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Havens of Risks or Resources? A Study of Two Latino Neighborhoods in New York City

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ABSTRACT *Research has been mixed on the potential risks and resources that ethnic enclaves may confer upon residents: whereas some authors characterize racial and ethnic minority neighborhoods through the lens of segregation and risk, others argue that these minority neighborhoods are ethnic enclaves that can improve the availability of resources to residents. In this study, we sought to assess two predominantly Latino New York City neighborhoods (one enclave neighborhood and one comparison) in the areas of structural resources (e.g., grocers, parks), cultural resources (e.g., botanicas, hair salons), and risks (e.g., empty lots, bars) by street-level coding in 20 census tracts (streets N=202). We used Poisson generalized linear models to assess whether enclave status of a neighborhood predicted the numbers of risks and resources on streets within those neighborhoods. Enclave status did not predict the number of risks (Rate ratio=1.08(0.83,1.42),$\chi^2(1,N=202)=0.35,p=n.s.$) or cultural resources (Rate ratio=0.87(0.54,1.40),$\chi^2(1,N=202)=0.34,p=n.s.$), yet it was associated with a higher number of structural resources (Rate ratio=1.90(1.48,2.43),$\chi^2(1,N=202)=25.74,p<0.001$). The results suggest that while living in an ethnic enclave may not reduce risks, it may help residents cope with those risks through an increased number of structural resources. These findings support theories that conceptualize ethnic enclaves as neighborhoods where greater resources are available to residents. The focus on resources within this work was instrumental, as no difference would have been found if a solely risk-focused approach had been employed.*

KEYWORDS *Ethnic enclave, Latino, Resources, Risks, New York City, Dominican*

From 2000 to 2010, the Latino population in the USA grew from 35.3 to 50.5 million people, with Latinos now comprising 16 % of the total population. More than half of the population growth in the USA in the last 10 years is due to the increase in the Latino population.[1] According to the 2000 census, 43 % of Latinos live in predominantly Latino neighborhoods.[2] This study focuses on these Latino communities. In contrast to the focus on risks in much of the current research on these communities, we examine both the risks and benefits in these neighborhoods.

A large and growing body of research examines the risks of living in neighborhoods with high concentrations of ethnic minorities.[3] Much of the existing work characterizes neighborhoods in terms of the percentage of residents who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group.[4,5] Residents of these neighborhoods perceive that there is low

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social cohesion, reduced walkability, and worse safety within their communities.[6,7] Additionally, there is evidence that neighborhoods with high percentages of Latinos have high numbers of health-aversive establishments, such as liquor stores and other alcohol retailers.[8] It is important to note that much of this work describes these predominantly Latino and African-American neighborhoods through the lens of racial segregation, which has been identified as a fundamental cause of racial health disparities.

In contrast to the focus on the risks described above, a parallel literature posits that predominantly Latino neighborhoods characterized as ethnic enclaves may confer benefits to residents. The ethnic makeup of a geographical area constitutes the simplest categorization of an "ethnic enclave." An ethnic enclave, however, is not merely a physical space with large numbers of residents of the same ethnicity. Other important aspects of a geographical area make it an enclave. Chief among them is the availability of services that are unique to, and may be culturally appropriate for, the predominant group within the enclave.[9]

Some theories posit that ethnic enclave economies are formed in efforts to capitalize on small business opportunities through which immigrants can gain access to higher-prestige jobs, coupled with higher wages, human capital returns, and upward social mobility.[10,11] This line of research suggests that living in an ethnic enclave can facilitate immigrant adaptation to new cultures through shared linguistic and cultural bonds, as shared language and culture may create a protective environment in which residents may best capitalize on opportunities.[12,13] Small argued that neighborhood institutions such as childcare centers and churches within ethnic enclaves can serve as "resource brokers" that aid residents in accessing and utilizing available neighborhood resources.[14] Despite the economic disadvantage prevalent in many of these neighborhoods, reasons for the beneficial effects include the potential availability of cultural and other resources that could promote health. There is, however, relatively little focus on the beneficial effects on health of living in ethnic enclaves. Nevertheless, there is growing evidence that Latinos living in high-density Latino areas report better overall health relative to those who live in low-density areas and that living in an ethnic enclave has a protective effect against depression among Latinos, but not African-Americans.[15,16]

Ethnic enclaves are characterized by multiple variables, such as residential density of ethnic minorities,[6] availability of goods and services,[14] and minority ownership of small businesses.[17] Although an ethnic enclave can be construed as a racially segregated area, it is different from a ghetto. Whereas the ethnic enclave arises due to cultural ties and potential resources, the ghetto exists due to processes of social exclusion and is thought to "ensnare people in a system."[18] Despite the important theoretical distinction, both types of neighborhoods are likely to have high rates of poverty and low-income housing.[18]

Furthermore, the majority of research on "Latinos" focuses primarily on Mexicans, the most populous Latino group within the USA, though many studies do not report self-identification of participants beyond "Latino/Hispanic."[19] There is extensive evidence of differing health profiles among the various Latino subgroups due to a myriad of factors, such as level of acculturation and country of birth.[20–22] In light of this heterogeneity, we assert that it is important to acknowledge that Latinos are not a monolithic group. Therefore, this study focuses on one subgroup that is relatively large yet under-studied: Dominicans.

Dominicans are the fifth largest group of Latinos in the USA, accounted for about 3 % of the US Latino population in 2010, and nearly half (48 %) of all Dominicans in the USA live in New York City.[19] The Dominican population in the USA has particular demographic characteristics when compared to other Latinos: lower levels of English language proficiency, older median age, and a higher rate of foreign nativity. Our current research on predominantly Dominican neighborhoods adds to the literature on

Latino health in the USA and contributes information about a unique (and understudied) portion of that population. The aim of the current study is to examine whether a Dominican ethnic enclave in New York City has a different number of risks and resources than a demographically similar non-enclave comparison neighborhood.

Northern Manhattan is a Dominican ethnic enclave: it has a very large and relatively homogeneous population of Dominican residents, provides availability of culturally relevant goods and services,[23] and has a Dominican entrepreneur-driven economy.[23,24] Though Portes and Jensen warn against using residential density as the sole benchmark for ethnic enclave status,[17] northern Manhattan meets the multiple criteria listed above, and there is consensus that this geographical area constitutes an ethnic enclave.[25–28]

The West Bronx (specifically the Kingsbridge Heights and Morris Heights areas) does not meet the criteria of an ethnic enclave. There are high numbers of minority residents in these neighborhoods. The area's recent migration history has included influxes of various Latino groups: Puerto Ricans in the 1940s and 1950s, Cubans in the 1960s and 1970s, Dominicans in the 1980s and 1990s, and Mexicans in the 2000s. Additionally, the area underwent a transition between 1970 and 1990 where most white residents fled the area, creating predominantly Latino and African-American census tracts.[29] Although a relatively large number of Dominicans currently reside in the West Bronx, many relocated from northern Manhattan for more affordable housing.[26] Based on the heterogeneity of the minority population, lack of historical precedent, and lack of references to this area in the literature, we posit that the West Bronx is not an ethnic enclave.

Because of the mixed findings about ethnic enclaves as either conferring resources or creating risky environments, we considered the occurrence of both the available risks and the available resources present in these areas. Additionally, within the category of resources, we sought to disentangle the differences between the "cultural resources" that primarily cater to the needs and culture of Dominicans (e.g., botanicas and Dominican hair salons) and "structural resources" that facilitate life for all residents, regardless of country of origin (e.g., clinics, parks, grocery stores). This distinction between cultural and structural resources was grounded in work by Small, which posits that enclave neighborhoods may provide benefits that go beyond a culturally and linguistically supportive environment and help residents take advantage of other (more structural) resources within a neighborhood context.[14]

In light of the conflicting evidence in the literature and the debate about the potential benefits and risks of ethnic enclave neighborhoods, we pose the following research questions:

Q1. Does an ethnic enclave neighborhood have a different number of risks than a non-enclave neighborhood?
Q2. Does an ethnic enclave neighborhood have a different number of structural resources than a non-enclave neighborhood?
Q3. Does an ethnic enclave neighborhood have a different number of cultural resources than a non-enclave neighborhood?

METHOD

Neighborhood and Street Selection

Using data on the number of Dominican residents according to the 2000 census, we selected 20 urban New York City census tracts for this study within two

neighborhoods. The 2000 census was the most recent census available at the time of data collection, though the tracts selected from the 2000 census continued to have a very high percentage of Dominican residents in the 2010 census. Ten of these tracts were in northern Manhattan, and the ten remaining tracts were in western areas of the Bronx.

We identified northern Manhattan as a Dominican ethnic enclave and selected the West Bronx as our comparison neighborhood because of its sizable Dominican but largely heterogeneous Latino population. In terms of the general population, 51 % of the residents in the ethnic enclave tracts are Dominican, compared with 31 % in the Bronx tracts, which also include large populations of several other ethnic groups, such as Puerto Ricans and African-Americans. Additionally, the Latino population in northern Manhattan is more homogeneous in that Dominicans comprise 70 % of the Latino population in the ethnic enclave tracts in northern Manhattan, but only 38 % of Latinos in the Bronx comparison neighborhood tracts. To reduce any possible effects of differences in socioeconomic status between the two neighborhoods, we selected the neighborhoods based on their similar socioeconomic profiles, as measured by tract-level median household income (MHI). The ethnic enclave neighborhood tracts had a MHI of US$25,631 (SD=US$2,991), whereas the comparison neighborhood tracts had a MHI of US$21,135 (SD=$4,470). Although there is some difference between the two neighborhoods in MHI, they are well matched in other socioeconomic status measures, such as percentage of low-income residents (i.e., household incomes of less than US$41,000/year for a family of four). Specifically, 80 % of residents in the ethnic enclave neighborhood tracts fell into this category, as did 83 % of residents in the comparison neighborhood tracts. Nevertheless, we controlled for MHI within our analyses to compensate for any effects driven by income differences between the two neighborhoods.

Within each census tract, we accessed up-to-date digital maps, available online through Google Maps, and created a comprehensive list of all street sides within the tracts.[30] Of these street sides, we randomly selected 25 % for street-level coding. In total, we coded 202 street sides: 128 in northern Manhattan and 74 in the Bronx. The selected areas included both commercial and residential streets. To control for possible differences in geographical size between the two neighborhoods, we used the same online maps to collect data on street length and controlled for this in our statistical analyses.

Coding Scheme

We developed the coding scheme to reflect both areas of theoretical interest and the observable characteristics of the neighborhoods. Two members of the research team independently and systematically noted all visible aspects of multiple streets (both commercial and residential) in northern Manhattan as a starting point to create the street coding scheme. We then used these notations of the observed items and organized the codes into three broad categories of theoretical interest: structural resources, cultural resources, and risks. We conceptualized structural resources as elements within a neighborhood that are beneficial to all residents whereas cultural resources are elements that are centered on the needs of Dominican residents. Risks are elements that are associated with poorer quality of life (see Table 1 for all elements tallied within each category). Coders used tally sheets to record the number of each element in the coding scheme. All elements coded had to be clearly visible

TABLE 1 Elements tallied in each category

Category	Elements tallied
Structural resources	- ATM
	- Bank
	- Church
	- Clinic/doctor's office
	- Daycare
	- Exercise club/gym
	- Farmer's market
	- Green cart (fruit and vegetable street vendor)
	- Grocery store
	- Laundromat
	- Non-Hispanic food restaurant
	- Park
	- Pharmacy
	- Police/fire station
	- School
Cultural resources	- Botanica
	- Dominican hair salon/barber shop
	- Hispanic food restaurant
	- Positive public art/mural
	- Travel agency
Risks	- Bar
	- Check cashing establishment
	- Empty lot
	- Fast food restaurant
	- Fast food/candy street vendor
	- Liquor store
	- Open dumpster/garbage area
	- Parking lot
	- Permanently closed store
	- Tobacco store

from the sidewalk, as all coding took place on the street and coders did not enter establishments or residences.

Procedure

A member of the research team who spearheaded the conceptualization and development of the coding scheme served as the master coder and trained three additional coders. We calculated coding agreement by assigning coders and the master coder to the same streets and then comparing the number of items tallied in each element of the coding scheme. We considered an exact match in the number of items to be agreement and any discrepancies to be a disagreement. All coders reached a coding agreement of at least 90 % with the master coder before beginning data collection, which ensured inter-coder reliability. Reliability was not reassessed after this initial point because elements in the coding scheme (Table 1) were easily

discerned by coders, and all coders reached the 90 % reliability threshold relatively quickly and easily.

Four research assistants (RAs) were trained as coders and coded all of the street sides from September 2010 to August 2011. Coding always occurred in the afternoons and always during daylight hours, on days without rain.* On each designated coding day, coders were each assigned five street sides in one tract and went out in groups of two or three. The coding packet included five coding schemes and an annotated map of the area to ensure accurate coding. Though each RA was assigned to specific streets to code on their own, having other RAs nearby allowed the coders to help each other with specific questions related to coding if needed. Coders never coded more than seven street sides in one outing in order to reduce any effects of fatigue on coding accuracy.

Measures

We dummy coded the predictor variable (enclave status) as 1=enclave, 0= comparison neighborhood. We summed the counts of street-level codes to create three aggregate scores: "risks," "structural resources," and "cultural resources," representing the total number of establishments within each of these categories on each street. We used these counts at the street level in all statistical analyses.

Statistical Analyses

We examined the three research questions separately in three different statistical models. We used a Poisson generalized linear model (GLM) for each analysis to account for the non-normal distribution of count data. Each model had a different outcome: risks, structural resources, and cultural resources. For each of the three models, we used enclave status as a predictor (dummy coded as 1=enclave, 0= comparison neighborhood). Additionally, we included both median household income (in thousands of dollars) and street length (in thousands of feet) as covariates to control for any differences in socioeconomic status and physical density (respectively) between the two neighborhoods. Median household income was obtained from the 2000 census (consistent with our neighborhood selection, which occurred prior to the 2010 census), and street length was obtained through analysis of online Google Maps.[30] We used rate ratios (calculated by exponentiating the unstandardized *b*) as the appropriate standardized effect size measure for Poisson GLM.[31]

RESULTS

Table 2 shows the average number of risks, structural resources, and cultural resources observed in the ethnic enclave and comparison neighborhood. Although the average numbers of risks and cultural resources are not very different between the two neighborhoods, the ethnic enclave neighborhood has nearly double the number of structural resources per street when compared to the non-enclave neighborhood. Figures 1, 2, and 3 provide visual depictions of the distributions of each outcome variable within each neighborhood. Similar to the averages observed in Table 2, Fig. 2 depicts the actual observations of structural resources—the

*The vast majority of coded elements are features of the built environment that would not be affected by weather changes.

TABLE 2 Mean number of risks, structural resources, and cultural resources per street within each neighborhood

	Ethnic enclave	Comparison neighborhood
	mean number per street (interquartile range)	mean number per street (interquartile range)
Risks	1.30 (2.00)	1.08 (0.25)
Structural resources	2.10 (3.00)	1.11 (2.00)
Cultural resources	0.33 (1.00)	0.38 (0.00)

distribution for the ethnic enclave neighborhood shows a greater number of streets with a higher number of structural resources. Table 3 shows the coefficients for all models, which are further described below. Although we were initially concerned that differences in median household income and/or street length between the two neighborhoods would confound our findings, controlling for these variables did not meaningfully alter the magnitude or direction of the relationship between enclave status and the outcome of interest in any of the models. For this reason, we report the simpler bivariate models.

Model 1: Enclave Status Predicting Risks

The first model examined enclave status (dummy coded as 1=enclave, 0=comparison neighborhood) as the predictor of the number of risks within a

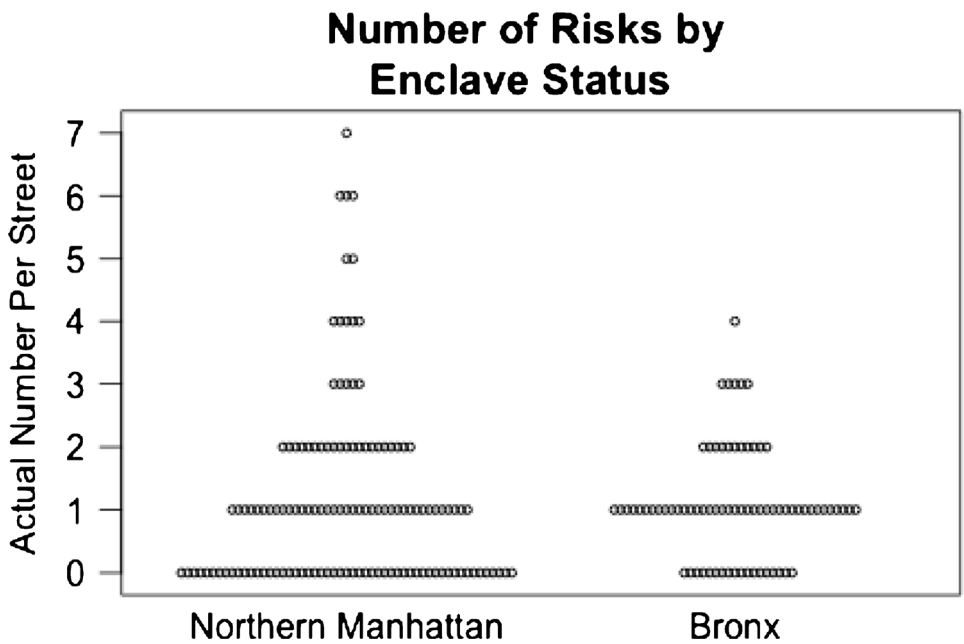

FIG. 1 Number of risks by enclave status. The plot shows the number of risks by enclave status. Northern Manhattan is the ethnic enclave neighborhood, and the Bronx is the comparison neighborhood. Each *point* on the plot represents one street-level observation. Enclave status was not a significant predictor of observed risks.

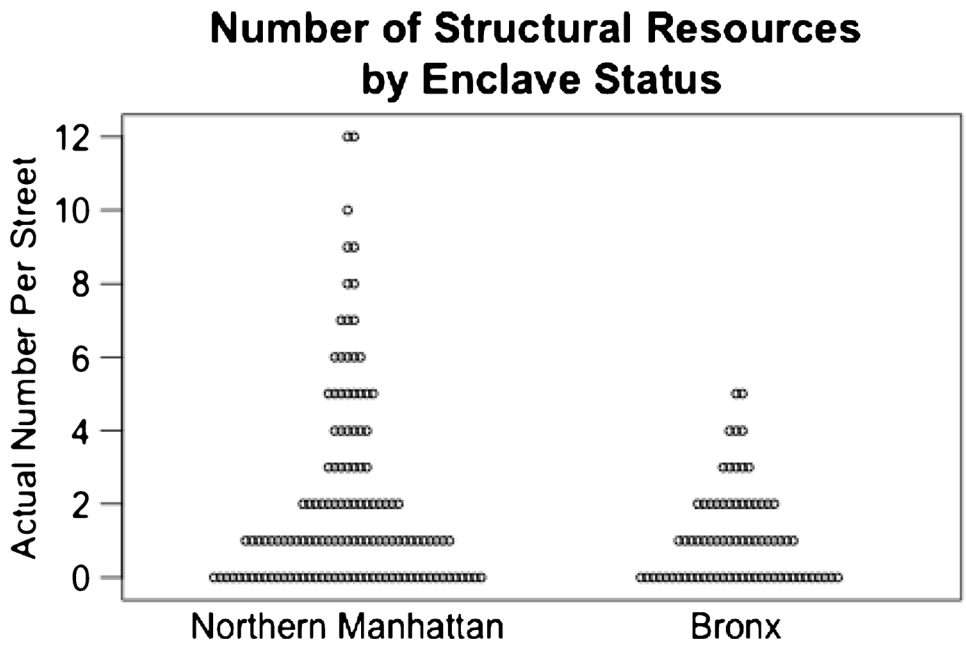

FIG. 2 Number of structural resources by enclave status. This bee swarm plot illustrates the number of structural resources in each neighborhood, with each *point* on the graph representing one coded street. Northern Manhattan is the ethnic enclave neighborhood, and the Bronx is the comparison neighborhood. It is visually apparent that there are a greater number of streets in northern Manhattan with a higher number of structural resources when compared to streets in the Bronx.

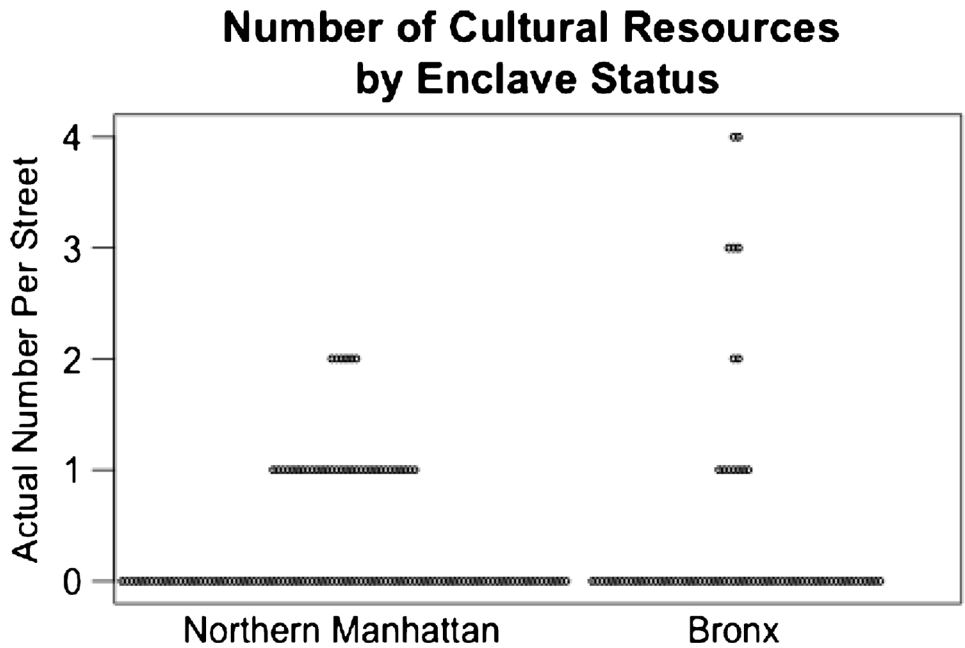

FIG. 3 Number of cultural resources by enclave status. This plot represents the number of cultural resources in each neighborhood, with each *point* on the graph representing one coded street. Northern Manhattan is the ethnic enclave neighborhood, and the Bronx is the comparison neighborhood.

TABLE 3 Statistical coefficients for all models

Outcome	Rate ratio (RR) (95 % CI)	Wald chi-square [df]	*P* value
Risks (Q1)	1.08 (0.83, 1.42)	0.35 [1]	ns
Structural resources (Q2)	1.90 (1.48, 2.43)	25.74 [1]	<0.001
Cultural resources (Q3)	0.87 (0.54, 1.40),	0.34 [1]	ns

ns not significant

neighborhood. The results revealed that enclave status does not significantly predict the number of risks within a neighborhood: Rate ratio=1.08 (0.83, 1.42), $\chi^2(1, N=202)=0.35, p=$n.s.

Model 2: Enclave Status Predicting Structural Resources

We then examined whether enclave status was a significant predictor of structural resources. Specifically, the ethnic enclave status of a neighborhood significantly predicted a greater number of structural resources when compared to the non-enclave neighborhood: Rate ratio=1.90(1.48,2.43), $\chi^2(1, N=202)=25.74, p<0.001$.

Model 3: Enclave Status Predicting Cultural Resources

Within the final model, we examined enclave status as the predictor of the number of cultural resources. Enclave status did not significantly predict the number of cultural resources in a neighborhood: Rate ratio=0.87(0.54,1.40), $\chi^2(1, N=202)=0.34, p=$n.s.

DISCUSSION

The finding that enclave status does not predict the number of risks within a neighborhood is at odds with research that labels enclaves as inherently risky spaces for residents. In fact, the enclave status of a neighborhood positively predicts the number of structural resources that are available in that neighborhood, which supports theories hypothesizing that ethnic enclaves provide structural support to immigrants through greater opportunities.[24] The various structural resources observed in this study can serve as "resource brokers," empowering residents by offering informational and other services that may buffer the negative effects of low socioeconomic status.[14] Enclave status did not predict the presence of cultural resources in our data. This indicates that ethnic enclaves may not provide residents with support that is necessarily tailored to one ethnic group or cultural identity. However, this final analysis may have been statistically underpowered to detect any differences between the two neighborhoods due to the relatively small total number of cultural resources observed in either neighborhood and the relatively large street-by-street variability in their presence.

Some weaknesses of our approach warrant mention. Our strategy to calculate risks and resources as sums treats all elements within each category equally. For example, in terms of resources, our summed scores treat one doctor's office as having the same weight as one grocery store, which may not accurately reflect the impact or importance of a specific element on the quality of life of neighborhood residents. Unfortunately, there were not a sufficient number of observations to perform any subanalyses based on specific elements within the overarching

categories. Moreover, the sociodemographically similar neighborhoods compared in this study have rich and distinct historical contexts that may affect their comparability. Though these two neighborhoods were very similar in terms of median household income, further research is needed to examine the risks and resources present in other non-enclave neighborhoods with Dominican populations. In addition, the coding was not conducted beyond the street level. There may have been important risks or resources that were not visible from the street. Finally, our procedures, which standardized coding to certain daylight hours and weather conditions, may have resulted in missed observations of risks, structural, and cultural resources. However, because the focus of this research was on the observable physical characteristics of neighborhoods (e.g., built structures), it is unlikely that these observations would have changed with variations in time of day.

Despite these weaknesses, there are several strengths of our approach that are notable. Our method of street-level coding relied upon coder observation and allowed for a granular analysis of neighborhood characteristics when compared to research that relies solely on census-level data. The latter method does not include information at the level of the street. Our approach included the consideration of risks, structural resources, and cultural resources, which allowed for a multifaceted analysis that took into account different elements of each neighborhood. If we had limited our data collection and analyses to only one of these dimensions, the conclusions drawn would have been incomplete. For example, had we focused only on analyzing risks, we would have simply concluded that there were no differences between the ethnic enclave and the comparison neighborhood, missing the observations on resources.

It is important that future research identify specific risks and resources that are particularly relevant to residents and perform analyses disentangling which risks and resources drive the effects found at the sum level. By using overarching theoretical categories such as risks and resources, we found interesting results at the aggregate level. Nevertheless, future research should focus on specific neighborhood structures that are most often present in ethnic enclaves and aim to identify how different types of risks and resources may interact with each other. Additionally, further research is needed to replicate these results in a greater number of ethnic enclaves and comparison neighborhoods to determine if the observed results are present in non-Latino ethnic enclaves and outside of urban environments. Also, future research should seek to characterize these neighborhoods using longitudinal data, which will allow for an understanding of possible temporal changes. Finally, it is crucial to further explore the finding that ethnic enclaves are associated with a greater number of structural resources. Specifically, future research should examine whether these resources at the neighborhood level are positively linked to the health of residents.

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