ETHNIC CONGRUITY MOTIVE: WHEN SERVICE ENCOUNTERS WITH HISPANIC FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES ENHANCE HISPANIC CUSTOMERS' SERVICE SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the impact of an ethnic congruity motive on Hispanic customers' service satisfaction via the mediating role of sense of power during the service encounter. Across three web-based experiments, this research empirically tests the impact of Hispanic customers' ethnic congruity motive (desire to be served by a Hispanic [vs. non-Hispanic] service provider) on service satisfaction mediated by sense of power using a linear regression-based approach. Results show that customers' ethnic congruity motive is positively associated with satisfaction toward service by an ethnically congruent employee and this association is stronger than the positive association between customers' ethnic incongruity motive and satisfaction toward service by an ethnically incongruent employee. Furthermore, sense of power during the service encounter mediates the effect of ethnic congruity motive on satisfaction, but not of ethnic incongruity motive. The findings support prior research findings that customer–employee ethnic congruity provides a competitive advantage. However, this research provides deeper insight into the power-related mechanism that underlies ethnic congruity effects, which suggests that being served by an employee of a particular ethnic background can enhance service satisfaction through consumers' sense of power. Managers can leverage this effect by training employees to recognize ethnically congruent customers, segmenting ethnic consumers based on ethnic congruity motive, as well as by training frontline employees to leverage customers' sense of power during the service encounter.

INTRODUCTION

The US Hispanic market comprises the largest US ethnic minority group and boasts a purchasing power of $1.7 trillion that is consistently rising (Morse, 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Customer service plays a key role in US Hispanic customers' retail store choices. In their study on Hispanic retail customers, Fowler *et al.* (2007) found that the human factor is the most important dimension of the retail atmosphere that influences customer satisfaction and loyalty. Accordingly, Hispanic customers tend to favor establishments with Hispanic service frontline employees due to their inclination to provide Hispanic customers with beneficial service behaviors such as speaking Spanish or providing special service treatment (Montoya and Briggs, 2013; Penaloza, 1994; Seock, 2009). Interacting with frontline service employees who share a similar ethnic background helps ethnic customers feel like they belong, enhancing their store loyalty (Rosenbaum and Montoya, 2007); an outcome that also bolsters satisfaction with retail service recovery efforts (Ashley and Varki, 2009). However, studies examining customer service

interactions with shared ethnicity employees present mixed findings on the relationship between customer–employee ethnic congruence and customer satisfaction. For instance, race did not affect customers' choice of grocery store clerks in one study (McCormick and Kinloch, 1986), but it significantly influenced preference toward fast food restaurant and bank clerks in another study (Juni *et al.*, 1988). Meanwhile, both race and ethnicity influenced choice of cashier or physician in a separate set of studies (Laveist and Nuru-Jeter, 2002; Malat and Hamilton, 2006). Most notably, a study conducted on a major U.S. retail chain found no consistent support that customers gravitate toward firms where they will be served by salespeople of their same ethnic background (Kochan *et al.*, 2003). We suggest that these mixed findings may be due, in part, to variations in ethnic customers' desire to be served by a frontline service employee who shares a similar ethnicity, in other words, an ethnic congruity motive. Most prior research on ethnic congruity or shared ethnicity in service settings assumes that ethnic customers possess an ethnic congruity motive. Certainly, social identity theory supports the notion that people tend to favor their social in-group members (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Yet, we argue that not all ethnic group members necessarily favor other ethnic group members to the same extent and certainly not with the same favorability across all contexts. Rather, due to individual differences such as level of acculturation (Saldaña, 1994) and perceived status of one's ethnic group or cultural stereotypes (Alvarez *et al.*, 2017), customers' desire to be served by an ethnically congruent frontline service employee is likely to vary. We also propose that customers' ethnic congruity motive will influence their satisfaction with service experiences.

To our knowledge, this research is the first to propose and empirically examine ethnic congruity motive as an antecedent of service satisfaction. Shedding light on an individual difference characteristic such as ethnic congruity motive provides a better understanding of the effects of cultural variables on consumer behavior, which benefits retailers' approach toward provide satisfactory services to ethnic customers (Blodgett et al., 2015). Furthermore, this research examines the mechanism that mediates this relationship between ethnic congruity motive and service satisfaction: sense of power. During a retail service encounter, customers would feel a greater sense of power when they perceive that they can influence the outcome of the encounter (Bradley *et al.*, 2010). Thus, we propose that Hispanic customers with an ethnic congruity motive expect favorable treatment from ethnic in-group members, which bolsters their sense of power in service encounters with Hispanic employees. Our research is distinct from the limited existing research on customer power in service encounters, which regards power as an antecedent state that the customer enters the service encounter with, rather than as a consequence of, the service interaction. The discriminatory treatment that many ethnic/racial minority customers experience in the marketplace detracts from their sense of power, which is their perceived ability to influence service outcomes (Walsh, 2009). Therefore, we consider that customers' sense of power in the service encounter is a pertinent and consequential mechanism to explore in relation to ethnicity in service encounters.

Our moderated mediation framework bridges the power literature and research on ethnicity in service encounters to provide new insight on the interplay of customers' ethnic congruity motive and sense of power and its impact on customer service satisfaction (Figure 1). Across three experiments, we demonstrate that customers' ethnic congruity motive (the desire to receive service from a Hispanic employee) is more positively associated with service satisfaction than ethnic incongruity motive (the desire to receive service from a non-Hispanic employee) (Study 1). Furthermore, felt power mediates the effect of ethnic congruity motive, but not of ethnic incongruity motive, on satisfaction (Study 2a and 2b).

Figure 1. Moderated Mediation Model

(Moderating the role of frontline ethnicity on the effect of ethnic congruity motive on service satisfaction through sense of power).
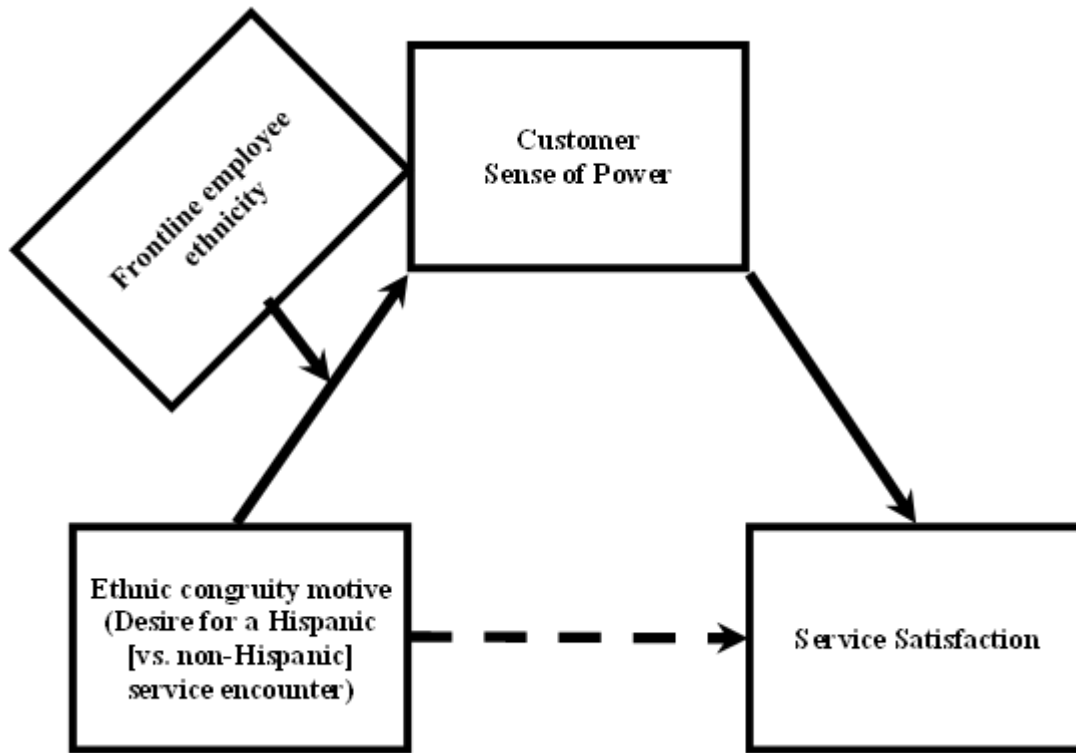
RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Ethnicity in Service Encounters

The term "ethnicity" refers to cultural differences among groups. For example, ethnic group members tend to identify themselves (or be identified by out-group members) by their cultural differences rather than their similarities (Hirschman and Snipp, 2001). Consumers often prefer to interact with retail service staff from their same ethnicity (Johnson-Hillery *et al.*, 1997; Shanmuganthan *et al.*, 2003). Indeed, a large-scale, content analysis-based study suggests that consumers exhibited greater satisfaction with the service they receive when the provider shares the same cultural background (Rizal *et al.*, 2016). This is noteworthy given that customer satisfaction is argued to be the ultimate goal of marketing research and practice (Larsen and Wright, 2020).

Customers and frontline employees who self-identify with a particular ethnicity consider themselves as members of a social group with common origins and shared cultural norms and behavior patterns (Friedman *et al.*, 2007; Phinney, 1996). As such, ethnic identification can engender expectations of cultural behavioral adaptation and in-group favoritism (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Consider consumers from high-contact cultures, such as Latin American, Eastern European, and Arab cultures, who tend to display warmth and approachability through behaviors such as standing closer to others and greater touch manners (e.g., placing a hand on another's

shoulder; Andersen *et al.*, 2002; Andersen, 1985). These consumers often prefer service providers from similar high-contact cultures given that interactions with service providers from low-contact cultures, such as Asian and northern European cultures, could seem colder due to their cultural tendencies toward less interpersonal immediacy in interactions (Sussman and Rosenfeld, 1982). When service employees' verbal and/or non-verbal behavior is consistent with customers' cultural expectations, the perceived communication competency facilitates a comfortable, satisfactory interpersonal service interaction (e.g., Collier *et al.*, 1986).

Customer Ethnic Congruity Motive and Service Encounter Satisfaction

Many retailers try to match the ethnic makeup of their frontline employees with those of their customers to appeal to customers who desire to patronize retail establishments with an ethnically congruent identity (Rosenbaum and Montoya, 2007). Previous research shows that such a strategy can provide positive outcomes. For example, across two studies, Ta *et al.* (2018) found that delivery services that disclose the driver's identity increase customers' trust, satisfaction, and repurchase intentions, but only when customers perceived that the driver shared their ethnic background. We suggest that this positive association between Hispanic customers' ethnic congruity with service employees and service satisfaction transpires when customers possess an ethnic congruity (versus incongruity) motive. In the interpersonal service context, we define ethnic congruity motive as a customer's desire to be served by a Hispanic [vs. non-Hispanic] service provider. However, some Hispanic customers' ethnic congruity motive may be stronger than others' due to individual differences related to acculturation level and assimilation motives, which we discuss subsequently.

Differences in customer acculturation may dampen customers' ethnic congruity motive. For many ethnic consumers, the motivation to acculturate is associated with a felt need to detach from their heritage culture as a means of redefining their identity as a member of the host culture (Padilla and Perez, 2003). For example, a study with US Hispanic consumers showed that highly acculturated Hispanic consumers (those who identify primarily with mainstream American culture) did not respond in culturally congruent ways (e.g., adopting Hispanic culture-expressive product attitudes and purchase intentions) to Hispanic cultural primes (Chattaraman *et al.*, 2010). This consumer behavior finding seems to reflect a weak ethnic congruity motive, driven by Hispanic participants' acculturation level. Such weakness or absence of an ethnic congruity motive could pose a barrier to felt similarity or in-group connection between a Hispanic customer and a Hispanic service employee.

Assimilation motives can also increase individuals' sensitivity to social stigmas associated with their ethnic group (Padilla and Perez, 2003). Some minority ethnic groups are cognizant of the dominant ethnic group's negative stereotypes and negative treatment of their ethnic group, which can devalue their social identity. Some US Hispanic ethnic groups, such as Mexican Americans, believe that their ethnic group is viewed negatively by many non-Hispanic Whites (Casas *et al.*, 1987). Individuals who consider their ethnicity to be outwardly visible by their physical appearance (e.g., skin color, facial features) or due to their language accent may be particularly sensitive to the prejudice that their ethnic features may trigger (Goffman, 1963; Steele and Aronson, 1995). Research suggests that consumers commonly avoid circumstances that are even symbolic of a dissociative group, to avoid associating with undesirable identities (White and Dahl, 2006). Thus, some Hispanic customers may avoid signaling their Hispanic identity, such as by avoiding Hispanic frontline service employees, as a self-protective mechanism against experiencing discrimination.

For these reasons, we suggest that whereas some Hispanic customers may enter the service encounter with an ethnic congruity motive (desire service from a Hispanic frontline employee), others may enter it with an ethnic incongruity motive (desire service from non-Hispanic frontline employees). Given that customer satisfaction is determined by disconfirmation of expectations, such as felt similarity and in-group favoritism expectations from service involving a Hispanic frontline employee, as well as the extent that a service fulfills a person's desires (Spreng et al., 1996), we propose that Hispanic customers' ethnic congruity (versus incongruity) motive will predict their satisfaction with the service encounter. Specifically, the fulfillment of the desire for service by a Hispanic service employee and perceived confirmation of expectations of felt similarity and in-group favoritism will result in greater satisfaction for customers with an ethnic congruity motive. Alternately, the service evaluations of Hispanic customers with an ethnic incongruity motive (desire to be served by a non-Hispanic service employee) will lack felt similarity and in-group favoritism. As a result, Hispanic customers with an ethnic incongruity (vs. congruity) motive will experience weaker service satisfaction. Formally, we hypothesize:

> **H1.** *Hispanic customers' ethnic congruity (incongruity) motive is associated with stronger (weaker) service satisfaction with a Hispanic (non-Hispanic) service provider.*

Ethnic Congruity and Sense of Power in the Service Encounter

Power is commonly conceptualized in terms of control over resources that elevates the individuals' social status (Rucker et al., 2011). However, power is also a psychological state in which individuals perceive themselves as being able to influence others (Bugental *et al.*, 1999; Galinsky *et al.*, 2003), without necessity of controlling resources or possessing social status or position of authority (Anderson *et al.*, 2006; Fast and Chen, 2009). For instance, Blodgett, Hill and Bakir (2006) demonstrated that customers in India perceive that they have little power to resolve unsatisfactory purchase experiences due to local retail stores' unfavorable return and exchange policies. Conversely, US customers perceive they have greater power to resolve such situations given US retail stores' favorable return and exchange policies. In another example, a study conducted by Meng *et al.* (2010) with two US ethnic immigrant groups showed that Mexican immigrant consumers perceive a higher likelihood of successful resolution of a retail service complaint than Chinese immigrant consumers. This difference reflects ethnic customers' divergent perceptions of power in the customer service context.

Feeling sense of power provides a basic psychosocial need of customers in service encounters (Bradley *et al.*, 2010). Frontline service employees' adaptive service behaviors, which consist of customizing their interpersonal style and/or the service offering (Gwinner *et al.*, 2005), can enhance customers' sense of power given that the adaptations are intended to meet customers' individual needs. For example, if an ethnic customer does not speak the local language well and the employee makes an effort to speak the customer's native language, the customer's sense of power will increase through heightened communication competence during service encounter (see Giles *et al.*, 1987). Similarly, if a service employee tailors the goods or services offered, this can also increase customers' felt power during service encounter by increasing the advantage customers perceive from the service interaction (Bradley *et al.*, 2010).

Prior research finds that customers sometimes expect special treatment or benefits when interacting with an ethnically similar service employee (Montoya and Briggs, 2013). These expectations arise from the tendency of individuals to favor in-group over out-group members

(Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1979), such as by prefering to share resources with in-group (over out-group) members (Foa and Foa, 1974; Hewstone *et al.*, 2002). For example, a Hispanic customer with an ethnic congruity motive may expect that a Hispanic hotel employee will not only verbally describe the hotel's amenities (the standard service offering) but will also provide a customized walking tour of the amenities (service offering adaptation). We suggest that the extent to which ethnic customers will expect preferential services, and, in turn, will increase ethnic customers' sense of power in the service encounter is determined by their ethnic congruity motive. Ethnic congruity motive customers find special treatment desirable. The expectation of favoritism bolsters ethnic customers' sense of power in the service encounter due to the advantage they expect to gain from the resources shared by ethnically congruent service employees. Conversely, given that Hispanic customers with an ethnic incongruity motive desire service from non-Hispanic service employees, they are unlikely to expect special interpersonal- or service offering-type adaptation behaviors that leverages their advantage in service encounters with ethnic out-group service employees. We expect that the absence of expectations of such perceived service advantages would diminish these customers' sense of power in ethnically incongruent service encounters. It is important to note that our theorizing focuses on the effect of customer expectations and perceptions on sense of power in the service encounter, rather than on the effects of actual preferential (versus standard) service. Although it is possible that ethnically congruent employees would provide standard, rather than special treatment, and that ethnically incongruent employees would provide special rather than standard treatment, the extent to which such actual service experiences would impact sense of power is outside the scope of this research. Thus, we hypothesize:

> **H2:** *Hispanic customers' ethnic congruity (incongruity) motive is associated with stronger (weaker) sense of power in service encounters with a Hispanic (non-Hispanic) service provider.*

Customers' Sense of Power and Service Encounter Satisfaction

In service encounters, customers possess the psychosocial need for power (Anderson and Berdahl, 2002). Previous research has shown that service encounter cues should be designed to bolster customers' felt power, which is associated with feeling able to influence the service outcome (Yoo, 2017). For example, Min *et al.* (2019) suggest that since service employees' body language can signal power to customers, employees should avoid agentic demeanors when serving customers, such as demonstrating the power to make a sample or special discount accessible (or inaccessible). Menon and Bansal (2007) found evidence to suggest that since high-power customers believe they can alter a situation to their benefit, they experience greater satisfaction with the service encounter. Given the desirability of felt power in service encounters and the positive effect on customers' service satisfaction, we hypothesize the following:

> **H3.** *Hispanic customers' sense of power in the service encounter is positively associated with service satisfaction.*

The Mediating Role of Customer Sense of Power

The service-retail literature establishes that ethnic customers (e.g., Hispanic) prefer to interact with service providers from their same ethnicity (versus other ethnic group members) due to better communication competency, cultural understanding, and expectations of benefiting from

in-group favoritism such as special treatment. We suggest that Hispanic customers with an ethnic congruity motive seek out ethnically congruent service encounters because these service encounter qualities bolster consumers' perceived ability to ensure their desired service outcome, which increases their sense of power. In turn, this increased sense of power enhances satisfaction toward a service encounter with a Hispanic employee. Alternately, ethnically incongruent service encounters lack the preferential service qualities that typify service by a shared ethnicity employee, which diminishes the customers' sense of power in the service encounter. Weak sense of power results in diminished service satisfaction toward service by an ethnic incongruent retail service employee. Thus, we hypothesize:

H4: *Sense of power mediates the effect of ethnic congruity motive on customers' service satisfaction, such that Hispanic customers' ethnic congruity (incongruity) motive results in stronger (weaker) sense of power in service encounters with a Hispanic (non-Hispanic) service provider, which, in turn, produces greater (lesser) service satisfaction.*

STUDY 1

Study 1 investigates the predicted positive relationship between Hispanic customers' ethnic congruity motive and service satisfaction (H1). This study uses a Qualtrics web-based experimental design in which participants read a scenario involving a Hispanic customer's service encounter with travel agents of Hispanic, white American, or African American ethnicities and completed a variety of measures.

Participants and Design

We recruited participants in exchange for a small monetary incentive through the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform. The data collection took place in Fall 2020. At the start of the survey, participants indicated whether they were Hispanic ("Are you at least part Hispanic/Latino(a)/Chicano? Yes/No"). Only Hispanic adults were allowed to take part in the study. To control the quality of our data, our survey included attention check questions with a "fixed answer" in the very beginning of the survey. Participants were asked to respond to the following statement: "If you took the time to read these instructions, which many people who respond to surveys do not, then please answer the questions below by clicking on the option that says, "strongly disagree", rather than checking the response that says, "strongly agree"." Then we screened out those who failed to respond correctly. The final sample consisted of 71 adults (59% male, $M_{age} = 30$ years) who were randomly assigned to one of three conditions of service provider ethnicity (Hispanic vs. white American vs. African American), a between-subjects factor. Ethnic congruity motive was a measured continuous factor.

Procedure and Measures

After being randomly assigned to one of the three frontline travel agency employee ethnicity conditions, participants completed a battery of survey items. Ratings of all multi-item measures were averaged for our statistical analyses. The measure of the independent variable, ethnic congruity motive, consisted of rating, "How desirable is it to be served by a(n) [assigned ethnicity] employee in a retail service establishment?" on two 7-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *extremely*; 1 = *very undesirable*, 7 = *very desirable*). This variable measure was embedded

unobtrusively to avoid direct influence on the dependent measure within a battery of demographic questions.

Subsequently, participants read a scenario adapted from Boukis (2016) about an interpersonal customer service encounter with a travel agent. They were told that a Hispanic customer (Alex Hernandez) was planning a family cruise vacation and visited a travel agency in which Alex sees three frontline employees at the service counter occupied with other customers. Participants then viewed three side-by-side images of the employees with their name under the picture: José Alonzo (Hispanic), Brett Stevenson (white American), and Terrell Johnson (African American). We pre-tested these images with a separate MTurk sample of 90 Hispanic adults, who were randomly assigned to one of the three ethnic employee images and rated likability with a single item ("How do you feel about the travel agent?") on a 7-point scale (1 = *dislike*, 7 = *like*). No significant mean differences arose ($M_{Hispanic}$= 5.53, $M_{African\ American}$= 5.84, $M_{White\ American}$= 5.63; F (2, 89) = 0.61, $p > .5$) and the overall mean liking score (M=5.66) was significantly above the scale neutral point (t (89)= 12.17, p< .001).

Participants read that Alex waited by looking at some travel brochures and then was greeted by the first available travel agent whose picture and name appeared on screen. The interaction depicted the employee providing standard service, with some basic suggestions, that resulted in Alex booking the cruise vacation. Next, participants completed the dependent variable (service satisfaction) by responding to a single item ("How satisfied is Alex with the service received at the travel agency?") on two 7-point scales anchored by *very unsatisfied/very satisfied* and *not at all/completely.* Participants were then thanked and debriefed.

Table 1
Summary of IV and DV corresponding with each experimental condition in Study 1

Condition	Assigned travel agent ethnicity	Independent variable (measured)	Dependent variable (measured)
1	**Hispanic**	*Ethnic congruity motive* = Desire for service by **Hispanic** retail service employee	Satisfaction with service provided by **Hispanic** travel agent
2	**White American**	*Ethnic incongruity motive* = Desire for service by **White American** retail service employee	Satisfaction with service provided by **White American** travel agent
3	**African American**	*Ethnic incongruity motive* = Desire for service by **African American** retail service employee	Satisfaction with service provided by **African American service** travel agent

Results

We conducted moderated multiple regression analysis using SPSS, with ethnic congruity motive as the independent variable, employee ethnicity as a moderator, and service satisfaction as the dependent variable. The three categories of employee ethnicity were dummy coded into two variables: D1 (0= Hispanic, 1= White American) represents a comparison of the Hispanic versus White American travel agent condition, and D2 (0= Hispanic, 1= African American) represents a comparison of the Hispanic versus African American travel agent condition (see Table 2 for a

breakdown of the specific independent and dependent variables corresponding with each travel agent ethnicity condition).
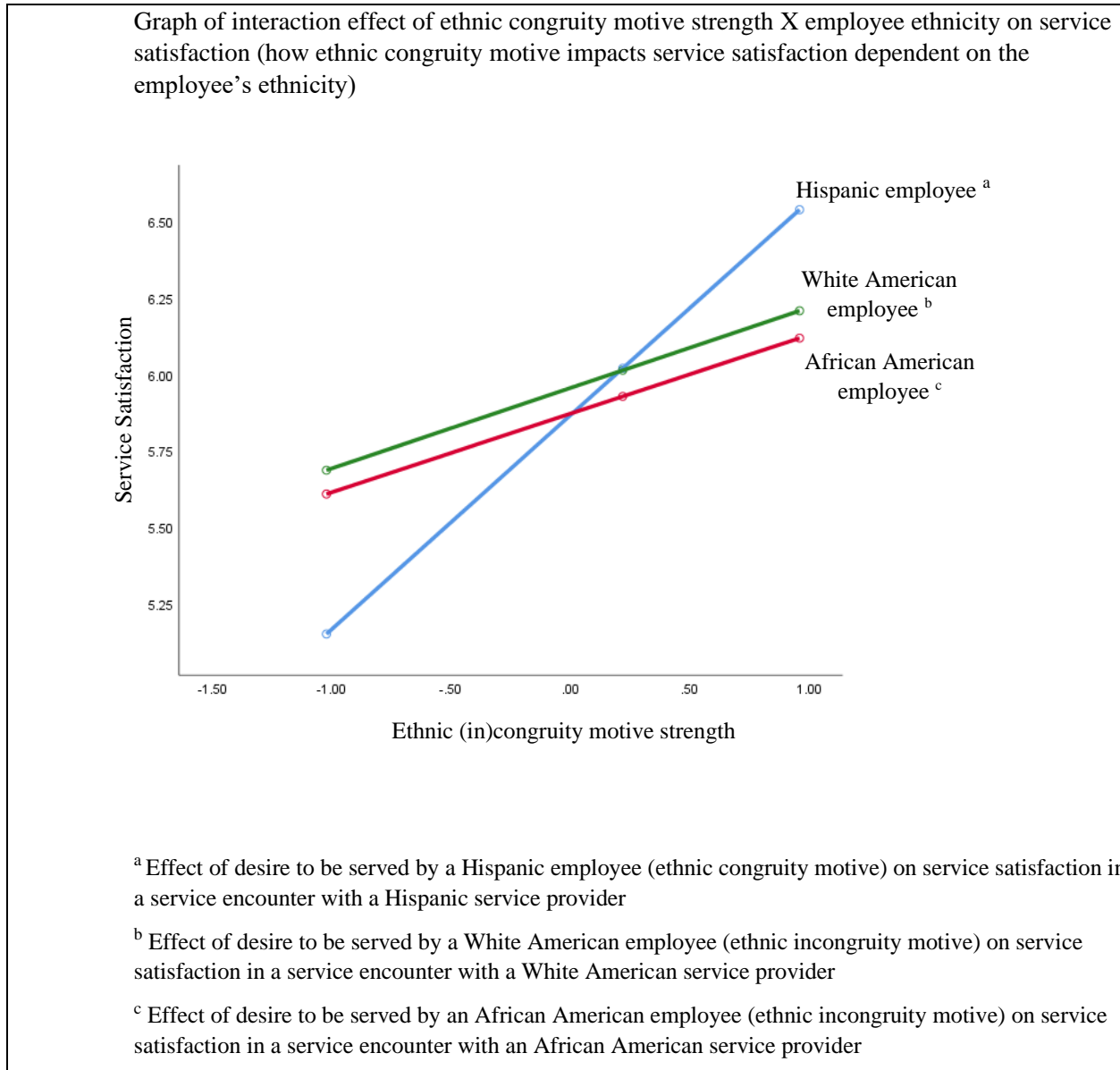
The results revealed a significant ethnic congruity motive effect, which was qualified by a significant interaction with the D1 variable (b = -.66, t = -2.84, p < .01) and by a significant interaction with the D2 variable (b = -.59, t = -2.84, p < .01; see Table 2, Panel A; see Figure 2). These two interaction effects signify that participants' desire for service with a Hispanic service provider (ethnic congruity motive) resulted in greater service satisfaction with a Hispanic service provider (b = .92, t = 5.07, p < .001) compared with the ethnic incongruity effects on satisfaction with a White American employee (b = .26, t = 1.76, p= .083) and an African American employee (b = .26, t = 2.40, p < .05; see Table 2, Panel B). These results support H1.

Table 2
Study 1 Linear Multiple Regression Results

PANEL A						

Outcome variable: Service Satisfaction

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.61	.37	.54	7.61	5	65	.001

Predictor variable	B	SE	t	p	Lower	Upper
Constant	5.73	.17	33.97	.001	5.40	6.07
Ethnic (in)congruity motive (E[I]CM)	0.92	.18	5.07	.001	0.56	1.28
D1	0.17	.24	0.72	.476	-0.30	0.65
D2	0.25	.22	1.12	.265	-0.19	0.69
E(I)CM * D1	-0.66	.23	-2.84	.006	-1.13	-0.20
E(I)CM * D2	-0.59	.22	-2.70	.009	-1.02	-0.15

PANEL B						

Conditional effects of ethnic (in)congruity motive toward each service employee ethnicity on service satisfaction

Levels of the moderator	b	SE	t	p	Lower	Upper
Hispanic	.92	.18	5.07	.001	0.56	1.28
White American	.26	.15	1.76	.083	-0.04	0.55
African American	.33	.12	2.73	.008	0.09	0.57

*Note: D1= employee ethnicity conditions comparison #1: 0= Hispanic, 1= White American; D2= employee ethnicity conditions comparison #2: 0= Hispanic, 1= African American

Figure 2, Study 1

Graph of interaction effect of ethnic congruity motive strength X employee ethnicity on service satisfaction (how ethnic congruity motive impacts service satisfaction dependent on the employee's ethnicity)

[a] Effect of desire to be served by a Hispanic employee (ethnic congruity motive) on service satisfaction in a service encounter with a Hispanic service provider

[b] Effect of desire to be served by a White American employee (ethnic incongruity motive) on service satisfaction in a service encounter with a White American service provider

[c] Effect of desire to be served by an African American employee (ethnic incongruity motive) on service satisfaction in a service encounter with an African American service provider
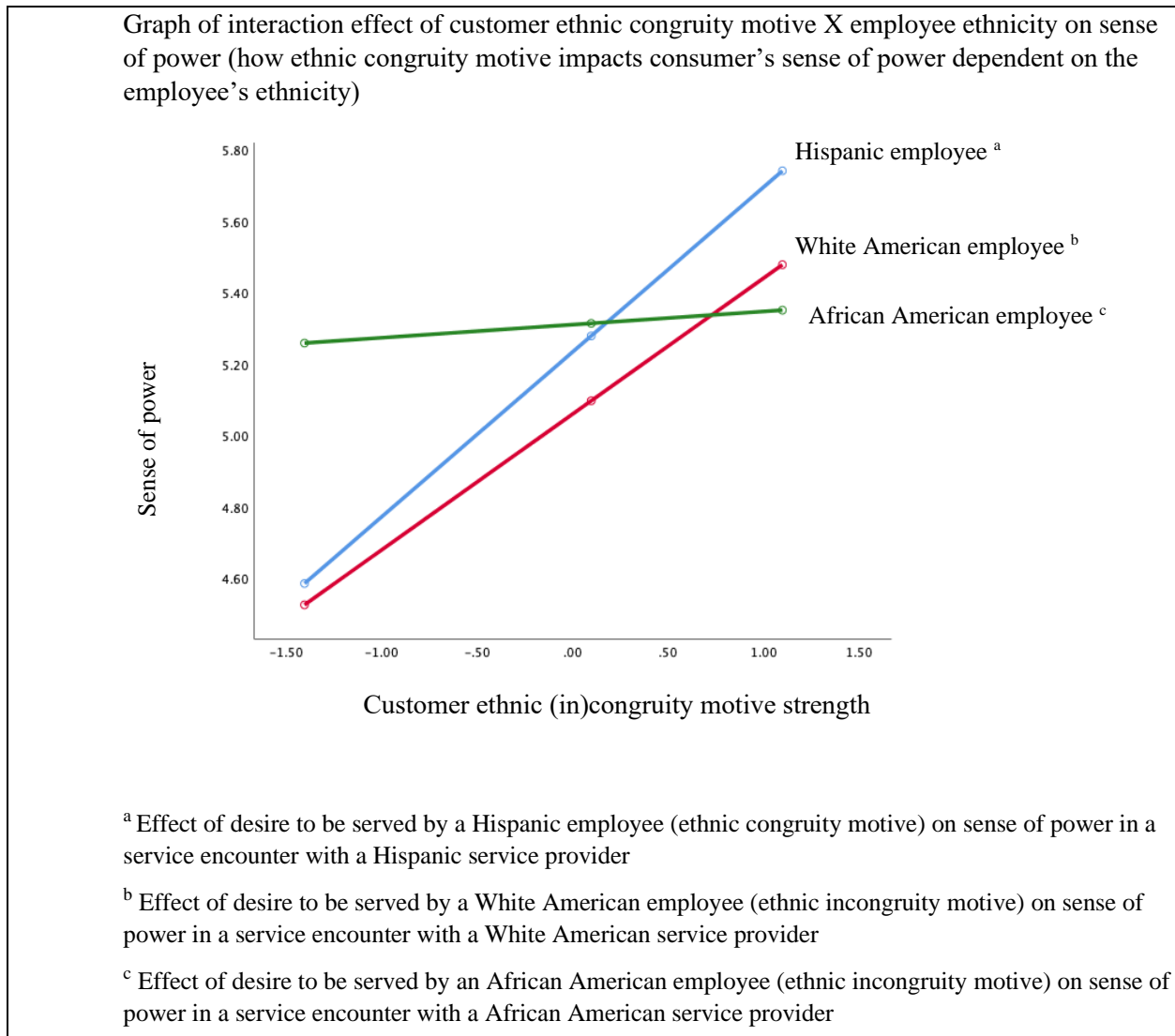
STUDY 2

Study 2a and Study 2b (replication study) investigate the relationship of Hispanic customers' ethnic congruity motive on sense of power in the service encounter (H2), the relationship of sense of power with service satisfaction (H3), and whether sense of power mediates the relationship of ethnic congruity motive and satisfaction (H4). The Qualtrics web-based experiment studies involved a non-student sample (Study 2a) and a student sample (Study 2b).

Study 2a

     Participants, design, and procedure. We recruited participants in exchange for a small monetary incentive through the MTurk platform. The data was collected in Spring 2020. As in study 1, only Hispanic adults were allowed to participate in the study and attention checks were used for data quality control. The final sample consisted of 107 adults (63% male, $M_{age} = 30$ years), which were randomly assigned to one of three conditions of service provider ethnicity (Hispanic vs. white American vs. African American), a between-subjects factor. Customer ethnic congruity motive was a continuous, measured factor. The procedure was fairly identical to that in Study 1. However, it included several measures that participants completed after the dependent measure, such as a sense of power process measure and covariate measures of perceived socioeconomic status of their Hispanic ethnic group and generational status (see Appendix A for measures).

Figure 3, Study 2a

Graph of interaction effect of customer ethnic congruity motive X employee ethnicity on sense of power (how ethnic congruity motive impacts consumer's sense of power dependent on the employee's ethnicity)

Hispanic employee [a]

White American employee [b]

African American employee [c]

Sense of power

Customer ethnic (in)congruity motive strength

[a] Effect of desire to be served by a Hispanic employee (ethnic congruity motive) on sense of power in a service encounter with a Hispanic service provider

[b] Effect of desire to be served by a White American employee (ethnic incongruity motive) on sense of power in a service encounter with a White American service provider

[c] Effect of desire to be served by an African American employee (ethnic incongruity motive) on sense of power in a service encounter with a African American service provider

Study 2a results. We conducted a moderated mediation analysis using PROCESS (model 7; Hayes, 2018) with a bootstrap sample of 10,000 and 95% confidence intervals. The model included customer ethnic congruity motive as a continuous independent variable, dummy-coded employee ethnicity variables as moderators, sense of power as a mediator, and service satisfaction as the dependent variable. As in the previous study, the three categories of employee ethnicity were dummy coded into two variables: D1 (0= Hispanic, 1= White American) compares the Hispanic versus White American travel agent condition, and D2 (0= Hispanic, 1= African American) compares the Hispanic versus African American travel agent condition (see Table 3 for a breakdown of the specific independent, mediator, and dependent variables corresponding with each travel agent ethnicity condition). Additionally, perceived socioeconomic (SES) status and generational (GEN) status were included as covariates given their potential extraneous influence on sense of power. Neither of the covariates was statistically significant in either the regression model with sense of power as the dependent variable (see Table 4, Panel A) or in the regression model with service satisfaction as the dependent variable (see Table 4, Panel C).

The regression model with sense of power as the dependent variable revealed a significant ethnic congruity motive effect, qualified by a significant ethnic congruity motive interaction effect with the D2 variable ($b = -.42$, $t = -2.28$, $p < .05$; see Table 4, Panel A). The interaction effect was such that participants' ethnic congruity motive resulted in stronger service satisfaction with a Hispanic service provider ($b = .50$, $t = 3.63$, $p < .001$), compared to the service satisfaction resulting from participants ethnic incongruity motive for service from an African American service provider ($b = .07$, $t = 0.65$, $p > .5$; see Table 4, Panel B; see Figure 3). No other effects in this regression model were statistically significant. The non-significant ethnic congruity motive interaction with D1 indicates that participants' service satisfaction resulting from an ethnic congruity motive ($b = .50$, $t = 3.63$, $p < .001$) did not differ significantly from the service satisfaction resulting from an ethnic incongruity motive for service from a White American service provider ($b = .41$, $t = 2.96$, $p < .01$; See Table 4, Panel B). The results provide partial support for H2.

Table 3
Summary of IV, Mediator, and DV corresponding with each experimental condition in Study 2a and 2b

Condition	Assigned travel agent ethnicity	Independent variable (measured)	Mediator (measured)	Dependent variable (measured)
1	**Hispanic**	*Ethnic congruity motive =* Desire for service by **Hispanic** retail service employee		Satisfaction with service provided by **Hispanic** service employee
2	**White American**	*Ethnic incongruity motive* = Desire for service by **White American** retail service employee		Satisfaction with service provided by **White American** service employee
3	**African American**	*Ethnic incongruity motive* = Desire for service by **African American** retail service employee		Satisfaction with service provided by **African American service** employee

The results of the regression model with service satisfaction as the dependent variable demonstrated a significant, positive effect of sense of power ($b = .67$, $t = 8.90$, $p < .001$; see Table

4, Panel C), which supports H3. No other effects in this regression model are statistically significant. Next, we examine the direct and indirect effects.

The direct effect ethnic congruity motive on service satisfaction, controlling for sense of power, was non-significant ($b = .09$, $t= 1.51$, $p > .1$). The index of moderated-mediation for the D2 variable was statistically significant ($b=-.26$, 95% CI [-.64, -.01]), which indicates that the indirect effect of customer ethnic congruity motive on service satisfaction differs significantly between desire for service from a Hispanic ($b=.28$, 95% CI [.13, .52]) versus African American service provider ($b= .02$, 95% CI [-.22, .22]; see Table 4, Panel D). These indirect effects reveal that desire for service from a Hispanic service provider produces greater sense of power in the service encounter with a Hispanic employee ($b = .50$, $t= 3.63$, $p < .001$; see Table 4, Panel B), which positively influences service satisfaction ($b = .67$, $t= 8.90$, $p < .001$; see Table 4, Panel C). Conversely, desire for service from an African American service provider does not affect sense of power in the service encounter with an African American employee ($b = .07$, $t= 0.65$, $p >.5$); see Table 4, Panel B). Hence, the conditional indirect effect results show that sense of power does not mediate the relationship of ethnic congruity motive to satisfaction with service from an African American service provider ($b= .02$, 95% CI [-.22, .22], confidence interval overlaps with zero; see Table 4, Panel D). Lastly, the index of moderated-mediation for the D1 variable was not statistically significant ($b=-.05$, 95% CI [-.32, .18]), which is indicative of the similar indirect effects of ethnic congruity motive on service satisfaction with a Hispanic employee ($b=.28$, 95% CI [.13, .52]) versus a white American employee ($b=.23$, 95% CI [.07, .45]; see Table 4, Panel D). These results provide partial support for H4.

Study 2b

To provide generalizability to the previous study's findings, Study 2b aimed to replicate the results of Study 2a using the same study design and procedure administered to an undergraduate student sample.

Participants, design, and procedure. In exchange for course credit, 226 undergraduate students (64% female, M_{age} = 23.2) from a major public university in the southeastern United States volunteered to take part in the study. The data were collected in Spring 2020 via a Qualtrics web survey. The design, stimuli, procedure, and measures are identical to those in Study 2a. Study 2b results. The regression model with sense of power as the dependent variable showed a significant ethnic congruity motive effect, qualified by a significant ethnic congruity motive interaction effect with the D2 variable ($b = -.36$, $t = -2.90$, $p < .01$; see Table 5, Panel A). The interaction effect was such that participants' ethnic congruity motive resulted in stronger sense of power from service with a Hispanic service provider ($b = .36$, $t = 3.93$, $p < .001$), compared to the sense of power resulting from participants ethnic incongruity motive for service by an African American service provider ($b = .01$, $t = 0.07$, $p > .9$; see Table 5, Panel B; see Figure 4). No other effects in this regression model were statistically significant. The non-significant ethnic congruity motive interaction with D1 indicates that participants' sense of power arising from service by a Hispanic employee ($b = .36$, $t = 3.93$, $p < .001$) did not differ significantly from the sense of power resulting from service by a White American service provider ($b = .13$, $t = 1.24$, $p > .2$; See Table 5, Panel B). This result suggests that Hispanic participants' desire to receive service from a Hispanic frontline employee leads to a stronger sense of power during the service encounter than

Table 4

Study 2a Moderated Mediation Results with MTurk sample

PANEL A

Outcome variable: Sense of Power

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.45	.20	.93	3.63	7	99	.002

Predictor variable	b	SE	t	p	Lower	Upper
Constant	5.20	.40	13.11	.001	4.42	5.99
Ethnic (In)Congruity Motive (E[I]CM)	0.50	.14	3.63	.001	0.23	0.77
D1	-0.15	.23	-0.67	.507	-0.61	0.30
D2	0.13	.23	0.55	.581	-0.33	0.59
E(I)CM * D1	-0.09	.19	-0.44	.661	-0.47	0.30
E(I)CM * D2	-0.42	.18	-2.28	.025	-0.78	-0.05
Socioeconomic	0.01	.05	0.25	.800	-0.09	0.12
Generation	-0.03	.06	-0.47	.640	-.14	0.08

PANEL B

Conditional effects of ethnic (in)congruity motive toward each employee ethnicity on sense of power

Service employee ethnicity	b	SE	t	p	Lower	Upper
Hispanic	.50[a]	.14	3.63	.001	.23	.77
White American	.41[b]	.14	2.96	.004	.14	.69
African American	.07[c]	.12	0.65	.520	-.16	.31

*Note: D1= employee ethnicity conditions comparison #1: 0= Hispanic, 1= White American; D2= employee ethnicity conditions comparison #2: 0= Hispanic, 1= African American

[a] Effect of desire to be served by a Hispanic employee (ethnic congruity motive) on sense of power in a service encounter with a Hispanic service provider

[b] Effect of desire to be served by a White American employee (ethnic incongruity motive) on sense of power in a service encounter with a White American service provider

[c] Effect of desire to be served by an African American employee (ethnic incongruity motive) on sense of power in a service encounter with an African American service provider
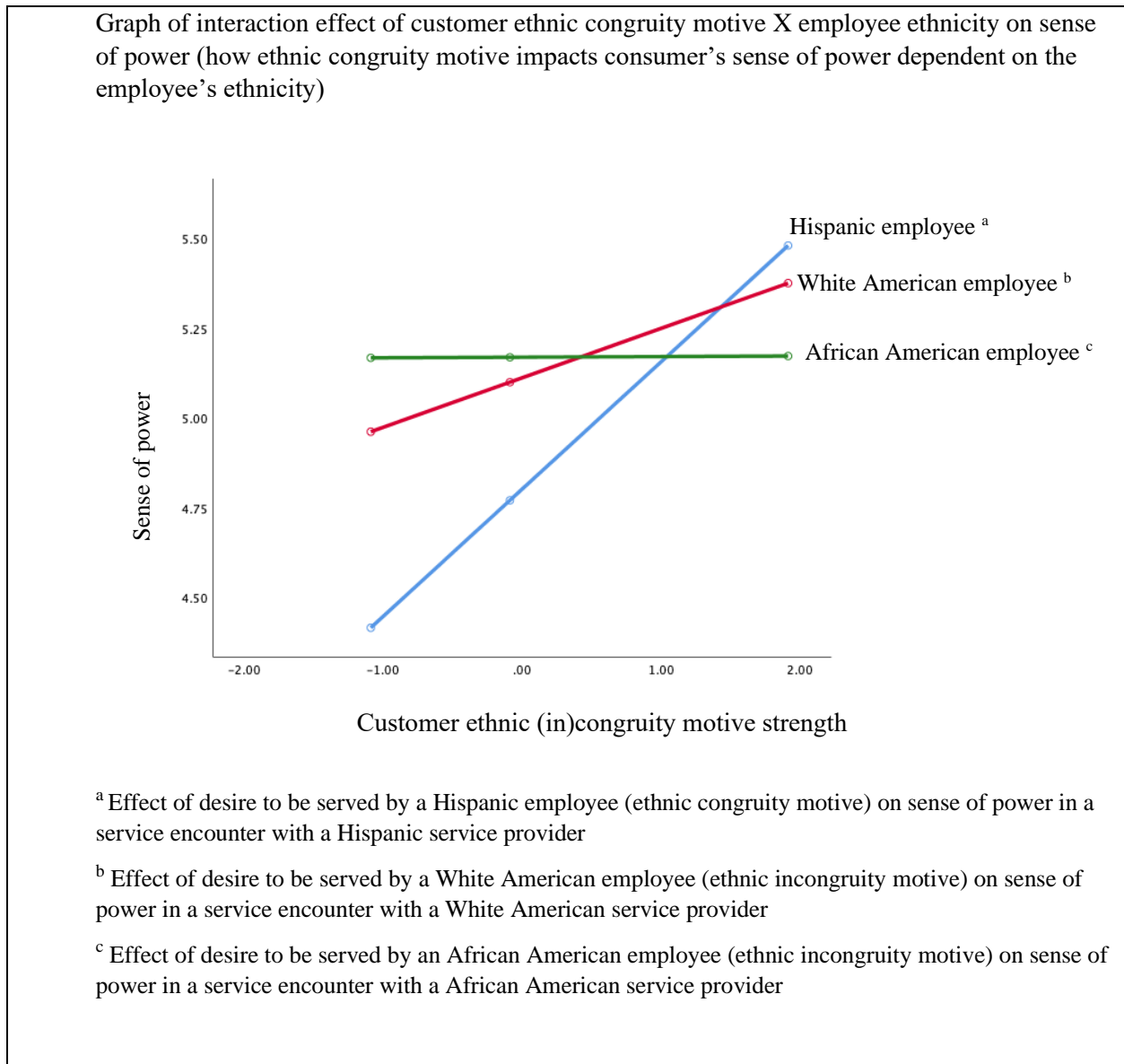
Table 4 (continued)

PANEL C

Outcome variable: Service Satisfaction

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.72	.52	.56	26.74	4	102	.001

Predictor variable	b	SE	t	p	Lower	Upper
Constant	2.63	.48	5.47	.001	1.67	3.58
E(I)CM	0.09	.06	1.51	.134	-0.03	0.22
Sense of Power	0.67	.07	8.90	.001	0.52	0.82
Socioeconomic	-0.04	.04	-0.98	.329	-0.12	0.04
Generation	-0.04	.04	-0.89	.375	-0.12	0.05

PANEL D

Direct effect of ethnic (in)congruity motive on service satisfaction

	b	SE	t	p	Lower	Upper
	.09	.06	1.51	.133	-.03	.22

Conditional indirect effect of ethnic (in)congruity motive toward each employee ethnicity on service satisfaction

Service employee ethnicity	b	SE		Boot_Lower	Boot_Upper
Hispanic	.28[a]	.10		.13	.52
White American	.23[b]	.10		.07	.45
African American	.02[c]	.11		-.22	.22

Index of Moderated Mediation (difference between conditional indirect effects)

	Index	SE		Boot_Lower	Boot_Upper
D1	-.05	.13		-.32	.18
D2	-.26	.17		-.64	-.01

[a] Indirect effect of desire to be served by a Hispanic employee (ethnic congruity motive) on service satisfaction through sense of power in a service encounter with a Hispanic service provider

[b] Effect of desire to be served by a White American employee (ethnic incongruity motive) on service satisfaction through on sense of power in a service encounter with a White American service provider

[c] Effect of desire to be served by an African American employee (ethnic incongruity motive) on service satisfaction through on sense of power in a service encounter with an African American service provider

Figure 4, Study 2b

Graph of interaction effect of customer ethnic congruity motive X employee ethnicity on sense of power (how ethnic congruity motive impacts consumer's sense of power dependent on the employee's ethnicity)

[a] Effect of desire to be served by a Hispanic employee (ethnic congruity motive) on sense of power in a service encounter with a Hispanic service provider

[b] Effect of desire to be served by a White American employee (ethnic incongruity motive) on sense of power in a service encounter with a White American service provider

[c] Effect of desire to be served by an African American employee (ethnic incongruity motive) on sense of power in a service encounter with a African American service provider

their desire to receive service from an African American frontline employee, but it did not differ in reference to the White American employee. These results partially support H3.

The regression model with service satisfaction as the dependent variable showed significant effects of overall ethnic (in)congruity motives (across all employee ethnicity conditions; $b = .23$, $t = 4.42$, $p < .001$) and sense of power ($b = .54$, $t = 8.61$, $p < .001$; See Table 5, Panel C). Sense of power positively affected service satisfaction, which supports H2. No other effects were statistically significant. Next, we examine the direct and indirect effects.

The index of moderated mediation associated with D2 (index $= -.19$, 95% CI [-.3740, -.0208]) was statistically significant (see Table 5, Panel D), which indicates that the indirect effect of customer ethnic (in)congruity motive on service satisfaction differs significantly between desire for service from a Hispanic ($b = .20$, 95% CI [.06, .35]) versus African American service provider

(b= .003, 95% CI [-.09, .10], confidence interval overlaps with zero; see Table 4, Panel D). These indirect effects are such that desire for service from a Hispanic service provider produces greater sense of power in the service encounter with a Hispanic employee ($b = .36$, $t= 3.93$, $p < .001$; see Table 5, Panel B), which positively influences service satisfaction ($b = .54$, $t= 8.61$, $p < .001$; see Table 5, Panel C). Conversely, desire for service from an African American service provider does not affect sense of power in the service encounter with an African American employee ($b = .01$, $t= 0.07$, $p >.9$); see Table 5, Panel B), which preempts sense of power from mediating the relationship of ethnic incongruity motive to satisfaction with service from an African American service provider ($b= .02$, 95% CI [-.22, .22], confidence interval overlaps with zero; see Table 5, Panel D). Lastly, the index of moderated-mediation for the D1 variable was not statistically significant ($b=-.13$, 95% CI [-.30, .04]), which indicates the similarity of the indirect effects of ethnic (in)congruity motive on service satisfaction with a Hispanic employee ($b=.20$, 95% CI [.06, .35]) versus a white American employee ($b=.07$, 95% CI [-.02, .17]; see Table 5, Panel D). These results provide partial support for H4.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Despite the importance of customer–employee ethnic congruity in a retail service space and the proclivity of ethnic consumers to favor other similar ethnic group members, scant research has explored when and how service provider ethnic congruity enhances ethnic customers' service satisfaction. To fill this gap, this study investigates the influence of Hispanic customers' desire to be served by a Hispanic service provider on service satisfaction and the mechanism of felt power underlying this effect. The hypothesis test results for each study are summarized in Table 6.

Table 5

Study 2b Moderated Mediation Results with Student Sample

PANEL A							

Outcome variable: Sense of Power							
Model Summary							
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p	
.32	.10	1.37	3.44	7	218	.002	

Predictor variable	b	SE	t	p	Lower	Upper
Constant	5.06	.30	16.95	.001	4.47	0.65
Ethnic (In)Congruity Motive (E[I]CM)	0.37	.09	3.94	.001	0.18	0.55
D1	0.37	.19	1.92	.056	-0.01	0.76
D2	0.36	.19	1.87	.062	-0.02	0.74
E(I)CM * D1	-0.23	.14	-1.63	.106	-0.51	0.05
E(I)CM * D2	-0.36	.12	-2.90	.004	-0.60	-0.12
Socioeconomic	-0.03	.04	-0.58	.564	-0.11	0.06
Generation	-0.04	.03	-1.20	.232	-0.11	0.03

PANEL B

Conditional effects of ethnic (in)congruity motive toward each employee ethnicity on sense of power

Levels of the moderator	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*Lower*	*Upper*
Hispanic	.36	.09	3.93	.001	.18	.55
White American	.13	.11	1.24	.217	-.08	.35
African American	.01	.08	0.07	.947	-.16	.17

PANEL C

Outcome variable: Service Satisfaction (SAT)

Model Summary

R	*R-sq*	*MSE*	*F*	*df1*	*df2*	*p*
.58	.34	1.25	28.38	4	221	.001

Predictor variable	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*Lower*	*Upper*
Constant	2.66	.43	6.25	.001	1.82	3.50
E(I)CM	0.23	.05	4.49	.001	0.13	0.34
Sense of Power	0.54	.06	8.61	.001	0.42	0.66
Socioeconomic	.01	.04	0.15	.880	-0.08	0.09
Generation	.06	.03	1.91	.058	-0.01	0.13

PANEL D

Direct effect of ethnic (in)congruity motive on service satisfaction

	b	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*Lower*	*Upper*
	.23	.05	4.49	.001	.13	.34

Conditional indirect effect of ethnic (in)congruity motive toward each employee ethnicity on service satisfaction

Levels of the moderator	*b*	*SE*		*Boot_Lower*	*Boot_Upper*
Hispanic	.20	.08		.06	.35
White American	.07	.05		-.02	.17
African American	.003	.05		-.09	.10

Index of Moderated Mediation (difference between conditional indirect effects)

	Index	SE		*Boot_Lower*	*Boot_Upper*
D1	-.13	.09		-.30	.04
D2	-.19	.09		-.39	-.02

*Note: D1= employee ethnicity conditions comparison #1: 0= Hispanic, 1= White American; D2= employee ethnicity conditions comparison #2: 0= Hispanic, 1= African American

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This research contributes to the service literature in two main ways. First, it adds to the literature on ethnicity and service interactions by providing deeper insight into an antecedent of the positive effect of customer–employee ethnic congruity on customer satisfaction. While most organizations' goal is for frontline employees to deliver quality service to all customers, meeting the culturally diverse service expectations of ethnic customers is a challenge that ethnically similar service employees are in a unique position to address due to their empathetic understanding of customers' cultural service expectations, which often differ markedly from those of the majority population. Although prior research suggests that ethnic consumers gravitate toward retail stores that employ personnel who share their ethnicity, previous findings regarding the relationship between shared ethnicity service encounters and customer satisfaction have been mixed.

Moreover, prior studies do not account for individual differences in ethnic customers' desire for service encounters with ethnically congruent frontline employees. Research on bicultural consumers shows that some individuals assimilate cultural cues (e.g., ethnic salesperson) in the marketplace, whereas others react against them to protect their self from the psychological threat of eroding the excluded identity (Mok and Morris, 2013). Our research is the first to introduce the "ethnic congruity motive" construct to predict differential service evaluations by customers from one ethnic group, Hispanic, toward service encounters with frontline service employees of congruent and incongruent ethnic backgrounds.

During interpersonal service interactions, customers often feel dependent upon the frontline employee for reasons such as the valued product knowledge the employee possesses or the employee's role in facilitating financing for expensive purchases (Kirmani and Campbell, 2004). In this sense, some customers may perceive that the balance of power favors the frontline employee, which further highlights the importance of the interplay of ethnic congruity motives and front-line employee ethnicity in determining ethnic customers' service satisfaction. Interacting with a Hispanic employee is desirable for a high ethnic congruity motive customer, resulting in a greater sense of power and service satisfaction. The same pattern emerged for service with white American service employees, with greater desire for such service resulting in greater power and satisfaction, which indicates that participants in the sample possess a bicultural Hispanic American identity in which they identify with both ethnicities. Conversely, desire for a service encounter with an African American service employee was not significantly associated with Hispanic customers' sense of power, nor service satisfaction. Although our studies were conducted with Hispanic customers, the association between desire to receive service from an ethnically similar versus dissimilar frontline employee and sense of power experienced during the service encounter is not necessarily restricted to Hispanic customers. Many minorities ethnic customers encounter prejudicial treatment from non-minority service providers (Klinner & Walsh, 2013; Walsh, 2009), which no doubt undermines their felt power during a service encounter.

Second, this research contributes to the literature on power in service interactions. Despite the prevalent role of power in consumer experiences (Rucker *et al.*, 2012), research on the role of power in service encounters is sparse. We address this dearth of literature by demonstrating that the extent to which customers feel they can influence the service encounter outcome is significantly influenced by the extent to which they desire service from a member of a particular ethnic group, and this, in turn, significantly influences service satisfaction. Given that minorities sometimes encounter discrimination from service providers, which undercuts felt power in the service encounter, examining felt power as a consequence of the service encounter sheds further light on

Table 6. Summary of hypothesis test results per study

		Study 1	Study 2	Study 3a	Study 3b
H1	Ethnic congruity motive→ Service satisfaction	• Service satisfaction associated with desire for service from Hispanic service provider was greater than satisfaction associated with desire for service from non-Hispanic service providers. • H1 supported			
H2	Sense of power→ Service satisfaction		• Sense of power positively affects satisfaction • H2 supported	• Sense of power positively affects satisfaction • H2 supported	• Sense of power positively affects satisfaction • H2 supported
H3	Ethnic congruity motive →Sense of power			**Interaction effects**: ServDes X D1: b = -.08, ns ServDes X D2: b = -.43, p < .05 **Simple effects**: ServDes- Hispanic: b = .46, p < .001 ServDes-White Amer.: b = .38, p<.01 ServDes-Afr. Amer.: b = .04, p > .7 • Positive significant effect of desirability of Hispanic service encounter on sense of power is greater than desirability of non-Hispanic service encounter (African Amer employee). • H3 partially supported	**Interaction effects**: ServDes X D1: b = -.22, ns ServDes X D2: b = -.35, p < .01 **Simple effects**: ServDes- Hispanic: b = ..36, p < .001 ServDes-White Amer.: b = .14, ns ServDes-Afr. Amer.: b = .002, ns • Positive significant effect of desirability of Hispanic service encounter on sense of power is greater than desirability of non-Hispanic service encounter (African Amer employee). • H3 partially supported

H4	Ethnic congruity motive → Sense of power → Service satisfaction			**Indices of moderated mediation** D1: -.05, n.s. D2: .28, p< .05 **Indirect effects:** Hispanic: .28, p < .05 White Amer.: .23, p< .05 Afr. Amer.: .02, n.s. • Positive indirect effect of desirability of Hispanic service encounter on satisfaction through sense of power is greater than indirect effect of desirability of non-Hispanic service encounter (African Amer employee). • H4 partially supported	**Indices of moderated mediation** D1: -.12, n.s. D2: -.19, p< .05 **Indirect effects:** Hispanic: .19, p < .05 White Amer.: .07, ns Afr. Amer.: .001, n.s. • Positive indirect effect of desirability of Hispanic service encounter on satisfaction through sense of power is greater than indirect effect of desirability of non-Hispanic service encounter (African Amer employee). H4 partially supported

* Note: D1= dummy coded employee ethnicity variable 1: 0= Hispanic, 1= White American; D2= dummy coded variable 2: 0= Hispanic, 1= African American; "Amer."= American, "Afr. Amer."= African American;

the positive relationship between customer–employee ethnic congruity and minority customers' service satisfaction.

Customers' ethnic congruity motive, or desire to receive service from an ethnically similar frontline employee, may stimulate certain expectations of how much influence the customer will be able to exert over the service encounter outcome, which colors their perception of sense of power during the service encounter, which determines customer satisfaction. Interestingly, in both Studies 2a and 2b, the effect of ethnic service encounter desirability on sense of power was nonsignificant when the frontline employee was African American, which also resulted in a non-significant indirect effect of service encounter desirability on service satisfaction through sense of power. This may be due to uncertainty of what to expect in terms of whether the customer could or should exert influence over the service encounter outcome. Given the greater role-based power of an African American frontline employee as an expert and/or gatekeeper (Kirmani and Campbell, 2004), any lack of confidence concerning interpersonal influence abilities by a Hispanic customer detracts from the customer's sense of power in the service encounter, which weakens service satisfaction. Furthermore, as fellow minority ethnic group members, Hispanic customers may be motivated to control prejudicial reactions toward African American frontline employees (Maddux et al., 2005). Thus, they may consciously correct for any beliefs that would bias their service encounter power expectations given that desiring an interpersonal service encounter with an African American frontline employee out of expectations of exerting power and influence over the service encounter would seem prejudicial. Correcting one's sense of power may detract from service satisfaction given that previous research on power shows that the mismatch between one's actual power and a sense of power might lead to a negative psychological reaction (Rucker, 2012; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008). Our studies showed Hispanic customers' strong desire to be served by a Hispanic employee leads to greater felt power and, in turn, positive downstream consequences on behavior such as greater service satisfaction. These findings result in novel theoretical insights and extend the implication of prior research on service encounter by examining desirability of being served by ethnically similar frontline employee, and by introducing the sense of power as a novel underlying mechanism.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Our findings have two important managerial implications. First, the findings show that Hispanic customers' strong desire to be served by a Hispanic employee is associated with greater felt power and, in turn, greater service satisfaction. However, a weaker desire to be served by a Hispanic employee leads to weaker felt power and lower service satisfaction. Thus, retailers and other service providers in markets with large concentrations of minority customers should segment their markets according to customer ethnic congruity motive, that is, how strongly customers want to be served by employees of their same ethnicity versus other ethnicities. The extent of retailer and service provider ethnic and/or racial matching of employees to customers in each market would be more effective were it based on the degree to which ethnic customers desire service from members of their ethnic group. Therefore, retailers should not assume that Hispanic customers desire service from Hispanic service employees. Rather, service managers should approach Hispanic customers and provide options of which service employees are available to serve the customer. For example, if there is a Hispanic (employee A) and a non-Hispanic employee (employee B) available and within the customer's visual field, the service manager could inform the customer that employee A and employee B can serve his or her needs and point the customer toward them. Given that customers commonly rely on a variety of service employee nonverbal

cues (e.g., physical appearance, physical proximity behaviors, hard gestures) to determine shared ethnicity (Montoya & Briggs, 2013), the customer can choose the ethnically congruent or incongruent service employee based on their own ethnic congruity motive. This method avoids a potentially offensive or upsetting assumption that the customer desires an ethnically congruent service encounter. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that a diverse workforce requires an environment that promotes fair personnel practices and fosters integration of ethnic minorities employees (supportive diversity climate) to minimize potential decrease in performance by the employees that are part of ethnic minorities (Robinson and Dechant, 1997). Research shows that sales increase significantly, especially among ethnic sales personnel and service providers, when management effective promotes a positive diversity climate (McKay et al. 2008).

Second, retailers and service providers should train their employees to try to increase customers' felt power during the service encounter. Certain employee cues that show that the customer is influencing the service outcome in a desirable manner (e.g., engaging in active listening, showing empathy) can help increase felt power regardless of ethnic congruity, which will positively affect service satisfaction (Comer and Drollinger, 1999). Communicating to customers that all frontline employees of a retail establishment practice cultural sensitivity in their service interactions could also encourage customers to self-correct for any implicit biases in their perceptions of how much influence they will have over service encounter outcomes with ethnic employees as seemed to take place in studies 2a and 2b, helping to create consistent service expectations across a retailer's frontline employees.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

The findings should be interpreted with caution, given our study's limitations. Our three studies consist of experiments that involve responding to a travel agency scenario. Future studies should examine the extent to which our findings apply to other service contexts. Our non-student sample results are based on convenience samples drawn from US Hispanic subculture groups from around the United States which introduces certain heterogeneity into the sample (e.g., the characteristics of Hispanic culture that a Cuban customer in Miami identifies with differs from the characteristics of Hispanic culture that a Mexican customer in Arizona identifies with). Our student sample results are based on a convenience sample drawn from a largely Hispanic undergraduate student population from diverse national backgrounds, which likewise introduces heterogeneity due to different national differences in Hispanic cultural identification. Future studies should examine whether such US regional subcultural differences and national background differences in US Hispanic populations differentially impacts the roles of ethnic service encounter desirability and sense of power on service satisfaction.

Moreover, our focus on Hispanic participants limits the generalizability of our findings to other populations. Future research should examine other ethnic groups. The ethnic subculture groups in all the studies are also ethnic minorities in the United States. The experiences of non-minority ethnic groups being served by an employee of a particular ethnic background would likely differ from the experiences of minority groups in terms of felt power and service satisfaction. Future studies could compare the factors that influence non-minority customers' felt power and satisfaction in service encounters. Future research may explore our findings from employees' perspectives and examine the long-term effect of serving a particular type of ethnic customer on employees' sense of power and satisfaction.

The use of Mturk samples also presents potential limitations concerning data quality (Burnham et al. 2018; Smith et al. 2016). To minimize data quality issues, we incorporated

"attention filter" or "trap questions" within the survey which allowed us to screen out participants who failed the attention check and in turn enhanced our data quality. Further, according to Aguinis et al. (2021), one of the advantages of using MTurk is that it allows researchers to access particular demographics. Therefore, in study 1 and study 2a, we screened out participants who were not Hispanic by redirecting them to the end of the survey.

Lastly, in Studies 2a and 2b we found that the effect of Hispanic participants' desire to receive service from a Hispanic frontline employee on service satisfaction did not differ significantly from the effect of desire for a service encounter with a white American employee. We suspect that this may be due to actual and/or desired bicultural identification with both Hispanic and mainstream American culture by Hispanics in the US. Actual bicultural identification can result from customers undergoing the acculturation process and feeling comfortable identifying with both their culture of origin and the dominant US culture. Another possibility is that some consumers who are striving toward acculturation desire to identify with their Hispanic origins and dominant US culture, resulting in biased responding. In either case, acculturation is a key element of US Hispanic consumer identification with the Hispanic versus dominant American cultural group and future research should examine more closely the moderating influence of acculturation in customer satisfaction from service with ethnically congruent versus incongruent service providers.

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APPENDIX A

Compilation of study measures

Label	Items/Rating scale	Reliability
Ethnic congruity motive	How desirable is it to be served by a(n) [assigned ethnicity] employee in a retail service establishment? (1=Not at all, 7=Extremely; 1= Very undesirable, 7= Very desirable)	Pearson's r = .57 (Study 1) Pearson's r = .70 (Study 2a) Pearson's r = .97 (Study 2b)
Service satisfaction	How satisfied is [customer name] with the service received at the travel agency? (1 = not at all, 7 = completely; 1 = very unsatisfied, 7 = very satisfied)	Pearson's r = .47 (Study 1) Pearson's r = .63 (Study 2a) Pearson's r = .87 (Study 2b)
Sense of power (adapted from Anderson and Galinsky 2006; Anderson et al., 2012)	[customer] got the agent to listen to what he said [customer] got the agent to do what he wanted [customer] had the power to make the decisions (1 = disagree strongly, 7 = agree strongly)	α =.76 (Study 2a) α =.77 (Study 2b)
Perceived socioeconomic status of ethnic group	Please select the number of the rung that best represents where the Hispanic ethnic group stands on the ladder in the United States. [visual scale of a ladder with 10 rungs, numbered from 1 for the top rung, consecutively to 10 for the bottom rung]	Single item measure
Generational status	What generation of Hispanic ethnicity are you? (1=2nd generation [I was born in the United States & both parents were born outside of the United States]; 2= 3rd generation [At least one parent and I were born in the United States]; 3= 4th generation [At least one grandparent, parent, and I were born in the United States]…6= 1st generation [I was born outside of the United States, but I live in the United States])	Single item measure