

Immigrants Versus Nationals: When an Intercultural Service Encounter Failure Turns to Verbal Confrontation

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As diversity in the marketplace increases through immigration, examples of intolerance, confrontation, and even violence by nationals toward immigrant small business owners have begun to appear in popular press worldwide. This study examines how a simple and potentially unintended service encounter failure can evolve into a verbal confrontation that is outside the realm of acceptable marketplace interaction, to recommend ways to protect immigrant shopkeepers and their pursuit of entrepreneurial success as business owners. The results of two experiments in South Africa and the United States highlight that intercultural service encounter failure may put the shopkeeper at risk, as consumers' reactions depend on the perceived level of similarity and anger, as well as the context. The findings suggest ways for policy makers to address the issues beyond the obvious repressive tools (i.e., training for [immigrant] shopkeepers in the management of consumers' anger and a public campaign promoting diversity in the small business community).

Keywords: intercultural interaction, service encounter failure, anger, immigrants, violence

A key issue of contemporary marketing involves the interaction and integration of actors from diverse cultural backgrounds within the marketplace. Increasing immigration worldwide has significantly reshaped the dynamics of many host countries' marketplaces. In particular, entrepreneurship has been recognized as one of the most positive contributions of immigration. Immigrants in the United States are 30% more likely to start a business than nonimmigrants are, and the total business income generated by immigrant businesses in 2007 was \$67 billion (Fairlie 2008). The highest representation of immigrant-owned business and immigrant employees is in the wholesale and retail trade: 6 of 10 new immigrants in the United States are employed in service and service-related sectors (Sum et al. 2002). Beyond these economic benefits, immigrants' participation in the services sector has been celebrated for creating opportunities for intercultural interactions capable of fueling tolerance and acceptance (Jamal 2003, 2005).

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Service encounters are called intercultural if the service provider and the customer involved belong to different cultures (Stauss and Mang 1999). Although most intercultural service encounters are positive (Ryoo 2005), they tend to deteriorate considerably when problems arise (Hopkins, Hopkins, and Hoffman 2005). In particular, both nonphysical (e.g., verbal confrontation) and physical (e.g., violence) aggressions are serious concerns that may occur when a service encounter failure escalates (LeBlanc and Kelloway 2002). Understanding the nature and consequences of intercultural service encounter failure has been central to marketplace debates since the U.S. civil rights era and remains a global contemporary social justice issue today (Scott et al. 2011).

Social justice is the achievement of widespread fairness in a community (Ross 2009; Williams and Henderson 2012). This notion of fairness includes a person's right to have proper and safe work conditions. However, widespread stereotypes about immigrants' behavior (e.g., crime, decreased resources for native-born citizens) have increased tensions between native and immigrant populations worldwide (Nannestad 2009). In the marketplace, examples of this type of intolerance are evident in the popular press, with stories of native people confronting and even inflicting violence against immigrant business owners being reported in both South Africa and the United States (e.g., South Africa [Dispatch Online 2009], the United States [see Dolnick 2009]). In countries such as South Africa, a culture of impunity with regard to xenophobic attacks has made immigrant shopkeepers, who are in immediate contact with

the population, particularly vulnerable to service encounter confrontation (Misago, Landau, and Monson 2009). Consequently, investigating such issues is important for policy makers as well as service providers to ensure harmony, safety, and justice in the marketplace.

This research examines the consequences of an intercultural service encounter failure on consumer behavior. We address a recent call for the social justice stream of consumer research to include a focus on safety and security (Scott et al. 2011). We first describe the issue related to intercultural service encounters and marketplace violence. Then, we develop hypotheses for understanding consumers' reactions to intercultural service encounter failure. We propose that the shopkeeper's characteristics predict consumers' similarity judgment, which in turn influences consumers' emotional (i.e., anger) and behavioral (i.e., verbal confrontation) reactions to the failure. We examine these hypotheses through two studies in South Africa and the United States. Our results suggest not only that intercultural service encounter failure may put the shopkeeper at risk but also that the reactions depend on the context. Our results enlarge the debate regarding the place of immigrant shopkeepers in the marketplace and provide recommendations that could be used to protect the liberty/dignity of this group of (vulnerable) workers.

Background

Service Encounter

The service encounter is the period of time during which consumers directly interact with a service provider (Shostack 1985). Unlike a service relationship, which implies established and long-term interactions, a service encounter tends to be shorter and assumes limited prior contact between both parties (Barker and Härtel 2004). Consequently, both the customer and the service provider rely almost exclusively on observable cues and related stereotypes to form expectations about the encounter and evaluate its success or failure (Barker and Härtel 2004). Specifically, research shows that successful service outcomes are more likely to be achieved if the service provider's cultural background matches that of the customer (Montoya and Briggs 2013). For example, the academic literature has extensively examined the relationship between Korean shopkeepers and African American customers since the Los Angeles riots in 1992 and subsequent boycotts against small Korean businesses (Bailey 2000; Lee 1993, 1999; Park 1993; Ryoo 2005). Most of these studies emphasize the problematic and unsuccessful nature of the interactions and subsequently raise questions about safety and social justice issues.

Bailey (2000) explains that ethnic tension in the service settings are due to social inequality and disparate cultural and linguistic styles that shape the context of the encounter as well as expectations and behaviors. Thus, cultural similarity strengthens interpersonal bonds, facilitates communication, increases the predictability of behavior, and fosters relationships of trust and reciprocity, whereas cultural dissimilarity increases the complexity of the exchange relationship, especially when problems arise and the communi-

cation needed becomes ineffective (Hopkins, Hopkins, and Hoffman 2005; Sharma, Tam, and Kim 2009). As a result, and considering modern society's growing cultural diversity, managing intercultural service encounters is critical for many service providers and policy makers, especially when difficulties occur.

Service Encounter Failure

Research shows that consumers tend to be particularly mindless during a service encounter, and it takes a failure (i.e., a deviation from what they expected) to put them into a different state of mind (Kelley, Hoffman, and Davis 1993; Solomon et al. 1985). As a result of this service encounter failure, the consumer may become angry toward the offending party, and tensions can escalate, depending on the consumer's view of the situation and perceived level of injustice (Bies, Shapiro, and Cummings 1988; Dunning, Pecotich, and O'Cass 2004; Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). This redress, or justice-seeking behavior, might be expressed in verbal confrontation or even physical violence.

Extant literature on intercultural service encounter failure primarily examines the reactions of foreign tourists to failure that occurs away from home (Pullman, Verma, and Goodale 2001; Stauss and Mang 1999; Warden et al. 2003). These studies report that intercultural service encounter failures are less frequent than intracultural failures because foreign consumers have lower service expectations and wider tolerant zones in an intercultural setting (Stauss and Mang 1999). However, such findings may not be transposable to domestic intercultural service encounter failure that occurs near home, because tourists have limited interaction with the host culture and thus may be more tolerant than nontourists (Sharma, Tam, and Kim 2009). Although domestic intercultural service encounters are becoming a key characteristic of contemporary marketplace, limited research has examined the nature and the consequences of its failure (Baker, Meyer, and Johnson 2008; Zourrig, Chebat, and Tofoli 2010).

Service Encounter Violence

Violence encountered by employees at the hands of customers during a service interaction is a health and safety issue that organizations are facing in today's marketplace (LeBlanc and Kelloway 2002). Subsequently, it has been identified as a threat to the institution of commerce (Kerr 2010). During a service encounter failure, there is potential for the consumer to become angry, and violence or other displays of aggressive behavior may then arise between the parties (Bies, Shapiro, and Cummings 1988), thus potentially depriving them of the safety that is owed to them.

Workplace aggression is related to negative emotions (Chang and Lyons 2012). With aggressive behaviors often being connected to the emotion of anger (Glomb 2002), an angry customer should be methodically managed to avoid further conflict or violence. This type of violence can range from nonphysical to physical aggression (Barling 1996). Although nonphysical violence, such as verbal confrontation and yelling, occurs more frequently than physical violence (Greenberg and Barling 1999), research has shown that nonphysical violence is a precursor to physical violence (Murphy

and O'Leary 1989). As business owners and their employees are increasingly confronted with anger and aggressive behavior, the work environment becomes unsafe for employees and, therefore, becomes an issue that policy makers must address. To understand how a routine service interaction can evolve into a violent encounter, examining the steps that lead from anger to nonphysical or physical violence is important. Exploring this is specifically needed because there is a lack of research examining the predictors of violence in this setting (Barling 1996). Reported incidences of this type of violent encounter are increasing, and measures need to be employed to protect workers from this scenario (Bowie, Fisher, and Cooper 2011; Elliott and Jarrett 1994; Leather, Cox, and Farnsworth 1990; Musacco 2009; Parks and Kidder 1994).

Research addressing policies that protect diversity in the marketplace has primarily focused on the preceding or resulting behavior of the shopkeeper (e.g., Harris, Henderson, and Williams 2005); in contrast, the current study centers on the resulting behavior of the customer. Absent in the current literature is an understanding of the process that a consumer goes through after experiencing an intercultural service encounter failure. The current research examines the mechanisms underlying this process to design strategies and implement policies to mitigate the potential for an intercultural service encounter failure becoming a larger social concern in the form of marketplace violence.

Hypotheses

This research examines how anger arises from intercultural service encounter failures. We examine this emotional response as it relates to the interaction between a shopkeeper and a customer of different nationalities. Specifically, we posit that the dissimilarity consumers perceive with the shopkeeper exacerbates their anger experienced after a service encounter failure.

Anger is the dominant emotional reaction experienced by consumers when a failure occurs (Bougie, Pieters, and Zeelenberg 2003; Kalamas, Laroche, and Makdessian 2008) and is a significant factor that should be examined when investigating aggressive behavior, such as verbal confrontation (Glomb 2002). Because this study aims to understand the process that leads a consumer who experiences a service encounter failure toward confrontation or violence, anger becomes an important variable to examine. Anger is a mental state, aimed at another person, an institution, or the self, which arises when a consumer perceives a specific event as harmful and frustrating. A key aspect distinguishing anger from other negative emotional reactions is that consumers believe that they have been unjustifiably wronged by others who had control and hold responsibility for the failure (Averill 1982; Lazarus 1991). Thus, after a service encounter failure, consumers make appraisals or assessments about the characteristics of the failure that, in turn, affect how they respond emotionally (Bonifield and Cole 2007; Kalamas et al. 2008). In the case of intercultural service encounter failure, we propose that these appraisals relate to the level of similarity or dissimilarity that the consumer perceives with the shopkeeper.

Indeed, when an intercultural service encounter fails, consumers use easily accessible cues, especially demo-

graphic or visual differences, to evaluate the reasons for the failure (Chung-Herrera, Gonzalez, and Hoffman 2010). This phenomenon implicates social categorization whereby people classify others into in- and out-groups on the basis of their similarities or dissimilarities (Hogg and Abrams 1988). Similarity, also referred to as homophily, is the extent to which people who interact share similar attributes, such as beliefs, attitudes, values, social status, racial group, or gender (Rogers and Bhowmik 1970). When others are categorized into groups, members of those groups are viewed as similar to one another and to a specific stereotype (Hogg and Hains 1996), differences between groups are exaggerated (Tajfel 1969), and information processing is biased (Grier and McGill 2000). Thus, when failure arises from a shopkeeper perceived as an other, consumers will more likely use group categories and related stereotype to assess the failure.

Although the literature on similarity demonstrates its positive effects on consumers' responses in a variety of contexts, such as group formation, organizational structures, and advertising (e.g., Johnson and Grier 2013; Simpson et al. 2000), little research empirically examines its relevance in intercultural service encounters. Our first hypothesis, which provides the foundation for the subsequent hypotheses, proposes that the shopkeeper's characteristics predict consumers' similarity judgment. The second hypothesis posits that the perceived dissimilarity between the consumer and the shopkeeper increases the level of anger experienced by the consumer after a service encounter failure. Formally,

- H₁: Consumers perceive themselves as more similar with a congruent shopkeeper who shares characteristics, such as nationality or race (vs. an incongruent shopkeeper).
- H₂: The more consumers perceive the shopkeeper as dissimilar, the more they feel angry in response to a service encounter failure.

Anger, or a strong feeling of displeasure and hostility (Bonifield and Cole 2007), is the dominant emotional response evoked by perceived injustice (Clayton 1992; Mikula 1986, 1987; Mikula, Scherer, and Athenstaedt 1998). When this feeling is perceived to have arisen due to the actions of another, anger is often accompanied by a desire to attack the source (Bonifield and Cole 2007). In other words, the psychological processes involved that would lead a person to anger-driven retaliation occurs when there is a distinct perception that the other party is responsible for that harmful behavior (Bies, Lewicki, and Sheppard 1999).

Intercultural service encounter failure that is perceived as intentional can lead to an increase in consumer anger. In this situation, there is the potential for a behavioral reaction from the consumer. Feeling harmed and affected by the presumably intentional mistreatment would lead to negative emotion formation in the consumer's mind. This negative emotion could then serve as motivation for retaliatory behavior (Thomas and Pondy 1977). A responsive action is a natural recourse for an adversely affected party, particularly when the person feels that the mistreatment was intentional and unjust (Thomas and Pondy 1977). Because the level of anger that a person feels is strongly correlated to an

increase in levels of aggression (Deffenbacher et al. 2001), there is a chance that this feeling of being wronged could manifest through several coping strategies, such as exit, voice, or loyalty (Hirschman 1970). Our analysis focuses on the voice strategy, or verbal confrontation, as the non-physical violent response to this type of service encounter failure that may lead to violence (Murphy and O'Leary 1989). The progression of this type of retaliation from civility to verbal confrontation is important, as people attempt to avoid physical violence from occurring. Our third hypothesis addresses the behavioral outcomes of verbal confrontation as a response to anger:

H₃: The angrier consumers feel in response to a service encounter failure, the more likely they are to verbally confront the shopkeeper.

The current research examines the preceding hypotheses regarding intercultural service encounter failure and consumers' responses across two studies. Specifically, Study 1 examines how anger arises from intercultural service encounter failure in South Africa, and Study 2 evaluates the generalizability of the effects of intercultural service encounter failure on anger observed in Study 1 in the U.S. context and investigates the behavioral response of this anger.

Study 1

Context

We selected South Africa as an appropriate research context in which to test our first two hypotheses. Indeed, in addition to an intrinsic diversity (e.g., there are 11 national languages), since the end of the apartheid period, South Africa has experienced a considerable influx of immigrants (often refugees) from neighboring African countries (Landau and Segatti 2009). For example, the number of Zimbabweans in South Africa is estimated to be between 1 million and 1.5 million (Polzer 2010).

Many of these foreign nationals set up small convenience stores (known as *spaza* shops) in townships and informal settlements, providing the community with an assortment of various products (e.g., food, cigarettes, laundry detergent). Although many locals appreciate these stores, some community members complain that these trades undermine local business (Misago, Landau, and Monson 2009). In particular, analyses of xenophobic attacks in 2006 and 2007 identify such a competition as the primary factor for groups of youths hired by local business owners to loot and destruct spaza shops (Misago, Landau, and Monson 2009).

In May 2008, tensions against immigrants in South Africa reached a climax when xenophobic attacks became widespread in the townships and informal settlements across the country. After two weeks and the deployment of the army, 62 people (including 21 South African citizens) were killed; 670 were wounded, dozens of women were raped; at least 100,000 people were displaced; and property worth millions of rand (South African currency) was looted, destroyed, or seized by local residents. The burden for foreign-owned businesses was particularly heavy: 342 shops were looted, and 213 burned down (Misago, Landau, and Monson 2009).

Even though many locals benefit from these foreign-run businesses' lower prices, extended shopping hours, and more convenient locations, tensions still remain palpable (Misago, Landau, and Monson 2009), especially when failure occurs. Consider, for example, a man threatening to kill a Somali shopkeeper with a bush knife for giving the wrong change to his daughter (Dispatch Online 2009). In addition to general suspicion, a culture of impunity with regard to xenophobic attacks makes immigrant shopkeepers particularly vulnerable to service encounter violence (Misago, Landau, and Monson 2009).

Sample, Design, and Procedure

The design of the experiment is a 3 (nationality of the shopkeeper: South African, Zimbabwean, or not mentioned) \times 2 (types of failure: mistake or suspicion) between-subjects design. We conducted the experiment with 232 black South African participants who were randomly drawn from Soweto, the major township in the southwest of Johannesburg. Sixty-two percent were female. Their ages ranged from 17 to 50 years ($M = 28$, $SD = 7.7$), and they all had obtained at least a high school degree. The participants were first presented with a statement indicating that the research project pertained to consumers' responses to services marketing. On the following page, they were presented with a scenario and were instructed to imagine themselves as being the consumer involved in the scenario (for the participant instructions and scenario, see the Appendix). This procedure was consistent with previous studies on imagined intergroup contact, which have shown that by imagining a particular social context, people experience cognitive, emotional, and behavioral outcomes similar to those they would have felt in the context itself (see Husnu and Crisp 2010).

The scenario depicts a consumer buying for the first time a product in a shop that has recently opened in the neighborhood. In the scenario, the nationality of the shopkeeper as well as the type of failure changes as a function of the experimental condition. Because a customer's assessment of a service situation is magnified by both the situation and the actions of the provider, it is believed that the overall evaluation of a service encounter may be more accurately measured by polar extreme levels of service encounter failure (Smith and Bolton 1998). In line with this, we presented two types of failures imputable to the shopkeeper: mistake and suspicion (Kelley, Hoffman, and Davis 1993). In the scenarios depicting a mistake, the shopkeeper gives the wrong change to the consumers; in the scenarios depicting suspicion, the shopkeeper blatantly accuses the consumers of stealing something from the shop. After reading the randomly assigned scenario, participants completed a questionnaire booklet.

Measures

The measurement instrument collected information for two dependent variables: perceived cultural similarity and anger. Respondents rated their degree of perceived similarity with the shopkeeper in terms of four items: overall lifestyle, cultural background, dress and appearance, and basic values (McKirnan, Smith, and Hamayan 1983). The

items were measured on seven-point Likert scales ranging from “disagree completely” (1) to “agree completely” (7). We created a perceived similarity scale by averaging the mean scores from each of the four scales ($\alpha = .78$). We also assessed consumers’ anger in response to the service encounter failure with a scale composed of three items: “I would feel enraged,” “I would feel angry,” and “I would feel mad” ($\alpha = .80$; Bougie, Pieters, and Zeelenberg 2003). A pretest confirmed the readability of the scenario and questionnaire.

Results

This section presents the results of the hypotheses testing. We discuss only the effects that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($p < .05$) or marginally significant ($p < .10$).

To test the first hypothesis, which proposes that consumers will perceive themselves as more similar with a congruent shopkeeper (vs. an incongruent shopkeeper), we conducted a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the shopkeeper’s nationality and type of service encounter failure as independent variables and perceived similarity as the dependent variable. The results reveal a significant main effect of the shopkeeper’s nationality on perceived similarity ($F(2, 226) = 3.75, p < .05$). A Bonferroni post hoc test shows that the participants perceived more similarity with the South African shopkeeper ($M = 3.75$) than with the shopkeeper whose nationality was not mentioned ($M = 3.16, p < .05$) and the Zimbabwean shopkeeper ($M = 3.23, p < .09$); thus, H_1 is supported.

Furthermore, a regression analysis tested H_2 , which proposes that the more consumers perceive the shopkeeper as dissimilar, the angrier they will feel after the service encounter failure. The regression analysis includes perceived similarity as the explicative variable and anger as the dependent variable. The results indicate that perceived similarity with the shopkeeper significantly influences participants’ anger ($\beta = -.25, p = .001$), which supports H_2 .

Discussion

The findings from Study 1 provide insight into how anger arises from intercultural service encounter failure. Anger in response to a failure is exacerbated when consumers perceive that they are dissimilar to the shopkeeper in terms of nationality. Study 2 delves further into the relationship between similarity and anger by assessing the generalizability of the results observed in Study 1 to the U.S. context as well as examining the role of the shopkeeper’s race. Furthermore, Study 2 investigates the behavioral outcome of anger, namely, verbal confrontation.

Study 2

Context

The United States has a rich history of immigrant success as self-employed, small business owners (Robles and Cordero-Guzmán 2007). It is also one of the most racially and ethnically diverse Western democracies (Hero 2007), thus providing an interesting setting for this study to further explore the dynamic of similarity.

Immigrant populations are outpacing nationals in the establishment of small businesses in the United States (Robles and Cordero-Guzmán 2007). Leading the pack, Hispanic-owned firms are growing at a rate of 31%, which is more than three times the national average (U.S. Department of Commerce 2006). Asian American groups are also faring well in the quest for business ownership. For example, there are estimates that up to 70% of the gas stations in South Central Los Angeles are now owned by Korean American immigrants (Park 1996).

With the success of these immigrant groups in the United States has come conflict, similar to that in South Africa. This conflict has been blamed on increased immigration that places minority groups in competition for resources (Johnson and Oliver 1989; Kaufmann 2003; Mindiola, Niemann, and Rodriguez 2002; Vaca 2004). As immigrant business owners seek to open businesses in the United States, they often gravitate toward lower-economic-status neighborhoods with minority populations, where they can afford the overhead of business ownership (Park 1996). There is then a subsequent belief that these immigrants are taking away money and other resources that belong to the national minorities (Peñaloza 1995).

Sample, Design, and Procedure

The design of the experiment is a 2 (nationality of the shopkeeper: foreign vs. American) \times 2 (race of the shopkeeper: black vs. Asian) between-subjects design. The experiment was conducted with 194 African American participants. Sixty-one percent were female. Their ages ranged from 15 to 63 years ($M = 22, SD = 7.24$), and they all had obtained at least a high school degree. The procedure replicated that of Study 1 and depicted a consumer buying for the first time a product in a shop that has recently opened in the neighborhood (see the Appendix). In this study, we also manipulated the race of the shop owner (black vs. Asian). The respondents were exposed to only one of the four treatments (i.e., African American shopkeeper, Korean American shopkeeper, African shopkeeper, or Korean shopkeeper).

Measures

The measurement instrument collected information for three dependent variables: perceived similarity, anger, and voice (or verbal confrontation). Respondents rated their degree of perceived similarity ($\alpha = .84$) and anger ($\alpha = .84$) using the same scales as in Study 1. We also assessed consumers’ behavioral reaction (i.e. verbal confrontation) by asking respondents to express their level of agreement with the following item: “You should firmly tell the shopkeeper that you have a right to be treated with dignity and respect, like all customers.” This item has been used in previous research to evaluate consumers’ coping strategy with perceived injustice in the marketplace (Evetts et al. 2012). We adapted this portion of the scale from Hirschman’s (1970) work, which notes that aggression can manifest through three main coping strategies: exit, voice (or verbal confrontation), or loyalty. In the case of workplace violence, only the verbal confrontation component of Hirschman’s three coping strategies is overtly relevant. Verbal confrontation has been directly linked as a precursor to physical violence (Murphy

and O'Leary 1989); therefore, this scenario is a critical issue for the marketplace and must be understood to prevent the reoccurrence.

Results

To test H_1 in the U.S. context, we conducted a two-way ANOVA in which the shopkeeper's race and nationality were independent variables and perceived similarity was the dependent variable. The results reveal a significant main effect of the shopkeeper's race on perceived similarity ($F(1, 190) = 10.076, p < .01$). The participants perceived more similarity with the black shopkeeper ($M = 3.47$) than with the Asian shopkeeper ($M = 2.90$). However, a statistically significant two-way interaction between the shopkeeper's race and nationality ($F(1, 190) = 18.444, p < .001$) subsumed the main effect of nationality. When the shopkeeper was American, the participants perceived more similarity with the black shopkeeper ($M = 3.94$) versus the Asian shopkeeper ($M = 2.56, p < .05$). Surprisingly, the race of the shopkeeper did not influence the participants' perceived similarity when the shopkeeper was foreign ($M_{\text{black}} = 2.95, M_{\text{Asian}} = 3.15; p > .40$). H_1 is therefore only partially supported.

Furthermore, a regression analysis tested H_2 , which proposes that the more consumers perceive the shopkeeper as dissimilar, the angrier they will feel after the service encounter fails. This regression includes perceived similarity as the explicative variable and anger as the dependent variable. The results indicate that perceived similarity with the shopkeeper did not influence the participants' anger ($\beta = -.074, p > .30$), thus leading us to reject H_2 in the U.S. context.

Finally, to test H_3 , which examines the relationship between respondents' anger and their behavioral reactions (i.e., verbal confrontation), we performed a hierarchical regression analysis in which verbal confrontation was the dependent variable, whereas the predictors, entered into the equation in successive blocks, were (1) anger, (2) the shopkeeper's nationality, (3) the shopkeeper's race, and (4) all possible interactions between these three predictor variables. The results show that anger has a main and positive effect on verbal confrontation ($\beta = .305, p < .001$), in support of H_3 . Furthermore, the introduction of the interaction of anger \times shopkeeper's nationality \times shopkeeper's race at the last step explains an additional 6.2% ($p < .001$) of the variance. This significant interaction reveals that both the shopkeeper's nationality and race moderate the relationship between anger and verbal confrontation. Indeed, exploration of this interaction shows that anger influences verbal confrontation only when the shopkeeper is Korean American ($\beta = .500, p < .001$).

Discussion

Study 2 replicated the study conducted in South Africa in the context of the United States with additional investigations of the role of race and the behavioral response to anger. The results indicate that the participants' similarity judgment was influenced by both race and nationality, as the shopkeeper's race influenced the participants' judgment only when the shopkeeper was American. However, when the shopkeeper was foreign, race did not influence the par-

ticipants' similarity judgment. Consequently, adding race has a seemingly more complex effect on perceived similarity than the findings that solely investigate nationality.

Surprisingly, Study 2 failed to support H_2 and did not replicate the results of Study 1 regarding the relationship between similarity and anger in response to a service encounter failure. Such results may highlight the importance of the context of the studies to understand this particular relationship. Indeed, a possible explanation is that consumers in developing countries (South Africa) may rely more on easily accessible characteristics, such as nationality and similarity judgment, to evaluate the failure of a service encounter and exacerbate their emotional reactions.

Finally, the second objective of Study 2 was to examine the manifestation of the anger felt after a service encounter failure as a verbal confrontation. As we expected, the results indicate that the anger felt by consumers after a service encounter failure influences their likelihood to engage in a verbal confrontation with the shopkeeper. Notably, further statistical analyses showed that this relationship holds only when the shopkeeper is Korean American. The decades of recorded tension in the marketplace between African Americans and Korean Americans (see Bailey 2000) might explain this strong perception of dissimilarity and potential for resulting verbal confrontation.

General Discussion

This research examines the consequences of an intercultural service encounter failure on consumer behavior. By examining the position of immigrant shopkeepers in the marketplace of both a developed and a developing country and by highlighting their vulnerability when a failure occurs, this research answers recent calls for marketing scholars to participate in contemporary social justice debates about a global economy (see Scott et al. 2011). In particular, this study explores a growing, but mostly ignored, category in the marketplace: immigrant-operated businesses.

Study 1 shows that when a failure occurs, South African consumers evaluate their level of similarity with the shopkeeper, and the less similarity they perceive, the angrier they feel in response to the failure. Conversely, Study 2 shows that U.S. consumers do not necessarily rely on their evaluation of similarity to feel anger after the failure. However, the anger they feel encourages them to engage in a verbal confrontation with the shopkeeper, especially if the shopkeeper is Korean American.

In both studies, the results highlight the importance of anger as a result of dissimilarity or as a precursor of verbal confrontation, respectively. These findings are particularly important to policy makers because research shows that anger often precedes violence (Rule and Nesdale 1976) and that "less extreme forms of aggression should be attended to because they can be precursors to more extreme forms of aggression" (Glomb 2002, p. 33). Although this form of violence is nonphysical, it has the proven potential to escalate into a public safety issue. Thus, controlling the anger that consumers may feel in response to a service encounter failure becomes key to ensuring a harmonious marketplace.

In terms of public policies, our results may imply the implementation of courses for shopkeepers on how they can

control their consumers' anger (as well as their own) when a failure occurs. In South Africa, those courses could also include discussions on how to generate more similarity with the consumers, such as introducing national cultural cues within the service environment (e.g., the national flag), as our results show that perceived similarity reduces the anger the consumer feels. This course could take the form of mandatory social norm trainings for these business owners as a part of their licensure process. Johnson (1978) suggests instruction in interpersonal communication as an effective method for avoiding aggressive confrontations. If immigrant business owners are adequately prepared to socially interact with native customers, policy makers will proactively prepare shopkeepers to circumvent violence.

Demangeot et al. (2013, p. 162) outline the necessity of action by "multiple stakeholders to create an inclusive and equitable marketplace environment characterized by increasing levels of intercultural competency." In addition to action by the immigrant business owners, policy makers should also make providing conflict management training to all small businesses a priority. As Neuman and Baron (1998, p. 409) state, "formal training can provide individuals with skills that are useful in defusing, managing, and responding to aggression." With this knowledge, policy makers can preemptively decrease the potential for violence in the marketplace. In addition, if all business owners are equitably trained in conflict management, a nation's consumers will become accustomed to how service encounter failures should be defused.

In addition, policy makers need to erase (particularly in South Africa) the culture of impunity with regard to xenophobic attacks toward immigrant shopkeepers. This can be done through more repression but also through marketing campaigns promoting the advantages of cultural diversity in small businesses within the community. The campaign should aim at increasing perceived similarities between the shopkeepers and the consumers.

These recommendations have the potential to help alleviate the potential for violence in the marketplace. Policy makers preemptively intervening, at a time when contention between natives and immigrants in many countries abound, is the best way to protect harmony in a country's diversifying marketplace. The ultimate goal would be a prosperous marketplace in which service encounter failures are not misconstrued by the difference between the service provider and the customer but rather are resolvable based on their human similarity.

Limitations and Further Research

One limitation of this research involves the use of a scenario to evaluate consumers' responses to intercultural service encounter failures. Further research can investigate these reactions in more realistic treatments through a field study or a laboratory experiment using simulation in multiple service settings. Another limitation of this study is that it examined verbal confrontation through a limited one-item scale. Future studies might employ multi-item scales as well as other behavioral outcomes, such as exit or loyalty. More detailed measurements of the behavioral outcome should be considered in subsequent analyses.

The concept of similarity also requires further investigation. In our analysis, although values were significant, the respondents seemed to be close to neutral about the amount of similarity they felt toward the shopkeeper in the scenario. Future studies could attempt to develop measures that will better tease out the degree of perceived similarity/difference.

Beyond the limitations of the current study, further research in this stream of investigation should examine, add, and/or manipulate the variables present in this study. For example, it may be worthwhile to determine whether the same process occurs when the customer is the immigrant and the shopkeeper is the native. Does anger arise in the customer in the same manner? In addition, which person—the shopkeeper or the customer (native or immigrant)—is likely to feel angrier in this situation? Finally, a longitudinal study would be warranted to determine the impact of the initiatives suggested herein as tools for policy makers to protect immigrant business owners from potential violence in the marketplace.

Appendix

Participant Instructions

This research is being done to gather individuals' assessments of service experience. On the following pages are some questions about what you think about service experiences. Take a moment or so to read the scenario, and imagine yourself as being the person involved in the scenario. Most of the questions contained in the survey will be based on the scenario. Please be sure to carefully read the scenario before going to the next page.

Study 1 (South Africa): Scenario

Imagine that you are entering for the first time in your life into a new *Spaza Shop* which has recently opened one block away from your house. The shop sells all sorts of products from soda to cigarettes and washing powder. Its owner and unique trader is a 30-year-old (South African/Zimbabwean national/this sentence was omitted in the "no mention of the nationality of the shopkeeper" condition).

On that day, you feel slightly hungry and decide to buy an apple for R1. Once in the street, you start eating the apple. But after your first bite, you hear the *Spaza Shopkeeper* shouting at you and accusing you of stealing several items from his shop (But after your first bite, you realize that the *Spaza Shopkeeper* gave you the wrong change. He was supposed to give you back R4, but you only got R3. One rand was missing).

Study 2 (United States): Scenario

A new corner store has opened in your neighborhood. The shopkeeper is a middle-aged (Korean/Korean American/African American/African) man who has recently immigrated into the (U.S./whose family has lived in your neighborhood many generations), and the store sells a range of products from soda to cigarettes to lottery tickets. One day, you decide to stop by the store for the first time to buy a snack. As you enter the store, you notice the store owner is walking around stocking the shelves. Once inside the store, you quickly pick up your items and stand at the register.

After waiting for several minutes, you become impatient because this is taking much longer than you expected. You realize that the owner has noticed you waiting, but yet he continues stocking the shelves. You are in a rush, so you politely ask the owner if he can ring up your purchase. He responds by putting his hand up as a signal for you to wait.

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