b>
<b>Housing Units</b>	<b>204,601</b>	<b>884,051</b>
<b>Population Density (People/Sq. Mile)</b>	<b>1,942.9</b>	<b>3,698</b>
<b>Household Density (Households/Sq. Mile)</b>	<b>95.2</b>	<b>227.8</b>
<b>Families Below Poverty Level (% of families)</b>	<b>N/A</b> <b>(8.1)</b>	<b>N/A</b> <b>(13.8)</b>
<b>Individuals Below Poverty Level (% of individuals)</b>	<b>N/A</b> <b>(11.3)</b>	<b>N/A</b> <b>(17.8)</b>
Hispanic Individuals Below Poverty Level (% of individuals)	16,273 (24)	114,258 (24)
<b>Foreign Born Population Below Poverty Line (% of Total Below Poverty Line Population)</b>	<b>6,695</b> <b>(12)</b>	<b>58,778</b> <b>(23)</b>
Median Household Income	\$52,948	\$56,053
Hispanic Median Household Income	\$37,013	\$38,310
White Population (%)	317,491 (79.8%)	1,658,573 (80.0%)
<b>Hispanic Population (%)</b>	<b>57,796</b> <b>(14.5)</b>	<b>487,519</b> <b>(23.5)</b>
Black or African American Population (%)	26,155 (6.6)	122,350 (5.9)
Asian Population (%)	18,073 (0.9)	3,331 (0.8)
Hispanic Population 3 years and over enrolled in school (%)	22,805 (36)	138,694 (31)
<b>Civilian Veterans (%)</b>	<b>49,257</b> <b>(13.1)</b>	<b>157,528</b> <b>(.08)</b>
Native U.S. Citizen (%)	354,090 (89.0)	1,799,884 (86.8)
<b>Foreign Born (%)</b>	<b>32,582</b> <b>(8.2)</b>	<b>273,386</b> <b>(13.2)</b>
<b>Latin-America-Born Population (%)</b>	<b>13,320</b> <b>(40.9)</b>	<b>161,450</b> <b>(59.1)</b>
<b>English only spoken at home</b>	<b>323,552</b> <b>(87.5)</b>	<b>1,515,268</b> <b>(79.0)</b>

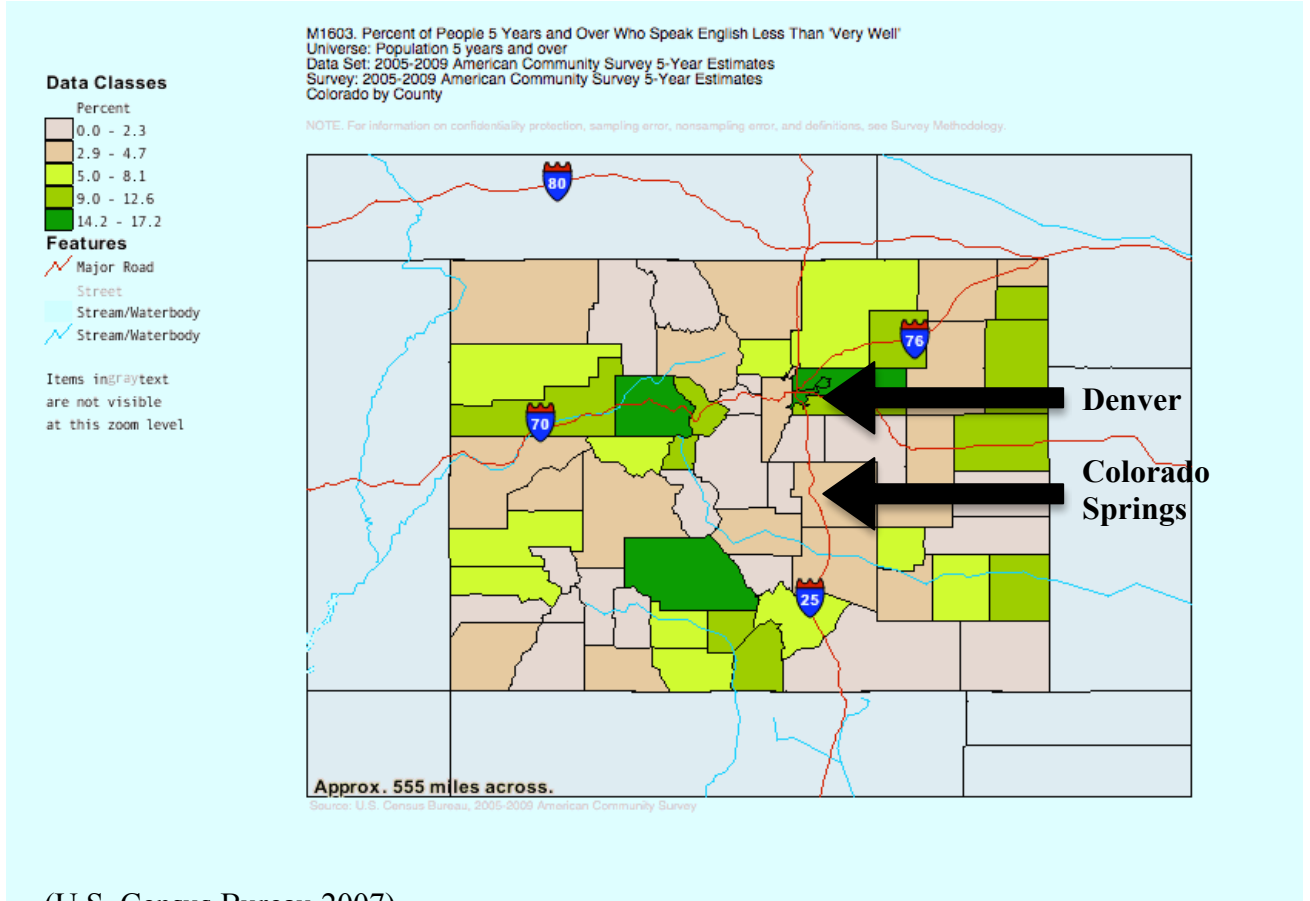
<b>Spanish spoken at home</b>	<b>26,592</b> <b>(7.2)</b>	<b>280,931</b> <b>(14.7)</b>
Religious Adherents	222,490 (56)	1,169,579 (56)
<b>Evangelical Protestants</b>	<b>77,088</b> <b>(35%)</b>	<b>250,106</b> <b>(21%)</b>
Mainline Protestants	41,497 (19%)	166,571 (14%)
<b>Catholic</b>	<b>58,155</b> <b>(26%)</b>	<b>470,583</b> <b>(40%)</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>14,277</b> <b>(6%)</b>	<b>129,665</b> <b>(12%)</b>

Figure 1: Percent of People Born in Latin America



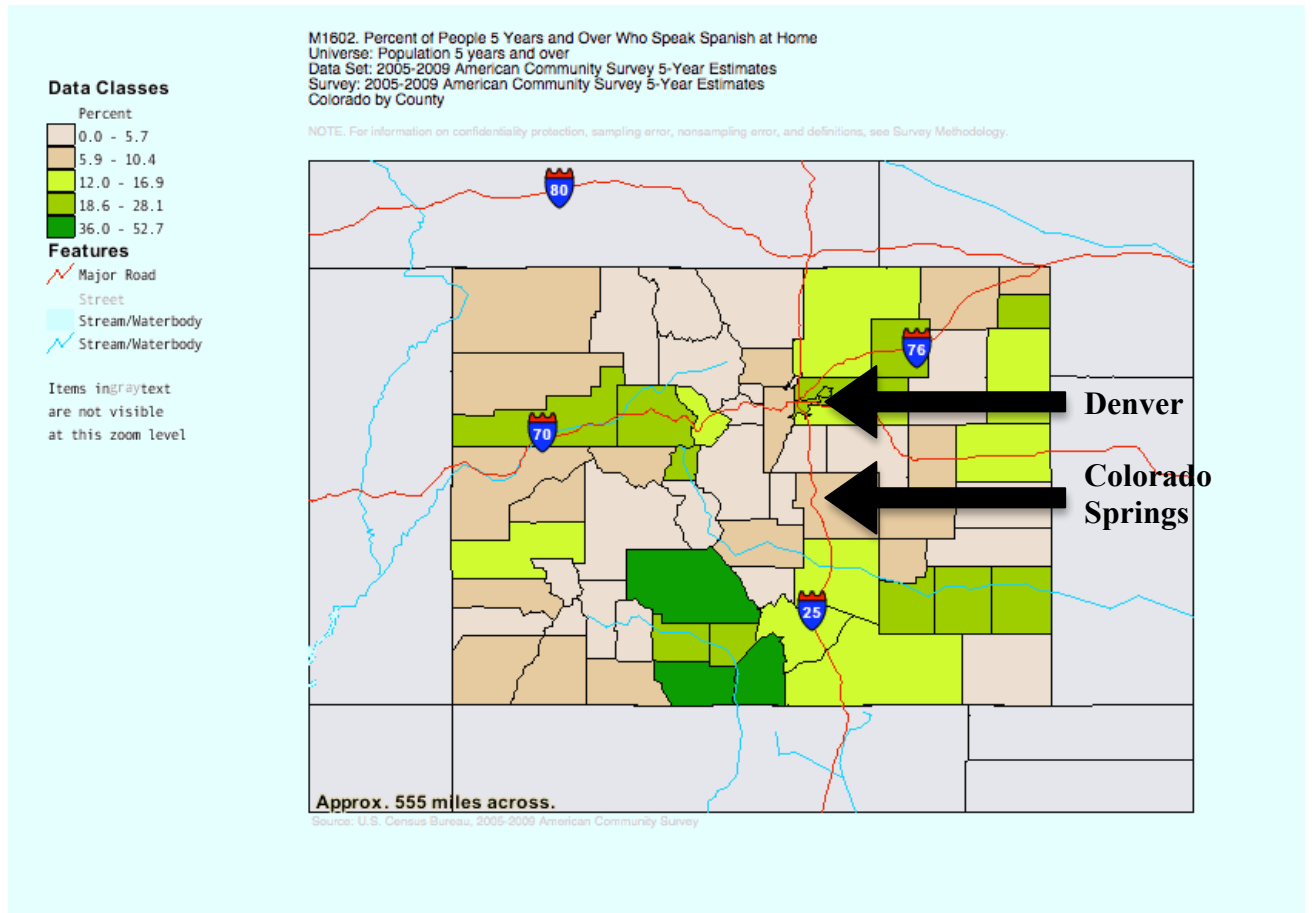
(U.S. Census Bureau 2007)

Figure 2: Percent of People Five Years and Over Who Speak English Less Than “Very Well”



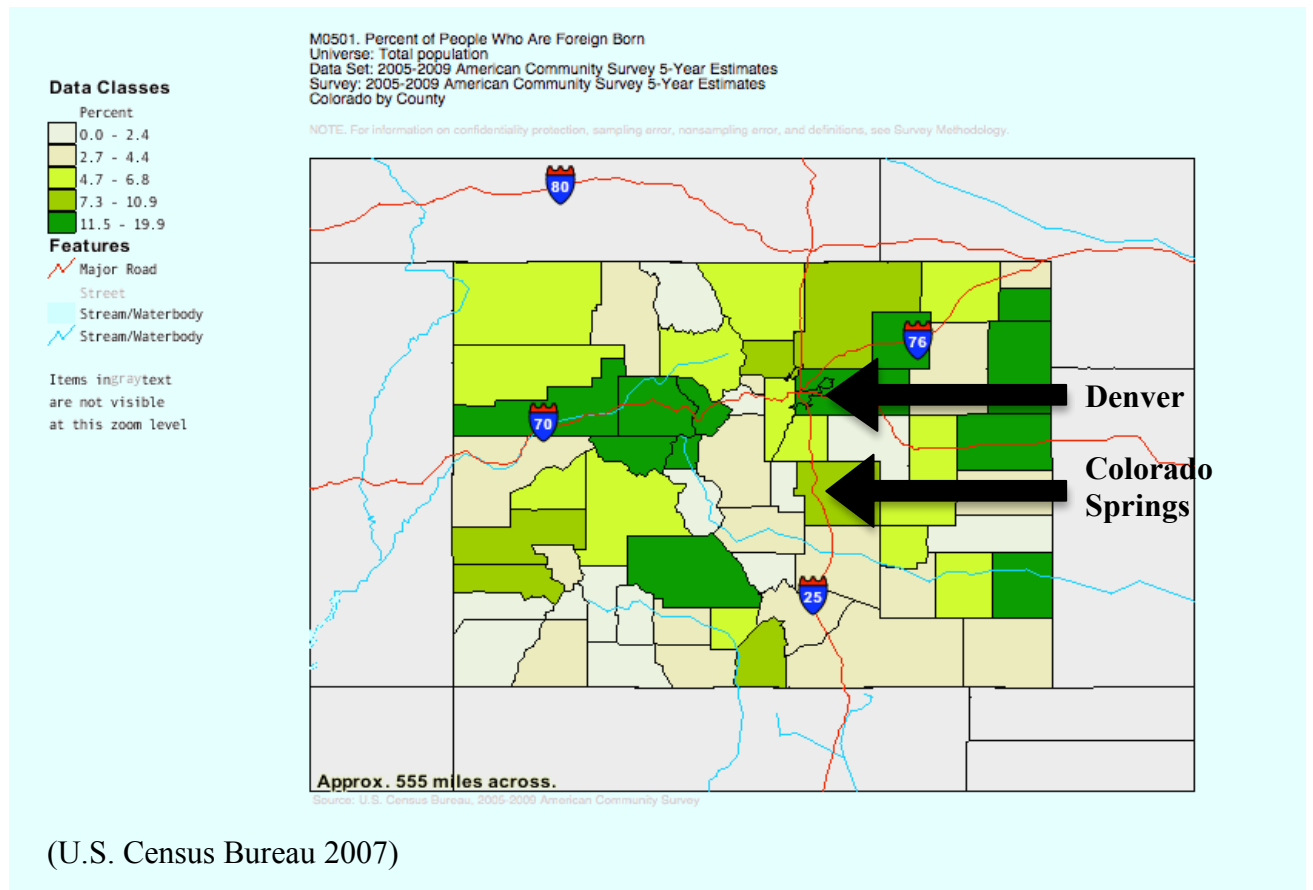
(U.S. Census Bureau 2007)

Figure 3: Percent of People Five Years and Over Who Speak Spanish At Home



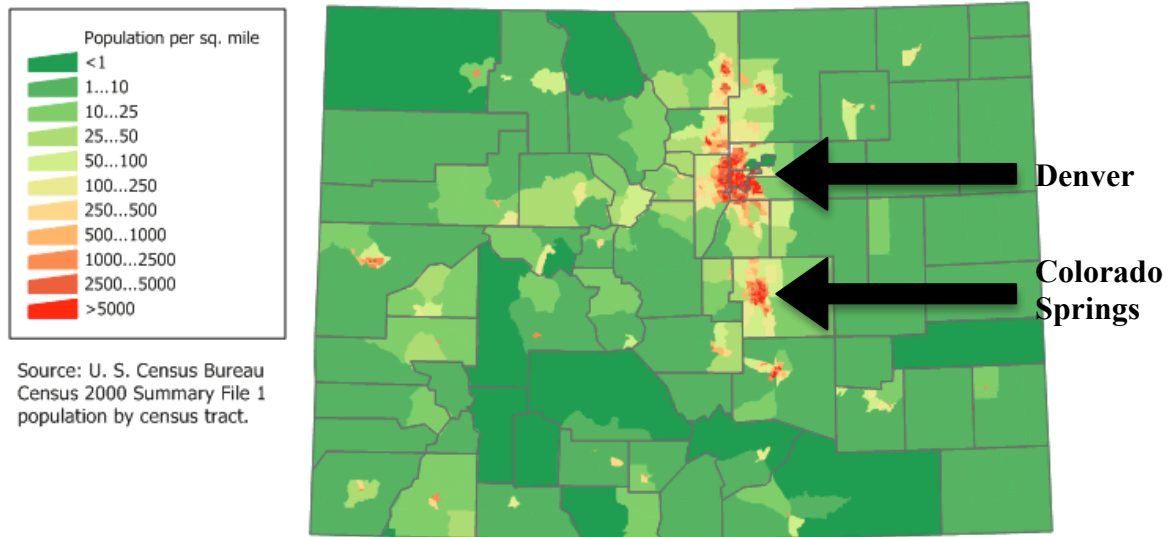
(U.S. Census Bureau 2007)

Figure 4: Percent of People Who Are Foreign Born



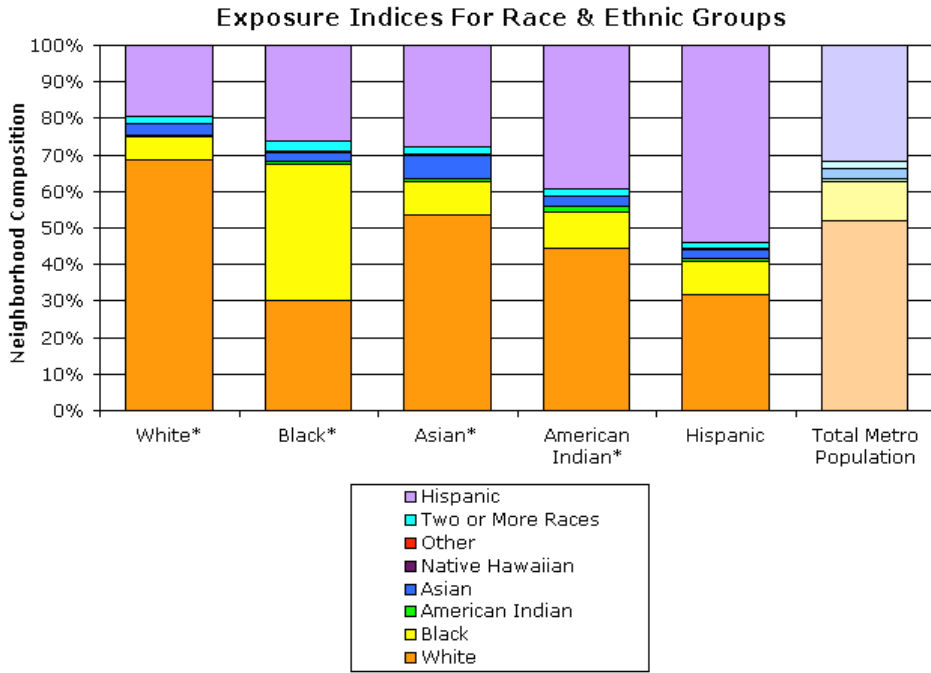
(U.S. Census Bureau 2007)

Figure 5: Population Density of Colorado



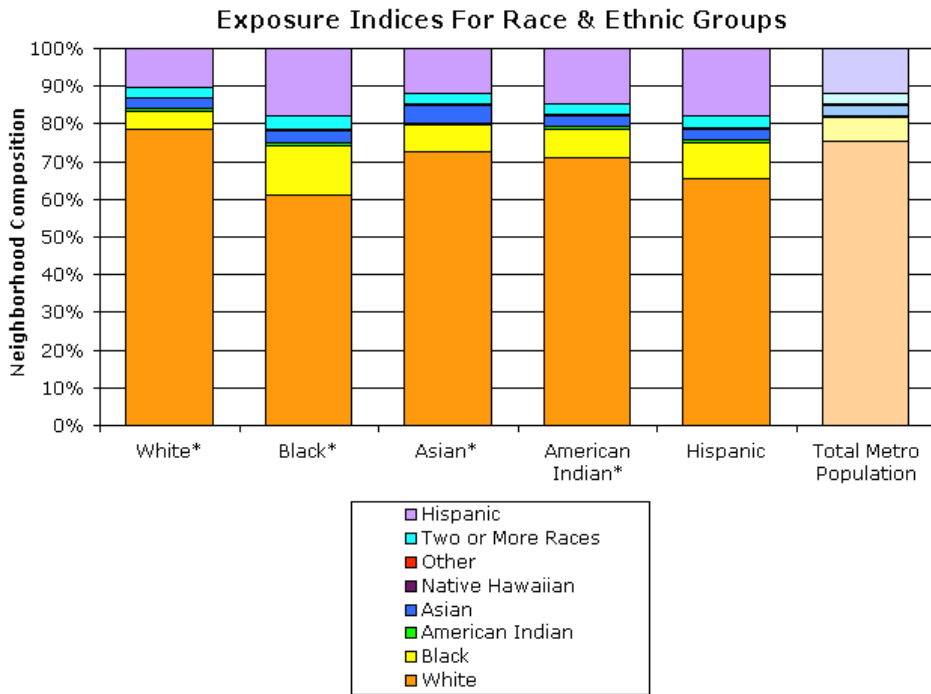
(U.S. Census Bureau 2000)

Figure 7: Exposure Indices for Race and Ethnic Groups for Denver, Colorado



(Social Science Data Analysis Network 2000)

Figure 8: Exposure Indices for Race and Ethnic Groups for Colorado Springs, Colorado



(Social Science Data Analysis Network 2000)



Residential segregation seems to plague both Colorado Springs and Denver, with two of the Colorado Springs respondents and all five of the Denver participants living in mostly Hispanic neighborhoods. Residential segregation is often encountered by immigrants, and more segregated a community is from the outside society, the less assimilated the community should be (Iceland 2009, Kim and White 2010). Though both cities experience residential segregation, the level experienced in Colorado Springs seems to be much higher than in Denver (See Figures 7 and 8), and thus experience higher levels of place stratification. However, for most of the respondents, segregation does not necessarily mean a lack of integration within their larger communities. One Colorado Springs participant explained:

...For the most part, it's pretty integrated. But when it comes to things that are on the home front like restaurants or places to shop, or just recreational areas, there's still a bit of segregation there. Not because they think because they can't click with the Caucasian or African-American community or other communities; it's just a huge sense that they have to come back to this huge group of family togetherness with the Latins.

The Hispanic communities in both cities are strong and prominent, but also integrated within the larger metro area communities. The respondent emphasizes that Hispanic "togetherness" does not need to come at the expense of integration within the larger community; the community is able to maintain close relationships with ingroup members as well as those outside of the community. Furthermore, the Hispanic community also seems to be slightly more integrated in Denver than in Colorado Springs, indicating a higher level of structural assimilation. The same participant continues:

You can see that [family togetherness] at Memorial Park whenever there are big celebrations. There's always a huge chunk of Latins there, I've noticed. It kind of happens in Denver too but not to the same extent.

This respondent indicates that the Hispanic community in Denver has less "family togetherness," and that Colorado Springs Hispanic immigrants are more likely to stick

together rather than venture into the larger community. This indicates that Denver has a higher level of structural assimilation, referring to the higher level of social assimilation. While 57% of urban Hispanics feel that “immigrants have to be a U.S. citizen to say that they are part of American society,” only 49% of suburban Hispanics and 46% of rural Hispanics do. This indicates that those in larger, more urban cities such as Denver are more comfortable and perhaps more aligned with American society than those in smaller cities like Colorado Springs. In addition, 58% of urban Hispanics believe the political traditions are better in the U.S., while only 44% of suburban Hispanics do. This again suggests that urban immigrants may integrate more within their surrounding community. As Rytina and Morgan argued, Denver’s Hispanic community has reached its “critical mass,” in which the population is so large, Hispanics can easily make outgroup connections, in contrast to Colorado Springs’ small and intimate Hispanic community. A Colorado Springs participant who lives in a mostly white, middle-class neighborhood, described:

It’s very strange from the one I grew up. I like the neighborhood, but it’s all white. It’s middle class. We care about each other, but we keep a distance, you know? We don’t socialize, but they have a key to my house. I have a key to their house. They check on my house when I leave. They get the mail. They look out for me. I look out for them. But never socialize. We never go over to each other’s homes. We will just wave. It’s very strange. They have the keys to my house, and I have the keys to their house. And they’ve been very nice... You know, I think I have not done enough to work on the relationship. I have not invited them over to the house. But I really think it has something to do with both of us. But yes, if we run into each other, we will talk. When I’m on vacation, if I forget to tell them, they’ll call me to see if I’m here. But that’s the extent.

Though the middle-class white neighborhood accepts and cares for the participants, the relationship does not go beyond that. This supports the theory that modern immigrants, particularly Hispanics, are avoiding the white middle-class, and opting to remain in their own Hispanic community (Suárez-Orozco 2000). This also further supports the theory that Colorado Springs Hispanics stick together a bit more, and

that the Hispanic community in Colorado Springs is not as integrated with the outside community as Denver. Other Colorado Springs respondents noted the tight-knit feel of the Colorado Springs Hispanic community, and one respondent even compared it to a younger Denver:

I would say it's more in its first infancy, like Denver was a couple years back. The Latin community here is a lot tighter. I know a lot of the businessmen and owners around here really well. They come in here and buy, and so on. But yeah, it's a lot closer knit here and respectful.

As Colorado Springs Hispanic residents stick together more, Hispanic immigrants in Denver are more incorporated within the larger community. One respondent agreed that the Hispanic community is more integrated in Denver:

In Denver, everyone just shops wherever. It doesn't really matter. In Denver, I feel free to just walk up to my favorite Asian market and get whatever I want.

As Rytina and Morgan argued, the segregation from the outside community and the high in-group density, or saturation, in Colorado Springs allows the community to maintain its cohesion (1982). The Hispanic community's cultural identity is so strong, the community can socially afford to integrate within the larger community. Coinciding with the higher level of social integration in Denver, most participants seem to hold the view that Denver has progressed further concerning race and ethnicity, and is more welcoming and open-minded, particularly towards immigrants. Several participants agreed that they encountered more discrimination and racism in Colorado Springs than in Denver, and others noted the conservative character of Colorado Springs and the diversity and open-mindedness of Denver. This is supported by the political history of each city: in Denver most city officials are Democrats, and the city has voted Democrat for every presidential election since 1964, with the exception of 1972. Colorado Springs was found to be the sixth most conservative city in the U.S., mostly taking into account voting patterns (Alderman et. al 2005). This variation in political affiliation and city size is represented

elsewhere; according to the 2007 National Survey of Hispanics conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center, 35% of Hispanic respondents agreed that the Democratic party “has more concern for Hispanics/Latinos,” while only 9% voted Republican. In addition, only 9% of urban Hispanics consider themselves Republican, 12% of suburban Hispanics do, and 15% of rural Hispanics. Likewise, 30% of urban Hispanics are Democrats, 34% of suburban, and 24% rural. This demonstrates how larger, more urban cities are often more Democratic and liberal, while smaller cities are more Republican and conservative. One Colorado Springs participant, when asked about hardships her parents had encountered while immigrating to the U.S., expressed her frustration with discrimination in the city:

It’s hard... Some people are racist. They don’t like helping you. Like one of my sisters just got turned down for a job because she can’t speak English... Especially with my mom too, cause she isn’t very good with English. People will be like, “Oh, she needs to learn English,” and...if it were that easy, I think she would.

Accordingly, while 69% of urban Hispanics state language differences as a cause of discrimination, 78% of suburban Hispanics do (National Survey of Latinos 2006). This demonstrates that discrimination may be more common in less urban areas such as Colorado Springs. When asked how integrated the Hispanic community is within the larger Colorado Springs community, the son of a Colorado Springs shop owner replied:

... To tell you the truth, here with Colorado Springs being more conservative – maybe it’s just me looking at it from my point of view, but I see a lot more people playing the race card here than in Denver. The cops here, they stop a Latino and they do all this investigating and everything. In Denver, a cop stops a Latino, just checks his insurance. Here it’s more thorough.

This discrimination in Colorado Springs likely brings the Hispanic population together even more, as they attempt to isolate themselves from the treatment, and further supports the theory of a closer, more intimate Hispanic community in Colorado Springs. Moreover, the more conservative character of Colorado Springs mentioned by several participants corresponds with the larger military population, and also likely adds to this

effect. The college professor from Colorado Springs also remarked on his experience with white repairmen:

...It takes them a little bit longer for them to realize that I am educated. But since I'm married to a woman that is an American, I've noticed that she can take care of business right away. They pay more attention to her, or they turn towards her. Little things that they do...I think they feel more comfortable with her.

No Denver participant mentioned experiencing discrimination or racism at any point in the interviews. To account for this, I offer that Denver has a larger actual and proportional Hispanic population than Colorado Springs, as well as a larger immigrant and Latin-American-born population. Because of this, the Hispanics of Colorado Springs are more likely to experience racial discrimination. This is paralleled with 37% of urban Hispanics, like Denver residents, believing that relations between ethnic groups are better in the United States than in their country of origin, while only 20% of suburban Hispanics do, like Colorado Springs citizens.

In addition, the Hispanic residents of Colorado Springs have been able to maintain their tradition, culture, and community more so than Denver residents, and the Hispanic community seems to be organized more around Hispanic culture. When asked if her family knows the people that attend her church, a Colorado Springs participant replies:

... I don't think our community is based on schools or where you live. It's based on church and culture. We know names and faces whenever you see anyone at church. We know a lot of the other Mexicans around here.

The tighter Hispanic community of Colorado Springs is also evidenced when one participant mentions the competition between Hispanic stores in Colorado Springs:

...it's definitely a Latino thing to go out of their way to keep the Hispanic businesses open, to keep the Latino businesses open. You see that a lot with the Hispanic bakeries around here. There's a lot of competition. That's because people just love finding their own, quote, breads, that are more traditional or what they're familiar with. And you hear all these recommendations, "Oh go to this panaderia" or "Go to this bakery." They cling to the fact that they stick to their traditional recipes, or their parents' recipes, or a particular region of Mexico.

Furthermore, many of the competing bakeries know one another. The Colorado Springs participants spoke of the Colorado Springs Hispanic community as a smaller, more intimate group, in which social ties and connections link local Hispanics close together. The community in Colorado Springs is more traditional. Another respondent mentions the “modern” character of Denver in contrast to the more traditional character of Colorado Springs:

Well, I love Denver for a certain amount of time, but eventually, I just clicked with Colorado Springs a lot more. Because things are a lot more timid. People are more alternative here. I know that’s hard to say, in comparing Denver, but alternative in Denver is more like modern alternative... Here, it’s alternative in the sense where you can see that culture more collide with, quote, traditional sense, like the suburbs, and they’re okay with that.

The traditional nature of Colorado Springs also corresponds with its tighter Hispanic community, and the modern nature of Denver corresponds to its looser but more integrated Hispanic community. This again connects to Rytina and Morgan, as the Hispanic community is large enough in Denver allows Hispanics to make connections and relationships outside of the Hispanic community, in addition to more accepting and more progressive nature of Denver. In contrast, because the Colorado Springs’ Hispanic community is much smaller, Colorado Springs Hispanics are discouraged from making outside ties and encouraged to stay within the community. When asked which of the terms a participant uses first when describing one’s self, 47% of urban Hispanics responded their country of origin, while 57% of suburban Hispanics did. In addition, 62% of suburban Hispanics consider their native country as their “real homeland,” while only 48% of urban Hispanics do (NSL 2006). This indicates that more urban Hispanics place importance on their ethnicity than suburban Hispanics, similar to Denver and Colorado Springs (National Survey of Latinos 2006).

### *Institutions*

The role of institutions in immigrant transition experiences has been well documented. They can offer resources, support, and social connections that facilitate the transition process, and they are often composed of other in-group members (Cao 2005, Massey 2010). This study found that institutions play a much larger role for Denver immigrants than those from Colorado Springs, and that this difference can be at least partly explained by two theories. First, Denver has a much higher population density, 3,698 people/square mile, compared to 1,942 people/sq. mile in Colorado Springs, and potential religious service attendees are more likely to attend if they are near the institution already, particularly immigrants who may not have reliable transportation. Second, akin to Rytina and Morgan's study, Denver has attained the "critical mass" of Hispanics required for the proliferation of institutions; there are enough people, resources, and demand to maintain the institutions in Denver, but not in smaller, more sparsely populated Colorado Springs. Furthermore, since Denver's Hispanic population is more integrated and holds more ties to the external society than Colorado Springs does, Denver relies on these institutions to maintain community and culture. Because Colorado Springs' Hispanic community is smaller and denser, they don't require an external force to preserve their community and culture.

In this study, four participants from Denver stated that they were involved with at least one Latino/Hispanic organization in the city, while only the daughter of a store owner in Colorado Springs mentioned that she would like to become more involved once she had moved to Denver. Denver immigrants were much more involved with these types

of groups than those from Colorado Springs. One participant from Denver explained her involvement with Hispanic organizations and their benefits to the community:

They offer all sorts of events...For example, in October, we're going to have a workshop for people that are going to need any type of help to get citizenship, to know about their rights, so. I'm very involved with that. And they're great. These people are just amazing and they love helping the community.

An insurance saleswoman from Denver also described the high level of involvement within the Hispanic immigrant community and Denver and the lack of involvement in the surrounding suburbs:

Well, it doesn't seem like the suburbs of Denver wants to get their voices heard, so the Hispanic community here in the Denver area is stronger than up in the suburbs... Even in the schools, I belong to the PTA, and Hispanics are much more represented in Denver than in the suburbs. Even my daughter tried to talk to the Thornton schools, to bring the community to Thornton, but we tried and nothing happened. So I don't know why the people in the suburbs don't work or defend their rights as much as they do here.

When asked if her family was involved with any Hispanic or Latino organizations, a daughter of a Colorado Springs wedding and party storeowner stated, "...the people that do our ads, they do a magazine called *La Imagen Latina*, but that's about it." Another interviewee offered an explanation for the lack of involvement in Colorado Springs:

There's more culture in Denver, history, background. We're not as organized here. A couple groups, but not as many as in Denver. A lot more organizations.

Latino and Hispanic organizations in Colorado Springs are less important for the Colorado Springs Hispanic community, perhaps because of the lower level of diversity, more conservative character, and smaller Hispanic population. Denver holds a 20.7% Hispanic population, while Colorado Springs is 12% Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Though this may indicate a weaker Hispanic community in Colorado Springs than in Denver, I propose that, in actuality, both communities seem fairly strong in different ways. Residents of both cities are affected by their size and composition, which manifests itself in the size of the Hispanic population, the number of Hispanic organizations in the



city, and citizen involvement. Because Colorado Springs is more conservative, has a smaller Hispanic population, and a more hostile attitude towards immigrants, the Hispanic community needs to stick together more and thus doesn't need to rely on Latino and Hispanic organizations and churches to maintain the community or culture. Consequently, Denver may seem as though its Hispanic community is stronger just because of these factors. In addition, and as a parallel example, the number of citizens who reside in a city with a population of more than one million that have taken part in a demonstration in the past year is 15%, while 6% of citizens residing in a city of three-hundred thousand to one million have taken part in a political demonstration, 5% of citizens who reside in a city of twenty-five thousand to one-hundred thousand, and 4% of those who reside in a city with less than 25,000 (General Social Survey). This shows how urban residents are much more likely to participate in any sort of institutional activity, such as a political demonstration, than more rural residents, as seen in this study. Urban Hispanics are more likely to be involved with an organization than those in suburban or rural areas, as they are often closer in proximity to these institutions or events, and communities rely on their cultural and community maintenance.

In terms of religious institutions, most of the participants belong to a local church, and religion, religious services, and one's religious community are much more significant to most of the participants than Latino/Hispanic organizations. Again, a discrepancy is apparent between Colorado Springs and Denver; all of the Denver participants attended religious services weekly, while only two Colorado Springs interviewees did. Two of the other three noted that they were spiritual and slightly religious, but did not consistently attend services, and the other did not view herself as religious at all. The differences in

religious attendance between Colorado Springs Hispanics and Denver Hispanics can also be accounted for with each city's size and composition. Because of the larger Hispanic population, Hispanic churches are more likely to be located in Denver. For those that did belong to a religious group, the church community provides and maintains a community, particularly for the participants who attend an Hispanic church. A Colorado Springs respondent remarked that the community is based around "the church and culture," noting that she personally knows many of the service attendees. Another participant from Denver described his Hispanic church, and how the church is able to retain and preserve the Catholicism of Hispanic culture:

I like it a lot. It's a strong community...I think a lot of the Latinos from Mexico, they are Catholic. But you know, in the U.S., there are a lot of Protestants. And we know that there are a lot of Latinos changing religion, but people like me that are strong and have family you know, we talk and we ... stay the way we should. We make sure we don't change...the culture.

This function of maintaining culture is especially important when there is outside pressure to change. For this respondent, the large number of Protestants (larger in Colorado Springs than Denver, however; See Table 1) is a threat to Hispanic and Catholic culture, particularly Evangelical Protestants, who often hold anti-Catholic prejudices and compose 35% of Colorado Springs. Religion is particularly important when considering Hispanic immigrants, as most identify as Catholics, and one of the most significant issues facing immigrants is how to negotiate between holding onto traditional values, including Catholic ones, and the pressure of Americanization. Attending a Hispanic Catholic church gives immigrants a way to connect with their traditional culture in an American setting with other Hispanic immigrants. The community that a church or religion offers seems to be more important and more available for the Denver Hispanic community than the Colorado Springs Hispanic

community, and the overall differences in institutional involvement and participation in Colorado Springs and Denver indicate that institutions such as Hispanic/Latino organizations and churches play a larger role in Denver's larger Hispanic community than in Colorado Springs. There is also a significantly larger Catholic population in Denver, which may indicate the same finding (40% compared to 26% of religious adherents). In addition, the much larger Evangelical Protestant presence in Colorado Springs, 35% of religious adherents compared to 21% in Denver, likely cause the Hispanic community in Colorado Springs to again draw back into itself, creating a stronger, more tight-knit community.

#### *Role of Hispanic/Latino stores*

The importance of Hispanic and Latino shops in both Colorado Springs and Denver was also very apparent. They provide a connection to their tradition and past, their culture that may not be quite as prominent as it used to be. One Colorado Springs participant describes their role in the community:

[Hispanic stores give] them a tie to the past, and gives them a tie to something they are comfortable with, they grew up with. Whereas if you go the Americana way, it just, you go wherever you want.

These stores provide comfort and familiarity. When asked if she was involved with any Hispanic organizations, one Colorado Springs respondent even replied, "In this area, no. Well apart from just the marketplace, like foods, and restaurants, and stuff like that." These restaurants and shops play such a large role in the community that this respondent perceives them as pseudo-organizations. All of the respondents that work in a Hispanic store or restaurant noted that most of their customers were Hispanic as well. One even stated that their store "relied" on Hispanic customers, and without them, the

store would not exist. A Denver respondent described the community building aspects of the stores and restaurants:

Well – Well I think that with stores around here, people meet others in the community they might not otherwise, and it's a way to keep those connections close. Especially in those very Mexican, very Hispanic places, like restaurants with pictures of the food because a lot – a lot of their customers can't read. The stores and restaurants...they give some comfort to people and help keep the community close.

Not only do these businesses provide a sense of heritage, culture, and community, but they offer relief from Americanization, American culture, and assimilation. In these shops and restaurants, Spanish is freely spoken, non-Hispanics are rare, and one Mexican immigrant described them as “Little Mexicos.” Immigrants are free to live as they used to in a comforting and familiar environment, and to escape American culture. The pressure to Americanize is strong, and the competing Hispanic and American identities can cause conflict. The issue of identity will be discussed in detail in the following section.

#### *Similarities Between Denver and Colorado Springs*

One indicator of assimilation is English-use and whether one speaks another language at home (Bohon 2009). All ten participants are fluent in both English and Spanish, and most of the members of their households are also fluent in both, indicating similar assimilation levels. Some of the older relatives, like parents and grandparents and especially first generation family members, only speak Spanish. One respondent explained her mother's difficulty with learning English:

Well, my mom isn't very good at it. She's says the older you get, the harder it gets, so she sticks with Spanish... I think older Latinos kind of give up with learning English.

First generation immigrants are more likely to continue to use their first language and to refrain from learning English, while the second generation is more likely to use English (Tran 2010). Though Denver has twice the amount of households in which Spanish is spoken at home than Colorado Springs, 14.7% compared to 7.2%, the use of

both English and Spanish by all of the participants in my research is logical; I interviewed Hispanic store employees who would need to speak Spanish at the very least, and I only interviewed those who spoke English.

Participants' well-being and quality of life are also comparable across the two cities. All the respondents were employed, lived in stable housing, and showed no signs of poverty or destitution. This contradicts traditional ideas about the level of integration in society affecting an individual's well-being, as there is no difference between the cities (Altschul 2008, Durkheim 1897, Kubrin 2007, Shinew and Stodolska 2009). To account for this, I offer that the close sense of community with Colorado Springs Hispanics likely compensates for the lack of integration within the larger society.

Aspirations for one's self or one's family were also similar across Denver and Colorado Springs. When asked about their future plans, all of the younger respondents discussed attending college and continuing with a career afterwards. Older respondents held similar expectations for their children, with college mentioned by each parent interviewed. This corresponds to previous research and the theory of racial-ethnic self-schema theory, as the participants held similar levels of in-group identity, thus having similar academic success (Altschul 2008).

One's perception of their identity also did not vary between Colorado Springs and Denver. Every participant in the study discussed how they attempt to negotiate between their traditional culture from their native country and American culture. One participant essentially summarized the sentiment expressed by the respondents when asked how "American" they feel:

It depends. It depends on what side of the bed I get up on. [Laughs] Just kidding... I celebrate the Fourth of July. I do the American celebrations. I'm a citizen, so I feel Americanized, but I still eat all my Guatemalan food. I keep my traditions coming, so I did it for the kids because they're American... Their blood is

Guatemalan, but... they were born here, so I have tried to incorporate both cultures in their lives... The morale in my house is very high, and we stress morals. Those are things I will always keep, and I hope they will keep it for their kids as well. As far as Guatemalan traditions, we cook Guatemalan food every once in a while. At least twice a month we're eating something Guatemalan. We talk in Spanish. We listen to music. They have experienced the culture as much as I can give to them here, of what Guatemalan is...I feel like an American, because I will do a lot of things that are for the country, if needed...I celebrate all the holidays. And we like to give honor to the country that has us here.

Every participant explained that they do feel somewhat American, as they all live in the culture at least somewhat, but that they also preserve and affirm their Hispanic heritage. The respondents explained that they try to embrace both cultures. Some pointed out the negatives of American culture, but also appreciated the positives:

The American dream is good, but just so many rules and regulations here. They don't let you discipline your kids anymore, which is a lot more traditional, say in Mexico...For example, a slap on the hand, here no. Here, you can't. So, from what I see, you get a lot of newer, younger generations not being as respectful, humility. It's something that younger generations just don't have.... You see [Americanization] a lot. A lot of the Mexican culture is assimilated by the American culture. You start losing interest in Mexican culture and start following American culture....[my sister] is more liberal, way more liberal. More newer ideas. You can definitely see the difference. She's younger, too. And in Mexican culture, real close family ties, real respectful, sometimes that's a bad thing. It just doesn't give you that independence. That's more of an American thing, which is good, too.

Participants took pride in their Hispanic culture, and though Americanization is not viewed as a completely negative phenomenon, a loss of Hispanic culture is.

Respondents emphasized that they attempt to hold onto their culture as much as possible.

And, of course, these competing cultures and identities can also cause conflict. One participant described how her Latin culture has hindered her education:

It just depends on how you define "American"...Coming from a Latin background, I realize that there are things that I can't do because of the community because of taboos, because of time periods, stuff like that. So at the most, I feel like sixty percent American. In the sense that I can do things, but there are stipulations and regulations keeping me at bay until I find the loopholes... The whole course of education for me was a bit difficult, because my aspirations were for a four-year college, or eventually get a doctorate... Given that my parents are still technically first-generation immigrants, not making as much as they could with the whole other college crowds' parents, that will mean that my education will be stunted. Or I can find other sources of financial means, so I spent my junior year and senior year doing nothing but finding scholarships. Even with that, I still have to, how do I say, pause my education for a bit to help out the family.

Dissension arising from generational differences, which almost always stem from conflicting Hispanic and American values, is also common. Younger Hispanics attempt

to fit in to the United States, but they also remain loyal to the Hispanic roots. These competing cultures offer an example the redistribution-recognition dilemma; Hispanic immigrants in both cities both want to maintain their differences from American culture, taking pride in their culture and heritage, but also want to be equal, and integrated within American culture.

In accordance with traditional Hispanic values, all participants showed a strong commitment to family. Every store or restaurant at which the participants are employed is family-owned and operated, and family members are expected to help with the business, particularly the owner's children. When asked about whom she goes to for emotional support, one Colorado Springs participant replied, "My family...we're pretty close, so. Yeah, I mean, obviously friends, too. But family, for us, is closest." This response shows that other relationships may be important, but family will always be the most important tie. Eight out of the ten participants cited family members as who they go to for emotional support. Another responded:

Siblings are always good. Mother, father are always good for emotional support. A lot more than what I see with a couple of my Caucasian friends. They don't know how to understand each other, their feelings; they don't have that emotional support. Family is just not as important. In Latin culture, you see that tie right away. It's very strong. A family tie – it's something you can fall on if something happens. They're there for you. Yeah, like I said, with my white, Caucasian friends, I just don't see that. A couple of my friend's parents have mad money. I can understand why they don't want to give them any money, but they just don't have any support.

Because family is deeply rooted in Hispanic culture, and the Hispanic community influences both cities heavily, family is important to citizens of both cities. Similar to Mary Curry and Helen Rose Ebaugh's "fictive-kin," the majority of participants' family members offered support and resources during the transition period; however, the "fictive-kin" in this study were all family members and priests or pastors (2000).

Likewise, the questions modeled from Wellman and Wortley's 1990 study revealed the

same finding: family members and religious figures were the only answers given when the respondents were asked who they would contact if they needed various types of help or support (See Appendix A for Interview Schedule). This indicates that, in contrast to the more varied responses Wellman and Wortley found, Hispanics rely mostly on familial relationships, and occasionally religious ties, for their needs. The participants view these relationships as their most important.

Because almost all of the participants are employed by Hispanic shops, many of the factors in the participants' lives may be similar, such as socioeconomic status, a stronger connection to their culture, and an automatic tie to the community. This may account for similar assimilation levels regarding religion, language, and aspirations. However, this also means that their similar outlooks or attitudes may control other variables to reveal a more accurate picture of immigrant experiences, and particularly Hispanic storeowners.

This study found a moderate amount of integration, assimilation, and acculturation with residents of both cities, but Denver has achieved higher levels. The level of assimilation, which concerns social relation and opportunities, is higher in Denver, in which the Hispanic community is more integrated. The level of acculturation, regarding language and values, is also higher in Denver, as Colorado Springs Hispanics stay within their own community (Milton 1964, Suárez-Orozco 2000). Segmented assimilation, the more recent immigrant assimilation theory, argues that different Hispanics are assimilating into different sectors of American life according to individual and structural factors such as education, English ability, and place of birth. Though this theory has been supported, all of the participants in this study have assimilated into



similar positions in the external society (Almgren and Ellis 2009, Altschul 2008, Suárez-Orozco 2000). This is likely *because* several individual and structural factors were similar across participants, and the respondents were likely in similar social and socioeconomic positions because of their similar employment. These differences in acculturation and assimilation are supported by both the interviews conducted for this research as well as statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau, the General Social Survey, and the Pew Hispanic Center. Further, the differences in demographic makeup of the two cities contribute to this discrepancy in integration, assimilation, and acculturation. Because Denver is a larger city, has a larger Spanish-speaking population, a larger Latin-America-born population, and a higher level of exposure to other ethnicities in one's neighborhood, the Denver Hispanic community integrates within the larger Denver community more easily, while the Hispanic community of Colorado Springs stays within their ethnic community more, increasing solidarity within the community but also decreasing integration within the larger Colorado Springs community. This effect is also present in the difference between institutional involvement of Hispanic immigrants in the two cities. Denver participants are much more involved with Latino/Hispanic organizations and religious groups and churches, as Denver needs an additional force to maintain Hispanic culture, in contrast with the already-close-knit Colorado Springs. For both cities, Hispanic restaurants and shops also play a significant role in the community. Other indicators or aspects of assimilation and acculturation were found to be similar across both cities, including English and Spanish language-use, one's well-being, one's aspirations for one's self or one's family, personal perception of identity, and the significance of family.

## CONCLUSION

This study found that there were several significant differences in how Hispanic immigrants experienced the two cities of Colorado Springs and Denver. These differences were then linked to the cities' often contrasting demographics. Denver is a much larger city, a higher proportion of the population in Denver speak Spanish and were born in Latin America than in Colorado Springs, and there's a much higher level of exposure to other ethnicities in one's neighborhood in Denver. This correlated with a higher level of integration, acculturation, and assimilation with Hispanic immigrants living in Denver than in Colorado Springs, as Denver is more diverse and less segregated. Since Colorado Springs has a smaller Hispanic population, a more conservative population, and Hispanic residents experienced more discrimination than those in Denver, the Hispanic community is much tighter and closer in Colorado Springs. Denver participants were also more involved with institutions such as Latino and Hispanic organizations and churches, as Denver needs an external force that will maintain culture more than the close-knit Colorado Springs. In addition, this study also highlighted the importance of Hispanic restaurants and stores within both Hispanic communities. Other factors of the assimilation and integration processes were found to be similar across both cities, such as language-use, well-being, aspirations for one's self or one's family, one's perception of their identity, and the importance of family.

Since the participants voiced similar aspirations either for themselves or their children, specifically to attend college, it's difficult to discern whether there is evidence of racial-ethnic self-schema theory, in which one's racial-ethnic identity affects their academic success. However, their perceptions of their identities were also similar, which

indicates that this perception did have similar effects on all of the participants. This study further supports Fraser's redistribution-recognition dilemma as well, as the participants strive to fit into American culture and succeed financially, but also to maintain and preserve their culture and gain recognition as a community. The study also found support for a correlation between social integration and well-being, as others have noted (Durkheim 1897, Kubrin 2007, Suárez-Orozco 2000). Denver's Hispanic community is more integrated within the larger society; thus, they experience less discrimination and a higher level of well-being, while the Hispanic community of Colorado Springs is more segregated, experiences a higher level of discrimination, and a lower level of well-being.

There is also evidence of Mary Curry and Helen Rose Ebaugh's "fictive-kin," but rather than consisting of more varied types, it solely consists of family relationships and religious ties. These relationships offer emotional support and open up possibilities for other connections. Similarly, family and religious connections were the only relationships mentioned that provide emotional support. Though Wellman and Wortley's "Different Strokes from Different Folks: Community Ties and Social Support" (1990) found various relationship types providing various types of resources and support, all ten Hispanic participants almost solely relied on close family members, mostly parents and siblings. This corresponds with Latino and Hispanic culture, which focuses on the importance of family.

Residential segregation is present in both cities, and, as others have noted, despite the heterogeneity of Latino and Hispanic culture, both the Denver and Colorado Springs recognize the Hispanic community as a whole, rather than distinguishing between countries of origin (Iceland 2009). Churches and other religious institutions have been

shown to ease the immigrant transition process, offering social support and cultural tradition (Cao 2005). Though most participants viewed themselves as religious, the church played a much larger role for Denver residents than those from Colorado Springs. Hispanics from Denver relied on the institution much more. In addition, the religious demographic differences between the two cities was also apparent; while 35% of Colorado Springs' religious adherents identify as Evangelical Protestants, only 21% of Denver's religious adherents do. This likely compounds the effects of Colorado Springs' conservative and less open-minded character upon the denser Hispanic community, further differentiating the two cities.

The quality of life experienced in Denver and Colorado Springs by Hispanic immigrants seems fairly similar and relatively high, as all research participants are employed, live in a stable location, and hold little to no fear of crime, but Colorado Springs seems to experience more racial-ethnic discrimination than Denver.

Lastly, Rytina and Morgan's concept of "critical mass" was highly beneficial to understanding both Hispanic communities, as the size of Colorado Springs and Denver and their Hispanic communities affect the social density of the communities and the amount of segregation experienced from the outside community. Since the Hispanic population of Denver has reached "critical mass," the community is able to make connections outside of their community, causing a higher level of integration with surrounding Denver. Since Colorado Springs has not reached this point, the Hispanic community has stuck together more and has made fewer connections to the wider Colorado Springs population.

This research only consisted of ten interviews and cannot be used to generalize about either Hispanic community. In addition, nine of the ten participants are employed at Hispanic stores, businesses, or restaurants, thus the participants are more likely to be more involved with the Hispanic community and culture. The participants may have censored or modified their answers based on their suspicions of me or the study, particularly because I am not Hispanic nor fluent in Spanish. Potential participants may have also held fears of anti-immigrant bias or being questioned about illegal immigrants. To further this research, more interviews covering a wider variety of occupations would be necessary. In addition, an ethnographic portion involving Hispanic stores, restaurants, businesses, events, organizations, and churches may also provide additional insight into the experiences of Hispanic immigrants in Colorado Springs and Denver.

Because Denver is a larger city and has reached the “critical mass” with their Hispanic population, the Hispanic community is able to reach out of the group to make more connections to the surrounding Denver society, and the Hispanic community in Denver is thus more integrated. Because the Hispanic community in Colorado Springs is smaller and denser, the community makes fewer connections to the outside society. The higher levels of diversity and lower levels of segregation in Denver and the more conservative nature, the larger military population, and the higher levels of discrimination in Colorado Springs compound these phenomena.

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## APPENDIX A

### *Interview Schedule*

How long have you lived in the United States? Or, if born here, what generation are you?

Do you speak English at home? How well do the different members of your family speak English?

What is your education level? What are the education levels of your friends and family? What level of education do you think most Hispanic/Latino immigrants have in this city?

What are your aspirations? Goals for your family?

How would you identify your religion? How often do you attend religious activities?

Are you connected with any Latino/Hispanic/religious organizations? What types of resources and support do they offer?

How safe do you feel in your neighborhood? Is crime a problem for your neighborhood?

How well do you know your neighbors? Do you feel as though your neighborhood is segregated? Is there a sense of community within your neighborhood?

What do you like about your neighborhood? What do you dislike? How well is your neighborhood maintained?

Why did your family come to Colorado? Why your particular city of residence?

What were some of the best things about coming to the United States? What were some of the worst? What would have made the transition process easier?

Did you have existing contacts in Colorado when you moved here? How did you utilize them to help the transition process? How did you meet people when you first arrived in the city?

How did you get your job? What is your job environment like? What are the ethnicities of your co-workers? Your bosses? What occupations do your friends and family hold?

How did you find your home?

Do you feel like an American? Why or why not? Has this changed since you first arrived?

How do immigrants perceive the non-immigrant community and vice versa?



Did/do you feel welcomed by the Colorado Springs/Denver community? Why or why not?

How integrated within the Colorado Springs/Denver community do you feel? How integrated is the Latino/Hispanic community in general?

Who would you ask for assistance if you needed to make a small home repair, and why? If you needed to borrow a large sum of money? If you needed emotional support? If there were a pothole in front of your home?