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THE STRUGGLE FOR MEANING

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For 10 years before I entered the field of organizational behavior, I played with clay. Happily pinching, pulling, centering, sculpting, and glazing, I learned and joyfully engaged in the creative demands of the ceramist's craft. When I was 15, my dad lost his job and had little hope of getting another. My five siblings and I were left with an uncertain financial future, questionable opportunities for college careers, and a feeling of fear in the pits of our stomachs that has never quite gone away. For me, publishing in the organizational sciences has always been a mixture of these two realities: the creative and the pragmatic, the expressive and the instrumental, the sacred and the profane.

In my profession, I write because I want to say something: to create a message that is clear, pleasing to my ear, and meaningful to me and, I hope, to others. I write because I have an urge to create. I also write because my livelihood depends on it. The publication process is highly charged because it involves making my inner self tangible and opening it up for assessment of the adequacy of its products. It is also charged because my survival depends upon those assessments. The publication process, for me, has been a struggle between these two realities. In that struggle, I have had extremely fortunate times (such as the acceptance of three articles in the 6 months just prior to tenure) and unfortunate times (such as the rejection of three articles in the 3 months just prior to my writing this essay). The former periods let my creative side take wing; during those times I feel like an especially imaginative, successful person. In contrast, in the latter periods I feel the perhaps irrational but just as real instrumental panic that I felt as a 15-year-old, wondering how I (the family) would survive.

I have seen these two realities manifest themselves in others, too, and in the field in general. In the best people I know in the field, the creative side burns brightly (and in watching and interacting with them, I am able to nurture this side of me). The symptoms of the creative side are readily recognizable: the inability to go home...
until words are on paper and a particular idea is expressed (I have walked out of my workplace at midnight as excited and happy as I have been at any other time in my life), the satisfaction of an argument well crafted, the pure joy in the choice of words and their arrangement on a page, the intense desire to share ideas with others and the enthusiastic engagement of any feedback those ideas bring.

The instrumental side, however, also seems omnipresent. You can see it in the anxiety people express over computer output—not because it presents a complex picture that will be difficult to interpret, but because the results portend whether they will have a "good year" with fresh manuscripts to submit or will need to start over, with the time already devoted to this project "wasted." (One colleague likens getting the computer output to pulling the handle on a slot machine—there is a lot riding on the results, and both situations seem at times equally uncontrollable.) You can see it in the numerous conversations between colleagues in which an instrumental language predominates: Publications become "hits" and journal names are used as nouns in a different sense than usual (as in "He has three AMJs and two ASQs"). You can hear it in the preconference workshops offered at the academy meetings for doctoral students and junior faculty, where it is difficult to turn the talk away from the instrumental (e.g., "How many publications do I need to survive in this field?"). And finally, you can see it in the proliferation of articles on "how to" get published (making me wary of the incremental contribution of this one).

In writing this chapter, my biggest regret is that I will say more about the instrumental than the creative side. The creative side seems amorphous to me—idiosyncratic to individuals and not amenable to advice. Further, although I could share some of the strategies that have helped me feel more creative, even that has a disappointingly instrumental tone (how to "get better" at the creative side). The most important message that I can convey about the publication process is that authors should not forget the creative aspect of our enterprise as they engage in the often instrumental actions that this process requires. Most of us entered this field because of a desire to create (to say something or discover something—other words that express what I mean by "create"). I am the least satisfied with my chosen career when this side is neglected and abused. When the instrumental dominates, nothing works. The more in touch I can be with the creative aspects of my undertaking, the more I can be open to feedback from reviewers and editors, face the publication process with hope and dignity, and feel great and deep satisfaction in the results.

So, with that caution in mind, I would like to address a couple of aspects of the publication process about which I feel I might have something to say. The point of the essays collected in this volume seems to be the "lessons" that may be extracted from the contributors' reflections on their experiences. As I think back, I come up with a few lessons, but I would also like to begin with two caveats. First, the publication process in some ways remains as ambiguous and frustrating today as it was when I started in this field (in 1983). As my recent experiences (noted above) attest, although there may be (and I believe there is) a learning curve involved in the publishing process, it is by no means a perfect one. Second, I comment on this process as one voice among many. There are certainly others who have published more, and more often, than I. Thus I approach this task with a great deal of modesty. What I bring to this essay is a lot of time spent in self-reflection (as I prepared to write) and an intense involvement with the other side. I have been on an editorial board since my first year in the field, and have served as a consulting editor for one of our journals for the past 3 years. In short, I have reviewed a lot of manuscripts. This has given me a sense of what works and what doesn't—some dos and don'ts.

Realistic Expectations

My first paper (the theory section from my dissertation) was conditionally accepted on the first review. This experience is probably not uncommon (I have had many people tell me that they had or know of someone who had a similar experience), but it gave me a warped view of the publication process and left me utterly unprepared for the much more difficult task of publishing the first empirical article from my dissertation. This latter effort involved several rounds at two different journals and was most discouraging to one starting out. The
lesson? Being new to the field may give one fresh eyes, leading to fresh theoretical insights that, if they can be well crafted into a paper, may be seen as a contribution (i.e., may be accepted for publication). I think this is what happened in my case. However, my sense is that the freshness of one's eyes erodes quickly, and that this is not a bankable strategy for tenure or a lifelong contribution to the field. Second, perhaps the hardest paper you will ever write will be the one that you pare down from a 250-page tome rather than build up from a blank sheet of paper. Third, it is important to develop fairly realistic expectations early on regarding the publication process. It is very hard. This reality seems almost universally true (i.e., true for everyone). The process has almost never gone easily for me since that first time. The feedback is harsh, the work involved in revisions is intensive, and the battle is uphill. Having this expectation allows one to handle the process better, without feeling that one is singularly (and uniquely) unsuited for this profession. This expectation is critical for continued persistence—the essential behavioral strategy—but more on that later.

The Way We Work

I have often been struck by the differences in work styles across successful academics. One has only to sit on a career-oriented panel (say, for doctoral students or junior faculty) once to get a sense of the real differences in how people work—and these are people describing styles that have seemingly led to success. Some successful academics work from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. every day in a regimented style that keeps them focused on the work at hand and away from the many distractions present in the workplace. Others work when their emotions move them, putting in perhaps more hours, but spending many of those hours reacting to the various interruptions of the day; these individuals definitely put in many hours at odd times (when the spirit moves them). The bottom line seems to be the importance of self-discovery—finding the style that best suits you, knowing your weaknesses and building in safeguards against them. Given that, I can only report what works for me. It is clearly not a guide for anyone else. If a description of my style gets you to think through the issues for yourself, then it has served its purpose. Although many of these issues will probably be touched upon in other chapters in this volume, also, I will mention a couple of work style issues that, in my mind, are directly related to the publishing process.

Multiple Projects

I get excited by a lot of different things. Hazel Markus's theory of possible selves must have been written with me in mind. I find many different literatures interesting, and I can see myself doing various different types of research. I used to worry a great deal about being "scattered" until someone told me about Lyman Porter's metaphor of the carnival plate spinner (now I only worry sometimes). At carnivals (it must be carnivals of old, for I have never seen this) there is a man who spins plates on top of various poles (this is actually a performance act that people pay money to watch, but enough editorializing). The plate spinner gives one plate a vigorous spin and moves on to the second. As he walks back and forth across the stage, he amazes the audience with the number of plates he is able to keep up and spinning. Porter argues that those who are most successful in the publication process (at least this is how his views have been recounted to me) follow the behavioral repertoire of the carnival plate spinner. They have several projects going, but projects that do not all need their attention simultaneously. Rather, they give one project a "spin" (send out a survey or analyze data and send them to a colleague) and then move on to the next (paying the first only partial attention to ensure that no sudden gusts of wind knock the first plate off its pole). My sense is that when we are new to the field and lower on the learning curve, the number of plates we can spin at once is fewer than the number we can handle later in our careers. In any case, the goal is to keep the plates all spinning (even if they are wobbling at times) without having any fall and crash. When things are going well for me, I have the sense of giving plates a spin as I move from project to project, with some requiring a vigorous spin and others needing just a gentle touch to keep them steady and on course. In my mind's eye, I also have a few plates (additional projects and
ideas) on the shelf, ready to be put up on poles as I gain capabilities (get better at the research process) or take other plates off their poles (as projects are completed).

I like this metaphor because it fits my preferred work style. Others work more as single-product producers. I have had the good fortune to know a few of these, and they are people I admire very much. These people move at a slower pace as far as getting things into print, but (ideally, or this strategy is woefully ineffective) each piece has significant impact. This strategy clearly works well, but it can be the Waterloo of younger faculty members. If your single product is not accepted at the journals, you don’t have much to fall back on. I have found the tendency to think in terms of multiple projects at different stages (requiring different degrees and levels of spinning) to be important to succeeding in the publishing process. And yet this is something new academics are rarely told. They enter the field with one project in hand (their dissertation) and often by the time they take that project through the publishing process, they are in the mind-set of What next? They are already thinking in terms of what single project to take on next. This strategy can be successful, but it seems more risky than a multiple-plate strategy.

Coauthors

I both love and hate the solitary nature of our profession. I am enough of an introvert to love the quiet and to value time alone, but I am also a social being. I find that I learn most through interaction with others (even more than through the written word). Since graduate school, my main sources of learning have been my coauthors. My success in the publication process has been enhanced by my interactions with coauthors. They both make it possible for me to keep more plates spinning (it is a great feeling when, after a long day of teaching and meeting with students, I get a phone message saying that my coauthor has just completed a draft of the discussion section of our paper or just sent me the draft of our survey—cha-ching! Another plate spun!) and make the process a whole lot more fun. Clearly to have this work, one needs the right coauthors—and one also needs to hold up one’s own end of the bargain.

The right coauthor can be anyone (and I wouldn’t begin to presume to tell anyone how to pick coauthors). I have found my coauthors mostly on job interviews. After my job talks at their institutions, we have started talking and then have soon begun working together. I haven’t always gotten the jobs, but I would take what I have gotten out of the process any day! One coauthor and I met at a junior faculty consortium—I asked her to lunch because she looked as if she had no one to eat with. We have published three papers together. My coauthors have typically been young people in the hunt for tenure (I think this is important) with strong research values. They often have strengths that are different from mine (and although this has been fortuitous, I think it is also important). For example, one of us might have a strength in data analysis, the other in building theoretical arguments; one might be better at crafting first drafts and the other in working revisions; one might have access to research sites or subjects and the other to the money to pay for subjects or travel. My coauthors and I have divided the work and credit pretty evenly. One of us usually takes a first crack at the theory section while the other does the analysis and writes it up. In dividing up credit, we typically have followed a “logrolling approach” (a term that comes from my negotiation-oriented coauthor). We presume that we will write multiple papers together. One becomes first author on the first, with the understanding that the other will be first author on the second. We usually include an authors’ note containing the disclaimer that “the authors contributed equally to the effort,” and this is true. I can think of at least one occasion when we switched the ordering of authorship because of the demands of one coauthor’s personal situation (i.e., one of us was coming up for tenure). I value my coauthors highly. They have served many functions for me. They were my “research cues” for the 8 years that I spent in a (relatively more) teaching-oriented environment. They have been my main source of learning over the past several years, and they are my personal friends. The publishing process is a lot more warm and fuzzy for me because of them. I wouldn’t undertake this process in any other way (no matter how committees “count” things at tenure time). My sanity and growth depend on my coauthors. However, you need to do what works for you.
A coauthor strategy requires interacting with others (which is not attractive to everyone) and carries some career risks (after all, those committees do count at tenure time, and they often count dual-authored papers differently from single-authored ones). I was and am willing to take those risks (whereas I am less willing to take the risk of the single-project focus—different strokes . . . ). Your goal should be to find your own preferences.

The Use of Time

The scarcest resource in our professional life is time. I am constantly monitoring my time, fretting over my time, saving my time, and spending my time. I consider the management of time to be critical to the publishing process because research time is the most fungible. It is the time that no one is particularly clamoring for. Journals will wait forever for your papers, but students demand that you be prepared on Tuesday. It is probably not surprising, then, that your time gets pulled toward teaching. You oil all the squeaky wheels and only then notice that there is nothing left for the work that is not only the most important to long-run career survival, but also your most creative and satisfying. Saving time for research is critical, for it is a task that requires time, lots of it, and quality time to boot. I have done a couple of things to help save time for the research/publication process.

First, I recognize Kaye Schoonhoven’s law (or at least the person who told me this attributed it to her). That is, young scholars keep waiting for big demands on their time so that they can be sure to turn them down to save themselves for research. What they don’t understand is that the process is more like being eaten away by ants; big demands on time are not the problem. It is the person who needs just 30 minutes of your time (and how can you turn down a request for 30 minutes?) who is the biggest danger to you. Such requests, like ant bites, are small, but they come with such frequency (and increasing frequency as one gains tenure; increasing frequency if one is female or minority) that soon all your time is eaten away. You’re left with a tattered day that has an hour free here and 15 minutes there. It is very difficult to conduct a research life with such time. Once I understood the ant problem, I had a much easier time turning down “reasonable” requests for my time and, by so doing, have preserved more time to devote to the publishing process.

Second, I make appointments with myself. All of us are very professional. If we make appointments with colleagues or staff persons at our universities, we keep them. If someone else asks for that time, we have little trouble saying that we have prior commitments, but would be glad to meet another time. A few years back, I asked myself why I didn’t offer myself that same courtesy. I began not just blocking time out for writing and attention to the publishing process, but making appointments with myself. I now have no trouble saying to someone who wants my time on a Tuesday that I have blocked out: “I can’t meet then; I have an appointment; I would be glad to meet another time.” With this strategy, I feel much more in control of my life, and I also feel good about respecting myself.

Third, I pay more attention to what I am doing and what it really demands. It occurs to me that for half of our job we are really novelists (the research, writing, and publishing parts) and for half we are talk-show hosts (the teaching and executive teaching parts). I try to identify to myself which part I am playing at any given time (during the times of the year that they can be separated) and am careful about bringing the rules of one into the arena of the other. For example, a novelist doesn’t need to go to an office (in fact, that might be the worst place for her to work); she doesn’t need to work 9:00 to 5:00, and she doesn’t need to dress up. When I am in a heavy research mode, I let myself sleep in if that is what I need. I work all hours (and odd hours), I never get out of my sweats, I do things that spur my creativity (such as exercise), and I leave the house only once a day, to pick up my kids. When I go into talk-show mode, I feel better about it (and get into the spirit of it) if I go to the office, dress up for the part, and read professional books. This discussion pertains to the publishing process in the following way: I do my worst at writing (coming up with responses to reviewers and so on) when I try to shoehorn that activity into the work mold of a professional. I do my best thinking while lying down (sometimes), during exercise, in sweats, and late at night. I am happiest when I take advantage of my flexible career and live my life this way when I am focused on writing.
One thing that I am always searching for in my career are ways to extend the novelist portion of my work year. The institutions that I have been a part of, for example, have allowed me to “bunch” my teaching (e.g., all into one term), allowing for an extended period to be devoted to writing. Bigger institutions, also, have a larger set of demands. Sometimes these can be traded for novelist time. For example, the dean asks you to take on a large administrative role? Negotiate for reduced teaching time. The field honors you with an appointment as a journal editor? Negotiate hard for fewer teaching commitments. Within reason, I find that the more time I am able to call my own as a novelist, the better. However, if this free time extends too long, I find I have diminishing returns. Sometimes the deadline of the impending return to the classroom is a useful discipline for my writing. I often get a lot done in that last month. I find that 6 months without teaching commitments works well for me, whereas with 9 months, I am slow in the start-up phase (because I have “so much” time to use).

Dealing With Feedback

I consider dealing with feedback to be the most important part of the publishing process. Therefore, in this central section of the essay, I will share how I deal with feedback and the attitudes and behaviors I have come to see as important from my observations of myself, my colleagues, and the authors with whom I have interacted in the reviewing/editing process.

I always read my reviews in a secluded place (not my office). I know several others who do this as well. One of the worst aspects of being as involved as I am in the reviewing/editing process is that I sometimes mistakenly open mail containing feedback on my own papers thinking that it is a reviewer report or a letter in which the journal editor is sending me copies of feedback for an author of a recent submission. In these cases I have taken in the feedback on my own work almost “intravenously” (without any mental preparation). This feedback is always the toughest on my soul.

So what preparation do I do in this secluded place, with my reviews sitting unopened on my knees? I tell myself that the feedback I am about to receive is about my work, not about me, and that my work is only a small part of myself. (It is nearly a mantra: “I am an effective teacher, I do good reviews, I am a good wife, I am a much-loved mother. . .”). I usually stop when I get to “I have my health.” It is a myth that people who write about the importance of feedback enjoy getting it themselves. I prepare myself for pain and I open the letter. In most cases receiving feedback has been painful, and perhaps there is a lesson here. The reviewing process has some inherently negative aspects. Reviewers staring at manuscripts, particularly new reviewers (I know this was true for me when I was starting out), feel that they haven’t done their job unless they have found a study’s flaws. They also worry that they will look bad in the eyes of editors if they think an article is just fine when two other reviewers return 16-page single-spaced analyses articulating its many shortcomings. These realities lead to what can sometimes be (and often is) a negative tone. Many of the acceptance letters for my articles have read something like: “This work isn’t much good, but we’ve run out of steam so we are (against our better instincts) going to go ahead and publish it.”

Recognizing that the process has some inherently negative aspects makes it easier to deal with. The most important suggestion implicit in the previous paragraph is that you should not take it personally. Remember that the article for which you just received feedback is but one piece of your work and that your work is but one piece of who you are. This attitude underlies what I think are the two most important attitudes for an author to have in the publishing process: openness to feedback and a willingness to persist.

Openness

I have been told by several of the authors with whom I have written that I am more open than they would naturally be to feedback from others on our work. I believe in the review process. Having spent countless hours laboring to give feedback to authors as part of the review/editing process, I believe that I should take the feedback offered me and try to learn from it. Thus I feel very open to suggestion and criticism (not that I always like it). I actually like the revise-and-resubmit part of the publi-
cation process. Suddenly, instead of having to deal with every possible criticism of your work that you can imagine (or might hear from the wide variety of colleagues you might have gotten a "preread" from), you have to deal only with a constrained set of critiques (though with the length of some reviews, the set doesn't always feel that constrained). With reviewers' reports in my hands, my uncertainty is reduced, my sense of self-efficacy goes up (usually), and I generally learn a lot. I find that as time goes on and we all get busier, it is very difficult to get colleagues to spend serious time with my work on an informal basis (and I am extremely grateful to those who have). Reviewers generally spend time with my manuscripts and have something valuable to say. Although the negativity does get me down, I can wade through that, I learn a lot. I especially learn a lot if I am working with a coauthor and we have a series of meetings in which we discuss how we will respond to reviewers' criticisms. The push that reviewers give to our thinking and the creative process in which we engage in responding is generally very stimulating—and fun!

It is interesting to note two recent comments from colleagues of mine that are relevant to feedback openness. First, in evaluating our PhD students recently, one faculty member summarized the discussion of seven different students by saying that what seemed to differentiate the top and bottom performers was their openness to feedback. Top performers were open to faculty input, actively sought it, and incorporated it into their work. Less effective students were defensive regarding feedback and, occasionally, openly hostile. Second, another colleague observed that several senior members of our field have essentially dropped out of the publication process, viewing the feedback they get from it as coming from "unqualified, incompetent reviewers." Although it may be true that reviewer quality is deteriorating, the generality of this statement reflects a degree of defensiveness toward feedback. This defensiveness may inevitably creep into an individual's personal style as he or she gains experience in the field. However, to my mind, this is disappointing. Our field relies on the participation of a community of scholars to shape the body of work that is our literature. The way each of us participates in that community is by putting his or her ideas out there to be tested and by providing feedback on each other's ideas. Defensiveness would seem to muck up this enterprise at both the early and later stages of one's career.

One practice has helped me remain open to reviewers and to keep my spirits up for responding. Shortly after I receive reviews, whether the decision is a revise and resubmit or a reject, I break each review up into specific points. I then create a setup for responding to each review (I typically dictate this and have a secretary type it up), a template in which I state the reviewer's points in order, each followed by "Response:" and room for my future response. Thus I create a lengthy document, most of it blank, awaiting my responses. No matter how gloomy I feel after receiving the reviews, I get this done. Then, after several days (sometimes weeks), I pick up the response templates and begin by answering those points that are easiest (sometimes all I can do at that time is fix typos and find missing references if my self-efficacy is still low). Once I am engaged in the task and the task is broken into small pieces, I generally can keep going and soon build a head of steam to deal with the more difficult issues. This procedure has two additional benefits as well: First, it allows me, in very busy times, to keep going, finding small things that I can tackle in the few minutes that I can squeeze out of a day for research. Second, it sets up my responses to reviewers in an ideal way for resubmitting the manuscript to a journal.

Having reviewed a lot, I have strong feelings regarding how response memos should be constructed. First, they should repeat (summarize) the reviewer's concerns (so that he or she doesn't have to go back to the initial report to check). Second, the author should be very clear regarding what he or she has done to address particular reviewers' comments and where those changes can be found in the new manuscript (i.e., the author should cite page and paragraph numbers). As a reviewer, I hate getting response memos that say something like, "Point I. Done." This tells me nothing regarding what my point was, what was done, or where the change can be found. My philosophy as an author is to make things as easy as possible for the reviewer (thus, for example, I repeat my responses for each reviewer who asked a particular question, rather than refer reviewers to my responses to other reviewers). Not everything I do is necessary (and indeed there may be a rationale for
not doing some of it), but everything I do does make the process less effortful for the reviewer. I figure that can’t hurt (and I appreciate such efforts as a reviewer).

Persistence

This theme is intricately interwoven with the theme of openness. Part of my struggle with remaining open to feedback lies in how not to become overwhelmed by it. And yet I think winning this struggle is central to succeeding in the publication process. Persistence in the face of adversity is crucial. There are many out there who are smarter than me, but they couldn’t handle the feedback and gave up. Many of us know colleagues from graduate school who fit this profile. They were (are) very smart, but they haven’t published. The publishing process is a discouraging one, and success at it requires persistence in the face of that discouragement. The most important advice that I can give is to keep going, whether it is in redoing the study with better measures and more constructs or in revising the article and resubmitting it to the journal (or to another journal following a rejection), the important thing is to keep moving. Perhaps what you thought was going to be the definitive study you will need to consider a pretest. Perhaps you will have to redo the manuscript and hope for a more sympathetic reading from a different journal—whatever, just keep moving.

One ability that is important to the maintenance of persistence is the ability to interpret feedback appropriately (or to find someone who can). Given the negativity of the review process, it is critical that you figure out what the messages you are given mean. Early on in my career, two colleagues and I submitted a paper to Administrative Science Quarterly and received very detailed (read “long”) reviews with lots of negative comments, along with an invitation to revise and resubmit the manuscript. We figured that with so many criticisms and concerns, how could the paper have a chance? We sent it elsewhere, to a lower-tier journal, and it was accepted there. Since then, we have learned that ours was actually a quite positive outcome from ASQ! To be invited to resubmit is a significant achievement, and the reviews that we received for this paper were no more negative than many that we pursued vigorously (and with success) subsequently in our careers. In retrospect, it is clear (to us, anyway) that we didn’t interpret the feedback correctly, in its proper context. One has to read the levels of negativity to make a judgment regarding the chances of success. The task of revising is usually daunting, but the size of the task shouldn’t be the measure of whether it is doable or “worth it.” I now believe that an invitation to revise and resubmit is extremely positive news (and I don’t pay much attention anymore to the phrase that editors like to use, “high-risk revise and resubmit”—it is used so frequently that it is not a differentiator). Since that early ASQ paper, I have turned down only one opportunity to revise and resubmit, and I always have someone else read my reviews to give me an assessment of how bad it seems (somehow, others don’t take the comments as personally).

Clearly, there are some rules for persistence. Never submit to a second journal without fixing (to the extent possible) the problems noted by reviewers at the first journal. Failure to do so will come back to haunt you with startling regularity. (We are indeed a small field, and most people I know have gotten an article to review twice. When an author hasn’t taken advice the first time around—if only to rebut—it tends to anger a reviewer.)

There are also some persistence practices that I have not used personally, but that are probably worth mentioning, as I have seen others use them successfully. These involve interacting directly with journal editors (something I am much too shy to pursue). As a reviewer, I have seen articles published that were previously rejected. The authors in these instances have gone directly to the editor (usually in writing, but, I gather, often preceded by phone calls) to make a case for the unfairness of the reviews or their ability to deal effectively with the comments raised. These are rare events, but they do suggest that no word is necessarily final. Instead of taking feedback personally and crawling off to find a rock to hide under, one might (at least others have) examine one’s reviews for their fairness and consider whether or not one can deal with the concerns raised in a convincing manner. Then one has to make the phone call to the editor (here is where I typically fall out of this imagining). Of note, however, is that whereas as an author I would feel that such a
phone call would prejudice the editor and reviewers against me, as a reviewer, I have seen little evidence of this. The review process is a human process, and reviewers and editors seem open to hearing about it if an author feels that he or she wasn’t treated fairly in it.

Conclusion

I just finished reading a novel by Kaye Gibbons. It was only fair, but the title has stuck with me and haunts my recent thoughts: A Cure for Dreams. Now, as professionals, we avoid many horrible cures for dreams that are daily realities for others in our world (such as poverty, urban violence, and famine). However, our dreams die just the same, and they often die in the publishing process. A researcher fueled by passion, whether that passion is for solving a practical problem, resolving a theoretical puzzle, or figuring out the implications of a new methodological insight, is a beautiful thing. This type of passion seems to fuel a career and leads to success in the publishing process almost as a by-product. The cure for dreams that we encounter in our world lies, in part, in the instrumentalism that I described earlier. Doing research that “they” seem to want, doing the types of studies that seem to be all that the journals are publishing (as opposed to what will best answer the question), and choosing a topic based on what is hot or accepted rather than because you are passionate about it are all examples of letting the instrumental dominate. Making such choices amounts to choosing death. These are small deaths, to be sure, and may go many years without detection, but it seems to me that they are death all the same. Clearly, the instrumental requires some thought and, particularly early in one’s career, can seem of paramount importance. I have never been able to rid myself of the instrumental completely: Posttenure, the annual performance review and that section where you are asked to list your articles accepted now looms large in a way that I seldom thought of prior to tenure. But I catch myself. I sometimes see that the instrumental is dominating and the creative, inner-directed side is withering away and in dire need of feeding. In my mind it is a matter of balance—the question of “Why am I doing what I am doing?” is one worth continual reflection. I prefer dreams and hope not to encounter their cure in my professional lifetime. Thus, to me, the struggle seems one well worth engaging.