Transformational consumption choices: building an understanding by integrating social identity and multi-attribute attitude theories

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* *Transformational value offerings result when marketers bundle products, services, and experiences in ways that provide consumers with opportunities to alter who they are. Examples include universities, healthcare providers, travel and leisure services, and many other businesses that guide individuals to change in some desired and lasting way. Pine and Gilmore (1999) predict that in the emerging economy "…transformation offerings will emerge across almost every industry that today views itself as part of the service sector" (p. 168). By definition, transformational value offerings involve identity development. Thus, it makes sense to use identity related variables to explain transformational value offering choices. This paper tests a model merging social identity theory and multi-attribute attitude modeling to better understand factors predicting consumers' intentions to select a transformational value offering. A survey sample of United States Army Reserve recruits was used to test the integrated model. Results show that identity-related perceptions form the basis for evaluating the value offering's benefits and intentions to adopt the offering. The prospective consumer also considers whether his or her self-concept can accommodate that role. The proposed blending of social identity and multiattribute attitude models provides a promising framework for understanding and investigating consumers' choices to adopt transformational value offerings. Copyright © 2009 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

Introduction

Transformational value offerings result when marketers bundle products, services, and experiences in ways that provide consumers with opportunities to alter who they are (Pine

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and Gilmore, 1999). Marketers poised to position themselves as transformational include universities, healthcare providers, travel and leisure services, and many other businesses that guide individuals to change in some desired and lasting way. The transformational marketer becomes a guide who designs situations that assist the consumer in diagnosing desired self-change, and then developing and delivering a transformational program. Pine and Gilmore (1999) predict that in the emerging economy "...transformation offerings will emerge across almost every industry that today views itself as part of the service sector" (p. 168). However, little is known about the factors that contribute to consumers' adoption of a transformational value offering.

What defines a transformational value offering? Transformations guide buyers toward fundamental changes in who they are (Pine and Gilmore, 1999: 171–172). The resulting self change is evident in lasting cognitive and behavioral changes. Transformations are intentionally chosen and inherently personal for every buyer. For example, obtaining a tattoo would not necessarily be a transformation in the sense used here. However, when a flower tattoo is part of the role-related symbols signifying the identity of expert gardener, the flower tattoo may signify transformation. Self-transformational value offerings require the customer to engage in an identity project, a process of adopting a particular identity (Kleine and Kleine, 2000).

This study examines how consumers make buying decisions involving transformational value offerings. We develop and test a model merging elements of social identity theory and multi-attribute attitude modeling to better understand factors predicting consumers' intentions to select transformational value offerings. Consumer researchers tend to analyze buying decisions as discrete choices, downplaying the importance of the larger self-developmental context. Yet when a value offering promises a prospective buyer a path to self-change, the self-developmental implications should influence the decision whether to choose that path.

The study reported here casts the decision to choose a transformational value offering as a case of identity adoption. Selecting a transformational value offering requires a consumer to ask "is this a type of person I want to become?" and "how might adopting this impact other elements of my self structure?" The results demonstrate that merging elements from symbolic interactionist identity theory (Stryker, 1980; Solomon, 1983; Pilivian and Callero, 1991; Kleine *et al.*, 1993) and multi-attribute attitude theory helps us understand factors predicting intentions to choose a transformational value offering.

The paper proceeds as follows. Pertinent theory is identified. A model of transformational value offering choice merging elements from symbolic interactionist identity theory with traditional attitude model relationships is then proposed. A study that tests the model in the context of choosing to join the U.S. Army Reserve is reported. We conclude that the proposed blending of social identity and attitudinal theory provides a promising framework for understanding and investigating consumers' decisions to adopt transformational value offerings.

Theoretical background

A person considering a transformational value offering evaluates weighted outcome beliefs and normative factors, but also the potentially more important impact the offering will have on their identity. Prospects assess how adopting the value offering will fit within their lives and what it will mean for their self-definitions and self-meaning. Therefore, supplementing traditional attitude models with identity factors should yield improved understanding of the transformational value offering adoption decision.

Social identity theory applied to transformational value offering adoption

Symbolic interactionist (SI) role identity theory (Stryker, 1980; Hoelter, 1983; Solomon, 1983;

Callero, 1985; Kleine, 1993; Laverie *et al.*, 2002; Kleine *et al.*, 2006) explains why individuals choose to become who they are (e.g., soldier, cyclist, teacher). It emphasizes how social networks and interaction patterns lead to choices impacting self-definition. Social influences, including marketing communications and selling messages, draw prospects into a socialization process through which they come to see themselves as a particular type of person (Kleine *et al.*, 1993). Whether a person's self-structure can accommodate the new role and what it means to the person should help explain his or her choice of a transformational value offering. The emphasis of social identity theory is on social influences, but it also can explain how attitudes and other internal dispositions arise. That is, it explains how the role-identity socialization process guides consumers to form outcome beliefs and intentions to adopt transformational value offerings.

The current approach adopts a prospect-centric approach. Instead of focusing on whether a prospect feels connected to an organization because of what it stands for, we examine how individuals evaluate whether a transformational value offering will yield an identity that will fit in their life pattern and self-conceptions. "Can I see myself in the role?" is the decision maker's issue, not whether he or she feels connected to the organization offering the identity opportunity (Elsbach and Bhattacharya, 2001; Bhattacharya and Elsbach, 2002).

Three related schemas capture role perceptions – the role schema, the ideal schema, and the identity schema (Kleine, 1993); these help explain how individuals come to perceive themselves with respect to a transformational possibility. These schemata capture self images of role, self, and aspirations with respect to a given transformational role.

Role schema

The role schema captures an individual's perception of the typical or average person who performs the role – the typical Army Reservist, for example. It is a stereotypical meaning resulting from socialization, exposure to media images, and/or contact with role occupants. Prospects develop role schemas prior to contact with the transformational provider. Like most role stereotypes held by outsiders to a role, role schemas may contain inaccurate or caricatured images of role occupants (e.g., Wheaton, 2000).

Ideal schema

The ideal schema captures a prospect's personal vision of how he or she ideally would be as someone in the role – e.g., "how I would like to be as an Army Reservist." The role schema and perceived personal competencies shape the ideal schema. This future oriented schema informs current behavior directed toward achieving the ideal.

Identity schema

The identity schema captures prospects' perceptions of themselves with respect to adopting a particular role-identity – "How I am now" as this type of person. The ideal schema influences or guides the identity schema, which in turn provides a frame of reference for how the prospect actually will go about engaging the particular role.

Identity schema predictors

Prior research (Kleine, 1993) provides empirical support for the role schema → ideal schema → identity schema relationships depicted in **Figure 1**. The role schema (a stereotype) influences a person's ideal aspirations (ideal schema) for their performance in the role. In turn, aspirations (ideal schema) influence how the individual believes they realistically will perform the role (identity schema).

Pride

Pride is a primary social emotion (Scheff, 1991) elicited by social experiences that bring forth feelings of self-regard. Feelings of pride associ-
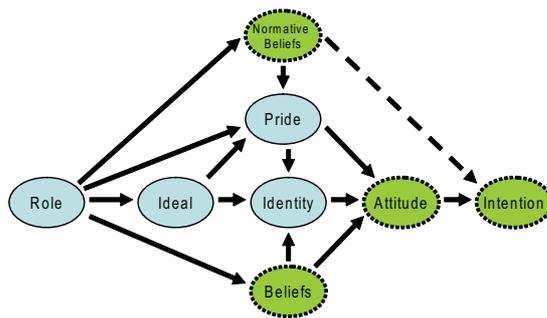
Figure 1. A model of the decision to adopt a transformational value offering. Solid arrows designate construct relations predicted and supported by the data. Dashed arrows indicate construct relations predicted but not supported by the data. Solid lines encircle social identity theory variables while dashed lines encircle attitude theory variables.

ated with the thought of adopting a particular role will enhance prospects' identification with the role itself. The emotion becomes additional, non-cognitive input into the perception of the role and encourages role-identity internalization (Deci and Ryan, 1991). Thus, greater pride associated with the role enhances an individual's view of how he or she will be in that role. The more pride one feels, the more favorable the identity schema (Laverie *et al.*, 2002).

Proposed model

The proposed Model of the Decision to Adopt Transformational Value Offerings is depicted in the Figure 1. The model blends Theory of Reasoned Action variables (Fishbein and Azjen, 1975) and adds Symbolic Interactionist Social Identity Theory (e.g., Stryker, 1980) concepts and relationships. Prior research shows that adding explanatory variables (e.g., emotions or identity salience, enhances the explanatory power of attitude models (Charng *et al.*, 1988; Pilivian and Callero, 1991; Allen *et al.*, 2005). As the Figure 1 shows, social identity concepts explain the origins of beliefs and behavioral intentions.

Attitude components applied to transformational value offering choice

Choosing to adopt a transformational value offering likely includes evaluation of perceived

benefits of role adoption. To capture this aspect, we apply the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Azjen, 1975). A prospect's attitude toward adopting the transformational value offering directly predicts his or her intention to adopt the offering. Attitude is predicted by Beliefs, which are the perceived benefits of the transformational value offering, each weighted by its perceived importance, and Normative Beliefs, which are perceptions about what others (family and friends) think of adopting the Reservist role, weighted by how much respondents care what those individuals think.

Social identity theory elements

The Figure 1 shows how role identity theory constructs explain attitudes and intentions. The Identity→Attitude path reflects the assumption that the more a person identifies with a transformational role, the more the person has internalized the role (Deci and Ryan, 1991; Pilivian and Callero, 1991), and the more favorably the person will view adopting that role.

Pride, Identity Ideal, and Beliefs each predict the identity schema. The Pride → Identity path reflects the fact that people tend to pursue activities which they believe they can perform competently and that will invite favorable feedback. The more prospects believe other people important to them think they will succeed in the role, the more they will anticipate experiencing pride upon role adoption (Normative Beliefs → Pride). The Ideal → Identity path shows that the type of person prospects aspire to be (Ideal) influences how they comport themselves with respect to the identity (Identity). Finally, knowledge about role outcomes (Beliefs) is expected to contribute to knowledge of self in role (Identity).

Prospects' beliefs about the consequences of adopting the role are influenced by their role stereotype (Role) and Normative Beliefs. The more favorable the role stereotype a prospect holds, the stronger their beliefs that adopting the role will provide desirable outcomes.

Prospects' conception of how they would ideally be in the role is influenced by the role schema (Role), which, in turn, influences expectations of Pride. The role stereotype is the basis of, and thus constrains, prospects' understanding of how they will be as role occupants. The path from Role → Pride suggests that the more prospects favorably evaluate the stereotypical role occupant, the more pride they anticipate with role adoption.

How the transformational role identity fits with current activities

The more prospects identify with a particular role (e.g., Army Reservist), the more personal and attentional resources they allocate to the related activities (Hoelter, 1983; Callero, 1985; Kleine, 1993). However, constraints are placed on how many resources individuals can devote to a role, depending upon how it impacts other identities already in place. The desirability of adopting the role also depends upon how the transformational role complements other roles comprising a prospect's self-concept. Major identity groupings for most people are family-, work-, and leisure-based. For example, a person may simultaneously be a father, husband, and brother, an avid hunter and fly fisherman, and work as a salesperson in a camera store. The prospect will consider how adopting a new role will impact other areas of life and will assess, *a priori*, the potential conflict with other role identities. If the prospect anticipates a new role will complement other identities, role adoption increases in appeal.

The proposed model seeks to explain and predict intentions to adopt a transformational value offering by combining social identity variables with traditional attitude variables. It portrays how perceptions of the intended self change emerge and influence outcome beliefs and intentions toward adopting the transformational value offering. Through the two analyses, we explore whether the proposed model blending social identity and Theory of Reasoned Action variables is useful for studying transformational value offering choices.

Methodology

Sample and procedures

Model testing required a context in which a transformational value was being offered deliberately. With this in mind, the proposed model was tested with data collected from individuals being actively recruited for the United States Army Reserve. Joining the U.S. Army Reserves, like joining any of the United States' armed services, is voluntary. Prospective Reservists are not drafted into service, but choose to become Reservists. U.S. Army Reserve recruits make a part-time commitment that entails monthly weekend, and annual week-long obligations, with the possibility of being called into active duty. This context choice may seem unusual. However, becoming an U.S. Army Reservist has been positioned for many years as a self-transformational opportunity (e.g., the U.S. Army's long running ''Be all you can be'' slogan) and fits Pine and Gilmore's (1999) definition of a transformational value offering. The context also provided the opportunity to simultaneously examine prospects' assessments of instrumental benefits and identity-related images.

Due to privacy issues, the earliest point for possible data collection occurred when recruits visited the military entrance processing station. At this station, prospects' abilities were assessed and recruits were informed of opportunities matching their abilities. This step occurred after the recruit had met several times with a recruiter. Although recruits already had started considering role adoption, they had yet to make the final decision to commit to the role.

Data were collected during peacetime, in the interval between Operation Desert Storm and the 2003 war in Iraq. Respondents were cognizant that, as a reservist, they could be called to full-time active duty. Data were collected with a self-administered questionnaire distributed by Army personnel to qualified Army Reserve recruits. The questionnaire was pretested prior to distribution with a sample of recruits selected from the target population. The questionnaires were

distributed as follows: the researchers provided questionnaire packets to coordinating personnel at U.S. Army Reserve Recruiting (USAREC) headquarters. Each of the 1600 questionnaire packets included a cover letter, a questionnaire booklet, and a stamped self-addressed envelope for returning the completed questionnaire. Army personnel distributed questionnaire bundles to selected Army Reserve Recruiters and guidance counselors. Each bundle included distribution instructions for the recipient recruiter or guidance counselor and a set of questionnaire packets. All questionnaires were distributed in this manner.

Recruiters and guidance counselors were instructed to ''distribute a questionnaire to each person you advise until your questionnaire supply is exhausted.'' They were asked to say the following when distributing a questionnaire to a qualified individual, ''Here is an important questionnaire about deciding to enlist in the U.S. Army Reserve. Please complete it at your earliest convenience and mail it promptly using the enclosed postage paid envelope.'' The questionnaire stated that the purpose of the research was ''to evaluate and improve military personnel and recruiting policies,'' promised confidentiality of responses, and gave contact information for reaching the researchers for questions.

Because recruiter and guidance counselor contact with recruits fluctuates, it was anticipated some questionnaire packets would not be distributed within the data collection timeframe. To track the actual number of questionnaires distributed, attached to each questionnaire packet was a postcard that uniquely identified the questionnaire. The recruiter/ guidance counselor was asked to remove and mail the postcard after distributing a questionnaire. More completed questionnaires were received than ''questionnaire distributed'' postcards. Because it was not possible to maintain a data base of prospects who had been given a questionnaire, no follow-up was possible with those who did not return their responses. This procedure created ambiguity regarding the actual number of questionnaire packets distributed. Applying the most conservative response rate calculation possible: the 275 usable questionnaires returned by qualified individuals yields a 17.1 per cent response rate (based on 1600 questionnaires provided for distribution). Individuals unlikely to enlist probably are under represented in our sample.

The typical respondent is 20.4 years old ($sd = 5.47$), male (62%), single and has never been married (85%), has no children (85%), is white (64%) or black (21%). Three educational groupings are apparent in the sample: those who are still in high school (35%), high school graduates (25%), and individuals with some college (25%). U.S. Army data reveal this profile is typical for Army Reserve recruits.

Measures

Identity measures are adapted from prior studies (Hoelter, 1983, 1985; Callero, 1985; Kleine, 1993). The attitude measures used are typical for multi-attribute measurement.

Role, identity ideal, and identity schemas

Each schema was indicated by three seven-point bipolar adjective scales: powerful–powerless, inactive–active (reverse scored), and weak–strong (reverse scored). The role schema was primed by asking respondents to use the bi-polar scales to describe ''the typical or average person who joins the Army Reserve.'' The ideal identity schema captured ''the kind of person who you consider to be the ideal (best) person for enlisting in the Army Reserve.'' The identity schema was primed by asking respondents to describe themselves ''as someone who may or will enlist in the Army Reserve.'' Prior research in various contexts has validated this approach to measuring self-schema meaning in the survey context (e.g., Osgood *et al.*, 1957; Hoelter, 1985; Kleine, 1993; Laverie, 2002).

Pride

Respondents were instructed to ''Please indicate how strongly you experience each

of the following emotions when you think about enlisting in the Army Reserve:'' Pride was indicated by three items: proud, dignified, and elite. Each item was measured by a seven-point scale anchored by ''don't feel at all'' (scored 7) and ''feel very strongly'' (scored 1).

Beliefs

Importance-weighted beliefs about the consequences of enlisting in the Army Reserve were measured. The beliefs statements were taken from a prior proprietary Army research project. The nine attributes describe the respondent's belief that ''by enlisting in the Army Reserve I will get...'' (1) ''to travel and live in different places,'' (2) ''to serve my country,'' (3) ''a skill that will help me get a civilian job when I get out,'' (4) ''money for a college or vocational education,'' (5) ''to take time out before deciding what I really want to do,'' (6) ''leadership training,'' (7) ''fringe benefits,'' (8) ''to work with sophisticated, high-tech equipment,'' and (9) ''a wide variety of opportunities to find a job I can enjoy.''

Respondents indicated belief strength on a seven-point scale anchored by extremely likely (scored 1) to extremely unlikely (scored 7). Belief importance was measured by a seven-point scale anchored by from extremely good (scored 1) to extremely bad (scored 7). Weighted beliefs were calculated for each attribute by multiplying the belief strength times the importance ratings. The sum of the importance-weighted beliefs forms the belief measure used for analysis.

Subjective norm

Respondents' normative beliefs were primed by this instruction: ''these questions ask about the degree to which people you know would support your decision to enlist in the Army Reserve.'' Respondents rated strength for these normative beliefs: ''members of my family support my decision to enlist in the Army Reserve.'' The other five items referred to ''people I know through religious activities,'' ''people I know in conjunction with being a student (e.g., other students, teachers),'' ''people with whom I participate in my athletic activity,'' and ''people with whom I participate in hobby related activities.'' Respondents answered on a seven-point scale ranging from strongly agree (scored 1) to strongly disagree (scored 7).

Motivation to comply was primed with this instruction: ''the following questions ask how important support from people you know is to your decision to enlist in the Army Reserve.'' The prefix ''in deciding to enlist in the Army Reserve, the support of ...'' was followed by each of the significant others listed above. Motivation to comply with each significant other was measured on a seven-point scale anchored by ''very important'' (scored 1) to ''not at all important'' (scored 7). The remaining five items referred to the other five groups of people used in the normative beliefs measure. Subjective norm was operationalized as the summed product of the normative beliefs multiplied by their respective motivation to comply with that significant other.

Attitude and intention

Respondents' attitudes toward joining the Army Reserve were measured using three seven-point bipolar adjective scales: good–bad, positive–negative, and favorable–unfavorable. Intention to enlist was measured by asking the likelihood that ''I intend to enlist in the Army Reserve,'' using a seven-point scale ranging from extremely likely (scored 1) to extremely unlikely (scored 7).

Self-structure today and 1 year from now

Respondents allocated a total of 100 points to indicate ''the degree to which each of the following activities describes who you are today. The more points you assign an activity, the more important it is to who you are.'' Respondents could allocate points across these identities: family, religion, student, job, athletic

activity, non-athletic hobby, Army Reserve, or other. To capture anticipated self-structure change, respondents allocated a second 100 points to indicate ''how important you anticipate each [activity] will be after you have served in the Army Reserve for one year.''

Demographics and other measures

Data were collected on descriptive variables including age, gender, parental status, racial/ethnic category, and education level.

Analysis and results

Measure quality assessment

Analysis followed Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) recommended two-step procedure. Step one involved a maximum likelihood confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate the reliability and validity of the measurement structure. The proposed transformational value offering choice model was then fit to the data via full information maximum-likelihood covariance structure analysis for step two. SAS' PROC CALIS was used for these analyses.

The confirmatory factor analysis model was specified such that each observed variable was influenced by the single factor each was determined *a priori* to indicate. Because identically worded indicators were used to measure the role, identity, and ideal schemas, common method variance was expected. To partition out this common method variance, the residuals of identically worded indicators were allowed to covary (Marsh, 1990). All other residuals were specified as uncorrelated. The belief, subjective norm, and intention constructs are each represented by a single indicator. The factor loading and residual for each single-indicator construct was fixed assuming 95 per cent reliability. The latent factor variance of each multi-indicator construct was fixed at 1.0. All latent constructs were permitted to covary.

The measurement model revealed all multi-item measures to have acceptable reliability

and validity. The overall fit of the measurement model to the data is acceptable ($\chi^2 = 211.8$, $df = 103$, $p < 0.0001$; NNFI = 0.93; CFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.07). The statistical significance of the χ^2 statistic reflects this statistic's sensitivity to large sample size. All parameter estimates are reasonable and have the expected sign. The inter-factor covariances evidence discriminant validity between all construct pairs (maximum $r = 0.50$). The covariances allowed between residuals of identically worded items were removed and the measurement model re-estimated. Removing covariances among the identically worded indicators decreased overall model fit ($\chi^2_\Delta = 68.7$, $df = 9$, $p < 0.0001$; CFI = 0.93; NNFI = 0.91; RMSEA = 0.08). This suggests that common method variance is present. The covariances among residuals of identically worded items were retained to test the proposed transformational value offering choice model.

Test of the hypothesized transformational value offering choice model

The confirmatory factor model was respecified to incorporate the hypothesized construct relations (see Figure 1). The resulting model evidences good overall fit ($\chi^2 = 249.6$, $df = 115$, $p < 0.01$; CFI = 0.94, NNI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.08). The statistical significance of the χ^2 statistic again reflects the impact of our large sample size. All parameter estimates are reasonable and have the expected sign. The residual pattern approximates normality. There is no evidence of model misspecification or indication that additional paths should be considered. **Table 1** presents the maximum likelihood parameter estimates. The top portion of the table reports parameter estimates for the structural portion of the model. The variance explained in each dependent construct by its predictors is also provided. The bottom portion of the table reports parameter estimates for the model's measurement portion. Fornell and Larcker's (1981) reliability measure (designated ρ_η) is reported for each

Table 1. Maximum likelihood standardized and unstandardized parameter estimates and standard errors

Dependent variable (with predictors beneath)	Completely standardized	Unstandardized	Standard error	*t*-statistic
Intention ($r^2 = 0.09$)				
Attitude	0.26	0.35	0.09	3.83
Normative beliefs	0.12	0.07	0.07	1.76
Attitude ($r^2 = 0.39$)				
Pride	0.36	0.25	0.05	5.13
Identity	0.27	0.24	0.06	3.93
Beliefs	0.25	0.20	0.05	4.21
Normative beliefs ($r^2 = 0.02$)				
Role	0.16	0.14	0.06	4.22
Pride ($r^2 = 0.21$)				
Normative beliefs	0.18	0.22	0.08	2.69
Ideal	0.27	0.31	0.09	3.30
Role	0.18	0.20	0.09	2.24
Identity ($r^2 = 0.25$)				
Pride	0.23	0.18	0.06	3.10
Beliefs	0.15	0.13	0.06	2.32
Ideal	0.31	0.28	0.07	4.16
Beliefs ($r^2 = 0.08$)				
Role	0.28	0.28	0.07	2.27
Ideal ($r^2 = 0.26$)				
Role	0.51	0.51	0.07	7.26
Factor loadings				

Construct (and indicators)	Completely standardized	Unstandardized	Standard error
Intention	0.98	0.90	—
Attitude ($\rho_\eta = 0.89$)			
Good–bad	0.89	1.0	—
Negative–positive	−0.77	−1.0	0.07
Favorable–unfavorable	0.90	1.0	0.06
Normative beliefs	0.97	37.27	—
Pride ($\rho_\eta = 0.81$)			
Proud	0.79	1.0	—
Dignified	0.86	1.17	0.09
Elite	0.64	1.03	0.11
Identity ($\rho_\eta = 0.86$)			
Powerful	0.67	1.0	—
Inactive	−0.85	−1.25	0.10
Weak	−0.93	−1.24	0.10
Beliefs	0.97	33.30	—
Ideal ($\rho_\eta = 0.90$)			
Powerful	0.81	1.0	—
Inactive	−0.93	−1.19	0.07
Weak	−0.84	−1.11	0.07
Role ($\rho_\eta = 0.91$)			
Powerful	−78	1.03	0.07
Dignified	−0.90	−1.19	0.07
Weak	−0.95	−1.28	0.07

Notes: ρ_η is the construct reliability calculated according to Fornell and Larcker's (1981) Equation 10. The reliability of the three single indicator constructs – intention, beliefs, normative beliefs – was fixed at $\alpha = 0.95$.
Covariances allowed between residuals of identically worded indicators. Key: 1 = powerful; 2 = dignified; 3 = weak. An * designates covariances that are statistically significant at $p < 0.01$: cov(role1, ideal1) = 0.23* (0.05); cov(role2, ideal-2) = −0.09* (0.03); cov(role3, ideal3) = 0.07 (0.03); cov(role1, identity1) = 0.28* (0.06); cov (identity1,ideal1) = 0.18* (0.05); cov(role2, identity2) = .03 (0.04); cov(identity2, ideal2) = 0.02 (0.04); cov(identity3, role3) = −0.02 (0.03); cov(identity3, ideal3) = −0.01 (0.04).

multi-indicator construct. The findings generally support the proposed transformational value offering decision-making model.

Intention to enlist

Starting at the extreme right of the Figure, intention to enlist is predicted by attitude toward enlisting ($\beta = 0.26$, $t = 3.83$; $p < 0.01$; β is the completely standardized structural coefficient). Counter to expectations based on traditional multi-attribute consumer choice models, normative beliefs do not directly predict intention to enlist ($\beta = 0.12$, $t = 1.76$; $p > 0.01$), but influence attitudes and intentions via identity perceptions.

Attitude to enlist

All else held constant, the more an individual identifies him/her self as a Reservist (Identity), the more favorable his or her attitude ($\beta = 0.27$, $t = 3.93$). Similarly, the more pride associated with enlisting in the Reserves, the more favorable the attitude toward enlisting ($\beta = 0.36$; $t = 5.13$). Beliefs also predict attitude to enlist. The more a recruit believes enlisting will yield desired outcomes, the more favorable the attitude ($\beta = 0.25$, $t = 4.21$). Pride and the Identity Schema both explain variance in attitude beyond that claimed by beliefs, providing support for the proposed model of transformational value offering adoption.

Outcome beliefs and normative beliefs

As anticipated, a person's role schema predicts outcome beliefs ($\beta = 0.28$, $t = 2.27$). The path from role schema to outcome beliefs reveals that perceptions of the typical Army Reservist provide a baseline for beliefs about the benefits of enlisting in the Reserves. The role schema also explains variance in normative beliefs ($\beta = 0.16$, $t = 4.22$), suggesting that the role stereotype informs normative beliefs.

Identity

Individuals pursue life courses, such as enlisting in the Army Reserves, with which they personally identify. As expected, outcome beliefs ($\beta = 0.15$, $t = 2.30$) and pride ($\beta = 0.23$, $t = 3.1$) significantly predict identity. Prospects' beliefs that enlisting in the Reserves will yield desirable benefits (beliefs) enhances the degree to which they perceive themselves as potential Army Reserve enlistees (identity). Also, the more enlisting in the Army Reserve elicits feelings of pride, the more individuals identify themselves as potential Reservists. Identity-ideal has a statistically significant effect on identity ($\beta = 0.31$, $t = 4.16$). This pattern replicates Kleine (1993) and suggests the prospect's personal ideal rather than a role stereotype most directly influences the identity schema. Consumers adopt the transformational identity in a personalized manner and are not simply adopting someone else's stereotypical depiction of the role.

Pride

Pride is predicted by the role schema ($\beta = 0.18$, $t = 2.24$). This suggests that the more one identifies with the stereotypical individual enacting the transformational role, the more pride they associate with adopting that role. Similarly, individuals' conceptions of how they would ideally be in the role – the ideal schema – also elicits feelings of pride ($\beta = 0.27$, $t = 3.3$). More supportive normative (social) beliefs also contribute to the magnitude of pride (a social emotion) associated with adopting the transformational role ($\beta = 0.18$, $t = 2.69$).

Identity-ideal

How individuals perceive they would ideally be as Army Reserve recruits is predicted by the role schema ($\beta = 0.51$, t = 7.26). This path supports prior research demonstrating that an individual's role schema guides and constrains how the person aspires to be in the role.

Summary

The result pattern provides encouraging support for the proposed model as a useful way to

Table 2. Weighted belief score summary

Rank and belief	Weighted belief score
1. Money for a college or vocational education	2.99
2. Leadership training	3.35
3. A skill that will help me get a civilian job when I get out	4.10
4. Serve my country	4.28
5. Fringe benefits	4.40
6. Wide variety of opportunities to find a job I can enjoy	4.87
7. Work with sophisticated, high-tech equipment	4.92
8. Travel and live in different places	7.88
9. Take time out before deciding what I really want to do	9.90

Note: Belief scores are the product of belief strength times belief importance. Belief strength and importance are scaled such that a lower weighted belief score indicates greater weighted importance.

understand the factors that influence adoption of a transformational value offering.

Beliefs about the benefits of the transformational value offering

To gain qualitative insights into the factors contributing to adoption of a transformational value offering, we explored the outcome and normative belief structures.

Outcome beliefs

We examined outcome beliefs ranked by weighted belief scores (see **Table 2**). A lower weighted belief score signals a more important belief. As Table 2 reveals, money for college or vocational training is the most important belief for the respondents. Leadership training, getting a skill useful in civilian life, and the opportunity to serve one's country are the next three important benefit beliefs. There seems to be a fit between the Reservist identity and other identities that are important to respondents (e.g., student, future employee, United States citizen). Taking time out before deciding what one really wants to do, and getting to travel and live in different places, are the least important benefits to these respondents. This is consistent with the part time aspect of the Reservist identity.

Normative beliefs

Table 3 presents the average weighted normative belief scores ranked by their importance to the respondents. On average, family is the most important normative

Table 3. Normative belief score summary

Rank and normative belief	Weighted belief score
1. Family members	5.38
2. People I know through being a student	12.28
3. People I work with	13.18
4. People known through athletic activity	13.64
5. People known through religious activities	14.86
6. People known through hobby	16.61

Note: Normative belief scores are the product of normative belief strength times motivation to comply with that significant other. Normative belief strength and motivation to comply are scaled such that a lower weighted belief score indicates greater weighted importance.

influence on an individual's decision to become an Army Reservist. People known through being a student, employee, an athletic activity pursued, and religious activities cluster together in a group that is important to the decision, but are less important than family.

Self-concept structure today and as anticipated 1 year in the future

Deciding to adopt the transformational role involves evaluating whether, or to what degree, role activities complement or conflict with other important parts of the person's life. To evaluate this fit issue, respondents allocated 100 points among the following activities/ identities: family, religion, student, job, athletic activity, non-athletic hobby, Army Reserve, and other.

Prospects' family-related identities (32.9%) are, on average, the most descriptive characteristic of prospective recruits. Trailing family were job (18.2%), Army Reserve (17.9%), Student (17.3%), religion (12.6%), athletic activities (10.5%), and hobby (5.2%). The data reveal considerable stability in self-concept structure. Respondents projected that 1 year from now family (30.8%) will remain the most important aspect of their identities. The other identities are projected to remain relatively stable, except for the Army Reserve identity. Whereas respondents anticipate the Reserve identity will become increasingly more integral to their lives (from 17.9 to 22.5%), they anticipate the importance of job responsibilities will decline 1 year from now (from 18.2 to 13.4%). The importance of hobby also declines slightly (from 5.2 to 3.5%). This data pattern suggests that the respondents plan to accommodate the identity of Army Reservist into their self-concepts by lowering the relative importance of other role-identities. Such individual differences may explain why one individual pursues a transformational identity while another does not. This issue is examined further in the next section.

Predictive value of other identities on attitude

To examine the influences of other role-identities on the desire to enlist in the U.S. Army Reserve, exploratory regression analyses were performed. These analyses examined the relative impact of the family, job, student, religious, athletic, and hobby identities on prospects' attitude to enlist in the Army Reserve. This relationship is examined for current self-perceptions and for anticipated self-perceptions in one year.

Attitude toward enlisting predicted by self-concept structure today and 1 year from now

We used stepwise regression to examine whether the importance of any of the six role identities, now or 1 year from now, predicted attitude toward enlisting. The first regression model included respondents' current view of themselves. A second regression model included predictors reflecting respondents' anticipated view of themselves 1 year from now.

For respondents current view of self, the regression model is statistically significant ($F_{(2, 240)} = 8.17$, $p < 0.0004$; $r^2 = 0.064$; Adj. $r^2 = 0.06$). Stepwise selection identified two significant predictors of attitude. Attitude toward enlisting in the U.S. Army Reserves increases, *ceterus paribis*, as current importance of the student role is lower ($\beta = -0.235$, $t = .3.53$, $p < 0.0005$; all parameter estimates are standardized) and current importance of the Army Reserve role is higher ($\beta = 0.206$, $t = 3.08$, $p < 0.002$). This suggests that the absence of family obligations, which could conflict with Army Reserve activities, enhances attractiveness of adopting the transformational value offering. These results support that attitudes toward enlisting are more positive the less important the current student role and the more important the current Army Reserve identity. Although respondents have not yet engaged in Reserve activities, there appears to be enough self-identification with

the role for it to impact respondents' feelings about enlisting.

Using as predictors respondents' view of themselves 1 year from now, the overall model is again significant ($F_{(4,238)} = 8.18$, $p < 0.0001$; $r^2 = 0.121$; Adj. $r^2 = 0.101$). The stepwise procedure identified four significant predictors. Attitude toward enlisting is predicted by lower importance of the family ($\beta = -0.159$, $t = -2.38$, $p < 0.01$) and student roles ($\beta = -0.337$, $t = -4.64$, $p < 0.0001$; again *ceteris paribus*) and by anticipated increased importance of athletic activities ($\beta = 0.225$, $t = 2.71$, $p = 0.007$) and the Army Reserve roles ($\beta = 0.190$, $t = 2.59$, $p = 0.01$). Respondents seem to perceive a future self characterized by the Reserve and athletic identities is more attractive than a future self dominated by family and/or school obligations.

These results are consistent with the observation that prospects weigh the potential fit of the emerging Army Reservist identity with both current and anticipated role-identities. Many of the mostly young, single respondents were establishing independence from their families of origin and school experiences. Thus, those who anticipate the Reservist role will be "me" also expect family and student roles to decline in importance. The positive relationship evidenced by the athletic activity role may suggest that the athletic identity is considered a facilitating, rather than competing, identity. Army Reserve activities require an above average level of physical fitness. Physical fitness cultivated by the athletic activity may enhance performance as an Army Reservist. Another possibility is that soldering and athletic activities share a "macho" base that resonates with the traditional male gender-role identity. The analyses show that the better the emerging identity fits with prospects' anticipated life picture, the more positive their attitude toward enlistment. Attitudes are less positive when competing identities are more important.

The amount of variance explained by each regression model is consistent with the fact that there are other predictors of attitude. These analyses focus on demonstrating that

attitude is influenced by the relative importance of certain master identities (family, occupational) competing for time and attention with the transformational identity in question. In general, the results support the proposed model integrating social identity schema relations and traditional multi-attribute attitude model variables.

Discussion and conclusions

Transformational value offerings provide consumers opportunities to permanently change or enhance themselves. A consumer who adopts a transformational value offering embarks on an identity project. Thus, the consumer decision to choose the value offering involves identity development factors. In the project reported here, we developed and tested a model blending role-identity theory variables with traditional attitude-based choice modeling. The results demonstrate that individuals evaluating transformational value offerings not only seek rational benefits but also evaluate the impact of the prospective self-change on their self-definitions. Central to the blended model is a prospect's identification with a transformational role identity and perceptions that the role is "me." Greater role identification leads to more favorable attitudes toward enlisting. Prospects also are more likely to see themselves adopting identities they would take pride in adopting. What others (family, friends) think of the role also impacts the prospect's evaluation of role fit.

Prospects' images of the role influences the transformational value offering evaluation in several additional ways. One, role perceptions affect what prospects can envision as their goals for being in the role, which in turn affect the degree to which they identify with the role. Two, role images are the basis for prospects' understanding of the benefits of adopting the transformational opportunity. Three, role images influence prospects' perceptions of others' opinions of their assuming the role. Finally, the better the emerging identity fits

with prospects' anticipated life picture, the more positive their attitude toward enlistment.

Normative beliefs did not have the direct effect on intentions predicted by the Theory of Reasoned Action. In the proposed model, normative beliefs were found to influence intentions indirectly. Respondents' sense of pride in the role identity, and the extent to which they identify with the Reservist role, mediate the effect of normative beliefs on attitudes and intentions to adopt the role. Future research should explore the replicability of this effect pattern. Normative beliefs reflect respondents' perceptions about what important others (family and friends) think of adopting the Reservist role and whether they care what those individuals think. The normative belief measure does not capture cultural beliefs, which were not involved in the model.

In general, identity-related perceptions of the transformational opportunity significantly impact prospects' attitudes and intentions to adopt the value offering. These results yield both theoretical and substantive implications.

Theoretical implications

The results here demonstrate the benefit of blending traditional attitude variables (benefit and normative beliefs) with symbolic interactionist identity theory constructs (role-, ideal-, and identity-schemas, and identity-related pride). Normative beliefs and outcome beliefs influence attitude *indirectly*, through the mechanism of projected identity meaning. The combined model predicts prospects' intentions to adopt a high involvement transformational value offering better than would either attitude or social identity variables alone. These results are consistent with research demonstrating that attitude models are enhanced by variables that provide additional predictive or explanatory power (Charng *et al.*, 1988; Allen *et al.*, 2005).

The results also suggest that symbolic interactionist identity theory complements other social identity theories previously applicable to marketing problems (Reed,

2002; Weigert *et al.*, 1986). Prior research frames social identity-related issues in terms of how prospective organizational members identify with the organization. For example, stronger organizational identification (e.g., ''I am a member of. . .'') may encourage members to pre-pay for organizational memberships (e.g., zoo or museums; Bhattacharya *et al.*, 1995; Bhattacharya, 1998) or purchase merchandise related to the organization (Madrigal, 2001). The present study analyzes how prospects evaluate the membership role itself and how becoming that particular type of person fits them. Future research should integrate social identity approaches and directly examine the relationships between group identification and perceived fit between self and role.

Substantive implications

Market segmentation and positioning may be enhanced by recognizing how mental perceptions of self-in-role change across prospects' stages of identity development (Kleine and Kleine, 2000). For example, even when a prospect forms an intention to adopt the value offering, there may remain opportunities to decline it prior to full commitment. At this stage, activities that provide prospects firsthand experience with role activities appear to be especially effective for building self in-role perceptions. Without personal images of what it will be like for ''me'' to assume the role, the intention to join may not come to fruition.

Because role-identity schemas are mental images, development of images of self-in-role can influence the role-identification process. For example, the U.S. Army's current recruiting web site (www.goarmy.com) provides site visitors with opportunities to understand the meaning of ''becoming a soldier,'' what it is like to ''be a soldier,'' and the ''future of a soldier.'' These categories work the prospect through identity development stages, fostering positive mental images and allowing initial assessment of potential identity fit.

Pride in the identity is critical to positive role evaluation. Messages emphasizing pride

associated with the role should promote stronger role-identification yielding more positive attitudes and higher intentions to join. Messages may also assist prospects in envisioning themselves in the particular role. Marketing messages should address known inaccuracies of stereotypical role images held by prospects that have ''outsider'' role perspectives. Reinforcing normative beliefs about the identity using images of the pride with which significant others view the role would enhance perceived role fit. Current (2008) U.S. Army advertising messages exemplify this process by showing two visibly proud parents next to a young person in military uniform.

Almost any business or organization can move from a product- or service-centric strategy to offering enduring, high value, highly differentiated, self-transformations. To embrace fully the transformational value offering concept, an organization would position its brand as providing opportunities for enduring self-change and targeted individuals who would be proud to see themselves in the resulting role and who can accommodate the role into their lives. Weight Watchers transformational offering incorporates many attributes of the proposed transformational value model. Jenny Craig, in contrast, approaches weight loss with a product-centric business model. Weight Watchers is reported to have superior efficacy and customer retention. A cycling products retailer, for example, could change emphasis from selling gear to offer programs that transform customers into cyclists with extended customer lifetime value to the retailer. Educational institutions fully embracing the transformational perspective would differentiate themselves by emphasizing how they guide students through self-transformation. Alverno College in the United States, for example, fully embraces the transformational approach by documenting each student's development on particular dimensions across their four years of study and positioning the institution's distinctive attributes accordingly.

Future research

We reported an initial test of the decision to adopt a transformational value offering. We collected data from individuals in the final phases of committing to the offering. Future research would evaluate individuals' role-identification at other points in the decision-making process (e.g., prior to information search). Also, future investigations should examine the qualitative content of prospects' role, ideal, and identity schemas and observe how they change through the transformational value offering adoption process.

The study reported here and other data (e.g., Kleine, 1993) allow us to generalize the idea that understanding how individuals accommodate new identities into their self-structure enhances our understanding of transformational value offering choices. The specific beliefs and master roles in other contexts will vary, but their general influence upon intention to adopt the value offering ought to be similar to what we observed here.

Transformational value offerings provide consumers with opportunities for lasting identity change. Someone considering a transformational value offering evaluates perceptions of the transformational role and whether his or her self concept can accommodate it. These identity-related perceptions frame the consumer's evaluation of the offering's benefits and intentions to adopt. The proposed blending of social identity and multi-attribute attitude theory constructs provides a promising framework for understanding and investigating consumers' decisions to adopt various transformational value offerings.

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