LGBTQ and religious identity conflict in service settings

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Abstract
Purpose – The USA is witnessing a conflict between LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) consumers/supporters and Christian fundamentalist service providers/opponents regarding whether service can be denied based on religious values. The purpose of this paper is to make a timely investigation into this conflict between marketplace inclusion (for LGBTQ consumers) and freedom of religion (for religious service providers).

Design/methodology/approach – The intersection of marketplace inclusion for LGBTQ consumers and religious freedom for service providers is examined by identifying appropriate strategies that address this conflict and reviewing how differing religious perspectives influence perceptions of LGBTQ consumer rights, all building off the social identity threat literature.

Findings – LGBTQ and religious identities often conflict to influence consumer behavior and service provider interactions. Such conflict is heightened when there is a lack of substitutes (i.e. only one service provider in an area for a specific service). Common LGBTQ consumer responses include changing service providers, providing justification for the provision of services and pursuing legal recourse. Suggested strategies to address this conflict include highlighting common social identities and using two-sided messages for service providers, using in-group interventions for social groups and using government interventions for public policy.

Originality/value – Research has yet to examine the conflict between marketplace inclusion and religious freedom, particularly for the inclusion of LGBTQ consumers. Thus, this paper provides a novel conceptual model detailing these relationships to stimulate discussion among consumers, service providers, social groups and public policy in addition to serving as a foundation for future research.

Keywords Social identity, Reactance, Freedom of religion, LGBTQ consumers, Marketplace inclusion, Religious service providers

Paper type Literature review

Introduction
The USA is witnessing a conflict between LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) consumers/advocates and Christian fundamentalist service providers/opponents. As a specific example, courts in several states are weighing the arguments regarding whether bakers, florists and photographers have the right to refuse to provide their services for gay weddings. Such conflicts over LGBTQ consumer rights versus religious freedom have produced years of debates, attacks, counter-attacks and emotional appeals from supporters and opponents.

Central to this conflict over servicing a gay wedding is the concept of marketplace inclusion: Do service providers have a moral obligation to provide service to everyone under all circumstances? And how does this affect consumers? LGBTQ consumers could be excluded from the marketplace in a variety of ways including service providers lacking resources to provide services, such as not having gender neutral bathrooms for transgender consumers, or service providers lacking...
awareness of the need for special services, such as a health clinic not realizing a need for two lines for moms (lesbian parents) or dads (gay parents) on family history forms. Additionally, service providers may seek personal benefit maximization, such as not carrying gay wedding cake toppers because a service provider receives few of these requests and carrying these toppers takes up inventory space. Alternatively, LGBTQ consumers could be excluded from the marketplace because of personally refusing to patronize a service provider with conflicting values, such as a LGBTQ consumer refusing to shop at the store of a religious fundamentalist, or service providers refusing to service consumers with conflicting values, such as a religious fundamentalist service provider refusing service to LGBTQ consumers.

Given recent news and court cases, a religious fundamentalist baker refusing to service a gay wedding is used as a running example in this paper. This example relates to the last type of marketplace exclusion just described (i.e. service providers refusing service to LGBTQ consumers), which is a tradeoff between civil rights and religious freedom, ultimately calling into question the very definition of freedom. Supporters of same-sex couples argue that refusing service to same-sex couples amounts to marketplace discrimination, akin to refusing lunch service to African Americans (Bazelon, 2015). Indeed, many forms of discrimination, both explicit and implicit, are still major problems in marketplace interactions (Harris et al., 2010, Lynn and Withiam, 2008, Sharma et al., 2012).

On the other hand, supporters of religious service providers argue that being forced to participate, via rendering professional services, in a same-sex wedding threatens the service provider’s freedom of religion. The USA was founded as a haven for religious dissenters, and the first amendment to the US Constitution protects individuals’ religious freedoms. As such, the American value of religious tolerance allows for some marketplace exceptions for religious individuals (Bazelon, 2015). While outsiders might view a refusal of service for a gay wedding as discrimination or even an example of imposing one’s faith on others, many religious fundamentalists tend to view this issue in terms of good and evil.

This review paper and conceptual framework seeks to examine these conflicting perspectives to identify how LGBTQ consumers may respond to being denied service by religious service providers as well as strategies that service providers, social groups and public policy can use to minimize conflict among both parties (LGBTQ consumers and religious service providers). While a consumers’ LGBTQ or religious identity can have a profound influence on their consumer behavior, the intersection of these identities in a service setting has received very little attention. In this paper, the focus of discussion is on the specific case of refusing service to a gay wedding in the USA, but discussion as to how LGBTQ and religious identities may apply to other scenarios is expanded upon in the future directions section. Additionally, this paper focuses on the discussion of conflict over marketplace inclusion and religious freedom in the USA rather than in other countries, given the vast differences among countries pertaining to the support for marketplace inclusion and freedom of religion.

**Conceptual framework**

To guide discussion and highlight research opportunities, a conceptual framework is developed (Figure 1), which describes the relationship among marketplace inclusion and freedom of religion conflicts, identity threat and marketplace outcomes. Following MacInnis’ (2011) framework for conceptual contributions in marketing, the goals for this paper are to explicate and delineate the conflict between marketplace inclusion and freedom of religion that results in denial of service outcomes for LGBTQ consumers. To this end, we describe the marketplace phenomenon, provide evidence of its importance, develop a conceptual framework to explain how the phenomenon works (e.g. antecedents, consequences, processes, moderators) and also provide a roadmap for future research. More specifically, the conceptual framework proposes that conflicts in the marketplace can lead to restricted freedoms that may be encoded as identity threats (here, LGBTQ or religious identity threat). In turn, these identity threats can produce reactance that motivates identity-restoring marketplace behaviors from the threatened party. This framework includes important contextual moderators (level of participation, sacredness and religious identity salience) as well as service provider moderators (religious affiliation, religious beliefs and values, fundamentalism and intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity) that may bolster or mitigate the probability of restricted freedom leading to identity threat, reactance and corresponding marketplace behaviors. Finally, the conceptual framework discusses how LGBTQ consumers respond to denial of service (change service providers, provide justification for the provision of services and pursue legal recourse) as well as strategies for service providers, social groups and public policy (common social identities, two-sided messages, in-group interventions and government interventions) for reducing the negative impact of marketplace restrictions of personal freedoms. This broad conceptual framework is intended to provide a variety of potential avenues for future research in this domain. The model may be tested comprehensively or piecemeal based on research methodology and conceptual goals.

Before discussing the individual components of the conceptual framework, a review of the marketplace freedom construct along with a backdrop on existing strategies used for protecting freedom of religion and marketplace inclusion is provided. This background discussion supports foundational elements of the conceptual framework (e.g. defining freedom is essential to understanding free access to the marketplace and freedom to express personal beliefs). The first stage of the framework, the conflict between marketplace inclusion and religious freedom, is then discussed before proceeding to elaborate on religious views regarding providing service to LGBTQ consumers, moderators, social identity threat and reactance. Finally, LGBTQ consumer responses to the denial of service, alongside strategies to address the conflict between marketplace inclusion and religious freedom, are discussed.

**What is freedom?**

One likely explanation for conflicts between the contrasting perspectives of some LGBTQ consumers and religious service providers is...
provides is that both parties react negatively to what they perceive as threats to their freedom. Given this reasoning, it is important to understand and define freedom before proceeding to discuss strategies that address LGBTQ consumers’ access to the marketplace. To develop an operational definition of freedom, this paper builds on the conceptualization of freedom established, this paper now turns to briefly reviewing marketplace-related policies that inform service providers’ requirements related to marketplace inclusion and religious freedom.

### Existing policies: marketplace inclusion

At the national level, the Civil Rights Acts of 1866 and 1964 provide some assurance of marketplace inclusion for all citizens (Harris et al., 2005). Section 1981 of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 gives all citizens the right to “make and enforce contracts” and includes “the enjoyment of all benefits, privileges, terms, and conditions of the contractual relationship” (Legal Information Institute, 2016). A few plaintiffs have referred to this section in alleging that they were denied the right to complete a retail transaction (Harris et al., 2005). In total, there were 89,385 charges filed in 2015 that claimed discrimination (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016). Before 2015, federal policies and amendments did not explicitly mention discrimination based on LGBTQ orientation. However, in 2015, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ruled that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 also prohibits employment discrimination based on LGBTQ orientation (Dean, 2015). This ruling could set a legal precedent for future marketplace inclusion cases based on LGBTQ orientation.

More recently, Supreme Court cases have also ruled in favor of marketplace inclusion. For example, in 2013, the US Supreme Court ruled in Windsor v. USA that there must be equality of estate regulations (i.e. marketplace inclusion) for LGBTQ consumers in the USA (Legal Information Institute, 2016). Additionally, in 2015, the Supreme Court decision for Obergefell v. Hodges determined that all states must license and recognize marriage between same-sex couples (Legal Information Institute, 2016).

### Existing policies: freedom of religion

In addition to marketplace inclusion policies, it is also beneficial to briefly review freedom of religion policies. The First Amendment to the US Constitution banned the initiation of any law restricting the free exercise of religion, as part of a separation between church and state. Specifically, the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the US Constitution asserts that government policies must not result in an “excessive government entanglement” with religious affairs (Legal Information Institute, 2016). This clause states...
that in addition to government activities not being overly intermingled with religious activities, government activities must also neither promote nor restrict religious practice and must have a secular government purpose. In other words, the US government neither can force or compel a citizen to follow any particular religious practice nor can it prevent any citizen from following the practices prescribed by his or her religion. However, these religious liberties are brought into question when they negatively influence other consumers (e.g. refusing service at a gay wedding harms the LGBTQ consumer).

With the goal of protecting religious freedom, many states have passed religious inclusion laws that allow for the intersection of religion and education (e.g. government vouchers/tax-credits for religious schools or moments of religious-related silence in public schools) and allow for religious displays in public places (e.g. public prayer) (Bentele et al., 2013). In addition, such laws have permitted activities deemed religiously appropriate that violate other policies. For example, although students are prohibited from bringing weapons to school, the court ruled that it was permissible for a Sikh teenage boy to bring a dagger known as a Kirpan because it is required by the Sikh religion (Bostic, 2014). Further, companies can be permitted to refrain from complying with laws that are viewed as violating religious principles. For example, in 2014, the Supreme Court ruled in Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby Stores Inc. and Conestoga Wood Specialties Corp. v. Sebelius that privately held corporations cannot be compelled to provide health coverage that conflicts with the religious beliefs of their shareholders (Legal Information Institute, 2016). In total, 87 different state-level religious-based laws have been passed between 1995 and 2009 with the goal of fostering freedom of religion (Bentele et al., 2013). While the names of the laws differ, the overall substance concerns religious freedom for individuals.

**Conflicts between existing policies: marketplace inclusion vs religious freedom**

The US marketplace is governed by certain policies that ensure that businesses are all held to the same standards and that consumers have equal and complete access to goods and services (Corday, 2013). These rules are universally applicable and deeply woven into the American culture. Although businesses are free to determine how they operate their business, they are not free to do so in a way that obviously disadvantages the marketplace generally or any segment of consumers within it. Therefore, discrimination based on religion can harm the marketplace and consumers (Harris et al., 2005). Under the proposed Federal Equality Act, it may soon be illegal to refuse any kind of service to same-sex couples (Fottrell, 2015), thereby posing a jarring conflict between a LGBTQ consumers’ rights for marketplace inclusion and a service providers’ freedom of religion.

The intersection of marketplace inclusion and religious freedom has had several ramifications at the national, state and local levels. For example, controversies have arisen over local rulings regarding prayer in schools, gay marriage, evangelism, Sabbath observance, ritual drug use and employment dress codes (Dreisbach, 2000). Supreme Court cases have both ruled in favor of marketplace inclusion for all, thereby restricting religious freedom (e.g. Employment Division of Oregon v. Smith and Gonzales v. O Centro Espirita Beneficente Uniao do Vegetal), as well as ruling against marketplace inclusion for all, thereby promoting religious freedom (e.g. Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby Stores Inc. and Conestoga Wood Specialties Corp. v. Sebelius) (Legal Information Institute, 2016). In each of these examples, granting free access to the marketplace for LGBTQ consumers may restrict religious freedom for religious service providers and vice versa.

**Religious perspectives on LGBTQ consumers’ equal access to the marketplace**

The discussion up to this point has focused on broad groups of individuals (e.g. religious consumers), but to better understand conflicting views toward marketplace inclusion of LGBTQ consumers, it is important to understand the nuances of beliefs within specific religions. While a consumer’s religion provides insight into core tenets of belief, it is also important to take into consideration related moderators, including a consumer’s level of fundamentalism (i.e. strict adherence to scriptural principles and beliefs that scripture is divinely inspired; Altemeyer and Hunsberger, 1992), intrinsic religiosity (i.e. living out one’s faith) and extrinsic religiosity (i.e. using one’s religion for other goals, such as status or social benefits; Allport and Ross, 1967). In what follows, the partnership of these moderators with one’s religion (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism) is discussed in how these influence how religious service providers perceive the ongoing religious freedom versus marketplace inclusion debate.

Christianity, whose followers make up 70.6 per cent of the US population (Pew, 2014), is represented by many denominations that have formally developed policies against members of the LGBTQ community. For example, the Presbyterian Church of the USA formed a rule in 1996 to prevent the ordination of LGBTQ persons to the ministry (Finlay and Walther, 2003), and the Southern Baptist Church opposes the legalization of gay marriage or civil unions (Van Geest, 2007). Despite growing acceptance of gay marriage among some Christian groups, most fundamentalist Christians, in particular, oppose a LGBTQ orientation because they view it as a moral issue, rather than simply a governmental issue (Cunningham and Melton, 2013). Opposition for a LGBTQ orientation draws support from the Old Testament (e.g. Leviticus 18:22, “You shall not lie with a man as one lies with a female; it is an abomination”) and the New Testament (e.g. Romans 1:27, “Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error”). Additionally, some Christian service providers may view baking a gay wedding cake or taking wedding photos of a same-sex couple as participating in an activity that runs counter to their moral standards and helps to consecrate a behavior (the gay wedding) that is deemed as sinful or evil.

Alternatively, from a pro-LGBTQ standpoint, the Christian concept of not judging others may help to explain why some Christians support equal access to the marketplace for LGBTQ consumers, fitting with the Pope’s recent call for a non-judgmental approach on gays (Malone, 2015). Christian doctrine suggests that all humans are tainted and beleaguered by their own misconduct (i.e. sin) against themselves, others and God (Hunt and Penwell, 2008). Given that Christians are
urged not to judge the sins of others for they themselves are sinners as well, some Christians may actively avoid judgment of the same-sex couple and, instead, be more accepting of them, fitting with scripture stating that one should “love thy neighbor” (Mark 12:31).

Judaism, representing 1.9 per cent of the US population (Pew, 2014), draws upon the same Old Testament teachings as Christianity (including those condemning a LGBTQ orientation as immoral); however, the Reform and Conservative Jewish movements have formally approved same-sex marriage (Pew, 2015). The only Jewish movement that does not approve of same-sex marriage is the Orthodox movement, which is the most fundamentalist denomination in Judaism. In fact, the Orthodox Union Advocacy Center (2016) has lobbied against US policies allowing gay marriage. These differences may be attributed to varying interpretations of Lev 18:22 (“Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable”), where some interpret it literally and others interpret it as only applying to sexual acts of pagan ritual.

Muslims, who make up 0.9 per cent of the US population (Pew, 2014), follow Islamic holy scripture, Islamic law and the verbal teachings of the Prophet Mohammed that outlaw a LGBTQ orientation entirely (Hélie, 2004). In Islam, a marriage (nikah) is defined as a relationship between a man and a woman, with procreation as one of the primary purposes (Hunt and Penwell, 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising that the perceptions of a LGBTQ orientation and same-sex marriage remain negative among most Muslims, especially when compared to Atheists’ perceptions (Anderson and Koc, 2015). In fact, same-sex sexual behavior is a crime in 26 different Muslim countries, including Saudi Arabia and Morocco (Hélie, 2004).

Hinduism, representing 0.7 per cent of Americans (Pew, 2014), is unlike most other religions in that it has no single, universally accepted religious ruling on any issue (Schmidt et al., 2014). Hindu sacred law discusses the presence and importance of consumers with a LGBTQ orientation as co-existing peacefully with all other orientations. In fact, hardly any condemnation or prejudice against LGBTQ orientations exist in Hindu literature (Dewan, 2015). Therefore, theological documents suggest that Hindus would be supportive of equal access to the marketplace for LGBTQ consumers.

Finally, for Buddhists, who also make up 0.7 per cent of the population in the USA (Pew, 2014), no specific texts mention LGBTQ orientations, but one of the paths of the Eightfold Path, Right Thought (Samma Sankappa), emphasizes openness and non-discrimination. Recent research shows that priming Buddhist principles among people of other faiths increased pro-social behavior and decreased implicit prejudices of different out-groups, inclusive of people with a LGBTQ orientation (Clobert and Saroglou, 2013). Therefore, Buddhists, especially compared to adherents of other religions, should be more likely to support equal access to the marketplace for LGBTQ consumers.

In sum, adherents of different religions are likely to arrive at different conclusions as to whether the rights of LGBTQ consumers or religious service providers should be protected. With these nuances among religions regarding their views of LGBTQ access to marketplace established, discussion now turns to how such religious views form the foundation of social identity and how these identities can lead to identity threat as well as resulting consumer responses to denial of service.

Conflicting social identities

LGBTQ groups, secular organizations and religious groups are all potential sources of social identity for consumers. According to Tajfel (1974, p. 69), an individual’s social identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership”. Humans possess a fundamental need to belong (Baumeister and Leary, 1995), which causes consumers to seek to fit into, maintain and defend specific social identities and associated social groups (Tajfel, 1974).

The challenge for consumers in a service setting arises when they perceive a threat to their identity, such as an ethnic identity (Pires and Stanton, 2000), physically disabled identity (Burnett, 1996), LGBTQ identity (Oakenfull, 2013) or religious identity (Rios et al., 2015). Individuals strive to maintain positive social identities, and they are likely to view negative information about an important social identity as self-threatening (White and Argo, 2009). For example, LGBTQ consumers may experience social identity threat when they feel that their values as a group, such as competence or morality, are being undermined.

Related to social identity threat, research on dissociative reference groups suggests that consumers take actions to avoid being associated with a social group conflicting with their core social groups (White and Dahl, 2007). For example, a religious individual may avoid actions that associate them with an atheist, just as a strong Democrat may avoid actions that associate them with Republicans. Thus, behaviors in response to marketplace conflicts may stem from a one’s desire to maintain a certain social identity. In particular, maintaining a stance against a LGBTQ orientation could be a fundamental part of identifying oneself as Christian. Consequently, LGBTQ consumers may feel that being refused service is an attack on a core social identity, ultimately leading to alienation and marginalization.

Identity threats are at the core of the religious freedom versus marketplace inclusion divide. As discussed in the previous section, several religions strongly advocate against a LGBTQ orientation. As such, Christian service providers might experience a threat to their religious identity when they are asked to perform actions that support a LGBTQ orientation. Similarly, a consumer that is refused service based on his or her LGBTQ orientation might feel that their gender identity is threatened. The reverse could also be true, such that a LGBTQ service provider could refuse service to a fundamentalist Christian or Muslim consumer in an effort to protect their gender identity. As with inter-group identity conflict, intrapersonal identity conflict may also occur. For example, an individual who is both gay and Christian may experience internal identity conflict when he or she decides what services to patronize in the marketplace or whom to serve while on the job. Each of these hypothetical scenarios may lead to a threat to a core identity and, thus, a consumer’s sense of belonging.
Social identity threats trigger the process of psychological reactance, which often leads to behaviors to restore the threatened identity (i.e. the “consumer response to denial of service” construct in the conceptual framework). When people feel that someone (or something) is constraining their freedom, they feel highly motivated to regain their freedom, which they enact through adversarial behaviors (Brehm, 1966). For example, telling dieters that sugary snacks are unhealthy leads them to consume more sugary snacks (Pham et al., 2016). Likewise, a threat to the freedom to exercise one’s social identity in the marketplace may cause reactance (Hong and Page, 1989). Actors on both sides of servicing a gay wedding are likely to feel that their freedom is being threatened by the other side, thereby magnifying their opposing reactions. This desire for freedom is one of the core tenets of American culture (Markus and Schwartz, 2010), and thus, most Americans react in strong, negative ways when they perceive their freedom is threatened.

To fully understand the effects of LGBTQ and religious identity threats on psychological reactance and corresponding marketplace behaviors for consumers and service providers, several potential moderators are examined in the sections to follow. These moderators (e.g. level of participation, sacredness, religious identity salience) are likely to exacerbate or mitigate the effects of identity threat on reactance.

Level of participation

The level of threat to one’s identity is likely to vary based on the level of participation in what is deemed as unacceptable behaviors (Reynolds et al., 2015). For example, in the scenario of servicing a gay wedding, an employee who is selling plates and napkins would be less involved in the gay wedding in comparison to someone who is baking the cake (moderate involvement), taking photos at the wedding (higher involvement) or officiating at the wedding (very high involvement). In addition, higher levels of involvement might blur the lines between the in-group (associative group) and out-group (dissociative group), which could further threaten one’s identity. For example, if a fundamentalist Christian photographer took photos at a same-sex wedding, then the photographer might be viewed as part of the LGBTQ associative group, which would serve as an intense identity threat. Therefore, the photographer may be more likely to refuse service to the same-sex couple rather than subject themselves to the identity threat.

Event sacredness

While the level of participation is important, it is also necessary to consider the sacredness of the event. Prior research shows that actions and emotions at sacred versus secular events differ (Belk et al., 1989, Minton, 2016), where a sacred event is likely to engender higher levels of involvement and higher motivation to avoid social identity threat. For example, baking a wedding cake for a gay couple is likely perceived as more sacred than baking a birthday cake for the same couple. The first behavior is assisting in a union that, according to some religious individuals, is against God’s desire (i.e. a sin), while the latter behavior is celebrating the birth of individuals, on which religious scripture provides limited direction. Additionally, the customer’s sexual orientation is more apparent when shopping for services related to a wedding (e.g. a couple coming in together and asking for a specific wedding topper), whereas the customer’s sexual orientation is likely less apparent when shopping for services related to a birthday (e.g. a man asking for another man’s birthday cake, which could be for a child, sibling or friend), thereby engendering different levels of perceived social identity threat.

Salience of a social identity

Individuals often retain multiple social identities (Allen et al., 1983). Given that a social identity shapes the attitudes and behaviors of an individual to conform to a specific social group (Tajfel, 1974), it is important to consider which social identity is most salient and, thus, impactful in determining how an individual behaves in marketplace transactions. For example, a gay consumer may identify with various groups, such as the LGBTQ community, engaged couples, consumers and Americans. On the other hand, a Christian baker might identify with Christians, bakers, business owners and Americans. If the situational salience of a “service provider” identity dominates the attitudes and behaviors of the Christian wedding service provider, then he or she may be more likely to render service to the gay consumer. However, if the salience of a Christian identity dominates, then he or she may be more likely to deny service to the gay consumer.

Consumer response to denial of service

Now that contextual moderators have been reviewed, it is important to understand some of the most common responses from a LGBTQ consumer who has experienced social identity threat and associated reactance after denial of service from a service provider. In this section, three common routes that LGBTQ consumers follow in response to being discriminated against in a service setting are discussed: choosing another service provider, providing justification for the provision of services and pursuing legal recourse.

Choose another service provider

First, consumers may simply choose to purchase at another service provider that would be willing to have them as customers, so long as a non-monopolistic environment is present. Thus, if there are comparable substitutes available to the LGBTQ consumer, then the level of discrimination experienced may be viewed as inconsequential. The consumer can practice “putting your money where your mouth is” or spending money at institutions that share one’s values. Consumers exercise these rights daily when they choose to shop at one store and avoid shopping at others. In more extreme cases, consumers even organize boycotts to avoid spending money at institutions that do not share their same values (e.g. human rights issues, health insurance coverage, fair wages) (Sergius Koku, 2012). However, voting with one’s wallet can be difficult for some consumers if their options and/or resources are constrained. For example, consumers with a low socioeconomic status may not be able to go out of their way to shop at institutions that match their values, whether it is because of constrained financial resources, transportation options or access to information (Harris et al., 2005). Additionally, challenges may arise in rural communities where service options are limited to just one
business of a type in a town. In these cases, being denied access to a sought-after service would likely engender a significant degree of discrimination for the consumer, leaving this consumer response strategy as implausible.

Provide justification for the provision of services
Another strategy that LGBTQ consumers could follow is to attempt to justify to the service provider why they should be treated like any other customer. One particularly effective approach in such attempts could be to leverage the process of self-affirmation (Sherman and Cohen, 2002). Given that religiously held beliefs are especially important to the self, religious service providers are likely to be resistant to arguments that may challenge such beliefs. However, if the LGBTQ consumer can first self-affirm the service provider by acknowledging that they have an admirable business or that the consumer respects their Christian beliefs, then the service provider might be less likely to succumb to defensive biases in their communication with the LGBTQ consumer. With reduced defensive biases, the service provider might be more open to understanding the viewpoints of and sympathizing with the LGBTQ consumer, even if such information may be threatening to deeply held beliefs and values (Sherman and Cohen, 2002). Consequently, the service provider may be open to serving the consumer despite being initially inclined to refuse the LGBTQ consumers’ business.

Pursue legal recourse
Finally, discriminated consumers may use legal recourse in response to being denied service by religious service providers. For instance, after being denied service to a wedding cake on religious grounds, a lesbian couple sued the now-defunct Sweet Cakes bakery in Oregon (Amos, 2015). Eventually, the bakery was forced to pay the couple $135,000 for violating the state’s non-discrimination laws. A gay couple in Washington, along with the attorney general, sued the owner of the floral shop Arlene’s Flowers after the service provider refused to design flowers for the same-sex wedding. Two years later, the service provider was found guilty of violating the state’s consumer protection laws (Mai-Duc, 2015). In addition, the New Mexico Supreme Court ruled against a photographer who refused to take pictures at a gay wedding (Associated Press, 2015). There are countless other examples of LGBTQ consumers pursuing legal action as a result of being denied service by religious service providers, such as bakeries, photographers, florists, caterers and entertainers. By suing the offending parties, LGBTQ consumers have the potential for monetary gain, but more importantly, they help to ensure equal protection under the law for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The preceding review of LGBTQ consumer responses to restricted access to the marketplace included individual-level responses. However, it is important to note that, like most major social issues, collective action is often more effective and necessary in ameliorating the issue at hand (Garrison, 1992). Paying heed to this call, the next section suggests more collective measures that service providers, social groups (e.g. LGBTQ communities), and public policy officials could pursue to improve marketplace interactions.

Strategies to address conflict between religious freedom and marketplace inclusion
Recommendations are a significant challenge when examining the intersection of LGBTQ rights, religion and service provider actions. Religion is considered a taboo topic of discussion by many (Minton and Kahle, 2014), yet is one of the most enduring psychological mechanisms a consumer can experience (Mathras et al., 2016, Minton, 2015). Additionally, LGBTQ rights and religion is a hot topic of debate, given conflicting value systems (Amos, 2015, Mai-Duc, 2015, Associated Press, 2015). With these challenges, how should LGBTQ consumers, religious service providers and public policy makers proceed? Freedom is at the core of this question: If adhering strictly to the idea of marketplace inclusion, then service providers should not be able to operate under religious principles to refuse service to anyone, inclusive of LGBTQ consumers. However, this suggestion violates religious freedom. On the alternative side, allowing service providers to operate by religious principles and refuse service to anyone for religious reasons violates LGBTQ consumers’ freedom. Therefore, complete freedom for both parties is not possible. To address the conflict between religious freedom and marketplace inclusion, several possible strategies for service providers, social groups and public policy makers are discussed in this section.

For service providers: common social identities and two-sided messages
Common social identities
Following the common in-group identity model (Gaertner et al., 1993), if both parties can re-categorize themselves as members of the same, more inclusive group (e.g. Americans), then there should be a reduction in inter-group bias. Specifically, this model proposes that identifying common identities (i.e. an inclusive “we” perspective) leads to greater levels of cooperation and lower bias than focusing on unique identities (i.e. a segregated “us” vs “them” perspective). Service providers could identify such commonalities (e.g. “We are all Americans” or even “We are all God’s children”) using marketing communications. Gaertner et al. (1993) note that identifying common identities in no way removes other identities (e.g. religious or LGBTQ orientation) but rather identifies commonalities (e.g. similarities in all being Americans or all being law-abiding citizens) to encourage cooperation. Highlighting commonalities also fulfills the central need for belonging described earlier in this paper when discussing social identity theory (Baumeister and Leary, 1995).

Two-sided messages
One way to prevent psychological reactance is by communicating with two-sided rather than one-sided messages. Pham et al. (2016) found that telling dieters that “all desserts are bad” increased consumption of desserts, whereas telling them that “all desserts taste good but are bad for your health” decreased consumption of desserts. Such two-sided messages may actually increase consumers’ perceptions of freedom, thereby decreasing psychological reactance. Consistent with this notion, preliminary research suggests that consumers experience high levels of satisfaction
when they have a larger amount of perceived freedom (Lamberton, 2013). Building on these findings, government entities should develop communications, such as public service announcements, that not only recognize the importance of a service provider’s right to practice religious freedom but also emphasize the importance of a consumer’s freedom to receive service (e.g. with messages in response to lawsuits over refusal of service to gay customers). Alternatively, service providers could not only develop two-sided messages that highlight the importance of each person’s unique identity but also emphasize the importance of the service provider’s right to practice religious freedom. By recognizing the validity of both sides of the issue, these types of messages are likely to result in a greater overall perceived sense of freedom, thereby leading to greater compliance (rather than reactance) among consumers and service providers.

For social groups: in-group interventions

Social group interventions may be another way to address conflicts. Interventions can promote behavior change as authority figures mediate conflicting situations (Moore, 2014). Interventions coming from one’s in-group are likely to be viewed more favorably and have a higher desire to be followed (White and Dahl, 2007). For example, the Catholic Pope’s statement on sustainability carried much more weight in encouraging sustainability among Catholics than if the same message came from another world leader or organization because of the authority and respect given to the Pope (Kirchgaessner, 2015). When a religious leader communicates a message promoting LGBTQ rights or service to all in-group members, the message is likely to be listened to and followed with greater reverence. Similarly, when a LGBTQ leader promotes patronizing all service providers, regardless of any formal association with the LGBTQ community, then LGBTQ consumers should be more likely to expand their consideration set of service providers. Because humans have a strong desire to belong to social groups (Baumeister and Leary, 1995), individuals are likely to adhere to mediation requests from in-group leaders. Therefore, such in-group interventions could help to reduce reactionary behaviors in the marketplace.

For public policy: government interventions

In contrast to in-group interventions, a neutral third party (the government in this case) could step in to mandate marketplace inclusion (Oakenfull, 2013, Harris et al., 2005). Specifically, marketplace inclusion laws could be created to mandate that businesses must serve all consumers, regardless of the consumers’ sexual orientation or the business’ religious orientation. While this would be one of the most inclusive recommendations from the consumer’s standpoint, such a position would likely engender a fair amount of backlash from religious fundamentalist service providers. At the same time, government mandates may be less threatening to one’s identity because service providers would not be performing the action by personal choice but rather in adherence to laws. Additionally, identity threat should be lower in this scenario because many religious scriptures encourage adherence to government policies (e.g. Romans 13:1: “Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God”). Also, servicing members of the LGBTQ community might not be a moral issue when providing service does not support or affirm the LGBTQ orientation (e.g. an ER doctor caring for an injured gay person or police responding to the scene of a gay couple in a car crash). Therefore, such actions should not threaten one’s identity, regardless of government mandates.

Neutral third party interventions by the government could alternatively grant religious exemptions, similar to the practice that is used with religious universities. The US Department of Education recently approved three universities (George Fox University, Simpson University and Spring Arbor University) to be able to deny accommodations to transgender students for religious reasons (Kingkade, 2014). This approval was based on the school’s guidelines that prohibit behaviors that are in contradiction to religious principles. Thus, policy could proceed to declare that so long as a business publicly posts that certain behaviors are in violation of their religious views, discrimination is acceptable.

Future directions

This review and conceptual framework is intended to stimulate quantitative and qualitative research at the intersection of LGBTQ marketplace inclusion and freedom of religion conflicts in services. Because the conceptual model presented in Figure 1 and throughout this paper is new and currently untested, future researchers are invited to empirically examine the relationships presented in the model, in whole or in part, and from the perspective of both the service provider and the LGBTQ consumer. Additionally, given that this paper focused on the intersection of LGBTQ and religious identities related to marketplace inclusion (i.e. freedom to participate in the market), further discussion and research is warranted that better examines this intersection as it affects other marketplace phenomena, such as the freedom to act, freedom of choice and freedom of access. Here, three examples of contexts are provided that highlight constraints to freedom: employer–employee identity conflict (freedom to act), healthcare provider–patient identity conflict (freedom to choose) and education system–student identity conflict (freedom of access).

The running example of the baker who refused service to a gay couple is an example of an employee–customer dyad. However, front-line employees may also experience LGBTQ identity threat if their jobs require them to provide service or adhere to company norms that diverge from their own standards. Many firms weave religious norms into their business practices and even add references to sacred text explicitly or discretely to products and in advertisements (Nisen, 2013). Chick-fil-A is infamous for their COO’s stance on gay marriage, while Forever 21 and In-N-Out Burger are known for including a Bible passage (John 3:16) on the bottom of their shopping bags and food containers, respectively. What should employees do when their identity-based beliefs differ from their employer’s beliefs? Inconsistency between one’s own identity and his or her firm’s identity may lead to reactance, a change in marketplace behaviors and a decrease in commitment to one’s firm. Future
research could address the conditions under which employees experience LGBTQ identity threat in the workplace and for which types of employers (e.g. public/private, large/small, specific industries). Additionally, further research should explore when identity-threatened employees are willing to uphold their employer’s mission (e.g. organizational commitment, dependency, power dynamics) versus engage in altered marketplace behaviors (e.g. sabotage, lowered service quality, quitting) as well as when employees start identifying less with their in-group.

Identity threat also comes into play in the medical domain where issues arise regarding a patient’s freedom to choose his or her treatment plan. Conflict may arise when a healthcare provider refuses to provide for anyone under any circumstance (e.g. contraception or gender reassignment surgery) or refuses service to certain patients (e.g. a doctor only doing artificial insemination for married heterosexual couples or prescribing Viagra only for heterosexual men). As such, doctors and healthcare providers are often caught at the intersection of marketplace inclusion, which promotes healthcare access for all, and the identities/values of their patients, which may demand or restrict the use of healthcare. What should doctors and patients do when they experience identity conflict during a healthcare interaction? Future research should consider such issues, including the conditions under which patients with identity conflicts should be given full freedom to choose (or to not choose) treatment plans versus deferring the choice of treatment plans to medical professionals. Such conditions may include, but are not limited to, the age of the patient, the severity of illness and the patient’s soundness of mind.

Another example of conflict affects freedom of choice in the content of education. Many state regulatory bodies have proposed laws that would dictate the content of education, such as mandating discussion of creation and evolution theories in public school textbooks (Bentele et al., 2013). The role of religion in education has led some to question whether the educational marketplace is truly inclusive for all, including LGBTQ children (e.g. textbooks including reference to homosexual relationships). Future research could address the effects of restricted access to information in public and private schools on outcomes such as student performance, achievement and well-being. Additionally, under which conditions is this restricted access to information acceptable (e.g. private religious schools vs public schools)? Because students are minors, is it acceptable to defer to their parents or their boards of education regarding the content of their education?

Collectively, more qualitative and quantitative research is needed in addition to more research examining LGBTQ marketplace inclusion versus service provider freedom of religion across different cultures. Research also needs to build on prior research showing the importance of forgiveness in service evaluations after service failure (Cowart et al., 2014; Tsarenko and Roosli Tojib, 2011) to identify the role of forgiveness with LGBTQ consumers and religious business owners. Additionally, given the importance of service quality in service evaluations (Zeithaml et al., 1996), future research should examine how service quality interacts with marketplace inclusion and freedom of religion. Fulfilling these future research directions would help to understand how conflicts over LGBTQ versus religious rights shape marketplace behaviors, service providers, psychology and societies.

**Conclusion**

Whether it is wedding services, universities, medical procedures or political activities, LGBTQ and religious social identities can conflict to influence the decisions that consumers and service providers make in the marketplace. With differing identities, it is easy to see how conflict can arise among service providers, consumers and policy-makers, thereby creating a pressing social problem at the intersection of these varying interests. Consumers and service providers alike bring LGBTQ and/or religious values and identities into the marketplace and now is the time to deeply consider how to maximize satisfaction, inclusion and equality for all parties and identities involved.

**References**


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