It's Not You, It's Me: Building and Maintaining Trust between Research Compliance/Administration Offices and the Research Community

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Introduction

- Central to the relationship between researchers and the Compliance Office (CO) that reviews their research – is Trust
  - Research Compliance must be trusted by the researchers whose research they review
  - This trust built on the framework of:
    - Authority
      - Not 'power'
    - Legitimacy
    - To be seen as a legitimate authority

- Types of Legitimate Authority (Max Weber)
  - Traditional
  - Charismatic
  - Rational
    - Built on system of rules and processes that are implemented with consistency and transparency
  - We will go with Door #3

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Building Legitimacy

- What should/can an CO do to build legitimacy
  - Operate with transparency
  - Operate with consistency
  - Be self-reflective, self-critical
  - Build processes for researchers to communicate with CO

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Operate with transparency

- At dinner hosted by Korean Studies Institute, researcher says:
  - I am doing study of communication between Korean couples/parents
  - HRPP said, I must complete forms for inclusion of children
  - Why???? Children are not the subjects, adults are!
  - Rather than argue, I just did it to get it done but makes no sense

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Operate with transparency

- After 10 minutes of discussion,
  - She says that research will include attending family dinners to observe how the adults communicate
    - Dinners included the kids!
    - Thus, the children are involved in the research process and their communication was to be included as well

- HRPP reviewer
  - Was correct to require documents for the inclusion of children
  - But failed to provide rationale, only said they must do it
  - A missed opportunity

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Operate with transparency

- Imagine
  - If the reviewer had responded in such a way as to explain WHY children's form and assent process was necessary
    - Received completely different by the researcher
      - Don't underestimate the value of providing rationale for actions, especially for researchers/faculty
    - Have educational value
    - Might impact subsequent submissions
    - A bit more effort by reviewer but not substantially – and follow up benefit

- Be received as expression of rational authority,

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Operate with Consistency

- Whether by staff, reviewers, or committees
  - Lack of consistency is a killer
    - Few things irritate a researcher more than inconsistencies in reviews
    - Admittedly, not all inconsistencies reported by researchers are truly inconsistencies
      - But some are
      - And refer back to discussion of transparency
    - Can seriously undermine legitimacy of Compliance when gross inconsistencies do exist
      - This was approved last time, why not now
      - Researcher reported – I try to time my submission to avoid committee X

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Operate with Consistency

- What To Do
  - As has been said, if the regulations told us what to do, we wouldn't need HRPPs/IRBs/IACUC/IBCs to make judgments
  - Strong program of education and guidance regarding institutional implementation of the regulations
  - For staff reviews
    - Monitoring of determinations and follow up as necessary
  - For committee reviews
    - Active role for regulatory staff attending the meetings
      - Researcher members are experts in science, regulatory staff more likely to be more knowledgeable of the regulations and what this and other committees has determined in the past

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Be Self-Reflective/Self-Critical

- When identifying problem areas and corrective actions
  - Be quicker to search in the mirror rather than the window

- What we see however at conferences
  - "Working with the difficult researcher"
  - Not
    - "Working with difficult HRPP/IACUC/IBC"
    - "How Not to be a Difficult HRPP/IACUC/IBC"

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Be Self-Reflective/Self-Critical

- Actions
  - While principles may be fixed, think of policies, processes, procedures, forms, etc. as dynamic and always subject to change
  - Develop a quality improvement program which periodically identifies specific areas for attention
    - Based on that mirror gazing and risk assessments
  - Establish program of on-going self-monitoring of processes and and determinations
  - Be the opposite of complacent – bold, energetic, flexible, experimental, open and willing to try

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Build Processes for Researchers to Communicate with HRPP

- Establish and Reinforce multiple channels of communication for researchers
  - Actively creating opportunities for communication, not just accepting communications
  - Face to face (under current circumstances: face on screen to face on screen) meetings
    - Research leaders
    - Departments
    - Research teams
    - Town Halls
    - One-on-one

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Build Processes for Researchers to Communicate with HRPP

- Establish and Reinforce multiple channels of communication for researchers (cont.)
  - Virtual communications
    - Targeted service surveys
      - Upon approval
      - For selected services
        - siRB
        - Selected determinations
    - Website/email address for messages
    - Confidential, anonymous routes
      - Often less useful due to lack of specific actionable information

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Wrap-Up

- At the end of the day, for an office to be successful
  - Its relationship with researchers must be:
    - Synergetic
    - Collaborative
    - Supportive
    - Cooperative
    - Etc.
  - In other words, built on trust

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Discussion and Questions?

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