Deborah J. MacInnis

A Framework for Conceptual Contributions in Marketing

Conceptual advances are critical to the vitality of the marketing discipline, yet recent writings suggest that conceptual advancement in the field is slowing. The author addresses this issue by developing a framework for thinking about conceptualization in marketing. A definition of conceptualization is followed by a typology of types of conceptual contributions. The types of conceptual contributions, their similarities and differences, and their importance to the field are described. Thinking skills linked to various types of conceptual contributions are also described, as are the use of tools that can facilitate these skills. The article concludes with a set of recommendations for advancing conceptualization in our field in the years to come.

Keywords: conceptual thinking, conceptual articles, theory, novel ideas

The 75th anniversary of Journal of Marketing (*JM*) is a fitting time for reflection on the vitality of our field, and, in particular, on its conceptual advances. More than 25 years ago, Zaltman (1983, p. 1) noted that although "the quality of our research primarily follows the quality of our ideas, the quality of our ideas needs improvement." These observations are in accord with those of the 1988 AMA Task Force on the Development of Marketing Thought, which advocated increased research on conceptualizations that enhance marketing thought. Yet in the intervening years, scholars have suggested that methodological and empirical advances have outpaced the field's conceptual advances (e.g., Kerin 1996; Stewart and Zinkhan 2006; Webster 2005; Zaltman, LeMasters, and Heffring 1985). Perhaps emblematic of this issue is the status of purely conceptual articles (e.g., integrative perspectives, reviews, propositional inventories) in our top journals. MacInnis (2004) observes a precipitous yet relatively recent decline in the number of such papers. Yadav (2010), who replicates these observations, proposes that this decline is detrimental to the field's advancement because conceptual articles not only provide new ideas but also are disproportionately more influential (e.g., in terms of citations and awards) than empirical papers. Moreover, Yadav notes that conceptual articles play an important role along the discovery–justification continuum that characterizes the knowledge development process (Hanson1958). For example, whereas propositional inventories lay out areas in which empirical research is needed, and thus contribute to the process of discovery, integrative reviews contribute to the process of justification by validating what is known.

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These concerns over conceptualization motivate this essay. In the pages that follow, I propose that our potential for making conceptual advances may be fostered by gaining clarity on (1) what conceptualization means, (2) the entities to which conceptualization applies, (3) what types of conceptual contributions academic scholarship can make, (4) what criteria should be used to evaluate the quality of conceptual ideas, and (4) how we and our future students can hone our conceptual thinking skills. The essay proceeds in four parts.

First, I define "conceptualization" and develop a novel typology of conceptual contributions that can guide academic research in marketing. The typology shown in Table 1 suggests that conceptualization can pertain to various entities, emphasizing smaller units (e.g., constructs) to very large units (e.g., science itself) (see the rows in Table 1).

Second, I argue that for each entity, conceptualization can contribute to knowledge in one or more ways, as noted in the column headings of Table 1. These types of contributions include envisioning new ideas, relating ideas, explicating ideas, or debating ideas. Within each of these four broad types of conceptual contributions, there are two subtypes that reflect contributions either to the process of discovery or to the process of justification. For example, envisioning encompasses contributions that add to the process of discovery by identifying something new. Envisioning also encompasses contributions that add to the process of justification by using new information, facts, or observations to revise an existing idea. Table 2 expands on the meaning of these more specific types of conceptual contributions.

I also discuss criteria along which different types of conceptual contributions can be judged (see also Table 2). One criterion noted in Table 2 is that of "interestingness." Murray Davis (1971) suggests that "interesting" ideas challenge strongly held assumptions about the state of the world. Interesting ideas add insight. They are not just new; they provide different perspectives that alter others' thinking. For example, if we were to believe that consumers tend to hold strong attitudes only when they think deeply about

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TABLE 1
Types of Conceptualization and Entities Around Which Conceptualization Can Occur

General Conceptual Goal	Envisioning		Explicating		Relating		Debating	
Specific Conceptual Goal	**Identifying**	**Revising**	**Delineating**	**Summarizing**	**Differentiating**	**Integrating**	**Advocating**	**Refuting**
Entities around which conceptualization occurs								
Constructs (measurable theoretical concepts)								
Relationships/theories (linkages among constructs)								
Procedures (ways of conducting research)								
Domains (areas of study that include constructs, theories, and procedures)								
Disciplines (collections of domains that specify what a discipline studies)								
Science (the activity disciplines perform in the pursuit of knowledge)								

TABLE 2
Detailed Description of Types of Conceptual Contributions

General Conceptual Goal	Envisioning		Explicating		Relating		Debating	
Specific Conceptual Goal	**Identifying**	**Revising**	**Delineating**	**Summarizing**	**Differentiating**	**Integrating**	**Advocating**	**Refuting**
Meaning	To see that something exists; to apprehend, notice, or behold	To see something that has been identified in a new way; to reconfigure, shift perspectives, or change	To detail, chart, describe, or depict an entity and its relationship to other entities	To see the forest for the trees; to encapsulate, digest, reduce, or consolidate	To see types of things and how they are different; to discriminate, parse, or see pieces or dimensions that comprise a whole	To see previously distinct pieces as similar, often in terms of a unified whole whose meaning is different from its constituent parts; to synthesize, amalgamate, or harmonize	To endorse a way of seeing; to support, justify or suggest an appropriate path	To rebut a way of seeing; to challenge, counterargue, contest, dispute, or question
Metaphorical role of the researcher	The astronomer	The artist	The cartographer	The astronaut	The naturalist	The architect	The guide	The prosecutor
Metaphorical tool	The telescope	The paintbrush	The map	The space ship	The magnifying glass	Architectural plans	The compass	The evidence
Common name applied to contribution	Novel framework; new perspective	Revised perspective; alternative view	Conceptual framework; structural framework; propositional inventory	Review paper	Typological/ taxonomic framework; classification scheme	Integrative framework	Position paper	Critique/rejoinder/commentary
Evaluative criteria based on execution	Make us aware of what we have been missing and why it is important; reveal what new questions can be addressed from identifying the entity	Identify why revision is necessary; reveal the advantages of the revised view and what novel insights it generates; maintain parsimony	Describe what the entity is, why it should be studied, and how it works (e.g., its antecedents, processes, moderating factors); provide a roadmap for future research	Circumscribe what falls within and outside the scope of the summary; develop an organizing framework; comprehensive in article inclusion; provide clear, accurate, and relevant conclusions; simplify through reduction; develop research priorities	Indicate how entities are different and why differentiation matters; indicate what novel insights can be gleaned or what findings can be reconciled from differentiation	Accommodate extant knowledge; explain puzzling or inconsistent findings; reveal novel insights; create parsimony	Clearly state the issue and one's perspective on that issue; state premises and assumptions; provide credible and unambiguous evidence; draw conclusions that support the advocated view; avoid fallacious reasoning errors	Clearly state the issue and one's perspective on that issue; state premises and assumptions; provide credible and unambiguous evidence; draw conclusions that are consistent the refuted view; avoid fallacious reasoning errors

TABLE 2
Continued

General Conceptual Goal	Envisioning		Explicating		Relating		Debating	
Specific Conceptual Goal	**Identifying**	**Revising**	**Delineating**	**Summarizing**	**Differentiating**	**Integrating**	**Advocating**	**Refuting**
Evaluative criteria based on interestingness, suggest that…	What is unseen is seen; what is unobservable is observable; what is unknown is known; what does not matter, matters a great deal	What is seen, known, observable, or known can be seen differently	What is simple is complex; what is micro is macro; what is unrelated is related; what is holistic is particularistic	What is complex is simple; what is macro is micro; what is unrelated is related; what is particularistic is holistic	What is similar is different; what is inseparable is separable; what is organized is disorganized; what is one-dimensional is multidimensional; what is homogeneous is heterogeneous	What is different is similar; what is separable is inseparable what is disorganized is organized; what is multidimensional is one-dimensional; what is heterogeneous is homogeneous	What is false is true; what is unacceptable is acceptable; what is wrong is right; what is inappropriate is appropriate	What is true is false; what is acceptable is unacceptable; what is right is wrong; what is appropriate is inappropriate
Similarities in thinking skills and facilitating tools	Divergent thinking: facilitated by search for metaphors; questioning assumptions, look for hidden events and outliers, engage in introspection		Logical reasoning: facilitated by mapping		Comparative reasoning: facilitated by Venn diagrams and comparison matrices			
Differences in thinking skills and facilitating tools	Beginner's mind: facilitated through "taking a hike," immersion in other people's views	Expert's mind and a beginner's mind: facilitated by finding anomalies, questioning assumptions, heuristic references	Deductive reasoning: facilitated by theories in use	Inductive reasoning: facilitated by outlines	Analytical reasoning: facilitated by analogies and metaphors	Analogical resoning facilitated by analogies and metaphors	Syllogistic reasoning: facilitated by argument diagrams, argument schemes, and awareness of persuasion tactics	

an attitude object, an interesting idea would be one that affirms the opposite—namely, that consumers tend to hold strong attitudes only when they do not think deeply about an attitude object. Davis identifies 12 ways that ideas can be interesting (see also Zaltman, LeMasters, and Heffring 1985). Notably, and as Table 2 shows, the current typology accommodates these ways (and more) but expands on Davis's work by linking the interestingness criteria to the various conceptualization types.

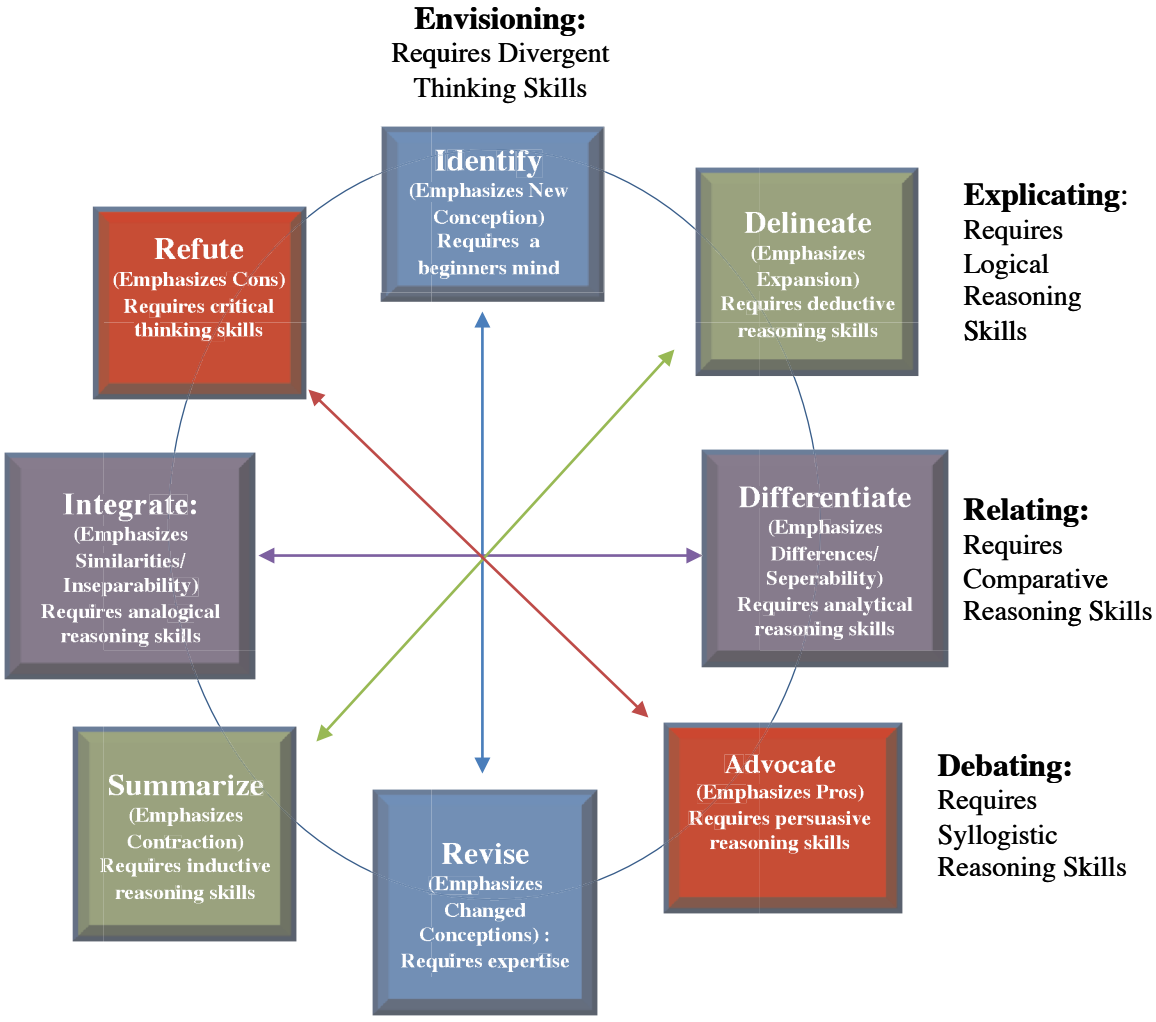
If the types of conceptual contributions noted in Table 1 are critical to the development of the field, it becomes important to understand what types of thinking skills and facilitating tools underlie each contribution type. By understanding these thinking skills and how they may be developed, we may be in a better position to enhance conceptualization. Table 2 and Figure 1, which constitute the third part of this article, describe these issues. In the fourth and final section, I conclude with recommendations pertinent to the next 75 years of marketing thought.

Conceptualization

Conceptualization is a process of abstract thinking involving the mental representation of an idea. Conceptualization derives from the Medieval Latin *conceptuālis* and from Late Latin *conceptus*, which refer to "a thought; existing only in the mind; separated from embodiment" (*American Heritage Dictionary* 2003). Thus, conceptualization involves "seeing" or "understanding" something abstract, in one's mind.

Conceptual thinking, then, is the process of understanding a situation or problem abstractly by identifying patterns or connections and key underlying properties. Such thinking can include a range of information-processing activities, among which are inductive and deductive reasoning, logical reasoning, and divergent thinking skills. Conceptual thinking may involve the visual representations of ideas in the form of typologies, process models, figures, flow charts, or other visual depictions. However, such representations are

FIGURE 1
Critical Skills Necessary for Conceptual Thinking



better regarded as outputs than as defining characteristics of conceptual thinking. Most academic articles (including those that take conceptual ideas and test them empirically) involve conceptualization. Identifying interesting problems, developing hypotheses, interpreting data, and deriving implications all involve thinking conceptually. Thus, conceptual thinking is at the heart of the scientific enterprise; it is critical to the development of both an individual scientist and the field of endeavor.

Conceptual articles are academic articles devoted purely to thought-based conceptions that are devoid of data (see MacInnis 2004; Yadav 2010). A differentiation is often made between conceptual and empirical articles (Elder and Paul 2009; MacInnis 2004), such that the latter include data. For example, purely conceptual articles include "conceptual frameworks," "integrative models," and "state-of-the art" reviews. Purely analytical (mathematical) articles are also examples of conceptual articles; here, ideas are represented mathematically as opposed to verbally. Purely empirical papers emphasize data mining. Other papers blend the conceptual with the empirical. For example, hypothesis-driven papers begin with conceptual ideas and test them empirically. Ethnographic papers often begin with data and use those data to build conceptual ideas. Meta-analyses also begin with data (individual papers) and use those data to understand generalizable relationships and their moderating factors.

Types of conceptual contributions, which are at the heart of this article, reflect ways in which contributions are realized. I describe such contribution types, which are represented in the columns of Table 1, in greater detail subsequently. Suffice it to say for now that (1) all contribution types reflect "seeing" or "understanding" something new in an abstract way, (2) they can pertain to the different entities shown in the rows of Table 1, (3) they reflect the nature of the research contribution and thus the criteria on which it is judged (as shown in Table 2), and (4) they differ in the conceptual skills they entail and the facilitating tools that enable them (see Table 2 and Figure 1).

Entities Around Which Conceptual Advances Can Occur

Conceptual advances can be made with respect to the entities labeled in Table 1 as constructs, relationships/theories, procedures, domains, disciplines, and science. I describe these entities in greater detail in the following subsections.

Constructs. Constructs are abstract, hypothetical concepts that are defined in a sufficiently precise manner (often along some dimension) to be operationalized or measured. For example, attitude strength, attitude valence, and attitude persistence are each unique constructs. Although all are reference "attitudes," they vary in whether the attitude is being conceptualized in terms of the confidence with which it is held (its strength), the degree to which it is favorable or unfavorable (its valence), or the degree to which is held consistently over time (its persistence).

Conceptual development pertaining to constructs is significant to academic and practitioner audiences for several reasons. First, "we see and understand things according to the concepts we have … and [we] filter our observations through concepts" (Niehoff 1998, pp. 1–2; see also Zaltman, LeMasters, and Heffring 1985, p. 18). Thus, constructs play a critical role in knowledge representation, perspective taking, and knowledge sharing. Second, constructs "enable us to identify, compare, and distinguish dimensions of our thinking and experience.… We can never achieve command of our thoughts unless we achieve command over (properly conceptualize) the concepts and ideas in which our thought is expressed" (Elder and Paul 2009, p. 10). Third, constructs have action significance because construct labels help academics and practitioners categorize situations and decide what to do. The better marketers can understand what something is, the more effectively they can deal with it. Fourth, constructs are critical because they reflect basic units of knowledge advancement. Without conceptualizing new constructs, we would study the same constructs over and over again, limiting our perspectives on the world. Finally, the conceptualization of constructs is critical because constructs form the basis on which measures are derived and from which theories are tested. Given their centrality to knowledge advancement, several papers have articulated processes for developing "good" constructs (e.g., MacKenzie 2003; Teas and Palan 1997).

Relationships/theories. Knowledge advancement occurs not only by studying and developing constructs but also by conceptualizing their relationship to other concepts, often in a nomological network. Relationships that specify why one (or more) construct affects other constructs are called theories. Theories can also specify when (the conditions under which) and how (the process by which) given outcomes are affected. Thus, theories often include moderators and mediators as part of their specification.

Conceptual advances related to theories are also critical to both academics and managers. First, conceptualizing relationships in terms of a theory helps clarify the workings of the world around us. Second, understanding *why* fosters better prediction of the outcomes that managers care about. Thus, by conceptualizing relationships in terms of a theory, marketers can better understand how to manipulate or arrange environments so that desired outcomes can be realized. Such understanding also enables the development of process measures that have value in diagnosing whether a person is on course and what must be done to correct off-course deviations. Third, conceptual advances pertaining to theories help refine our understanding of the world by understanding the conditions under which actions will or will not produce desired outcomes. Finally, conceptual advances in theories are critical to knowledge development; theory revision avoids "saturation" (Zaltman, LeMasters, and Heffring 1985), or an emphasis on incremental tests of theories rather than the development of new ideas. Given the importance of conceptual advances pertaining to theories, researchers have given considerable thought to what constitutes a "good" theory (e.g., Darden 1991; Dennis and Kintsch 2007; Zaltman, Pinson, and Angelmar 1973).

Procedures. Some conceptual advances contribute to knowledge by articulating procedures or "best practices"

for executing strategies or tactics, often with the goal of solving problems. Such procedures may be kinds of theories in that they are based on implicit or explicit theories about what will work. However, conceptual advances regarding procedures foster knowledge development by specifying how an activity should be done, often through a normative lens. Conceptual contributions at the procedure level can be of particular value to marketing practitioners who seek input on best practices. Conceptual advances related to procedures may involve identifying a new procedure; describing its implementation and/or the nature and range of the problems it solves; indicating how it solves the problems inherent in other procedures; and revealing the novel insights it can generate, the assumptions it makes, and the conditions under which it is most or least likely to be functional.

Domains. A domain is an area of study. In anthropology, domains include culture, customs, ethnocentrism, and kinship (Niehoff 1998). In psychology, domains such as attitudes, emotions, and memory assume centrality. Marketing studies domains such as relationships, services, competition, choice, strategic planning, price, and advertising. Domains are not constructs. Rather, they are broad categories of study within which specific constructs, theories, and/or procedures can be articulated. Different domains often have "different purposes, questions, information, concepts, theories, assumptions, and implications" (Elder and Paul 2009, p. 21). Domains are socially constructed, meaning that the academic or practitioner communities decide what a domain entails. Domains can encompass macrolevel phenomena (competition in the marketplace) or microlevel phenomena (e.g., preattentive processing). Moreover, domains can be hierarchically linked to other domains. For example, the domain of "consumer emotions" is part of a larger domain called "affect." Within the emotion domain, subdomains, such as "anticipated emotions," "experienced emotions," and "retrospective emotions," can be identified.

Conceptual advances at the domain level are also critical to marketing academics and practitioners. They contribute to a field's vitality by opening new and unexplored areas of study. Conceptual advances within a domain foster spheres of competence and expertise. Practitioners often rely on academics for making conceptual advances in a domain. Evidence of such advances can form the basis for practitioners' desires to connect with academic audiences. Thus, conceptual advances within a domain connect members of knowledge communities, which in turn fosters knowledge diffusion and sharing.

Disciplines. The domains and the procedures utilized in field of research constitute a discipline. Thus, the academic discipline of marketing represents the amalgamation of domains pertinent to exchange (Bagozzi 1975). Within this discipline are subdisciplines, including "consumer behavior," "marketing strategy," and "marketing models." Disciplines are the units of analysis for universities, and hiring strategies are typically organized around disciplines. Disciplines are critical for managers because disciplines have degree-granting bodies (departments and schools) that certify the breadth and depth of potential employees' knowledge and thus validate their potential to enter the workforce (MacInnis and Folkes 2010).Conceptual advances within disciplines help identify research priorities and indicate ways that research in the field needs to shift to adapt to changing environments.

Science. Finally, conceptual advances can be made at the level of science. In marketing, discussions about science and the philosophy of science became salient in the 1980s and early 1990s, driven in part by alternative perspectives on the philosophy and sociology of science (e.g., Kuhn 1962). Conceptual contributions at the level of science clarify what constitutes science, what differentiates science from nonscience, and what processes are involved in scientific research (i.e., what makes for "rigorous" research and whether theories can be proved). Whereas procedures may be specific to an academic discipline or domain, contributions at the level of science are independent of discipline. Although practitioner audiences may be less concerned with conceptual contributions at the level of science, such contributions are important for academic researchers and doctoral students whose membership in the scientific academic community specifies rules of conduct to be followed in executing scientific research.

Types of Conceptual Contributions

For each of the aforementioned entities, researchers can make conceptual contributions in any number of ways (Table 1). The columns of Table 2 present four types of conceptual contributions (envisioning, relating, explicating, and debating). Within each type, I identify two subtypes, which I describe subsequently and summarize in the rows of Table 2. Various cells of Table 1 are illustrated using examples of frequently cited conceptual articles.[1] I begin by describing the more specific conceptual contributions (e.g., identification and revision) so that their linkage to the broader contributions (e.g., envisioning) can be more clearly understood. My discussion of these contributions includes a description of the criteria by which "good" papers of this type can be judged. These criteria serve as guidelines for authors who write and readers who review papers. Although the contributions are different, all move the field forward by setting an agenda for further research.[2]

[1]My expertise in consumer behavior inclines me to report on conceptual articles based on verbal arguments versus those based on mathematical arguments (analytical models). However, the value of analytical models cannot be disputed. Their lack of representation here merely reflects the limitations of my knowledge.

[2]Some conceptual papers (including those described here) make several types of conceptual contributions. For example, Srivastava, Shervani, and Fahey (1998) propose a revised view of the marketing discipline, suggesting that marketing's role is to create and manage market-based assets that deliver shareholder value. They also differentiate two types of market-based assets—relational and intellectual—as well as the attributes of balance sheet and off–balance sheet assets. Reflective of delineation, they propose that market-based assets (e.g., customer relationships, partner relationships) affect various aspects of market performance, which in turn affect shareholder value.

Identifying Versus Revising: Contributions That Involve Envisioning

Identifying: seeing that something exists. Researchers who make contributions through identifying establish or make known something that has yet to be established. The goal is to introduce a construct, theory, procedure, domain, discipline, or aspect of science that has yet to be apprehended or given serious study. As Table 2 shows, a metaphor for a researcher whose contribution involves identification is one of an astronomer who uses a powerful telescope to identify stars, planets, or galaxies that had previously been unseen. Purely conceptual papers that contribute in this manner are often titled with words that connote originality, for example, a novel framework or a new perspective.

Identification can occur for any of the entities in the rows of Table 1.[3] To illustrate, Glazer (1991) identifies a novel *construct* called "information intensity." He proposes that at one end of the information intensiveness continuum are products that are completely information independent. At the opposite end are information-based products. The latter may have been used initially to market a product but have since become marketable products themselves. The continuum is important because it characterizes the degree to which information is a wealth-generating asset in its own right. Hunt and Morgan (1995) present a novel "comparative advantage" *theory* of competition. The proposed theory suggests that competition is based on comparative advantage, defined as the relative resource-produced value by the firm in relation to the relative resource costs it incurs. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) articulate a novel *domain* of consumer research, arguing that an overreliance on rational decision making and consumer information processing has blinded researchers to the role of feelings, fantasies, and fun in consumers' decision making. Day and Montgomery (1999) identify three novel "*discipline-based issues*" that the academic marketing discipline would face upon entering the new millennium: (1) providing meaningful measures, inferences, and calibration; (2) crossing boundaries and understanding functional interfaces; and (3) rethinking the role of theory.

As Table 2 shows, articles that contribute to identification make us aware of what we have been missing. This can be accomplished by providing evidence that the identified entity is real and moreover that its study is important. Reality and significance are often illustrated by reference to real-world problems, issues, or observations (see Day and Montgomery 1990; Glazer 1991). In some cases, these real-world examples reveal what is missing by comparison to prevailing views (Holbrook and Hirschman 1995; Hunt and Morgan 1995). In still other cases, they identify a novel entity by pointing to aligned research areas that have failed to intersect. For example, Ward (1974) argues that whereas marketing academics have studied consumers and developmental psychologists have studied children, the field of consumer behavior had yet to examine children's learning as it pertains to the marketplace—a domain he labels "consumer socialization." Good papers also reveal what new insights can be gained from the entity's study. Good papers provide clear and unambiguous definitions of the identified entity. They are also generative; they guide future research by indicating novel research questions fostered from identification. These latter two characteristics are true of all papers that contribute conceptually, including those described subsequently.

Revising: seeing what has been identified in a different way. Revision involves reconfiguring or taking a novel perspective on something that has already been identified. Thus, whereas identifying is consistent with the logic of discovery, revision takes empirical evidence on the identified entity into account and modifies it. Contributions based on revising gain insight from alternative frames of reference. The visual metaphor might be that of an artist who uses a paintbrush to depict a landscape as a series of colored dots (as in pointillism) or a series of shapes (as in cubism). A different visual metaphor is that of a person who turns a dial on a kaleidoscope to reveal a new image. Common labels for purely conceptual papers with this goal are revised perspectives or alternative views.

To illustrate, Shugan (1980) presents a revised perspective on the *construct* of information costs. Whereas traditional economic models assumed that information was provided at no cost to consumers, Shugan views information as costly. His reconceptualization has made it possible to assess the costs of various decision-making strategies or rules. It also helps us understand when consumers are likely to make suboptimal choices from limited decision making. Anderson's (1982) "theory of the firm" provides a different *theoretical* perspective from which to understand organizational issues in marketing. MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski (1991) reconceptualize the *domain* of advertising executional cues. Rather than categorizing cues as "central" or "peripheral," the authors conceptualize cues in terms of their potential to enhance consumers' motivation, ability, and opportunity to process information. Webster (1992) suggests reconceptualizing the marketing *discipline*. His reconceptualization moves away from a focus on profit maximization and transactions and toward a view of marketing that emphasizes long-term relationships with customers, strategic alliances, and partnerships. Also from the standpoint of the marketing *discipline*, Van Waterschoot and Van den Bulte (1992) offer a revised perspective on the marketing mix—one that overcomes the limitations of the prevailing four P scheme. Finally, at the level of *science*, Thompson, Locander, and Pollio (1989) provide a revised (existential phenomenology) paradigm for understanding the consumer experience. In contrast with the extant Cartesian view (rooted in logical positivism), the revised view regards consumer experiences in context, understanding experiences as they are lived.

As Table 2 shows, good papers that contribute through revision can be evaluated according to the following criteria: They should describe the need for a revised perspective.

[3]To prevent tedium in reading, I do not attempt to provide illustrations of each individual cell in Table 1. The goal is to provide illustrative examples that clarify the meaning of the type of conceptual contribution.

In some cases, this is accomplished by revealing and questioning the validity of hidden or explicit assumptions, foundational premises, or tenets in the extant view and indicating their limiting features. In other cases, they reveal the prevailing metaphor used to guide thinking and illustrate its limitations in understanding the entity (see Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989). Relaxing or altering these assumptions or using a different metaphor reveals what novel insights can be gained from the revised perspective (Shugun 1980). In still other cases, the need for a revised perspective is reinforced by reference to dynamic changes in firms or the marketplace that make the prevailing view outdated (see Hoffman and Novak 1996; Webster 1992). Good papers also indicate what new issues the revised view provides that the extant view cannot accommodate. They may also show how the new perspective provides a different way of understanding the meaning of various findings (MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski 1991) or activities (Peter and Olson 1983). Good papers that make contributions to a domain may also reveal aspects of identification, in that the new perspective may identify novel constructs, theories, and procedures that have yet to be studied.

Similarities and differences between identifying and revising. Conceptual contributions based on identifying and revising are similar yet distinct, in the ways noted in Table 2. Identifying something new and providing a revised perspective are similar in that both involve "envisioning"—that is, conceiving a new reality. Yet identifying is more closely related to the context of discovery because it involves observing that reality for the first time. In contrast, revision is more strongly related to the context of justification because it takes what is known or presumed to be and sees it differently. Identifying and revising also reflect opposing criteria of interestingness, as shown in Table 2. Articles that contribute through identification are interesting by suggesting that what is unseen is seen, what is unobservable is observable, what is unknown is known, or what does not matter actually matters a great deal. Articles that contribute through revision are interesting by suggesting that what is seen, known, observable, or of importance can be seen differently or by suggesting that what matters a great deal matters for a different reason than what was previously believed.

Delineating Versus Summarizing: Contributions that Involve Explicating

Delineation: detailing an entity. Delineation entails the goal of detailing, articulating, charting, describing, or depicting an entity. Often, this charting helps researchers consider how the entity they study (e.g., their "hometown") relates to the broader conceptual world around it. Papers aimed at delineation put the researcher in the metaphorical role of a cartographer, whose goal is to gain better grounding on a focal entity by mapping it out. Papers with a goal of delineation are often called conceptual frameworks, structural frameworks, or propositional inventories that describe an entity and identify things that should be considered in its study.

To illustrate, MacInnis and De Mello (2005) delineate the *construct* of hope, describing its implications for evaluation judgments, satisfaction processes, and risk taking. At the level of *relationships and theory*, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) delineate factors that drive consumers' perceptions of service quality (e.g., gaps between customers' perceptions and marketers' actions). Churchill's (1979) classic article on the development of marketing measures details a *procedure* for developing marketing measures. Frazier (1983) delineates the *domain* of interorganizational exchange behavior in marketing channels, articulating factors that affect the initiation of interorganizational exchanges, the processes involved in reviewing whether such exchanges should be enacted, the processes involved in implementing the exchange, and the outcomes of each of these processes. Alba and Hutchinson (1987) delineate the domain of consumer expertise. They examine the impact of expertise on a set of cognitive processes that include cognitive effort and automaticity, cognitive structure, analysis, elaboration, and memory. They develop logically derived hypotheses about the antecedents and consequences of expertise and factors that characterize experts as opposed to novices. Sherry (1983) delineates the domain of gift giving. He articulates the social, personal, and economic underpinnings of gift giving and develops a model of the gift giving process.

As Table 2 shows, "good" papers that contribute through delineation detail what the entity under study is (MacInnis and De Mello 2005), why its study is important, and how it changes or the processes by which it operates or is executed (Churchill 1979; Frazier 1983; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1985; Sherry 1983). Such papers may also consider what factors circumscribe the entity's study or moderating conditions that may affect it (Alba and Hutchinson 1987). They provide a roadmap for understanding the entity, sometimes in the form of boxes and arrows that demonstrate cause and effect relationships (Frazier 1983), pictorial models that depict processes (Sherry 1983), or propositional inventories or novel hypotheses (Alba and Hutchinson 1987).

Summarization: seeing the forest for the trees. The goal of summarization is to take stock of, digesting, recapping, and reducing what is known to a manageable set of key takeaways. Whereas delineation often specifies what relationships might exist (consistent with the context of discovery), summarization typically takes empirical evidence into account to derive conclusions about what is known (consistent with the context of justification). As Table 2 suggests, the visual metaphor of the researcher is one of an astronaut whose view from the spaceship allows him or her step back from the mountains, deserts, cities, and seas to see Earth in its entirety. Purely conceptual papers with the goal of summarization are commonly labeled review papers or critical syntheses (empirical papers with this goal are called meta-analyses).

For example, Gardner (1985) summarizes what is known about the *construct* of mood in consumer behavior. She reviews various mood induction methods and discusses the direct and indirect effects of positive mood on consumer behavior, memory, and product evaluation. She also reviews

what is known about service encounters, point-of-purchase stimuli, and communications as factors that may affect consumers' moods in the marketplace. Rindfleisch and Heide (1997) summarize research that draws on transaction cost analysis *theory*. Wright (1980) reviews research on the use of thought verbalization *procedures* (support arguments, counterarguments, source derogations) in persuasion research. Kerin, Varadarajan, and Peterson (1992) review empirical studies on the *domains* of order of entry and first-mover advantages. Folkes (1988) reviews what is known about attributions in consumer behavior. Wilkie and Moore (2003; see also Kerin 1996) summarize how the *marketing discipline* has changed across time; they summarize prior work by clustering it into four broad "eras" of marketing thought. Reviews such as the *Annual Review of Psychology*'s consumer behavior reviews (e.g., Loken 2005) summarize what is known about a *discipline* or subdiscipline.

As Table 2 shows, papers that contribute through summarization indicate why summarization is needed or is particularly timely. They circumscribe what falls within and outside the entity encompassed in the review, from the standpoint both of a substantive focus and of sources and time frames along which their summary relies (Rindfleisch and Heide 1997; Wilkie and Moore 2003). They often develop a useful organizing framework within which the summarized material can be couched and logically linked. For example, as mentioned previously, Wilkie and Moore (2003) organize the field of marketing in terms of eras. Gardner (1985) organizes mood research in terms of what is known about effects in different contexts (e.g., service encounters, marketing communications). Folkes (1988) organizes her review on attributions in terms of antecedents and consequences. Good papers are comprehensive in reviewing the papers that meet inclusion criteria, and their conclusions are clear, accurate, and consistent with the data at hand. They identify knowledge gaps and lay out research priorities (Folkes 1988; Rindfleisch and Heide 1997). They may also develop managerial implications that pertain to the summarized findings (Gardner 1985).

Similarities and differences in delineating and summarizing. Both delineating and summarizing involve explication—that is, articulating, explaining, or drawing out ideas and relationships (see Table 2). Both also emphasize generalities and abstractions as opposed to particulars. Thus, whereas studying exceptions are appropriate for contributions based on envisioning (identifying or revising), such study is not the goal of delineation or summarization. Delineation and summarization emphasize the rule, not the exception. Both can involve statements of relationships—though with delineation, such statements may be in the form of hypotheses, while summarization statements are in the form of generalizations.

Delineation and summarization are different, however. Delineation involves mapping or charting what might be (e.g., what a construct might entail, what a domain might encompass, what relationships might exist), as would be true with the context of discovery. In contrast, summarization involves taking stock of what is empirically known from many disparate instances, as would be true with the context of justification. They also differ in that delineation involves expansion, by mapping out the components of a construct, theory, or domain. In contrast, summarization emphasizes contraction, or the distilling of many empirical instances to a set of manageable conclusions.

As Table 2 suggests, delineation and summarization have parallel bases for interestingness. Interesting ideas aimed at delineation suggest that what is simple is complex, what is micro is macro, what is small is big, and what seems to be unrelated is actually related. In contrast, when it comes to summarization, interesting ideas are those that suggest that what is complex is simple, what is big is small, and what is idiosyncratic is general.

Differentiating Versus Integrating: Contributions that Involve Relating

Differentiation: seeing differences. Differentiation involves conceptual advances that add insight by distinguishing, parsing, dimensionalizing, classifying, or categorizing an entity (e.g., construct, theory, domain) under study. The goal of differentiation evokes a visual metaphor of a naturalist who uses a magnifying glass to classify and categorize flora and fauna into various taxonomic and hierarchical categories. Purely conceptual papers with the goal of differentiation are sometimes labeled typological, taxonomic, or classificational frameworks (Bailey 1994; Doty and Glick 1994). Several illustrations follow.

Houston and Rothschild's (1978) unpublished but often-cited paper brought great clarity to the involvement *construct* by suggesting the need to differentiate among the entities with which one could be involved: a brand, product, response, or situation. This differentiation was viewed as critical because involvement in one entity (e.g., a brand) did not necessarily imply involvement in a different entity (e.g., a product category). Moreover, theories about one construct (brand involvement) may be inappropriately applied to theories of a different construct (e.g., ad involvement). At the level of *procedure*, Jarvis, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff (2003) argue that there is a critical distinction between using formative versus reflective indicators of constructs. They differentiate the two and develop a set of procedures to help researchers identify when each should be used. They suggest that failure to specify construct indicators correctly as either formative or reflective has resulted in model misspecification in prior marketing research. Lovelock (1983) suggests that the *domain* of services can be differentiated in terms of the nature of the service act (whether it deals with tangible or intangible actions), who receives the service (people or things), the nature of the service delivery (discrete or continuous), and the presence or absence of a relationship between the firm and customers (membership relationship or no formal relationship). Likewise, the domain of "affect" can be decomposed into subcategories of emotions, mood, and attitudes (Cohen and Areni 1991). At the level of *science*, Calder, Phillips, and Tybout (1981) argue for the need to differentiate research goals in terms of whether they are designed to apply effects (to determine whether effects generalize to a different setting) or to determine whether theory can be generalized to different settings. They argue

that this distinction is important because the two goals represent different philosophical and scientific approaches to the conduct of research.

Papers that contribute through differentiation demonstrate how entities are different. They may do so by revealing the underlying dimensions along which entities can be compared or by recognizing their differing antecedents, manifestations, or effects. For example, Calder, Phillips, and Tybout (1981) compare effects-oriented and theory-oriented research in terms of differences in selecting respondents, operationalizing independent and dependent variables, choosing a research setting, and selecting a research design. Good papers also articulate why differentiation matters. Differentiation may matter because seeing the differences adds clarity, reduces confusion, or makes sense of out of what were previously regarded as inconsistent effects (Houston and Rothschild 1978) or viewpoints (Calder, Phillips, and Tybout 1981). Differentiation may matter because it adds precision to thinking, making it easier to compare findings across papers, or it may matter because lack of differentiation creates errors in reasoning about entities or developing findings that pertain to them. In other cases, differentiation matters because the articulation of differences helps identify novel contingencies. For example, classifying services in terms of the extent to which they involve a discrete or continuous set off transactions (Lovelock 1983) adds new insight into the conditions under which being market driven matters.

Integration: seeing the simplicity from the complex. Like revision, integration involves seeing something in a new way, and like summarization, it involves a holistic perspective. However, true integration does more than lay out what has been found. It takes what is known and has been theorized and transforms it into something entirely new. Integration draws connections between previously differentiated phenomena, finding a novel, simplified, and higher-order perspective on how these entities are related. Integration involves synthesis—that is, the creation of a whole from diverse parts. Integration leads to overarching ideas that can accommodate previous findings, resolve contradictions or puzzles, and produce novel perspectives. Thus, integration provides a simple and parsimonious perspective that accommodates complexity. The metaphorical role of the researcher is that of an architect who creates a new building from a set of pipes, cement, steel, wiring, and windows. The metaphorical tool is the architectural plan that both depicts the building in its entirety and notes how the building's specific elements fit together to make this novel structure. Common words for papers that make such contributions are integrative frameworks—though that term is sometimes (perhaps inappropriately) applied to papers that actually emphasize delineation or summarization.

Belk (1988) provides an integrated perspective on the *construct* of possessions, suggesting that they are part of our extended selves. This perspective is developed by leveraging research on possessions in self-perception, research on the loss of possessions, and research that demonstrates investment of the self into possessions. Drawing on literature from multiple disciplines, he describes the functions of having an extended self, and he describes processes by which possessions become incorporated into the self. Dickson (1992) develops a *theory* of competitive rationality that integrates other paradigms (e.g., Adam Smith's "invisible hand," Schumpeter's entrepreneurial "creative destruction," Simon's bounded rationality). Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) "elaboration likelihood model" provides an overarching and simplified perspective that accommodates myriad theories of attitude formation. Bettman, Luce, and Payne (1998) develop an integrated theory of consumer choice that blends two perspectives on contingent choice—the effort/accuracy perspective and the perceptual approach. Stern and Reve (1980) propose the "political economy framework" for understanding the *domain* of distribution channels. This framework, which integrates the economic and behavioral approaches to understanding distribution channels, considers the economic and sociopolitical factors that affect distribution channel behavior and performance.

Papers that contribute through integration accommodate extant knowledge. Thus, they account for well-accepted findings while explaining puzzling findings. In this way, they provide clarity by resolving apparent inconsistencies across studies. For example, Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) elaboration likelihood model shows that many of the prevailing theories of attitude formation have validity; yet their value in explaining consumers' attitude formation processes depends on whether consumers' motivation, ability, or opportunity to process information is high or low. Good papers also contribute by noting the parsimony achieved through the integrated perspective. The elaboration likelihood model achieves parsimony by taking the myriad theories of attitude formation processes and suggesting that they fall into two general buckets—those based on thoughtful processing (which occurs when motivation, ability, and opportunity to process information are high) and those based on less thoughtful processing (which occurs when motivation, ability, and/or opportunity to process information are low).

Similarities and differences between differentiating and integrating. The goals of differentiating and integrating are similar insofar as both involve comparing—that is, seeing how wholes and parts are related. Yet differentiation involves comparisons that decompose an entity by breaking it down into its constituent parts and noting contrasts or dimensions along which the entities differ and can be compared. In contrast, integration involves finding links or similarities that connect previously disparate entities; it involves seeing a new whole (e.g., a cake) instead of its constituent elements (flour, sugar, eggs, baking soda, and chocolate). Consistent with the notion that differentiation and integration are different but related forms of reasoning, Gardner (2008), uses the terms "lumpers" and "splitters" to describe people whose thinking style reflects integration and differentiation, respectively. Lumpers are people whose thinking style emphasizes putting things together and finding similarities among them. Splitters are people whose thinking style emphasizes distinctions and contrasts.

As Table 2 shows, these two contribution types have parallel interestingness criteria. In differentiation, ideas are

interesting because they suggest that what has been previously regarded as similar is different, what is inseparable is separable, what is unidimensional is multidimensional, what is homogeneous is heterogeneous, what is organized is disorganized, and what is holistic is particularistic. Integration involves the opposite set of interestingness criteria.

Advocacy Versus Refutation: Contributions that Involve Debate

Advocating: endorsing a way of seeing. Advocacy involves argumentation to justify or support a given conclusion. With advocacy, the researcher recommends or pushes for something, or speaks in support of a particular view. The metaphorical role of the researcher is that of a guide who relies on a compass to direct the path forward. The common label for purely conceptual papers that emphasize advocacy is a position paper, an editorial, or a perspective.

Zajonc (1980; see also Zajonc and Markus 1982) advocates a *theory* that in the relationship between affect and cognition, affect is primary—it causes cognitions. Preferences (affect) need not rely on cognition, because preferences can be acquired incidentally and nonconsciously through exposure; as exposure increases, so does affect. To illustrate, Szymanski (1988) argues for the importance of studying declarative knowledge as a critical *domain* that affects sales performance effectiveness. Hunt (1992) advocates a deontological philosophical approach to the academic marketing *discipline*, arguing that the field should be viewed in terms of its responsibilities and obligations. As a discipline within a university, our field's ultimate obligation is to serve society, but its other responsibilities are to serve students, marketing practitioners, and the academy. Also at the level of the *discipline*, Leone and Schultz (1980) suggest that a science of marketing should emphasize marketing generalizations. By identifying such generalizations, we can better understand what we do and do not know. Moreover, a general goal in the science of marketing is to use generalizations to build and modify extant theories.

Refuting: rebutting a way of seeing. In contrast to advocating, refuting involves argumentation aimed at rebutting, challenging, disputing, or contesting a given perspective. The metaphorical role of the researcher is that of a prosecuting attorney whose exhibits to the jury cast doubt on the defendant's innocence. Papers that refute a given perspective are commonly labeled "critiques," "rejoinders," or "commentaries."

To illustrate, Moore (1982) suggests that we abandon further research on the *construct* of subliminal perception in light of evidence suggesting that its impact on consumer behavior is limited. Lazarus (1981) issues one of a series of critiques against Zajonc's *theory*, suggesting that Zajonc's theory of affect primacy underestimates the role of cognition in affect generation. Olshavsky and Granbois (1979) critique the *domain* of "consumer decision making," arguing that in many consumer contexts (budgeting, purchase allocation decisions, store patronage, and brand purchase), decision making does not resemble the classic mode; indeed, decision making appears absent. Sheth (1992) criticizes the *subdiscipline* of consumer behavior for its "unimpressive impact" on understanding consumers, particularly for practitioner and policy audiences.

Similarities and differences between advocacy and refutation. Contributions based on advocacy and refutation are similar because both involve the process of debate—that is, putting forward reasons designed to convince others about the validity of an idea. Debate differs from explication because it is not designed to *explain ideas* but rather to *change beliefs* or alter the confidence with which beliefs are held (Walton 2006). In contrast to explication, both advocacy and refutation involve an assumption that there is an issue or something to be debated, and both involve a stance on that issue. Both also involve an action orientation designed to convert belief systems to be in line with one's own. Both involve a normative orientation reflecting one's perspective on what others should (or should not) believe. Thus, in contrast to the previously discussed contribution types, these types of contributions emphasize change of social opinions.

The criteria that make advocacy and debate papers good are also similar. Good papers state the premises and assumptions on which their argument is based. They put forth evidence that is credible, unambiguous, consistent with the stated conclusion, and not subject to fallacious reasoning. Providing multiple sources of evidence that point to the same conclusion adds validity. Conclusions are stated clearly and align with the argument, premise, and evidence.

Advocacy and refutation differ: Whereas advocacy is designed to enhance confidence in an idea, refutation is designed to undermine such confidence. As such, advocacy and refutation can be conceptualized as opposite sides of a persuasive debate, with advocacy involving a proponent who puts forward a set of ideas and refutation involving a respondent who rebuts the argument or points out logical weaknesses that undermine the validity of an idea.

Because advocacy and refutation are designed to persuade by taking a stance on an issue about which there may be varying opinions, interesting propositions suggest that prevailing beliefs about an issue or its normative appropriateness are, in fact, in error. Thus, with advocacy, interesting propositions argue that what is considered false is actually true, what is considered unacceptable is actually acceptable, what is considered wrong is right, and what is considered inappropriate is actually appropriate. Interesting propositions pertaining to refutation suggest the opposite.

Skill Building and Facilitating Tools

The conceptual contributions described in the previous section can form the basis for purely conceptual contributions. However, as noted, the conceptualization is pertinent to any paper that has a conceptual element, even if it is an empirical paper. For example, positioning a paper may involve identifying a new construct, relationship, or domain; providing a revised perspective on that entity; and/or articulating its significance and differentiating it from previously studied entities. Delineating constructs, domains, and/or relationships is critical to many papers that publish hypotheses or propositions. Advocacy is used to convince

readers of the importance of a topic and why its study matters. Refutation is used when rival hypotheses that may otherwise explain results are developed and then ruled out (see Platt 1964). Literature reviews and discussion sections entail summarization of what is known, while the development of hypotheses and the interpretation of data can involve integration of ideas into novel ones as well as the ability to advocate a particular position and refute others. Thus, the skills involved in conceptual thinking should apply to most published papers, whether they are purely conceptual or conceptual–empirical blends.

Given the central role of conceptualization in knowledge development, it is important to understand what skills these types of conceptual advances entail and how these skills may be fostered. I turn to this issue next. Figure 1 and the bottom two rows of Table 2 play an organizing role in the discussion that follows. As this figure and table show, the eight thinking skills are not only similar and different in the ways previously mentioned, they also require similar and different thinking skills and facilitating tools.[4]

Identifying and Revising

Skills. Both identifying and revising involve divergent thinking skills, both of which are critical to creativity (see Figure 1). Creative thinking results from "originality of thought, having the ability or power to create or produce, having or showing imagination and artistic or intellectual inventiveness, stimulating the imagination and inventive powers" (Elder and Paul 2009, p. 13). Both identifying and revising entail the ability to break free from an attachment to a familiar, comforting, prevailing frame of reference or worldview to see things that are not obvious (Zaltman, LeMasters, and Heffring 1985).

Yet they differ in other skills identified in Figure 1. Identification involves seeing something that has not yet been seen. Thus, it requires a beginner's mind. A beginner's mind can look at something as if seeing it for the first time and without inference or judgment. However, revision involves understanding the prevailing view, which requires expertise in the entity under study. Yet this expertise must be coupled with the creative capacity to see things anew and reconfigure the prevailing view in a different manner. Thus, such a perspective requires both a beginner's mind and an expert's mind and the ability to articulate why the revised view offers improved understanding over the prevailing view (Li 1996).

Facilitating tools. If identification and revision involve divergent thinking, how are divergent thinking skills fostered? An often-heralded method is the use of metaphors (see Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989). For example, Li (1996) describes how John von Neumann developed a new theory of mathematics and economic behavior (game theory) by thinking of decision making between two parties in terms of a game. Morgan's (2006) classic book on organizations shows how the use of different metaphors for organizations (as machines, organisms, brains, cultures, political systems, psychic prisons, or instruments of domination) has yielded novel constructs and theories about organizations. Thompson, Locander, and Pollio (1989) use metaphors in developing and articulating a revised perspective on science. They compare the machine and container metaphors characteristic of logical positivism with a pattern and figure-ground metaphor that characterizes existential phenomenology.

Identification and revision can also be fostered by questioning strongly held assumptions that may be at variance with the way the world actually operates. Such is the case with Shugun's (1980) work on the cost of thinking and Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) paper on experiential consumption. Identification and revision can also be fostered by a search for anomalies, hidden events (Zaltman 1983), differences, and things that go against the trend as opposed to nonoutliers, things that are expected, similarities, and supportive findings.

Additional devices may foster the open-mindedness necessary for identification. Facilitating tools include "taking a hike" to adjacent disciplines, seeing new vantage points from which disciplines view related phenomena, and considering how their respective vantage points can fill blind spots in our field's understanding (Zaltman 2000). Thus, understanding a construct such as "brand relationships" can be facilitated by examining the study of human relationships in sociology and psychology, mechanical relationships (as in the study of magnets in physics), or principal–agent relationships in economics. Introspection can facilitate identification because it allows a person to think about a new idea in terms of whether it "feels right." Immersion in an area of study can also provide insight, particularly if the researcher adopts a beginner's mind and observes without predetermined perspective, which, by definition, blocks the ability to see something new.

Additional devices to foster revision include the use of heuristic devices, or previously identified bases for thinking about things. For example, whereas early research on attitude formation processes considers consumers' motivation, ability, and opportunity to process ad information, the motivation, ability, and opportunity framework may also be a useful heuristic for thinking about other things, such as a salesperson's performance, consumers' abilities to delay gratification, factors that affect involvement in brand communities, and advertising executional cues. (The latter is true of MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski's (1991) work. Abbott (2004) identifies a set of different heuristics (beyond motivation, ability, and opportunity) that he used to provide revised perspectives on known phenomena.

Delineating and Summarizing

Skills. From a skills perspective, delineation and summarization require logical reasoning skills, defined as the ability to relate what is known in a linear, rational, internally consistent, and compelling manner (Elder and Paul 2009). Thus, they require the capacity to draw coherent conclusions on the basis of established findings. Such reasoning may be expressed in the form of verbal arguments or mathematical arguments that lay out predictions based on

[4]The discussion emphasizes the dominant (not the only) set of skills aligned with each type of conceptual contribution.

mathematical criteria. Halpern (1989) proposes that such reasoning uses knowledge about one or more related statements to determine whether another statement is logically true.

Notably, however, the two conceptualization types differ in other reasoning skills (see Figure 1 and Table 2). Delineation involves a process of deductive reasoning. Such reasoning occurs when a person begins with a statement known or believed to be true and then uses this statement to make conclusions about something else. A conclusion is valid if it necessarily follows from some statements called premises. To illustrate, if it is known that A affects B and that B affects C, it can logically be deduced that A should also affect C through the mediational effect of B. Deductive reasoning skills are useful in developing logical arguments on which hypotheses and propositions are based. In contrast, summarization involves inductive reasoning. Such reasoning begins with individual observations and then collates these observations into a higher-order set of conclusions. Thus, if it is observed that consumers tend to make decision-making errors when they are in crowded stores, when there is music playing, or when their children are around, it might be induced that decision-making errors are caused by distraction, which interferes with information processing. Because all three situations have distraction as a common feature, it becomes an overarching explanation that ties the individual observations together.

Facilitating tools. Because delineation involves charting, researchers have often benefited from a facilitating tool known as mapping (Novak 1998). A map is a visual representation of an area and its boundaries. It is constructed in a manner that enables someone who has never traveled the route to understand how to get from point A to B. Maps delineate where things are in relation to one another. With mapping, entities are typically labeled with words and lines (or arrows) that are used to denote the relationship between one entity and other. Frazier (1983, see Figure 1) provides an example of mapping a domain. So, too, does Parasuraman et al.'s (1985) theoretical model of the determinants of perceived service quality (see also Sherry 1983). With mapping, a person states what is known (I can get from point A to point B in 30 minutes; I usually travel at 60 miles an hour) and uses this knowledge to draw conclusions (A and B must be 30 miles apart).

When delineating theories, researchers might benefit from a "theories-in-use" approach (e.g., Argyris and Schon 1974). Such an approach fosters theory development by understanding a phenomenon from the perspective of the self or someone who is experiencing it. This tool also involves immersion in a phenomenon and uses immersion to understand relationships. Zaltman, LeMasters, and Heffring (1985) illustrate this approach through the example of a salesperson who views his or her role as that of a consultant (as opposed to being an advocate) for a good being sold. This consultant perspective allows the theorist to develop novel propositions by listening to or thinking through if/then logic. "If I appear to be concerned with understanding the consumer's problem, and if I offer general advice about solving that problem, then the consumer will perceive me to be on his or her side and thus relatively more objective, and hence is more likely to accept suggestions I make." From there, logical propositions can be deduced (e.g., "The more oriented a salesperson is to understanding consumers' problems, the more likely it is that the consumer will accept his or her advice.… The more the salesperson displays a consulting role [as opposed to an advocacy role], the more likely it is that the consumer will accept his or her advice" (Zaltman, LeMasters and Heffring 1985, p. 115). Zaltman, LeMasters, and Heffring recommend that a theories-in-use approach should also include unsuccessful practices. Such unsuccessful practices are useful for charting boundary conditions under which the theory may or may not hold.

Mapping is also useful for summarization, though maps can show the underlying features or properties that connect specific instances to a higher-order entity. For example, an "organizational chart"–type map might be used to suggest that "distraction" is the higher-order construct that connects crowds, music, and children with reduced information processing. Summarization is also facilitated by outlines, which use devices such as headings and subheadings to organize materials into categories that relate studies to one another (see Folkes 1988; for examples of useful headings, Gardner 1985). Boxes in maps represent major headings in an outline, which in turn organize prior research in a way that allows for synthesis. Subheadings further organize what is known, with research organized into headings that support a given linkage, others that do not support it, and still others that identify contingent factors.

Differentiating and Integrating

Skills. Various skills related to differentiating and integrating can also be identified. Contributions based on differentiation and integration are similar: Both involve comparative reasoning skills, which involve the act of examining resemblances based on similarities and differences. However, differentiation requires analytical reasoning skills, defined as the capacity to see the details of something and to characterize them in terms of its elements or constituent parts (Elder and Paul 2009). For example, the construct of hope can be decomposed into its constituent appraisals. That is, a person feels hope when an outcome is appraised as desirable, as consistent with that person's goals, and as uncertain but possible. Differentiation makes it possible to see how hope differs from potentially related constructs. Wishing is similar to hope, but whereas hope is related to future outcomes believed to be possible, wishing is often related to outcomes that are desirable but impossible. By distinguishing the essential elements or properties underlying hope, it is possible to understand how it is similar to and different from other constructs. In contrast, integration involves analogical thinking, which is defined as the ability to think of something in terms of something else. Integration also requires the expertise characteristic of revision because understanding similarities and differences requires prior knowledge. It also requires imagination—a characteristic linked to identification.

Facilitating tools. Several tactics foster the comparative reasoning skills associated with differentiating and integrating (see Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock 2004). Assessing similarities and differences is fostered by exercises that ask for comparisons of similarities and differences. Such exercises may be accompanied by graphic devices, such as Venn diagrams, in which similarities are represented by the intersections of circles and differences are represented in nonoverlapping areas. Comparison matrices are other graphic devices in which people develop a grid with items to be compared along the matrix columns and characteristics linked to the items in the matrix rows. The goal is to identify features, characteristics, or dimensions along which the items can be compared and then to indicate whether these comparisons reflect similarities or differences (see, e.g., Calder, Phillips, and Tybout 1981).

The development of integrative thinking skills is particularly challenging; research indicates that people who are skilled at integrative thinking cannot articulate how they developed their integrated ideas (Dixon 2005). However, it is possible that the ability to think analogically can be fostered by training in solving analogies (e.g., book is to human as _____ is to bear) or thinking metaphorically. For example, at least three theories have been proposed to explain consumer satisfaction: expectancy disconfirmation, equity theory, and attribution theory. In developing an integrative theory, perhaps analogies can be drawn between the theories (e.g., expectation is to product as fairness is to person). By examining what aspects of one theory do and do not map onto aspects of other theories, a novel metaphor might be uncovered that accommodates both the elements on which the theories are comparable and those on which the theories are not comparable.

Advocacy and Refutation

Skills. Both advocacy and refutation involve syllogistic reasoning, which involves deciding whether a conclusion can be inferred from one or more premises (Halpern 1989, p. 128). With advocacy, the researcher attempts to provide undisputed premises from which a conclusion logically follows. With refutation, the researcher disputes the premises and/or shows that the conclusion does not follow logically from them. Notably, a single researcher can engage in advocacy and refutation with respect to his or her own ideas, first advocating an idea and then being critical of the persuasive logic. Elder and Paul (2009) call this process "dialectical reasoning."

Refutation and advocacy differ, however, in the necessity of critical reasoning skills, defined as skills of careful judgment, reflection, or observation aimed at questioning, finding fault with, and determining the merit or accuracy of a conclusion and/or its premises (Elder and Paul 2009). Such critical reasoning skills are an essential component of refutation.

Facilitating tools. The facilitating tools linked to advocacy and refutation are similar, as Table 2 shows. However, their application differs as researchers use these tools in an advocacy form to argue for what is true or should be believed or followed. With refutation, these tools are used to dispute or argue against a view or suggest what should not be believed. Walton (2006; see also Walton, Reed, and Macagno 2008) suggests that evaluating the plausibility of persuasive arguments can be fostered by argument diagrams. With argument diagrams, verbal arguments are translated into a set of diagrams that visually depict the premises and the conclusions derived from them. This diagramming makes the premises and conclusions explicit, making it easier for the evaluator to determine whether they are defensible.

Researchers can also be trained to identify argumentation schemes, which are various types of plausible arguments whose validity can be assessed by a set of questions. A common argument scheme is to appeal to an expert. For example, "Jones is an expert in marketing relationships. Jones claims that power imbalances between two parties will undermine the relationship's tenure. Therefore, power imbalances do indeed undermine a relationship's tenure." When the scheme is identified, a set of questions can be asked that help validate the plausibility of this conclusion. With such appeals to expert schemes, a researcher can ask (1) Is Jones indeed a credible expert? (2) Is Jones an expert in the area of marketing relationships? (3) Is Jones's assertion based on solid evidence? and (4) Is the conclusion consistent with what other experts would say? Walton (2006) identifies a set of other argument schemes and associated questions. Such schemes include arguments based on popular opinions, arguments based on analogy, arguments that use correlation to assume causation, and arguments based on purported consequences, among others. In each case, the goal is to articulate a set of questions designed to help assess whether the premise and the conclusions drawn from it are valid.

Advocacy and refutation can also be based on known persuasion tactics, the awareness of which can facilitate refutation. For example, researchers can be trained to check for fallacies, such as the use of false dichotomies, circular reasoning, the provision of irrelevant reasons, the use of weak or inappropriate analogies, the use of emotional (suggestive or propaganda-like) language, the use of appeals, tradition, oversimplification, and incomplete or erroneous comparisons, among others. Gula (2007) provides excellent examples of these reasoning fallacies.

Moving Forward

I conclude with a set of recommendations for moving our field forward in making future conceptual advances. These recommendations are clustered into four categories: (1) valuing conceptualization, (2) addressing shortages, (3) developing/sustaining a beginner's mind, and (4) fostering training in conceptual skill development.

Valuing Conceptualization

Conceptualization is critical to vitality of academic fields—whether it is manifest in purely conceptual papers or in conceptual–empirical blends. Yet our field seems to have swung in the direction of valuing the empirical over the conceptual (e.g., Kerin 1996; Stewart and Zinkhan 2006; Webster 2005; Zaltman, LeMasters, and Heffring 1985).

This movement is evident not only in the decline in purely conceptual papers in our field's top journals but also in the fact that empirical advances (in methods, statistics) and empirically focused PhD coursework have outpaced conceptual advances and courses. Empirical methods are essential, but unless they are accompanied by good and interesting ideas, their value diminishes.

Moreover, whereas all articles (empirical and conceptual) are essential to the advancement of the field, conceptual articles play a special role by addressing big issues for which an accompanying empirical component may be impossible, particularly in the space of an academic journal article. Such papers are more likely to have an impact in both their influence on other's work and the external recognition they receive (Yadav 2010). The precipitous decline of such articles suggests that the field may be missing important ideas.

It might be argued that our field *is* open to conceptual papers, but their exposition is best suited to books (versus journal articles). Indeed, some of the most highly cited works in marketing and consumer behavior have appeared in books (e.g., Bettman 1979; Howard and Sheth 1969). Yet books are no longer valued in promotion and tenure decisions, giving authors little incentive to write them. Moreover, many of the most provocative conceptual pieces that appear in books today come from the practitioner community. This outcome undermines the credibility of the academic community, which in turn can taint our reputation as thought leaders.

It might also be suggested that the field *is* open to conceptual papers by pointing to articles (AMA Task Force 1988; Yadav 2010) and editorials (e.g., Kohli 2009; Monroe 1993) that acknowledge their importance. Indeed, some of the field's most respected and influential thought leaders express this view. Yet these calls remain largely unheeded. Why? Maybe we lack of a framework for thinking about conceptualization. The articulation of such a framework has been the goal of this paper. However, perhaps our field has an empirical bias that disinclines reviewers to accept such papers (which in turn disinclines authors to write them). This state of affairs would be unfortunate. An astounding number of fundamental and interesting constructs, theories, domains, and procedures were introduced to the marketing field from 1952 to 1977 (see Wilkie and Moore 2003, Table 5) because openness to thinking conceptually was deemed important.

This openness needs to be recaptured. Editors play a central role in directing this openness. They should be explicit (as is Kohli 2009) in communicating their receptivity to conceptual papers. Editorials, meet-the-editor sessions, and editorial review board meetings should be opportunities to discuss their stance on such papers. Yet editors alone do not bear the responsibility of driving the direction of the field. Reviewers should be sufficiently open-minded to accept articles based *not* on the nature of their execution (i.e., whether they are empirical or conceptual) but rather on the rigor and quality of their ideas. Finally, authors should be emboldened to write conceptual papers. In addition to writing papers that emphasize incremental findings (e.g., understanding moderators and mediators of a known relationship), authors should assume responsibility for addressing interesting and novel domains, theories, constructs, and procedures that will augment the field's vitality.

Attending to and Addressing Shortages

My "armchair review" of the conceptual articles published in the field's top journals over the past 25 years reveals a preponderance of articles that emphasize differentiation and delineation. Summarization papers are increasingly rare and are often relegated to specialized journals or book chapters. Furthermore, current standards seem to demand that summarization-type articles be complemented by empirical validation, as is true with meta-analysis. Meta-analysis is an extremely valuable procedure. Yet not all entities have a sufficient level of development or comparability to make for a useful meta-analysis. Meta-analysis may be most relevant to well-entrenched research domains in which researchers have examined similar phenomena that vary in context and procedures. They may be less useful for understanding an entity for which research is emergent, yet not yet entrenched.

Relatedly, although we do have articles that are called "integrative reviews," many (including my own) are summarization (not integration) papers. True integration papers are rare. Perhaps this is because they require a full set of conceptual thinking skills. In addition to expertise and a beginner's mind, they require the ability to see differences, the ability to think inductively about how various perspectives are related, the ability to take a creative stance on the entity, the ability to use deductive reasoning to put forth new arguments, and the ability to do so persuasively. Perhaps some forms of integration may be most successful when accompanied by structural models that test an integrative perspective (e.g., MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch 1986). Nonetheless, the value of integration cannot be underestimated. Consider, for example, the incredible productivity engendered by the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion, which is a truly integrative perspective on attitude formation processes.

Debate exists, but with the exception of the recent "Dialogues" sections in *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, it is rare. Indeed, some journals discourage debate by having a policy that excludes rejoinders. Perhaps debate is discouraged because it is perceived as instilling ill will among researchers and fragmenting a research community. Furthermore, authors may consider debate risky. Those who attempt to refute the ideas of other authors may find their own work rejected by these same individuals. Perhaps debate is less prevalent in marketing than in other disciplines because debate in other disciplines often centers on theories; in marketing, we have been less adept at developing, proposing, and debating theories than in borrowing theories developed elsewhere. To the extent that we borrow a theory, we do not spend time debating its validity.

Relatively few purely conceptual papers emphasize new constructs or theories. Perhaps new constructs and theories are more likely to appear in empirical than in purely conceptual papers. However, I fear that our discipline lacks a sufficient emphasis on developing new constructs and

theories (see also Stewart and Zinkhan 2006). Empirical papers that emphasize new relationships seem to study "effects" (e.g., relationships between variables). Even if they include moderators that identify contingencies for the effects or mediators that specify the process by which effects are observed, they often stop short of using these observations to build novel theory.

Identifying shortages is important because all types of conceptualizations add value. To the extent that our field emphasizes one type of thinking over another, knowledge in the field may be stunted. Indeed, the eight types of contributions noted in Figure 1 might be characterized as reflecting the process by which knowledge of an entity evolves. Knowledge begins when something new is first identified. Research advances by efforts to delineate it. Through delineation, complexities are realized that, in turn, require differentiation, which ensues from deeper thinking. Clarity from differentiation gives way to agreed-on views that are advocated and seem true. Subsequent thought may give way to a revised perspective, with summarized views on the revised view giving way to integrated perspectives. Refutations of the integrated view give rise to the identification of novel ideas. In this view, the eight conceptual contributions reflect the evolution of conceptual ideas about the entities in Table 1 from their early identification to more complete perspectives on them. Thus, the eight types of conceptual skills capture the development of knowledge and ultimately reflect the engine of scientific progress. As such, attentiveness to the underrepresentation of certain types of conceptualizations and their bases is important.

Developing and Sustaining a Beginner's Mind

Big areas of research begin with the process of identification. Indeed, it might be argued that identification is the most important of the conceptualization types. Yet our field does little to support the beginner's mind that is conducive to identification. In fact, it seems to dampen it. The people who are perhaps most adept at identification are first-year PhD students. Yet, they are immediately "indoctrinated" to learn a prevailing paradigm. Thus, they are trained as "game theorists," "information processing researchers," or "transaction cost analysis researchers" according to their advisor's interests and expertise. Such training may suggest that prevailing views are "right," silencing new ways of thinking. Among more experienced academics, indoctrination creates levels of comfort, which may minimize identification by disinclining the researcher to movement outside his or her comfort zone. Moreover, instead of developing a beginner's mind, researchers often immerse themselves in the academic literature for sources of inspiration. Turning to the literature is useful, but it can stymie identification by inclining us to understand something in terms of established ideas.

A critical avenue for cultivating a beginner's mind stems from immersion in the phenomenon of interest. Interesting new insights can come from observing managers, consumers, and retailers and from understanding their day-to-day realities. For example, a student doing a dissertation on social media may uncover new ideas from reading blogs, following people on Twitter, and reading posts of reviewed products. Immersion in the phenomenon encourages those with strong conceptual thinking skills to identify what others have not yet discovered. Yet immersion is rarely encouraged, except among scholars who adhere to the consumer culture theory paradigm. We need to support a beginner's mind. Supporting a beginner's mind through immersion can further enhance the impact of marketing scholars on the managerially, socially, and politically significant issues that face consumers and marketers alike. To the extent that we deeply understand the phenomena we study, we may have more credibility with external constituents (e.g., the press, managers, policy makers, students).

Training in Conceptual Thinking Skills

Finally, it strikes me that conceptualization and its attendant thinking skills are not emphasized in doctoral training. Instead, the importance of conceptualization and knowledge of conceptual thinking skills is often tacit, making it possible and even likely that gaps in conceptual thinking arise. This is unfortunate because conceptual thinking skills are critical to all scholarly works—even those that blend conceptual ideas and empirical data. It is also unfortunate because literature pertaining to these thinking skills is both extensive and eminently teachable. For example, outside marketing, it is relatively easy to find work that describes skill development related to persuasion and logical thinking skills (e.g., Walton, Reed, and Macagno 2008), induction (Holland et al. 1987), and deduction (Bonevac 2003), among others. We should offer students a language for these conceptual thinking skills and provide guidelines for how such skills might be developed. It is my hope that this article, and the typology it describes, provides a starting point for making these ideas explicit, in turn making contributions a priority for the next generation of marketing scholars.

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