

## **The Demise of Marketing Theory Creation and Development**

**Victoria L. Crittenden, DBA**  
**Co-Editor, *AMS Review***  
**President, Academy of Marketing Science**

Theoretical articles contribute to marketing knowledge by explaining phenomena and existing conceptual relationships between phenomena and by positing and predicting conceptual relationships to be investigated in the future. These theory development articles tend to be more impactful than empirically-grounded, methodological, or modeling-based articles. This generalization is supported by Yadav (2010) and illustrated by the ten “best-of-the-best” high-impact articles published in the *Review*’s sister journal, the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* as of the end of 2011 (Hult and Ferrell, 2012) and Cropanzano’s (2009) analysis of the most-cited articles in the *Journal of Management*.

For decades, however, marketing scholars have been hesitant to engage in the theory development process. Our research shows that this hesitancy is due to a broad range of factors, including: (1) the lack of understanding as to what theory actually refers to, (2) a de-emphasis on marketing theory in doctoral programs, (3) the lengthy manuscript development process relative to theory-testing manuscripts, (4) the supremacy of quantitative methods, and (5) the lack of original/creative thinking. Merton (1967, p. 39) summarized this lack of theoretical contribution in our scholarly journals as, “Like so many words that are bandied about, the word theory threatens to become meaningless. Because its referents are so diverse—including everything from minor working hypotheses, through comprehensive vague and unordered speculations, to axiomatic systems of thought—use of the word often obscures rather than creates understanding.” Unfortunately, almost half a century later, Merton’s words are still applicable.

In addition to describing the roadblocks inherent to the development of marketing theory, the presentation will portray the theory development process via the market-oriented sustainability model published in the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 39(1), pp. 71-85. The presentation should be of interest to all business scholars with an interest in theory development and/or sustainability research and, more specifically, to marketing scholars as related to re-establishing theory development as a critical foundation in the marketing field of inquiry.