Ombuds Interventions in Encouraging Covenantal Research Collaborations: I Am with You Always, Now and Beyond the End of Our Study

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ABSTRACT

Given the proliferation of coauthored research, organizational Ombudspersons are likely to encounter increasing numbers of conflicts among researchers. We suggest that *covenantal*, rather than contractual, collaborations will create long-term, productive research relationships more effectively. Using sacred covenants as our foundational principles, we describe how research collaborations can become covenantal and how organizational Ombuds can help research-active visitors forge these relationships. Characteristics of sacred covenants, such as a shared purpose, an expanded time frame, mutually defined expectations, strong emotional bonds, and shared commitment to team norms and ethical behavior are fundamental building blocks of covenantal research collaborations.

We use the example of Nobel Prize-winning researchers Kahneman and Tversky's relationship and its demise to illustrate these principles and conclude with recommendations for Ombuds working with researchers to create and nourish covenantal research relationships.

KEYWORDS

Research, collaborations, relationships, covenants

Authors' names are listed in alphabetical order

OMBUDS MAY SEE A RISE IN ISSUES INVOLVING RESEARCH RELATIONSHIPS

Ombuds from research institutions or universities may see a rise in visitors with collaboration problems, as the incidence of co-authored publications in academe has risen steadily over the years. This upsurge is due to the increased costs of research, advancing academic specialization, increasing competition for research funding (Howard & Laird, 2013), and more complex research questions, all which require collaborative relationships (Leahey, 2016). Predictions are that collaborations will continue to increase (Bozeman & Corley, 2004; Floyd, Schroeder, & Finn, 1994; Liu, Olivola, & Kovács, 2017; Manton & English, 2007). As fields become more interdisciplinary, statistical techniques become more rigorous, and the "publish or perish" culture of academia prevails, successful collaborative relationships may be a necessity for successful academic careers. Thus, visitors to Ombuds offices may be more often engaged in intra-research team conflict.

Much can be gained from collaboration. First, collaborative relationships provide complementary skills and knowledge so research can be fully conceived and executed (Birnholtz, 2007). Second, they provide an idea-development mechanism wherein researchers exchange and modify each other's thoughts, thereby improving and enhancing their studies. Third, they create groups with similar expertise so that "friendly reviews" of work can be done in a safe and trusted setting (Bozeman & Corley, 2004). Fourth, they provide needed interpersonal relationships for what otherwise can be a lonely profession (Frost & Taylor, 1996). Finally, collaborative research relationships allow science to progress in new, interdisciplinary directions in order to address systemic and complex issues (Bennett, Gadlin, & Marchand, 2018). However, not all collaborative relationships, regardless of size, complexity, project, or longevity, will be successful and garner all these benefits.

Unfortunately, the price of collaboration can be high (Wray, 2006). Researchers from diverse specialties and cultures amplify communication challenges, and role conflict between allegiance to an external research team and the researcher's home institution may arise. Multicultural research teams introduce higher levels of complexities, such as differing understandings of appropriate interpretation and reporting of data (Easterby-Smith & Malina, 1999).

A good collaboration requires "emotional work," at which not all researchers are skilled. As team size and diversity increases, so do costs. Further problems can be free-riding or improper, inaccurate, or even dishonest credit allocation (Leahey, 2016; Lui, et al., 2017; Manton & English, 2007). Finally, power relationships are frequently unequal in research teams, as graduate students work with advisors and junior researchers work with those more senior and better connected to others with access to professional growth.

Given the potentially high costs of collaborations, how can Ombuds assist such relationships to move forward successfully? What makes a research collaboration effective in publishing high-quality research, generating multiple studies, or prospering into decades of productive work? What enables them to be personally rewarding and enriching? What makes them fail at any or all of these goals?

This article encourages Ombuds to help researchers improve the quality of the relationship by suggesting it move to a *covenantal*, rather than a *contractual* model. We make this point by first exploring sacred covenants and legal contracts. We then discuss characteristics and likely outcomes of research collaborations that are covenantal. We conclude with "best practices" Ombuds may use for assisting researchers to build, maintain, and enhance covenantal relationships.

THE NATURE OF COVENANTS AND CONTRACTS

While the term "covenant" is used legally, it is also defined as "a usually formal, solemn, and binding agreement" (Merriam Webster, 2019). It is often associated with less prescribed relationships involving agreements between "two people, or companies, or even countries" (Vocabulary.com, 2019). Relationships can be "covenantal" to the extent they represent a shared goal, vision, or commitment that transcends the interests of the individuals involved. Thus, covenants deal more with shared values, goals, or vision while contractual arrangements specify actions to be undertaken, desirable behaviors, or other explicit agreements. We believe that research collaborations can be covenantal in this sense of the word. This type of covenant may be best illustrated in sacred covenants.

SACRED COVENANTS

It is generally believed that the first human agreements were covenantal (Elazar, 1980; Everett, 1987). Sacred – and other types of – covenants differ from legal contracts along several dimensions. First, covenants are expected to be permanent or nearly so, and are changed or renegotiated when new occurrences or information require it (Miller, 1990), while contracts are intended for a fixed period (Brinig & Nock, 1999) and are unchangeable without their dissolution.

Second, the "glue" holding the covenant together is a strong emotional bond and deep empathy (Brinig & Nock, 1999; Elazar, 1980; Everett, 1987; Miller, 1990), while contracts are impersonal legal agreements.

Third, the covenant's originator (in sacred contexts, the Divine) serves as judge and final arbiter of any perceived violations, while a third party determines contract breaches, and their resolution moves to the private domain (Miller, 1990). In secularly derived covenantal relationships, a broader sense of societally shared values may underlie the covenant, such as those found in professions (e.g. physicians' responsibility to "do no harm"), and members are seen as possessing inherent dignity and rights of self-determination (Miller, 1990). In contrast, contracts are undertaken to enhance self-interest and uphold the individual rights of their parties.

Fourth, covenants require mutual respect, trust, integrity, and responsibility, while in contracts such values are less relevant due to protections afforded by legal enforceability (Elazar, 1980).

Fifth, membership on the human side of covenants is fluid and changeable; parties may enter into the covenant or leave it, and the covenant continues to exist. Contracts usually dissolve or are rewritten when one party leaves the contract's frame (Everett, 1987).

Sixth, sacred covenants entail a broad and general expectation of reciprocity: Certain behaviors are to be undertaken without any immediate expectation of return and they are often intended to alter or enhance the character and integrity of its members. Contracts, however, require defined exchanges at specific times and are not intended to affect its members' foundational morality (Miller, 1990).

Finally, a sacred covenant unfolds and adapts gradually to needs and circumstances, while a contract is quickly defined and rigid and may therefore be challenged by unanticipated conditions or consequences.

A sacred covenantal relationship assumes concern for the common good, ethical distribution of property, and protects those lower in status and power (Magill, 1992; Peace, 2006). In many ways, the covenant defines the social identity of the human group as well as the nature of the Divine and serves as a means to establish stability and interdependence within the group (Brinig

& Nock, 1999). As a social identity, a covenant holds special significance to all parties and exists as a valued and meaningful entity outside of its individuals. Thus, its members will find behavior congruent with the covenant's precepts as intrinsically attractive and will exercise free will, self-reflection, and self-evaluation to self-regulate and maintain the covenant (Tajfel, 1982).

While the authors' backgrounds are Judeo-Christian, and thus the perspectives in this article are grounded in this cultural base, covenants are found in most of the world's major religions. For example, Islam also accepts the Abrahamic Covenant, as does Judaism and Christianity. Further, Islam accepts other covenants, such as that found in Quran 3:82 in which Allah "took a covenant from the people through the Prophets" (Al Islam, 2019). While Buddhism does not generally profess covenants with God, some congregations define themselves through covenantal relationships, such as the Sangha Covenant of the Buddhist Temple of Toledo (Buddhist Temple of Toledo, n.d.). Thus, although our experience is limited, we believe the concept of covenant is applicable to all human relationships and should therefore be familiar enough to most people to apply to the research setting.

CONTRACTS

A contract is understood to be an oral or written promise that is enforceable by law. It is a legally derived, voluntary agreement between two or more parties who intend to enter into enforceable obligations with one another (Brickley, 2019). Those obligations typically are promises to act to provide some work or service for a specific valuable consideration or benefit. A legal contract must also incorporate certain elements (DeLong, 2015):
- an offer and an acceptance of that offer;
- an intention to create legal relations between the parties;
- the agreement must be made in return for a valuable consideration such as payment;
- all parties must have the legal capacity to enter into the contract;
- the object or subject matter of the contract must be legal (Law Dictionary, 2019).

Contractual arrangements may take a variety of forms and structures. For example, in many U.S. states, a simple agreement following a mediated settlement, when witnessed and signed, constitutes a contractual, enforceable legal obligation. In practice, these agreements typically are rewritten into legal language and structure by an attorney, but this only changes its form, not the substance of the agreement into which the parties have entered (Chesler, 2009; Laurence, nd).

A partnership structure is a type of contractual relationship that assumes equality in ownership, operational responsibility, and assumption of liabilities (for general partners; limited partners serve as investors only). This contractual relationship implies that all general partners are responsible for the inputs, processes, and outcomes of the projects undertaken (Entrepreneur, 2019). Often in a small group of coauthors, a partnership might be the model most frequently adopted. As in all contracts, such a relationship requires clear specification of responsibilities, roles, effort, and contributions.

To be clear, legally derived *covenants* exist as well. They are a type of contract or an element of a contract and thus fall within the domain of contract law. Within these bounds, a covenant is defined as an agreement or written promise between two or more parties that constitutes a pledge to do something (an *affirmative covenant*) or refrain from doing something (a *negative covenant*; Hayes, 2019*)*. For example, legal covenants included in contractual arrangements between homeowners and homeowners' associations often require them to mow their lawns weekly (affirmative covenant) or restrict homeowners from painting their houses certain colors (negative covenant; Free Dictionary, nd). In law, the concept of a covenant is perhaps most frequently heard and used with respect to real property (real covenants), which are conditions attached to a property deed.

In summary, covenants are permanent but changeable, deeply felt relationships based on higher values; they demand mutual respect and trust and broadly and widely based reciprocity. Contracts are much narrower agreements, often legally derived, temporary, created for each party's self-interest, and value neutral.

We suggest that the appropriate model for successful research collaborations is more closely aligned with those designed around sacred covenants rather than contracts, for several reasons. First, covenants allow for *flexibility*. Research collaborations typically must adapt to changes in theories, data, newly published research, and even new statistical procedures, so flexibility in the relationship is a necessity. Second, far from being logical, rational interactions, many research collaborations involve different perspectives and opinions about the research or methodological approaches, as well as academic egos that can be large and sensitive. These emotionally laden characteristics require research relationships to be ***nimble, open, honest, reflective, and self-evaluative***. Third, a research collaboration must rely on the ***integrity*** of its members to analyze data honestly and report results that validly describe outcomes, whether or not they support the hypotheses. Thus, we believe covenants as employed in sacred contexts are more appropriately applied to research collaborations than legalistic, contractual approaches.

Indeed, the idea that covenants should inform and shape work relationships is not new. The historic guild form was created from what were essentially covenantal agreements between members of the profession and the community: Guilds formed binding, life-long obligations to act ethically and honestly within community expectations, involving deeply felt commitments with a secondary concern for self-interest and personal gain (Everett, 1987).

CONVENANTAL RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS

What does a covenantal research collaboration look like? We apply sacred covenants' practices related to *purpose*, *time frame*, *enforcement*, *member expectations,* and *member treatment*.

Defining purpose

Covenantal research relationships focus on the bigger picture. Inherent in sacred covenants is concern for the common good (Peace, 2006); in research collaborations, the common good can be conceived as the research group, the entirety of the scholarly community, the advancement of science, or the betterment of the world. The glue holding a covenantal research relationship together is based on social goods such as ethical behavior, creating better science, or generating practical solutions to critical problems.

Covenantal research relationships focus on the truth. In concern for the common good, the collaboration concentrates on producing useful, valid knowledge, thus minimizing the motivation to falsify data or self-plagiarize previous work. A covenantal research collaboration concerns itself with the welfare of targets of the research, ensuring that they will ultimately benefit from the generation of knowledge.

Time frame

In covenantal research collaborations, the duration of the relationship is not dependent upon a single project, but rather upon a commitment to the purpose, expectations, and emotional commitment of the team. Thus, unlike contractual research undertakings, the point is not only to finish a successful project, but to continue contributing to the shared purpose and mutual nurturance of collaborators.

Enforcement and member expectations

Research covenants self-enforce collaboratively. Even if a senior colleague founded or leads the team, enforcement is mutual and direction in how the project should proceed is expected from all parties. Because emotional bonds are strong, and motivations sincerely focused not only on the product but also the process of the research, members are willing to devote more effort than others at times because the others are trusted to contribute when needed; all are willing to "give more than they get" at some point in the collaboration. Members are expected to self-monitor and evaluate their own contributions in a covenantal network of trust and flexibility and thus enforcement of quality, quantity, and effort norms are done mutually within the group.

How members are treated

Research covenants are collegial, and senior members serve as mentors. Floyd, Schroeder, and Finn's (1994) work in developing a model to establish author order in research collaborations provides a framework to illustrate how covenantal and contractual relationships might work. These researchers juxtaposed *motivation for collaboration* and *power balance* as key elements predicting conflict over authorship credit (see Table 1), resulting in four types of relationships – collegial, mentoring, meritorious, and directing – and specified the common approaches to author credit associated with each.

Table 1
Floyd, Schroeder, & Finn (1994) Collaborative Relationships Model

	Equal	Unequal
Types of Motivation For Collaboration	**Collegial** "Trusting relationship in which no one person seeks to dominate." "... not caring about order of authorship." "Friendship ... taking turns carrying the load ... true collegiality."	**Mentoring** "... with mentors who appreciated my abilities and efforts and give credit where due." "... in a mentoring situation a willingness of the doctoral student to grow, learn, and work hard."
	Meritorious "First author is the person who has contributed the most to the paper." "Authorship should be decided on who made most contribution." "The rule-most contribution= first author."	**Directing** "First author has primary responsibility." "There has always been one lead author." "When someone takes the lead and others feel OK."

We propose that covenantal research collaborations are more aptly described by the two quadrants emphasizing social motivation for research, collegial and mentoring. Members in covenantal relationships are less likely to be motivated by merit and direction as depicted in the two productivity quadrants (the bottom row), since their focus is on the common good, a longer-term horizon, and shared responsibility rather than individual achievement. Floyd and his colleagues (1994) found that feelings of exploitation were common in the research relationships he studied; we suspect these collaborations tended towards contractual rather than covenantal.

In a covenantal research collaboration, ownership of scholarly theories, precepts, research activities, and writing is seen as the property of the group of involved scholars rather than that of any individual contributor (Magill, 1992; Wray, 2006). Covenants often assign property rights based on their higher values; these values stipulate who is responsible for what in order to fulfill the covenant (Magill, 1992). For example, when the Hebrew people were told to occupy Canaan because God wanted it to be theirs (Exodus 3:7-8), the *community* owned the land, not individuals.

A contractual approach to research, on the other hand, is likely to focus on productivity aimed at instrumental gain for individual scholars, and in extreme cases, perhaps without concern for the long-term benefits of the research outcomes or the good of the larger community. A contractual, "legally" construed research relationship is less likely to create a scholarly social identity, provide a sense of meaning, concern for the common good, or encourage development of an ethos of egalitarianism and equality. Enforcement in a contractual relationship will be based on carefully preconceived determination of "who's in charge," as described in Floyd et al.'s (1994) directing quadrant.

A COVENANT GONE WRONG: LESSONS FROM KAHNEMAN AND TVERSKY

In Michael Lewis' (2017) nonfiction book, *The Undoing Project*, readers are introduced to the marvelously collaborative relationship enjoyed by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky for many years, and from which came frame-breaking research. Their relationship illustrates the possibilities inherent in a covenantal scholarly relationship and highlights the small and large things that can sunder even a covenantal relationship.

THEY NURTURED EACH OTHER BY SHARED CREDIT

At its best, Kahneman and Tversky's relationship affirmed that their work was jointly produced (Sunstein, 2016). They fought against the tendency to attribute success to one, rather than both equally (Lewis, 2017); they "tossed a coin to determine the order of authorship of our first paper and alternated from then on" (Kahneman, 2003, page 724).

THEY FELT A STRONG EMOTIONAL BOND

Their colleagues remarked that they laughed together often. As Kahneman said, ". . . we spent hours of solid work in continuous amusement" (Sunstein & Thaler, 2016, para. 15). They participated freely in many non-work and social activities, buttressing their scholarly relationship with ties of friendship and companionship (Lewis, 2017).

THEY GAVE AS WELL AS RECEIVED

They adapted to each other's working styles and considered their joint work time supremely important. "Amos was a night person, and I was a morning person. This made it natural for us to

meet for lunch and a long afternoon together and still have time to do our separate things" (Kahneman, 2003).

THE COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP IN DECLINE

Physical distance often leads to emotional and intellectual diffidence, which in turn leads to questions of intent and challenges of interpretation (Lunenburg, 2010). After years of productive collaboration, the "magic" began to disappear when they were physically separated for the first time, Tversky at Stanford and Kahneman at the University of British Columbia. "Once they were separated by distance, and began working with students and other co-authors, their relationship lost its ease" (Sunstein & Thaler, 2016, para. 23).

Perceptions of outsiders further eroded the relationship. Consider the bitterness expressed in their joint conversation with Harvard psychologist Miles Shore: "With Amos in the room, Danny complained . . . 'I am perceived as attending him, which is not the case . . . I clearly lose by the collaboration . . .' 'The credit business is very hard,' said Amos . . . 'The outside world isn't helpful to collaborations. There is constant poking, and people decide that one person gets the short end of the stick'" (Lewis, 2017, page 294).

These challenges of status difference perceptions, professional envy, and the powerful influence of others' inaccurate perceptions of their relative contributions began to divide them. As Kahneman later said, "The spoils of academic success, such as they are – eventually one person gets all of it, or gets a lot of it. That's an unkindness built in" (Lewis, 2017, page 294).

Status differences are often imposed by the outside world, but over time may become internalized in ways that damage relationships. As time went on, Kahneman began to omit mentioning Amos in presentations and look for other collaborators to take Tversky's place, even indicating to one that he and Tversky were no longer working together, though in fact they were. Each denied the other credit they had previously given willingly. With these challenges becoming more prominent and disturbing, the scholarly relationship that was once described as "intense as a marriage" (Sunstein & Thaler, 2016, para. 21), began to dissolve. Amos's wife, Barbara, who had the office next door Tversky's at Stanford said, "I would hear their phone calls. It was worse than a divorce" (Lewis, 2017, page 332).

BUILDING AND SUSTAINING COVENANTAL COLLABORATIONS

It may be unreasonable to assume that all research teams can or should be covenantal. As some marriages may not be "made in heaven," some research collaborations sensibly base themselves solely on individually instrumental motivations, with the goal only a single publication or project and little interest on the part of members to remain together. For these types of collaborations, researchers at the National Institutes of Health published what many consider the "Bible" of practical research team effectiveness, *Collaboration and Team Science: A Field Guide* (Bennett, Gadlin, & Marchand, 2018), illustrating a generally contractual (or partnership-based), as opposed to covenantal, approach to research. For example, these recommendations touch on understanding roles, responsibilities, and expectations, establishing processes for sharing data, and checking references of new team members. We concur that these points are useful in establishing successful research relationships and that contractual research collaboration can be fruitful, particularly in short-term projects. Further, many collaborations will have elements of both contract and covenant, and this may be appropriate given that some team members may be useful only for a particular project for which their specific skills are needed (such as specialized statistical analysis).

However, we also assert that the most productive research teams, as were Kahneman and Tversky, form long-term bonds and a level of trust that goes beyond the shorter-term perspective of contractual relationships and partnerships. Further, Sargent and Waters (2004) found effective research teams attributed their success to subjective criteria (such as enjoying the experience, getting to know collaborators better, and learning through collaboration), in addition to objective criteria like publication. Successful collaborators liked, were attracted to, and trusted each other, all elements in Floyd et al.'s (1994) social dimension and indicative of a covenantal relationship. For teams that share a common vision and focus, creating a covenantal relationship may lead to long-term productivity and superior science.

Such covenantal research collaborations are long-term, relationship-centered, purpose-driven, flexible, and operate according to accepted team norms. David Hickson (2013) describes a covenantal experience at Aston University in the U.K.: First, norms were clearly specified as mutual rather than competitive; all team member names were listed as authors of all publications. Further, the team agreed to house their offices in one common space with adjoining desks rather than in separate rooms. The flexibility of this team was evident when two of the team members began to collaborate independently on an edited book, unaware of the economic gain from publishing a book as opposed to journal articles. Due to the strength of their bond, the team was able to withstand this stressor and continue working together productively (Hickson, 2013).

What is the role of Ombuds in helping researchers create covenantal, rather than contractual, collaborations? We answer this question first by offering a model (Figure 1) for how covenantal relationships could be initially cultivated. We then provide recommendations for assisting visitors to move from (or adapt) a confrontational research team, likely based on a contractual model, to one more covenantal.
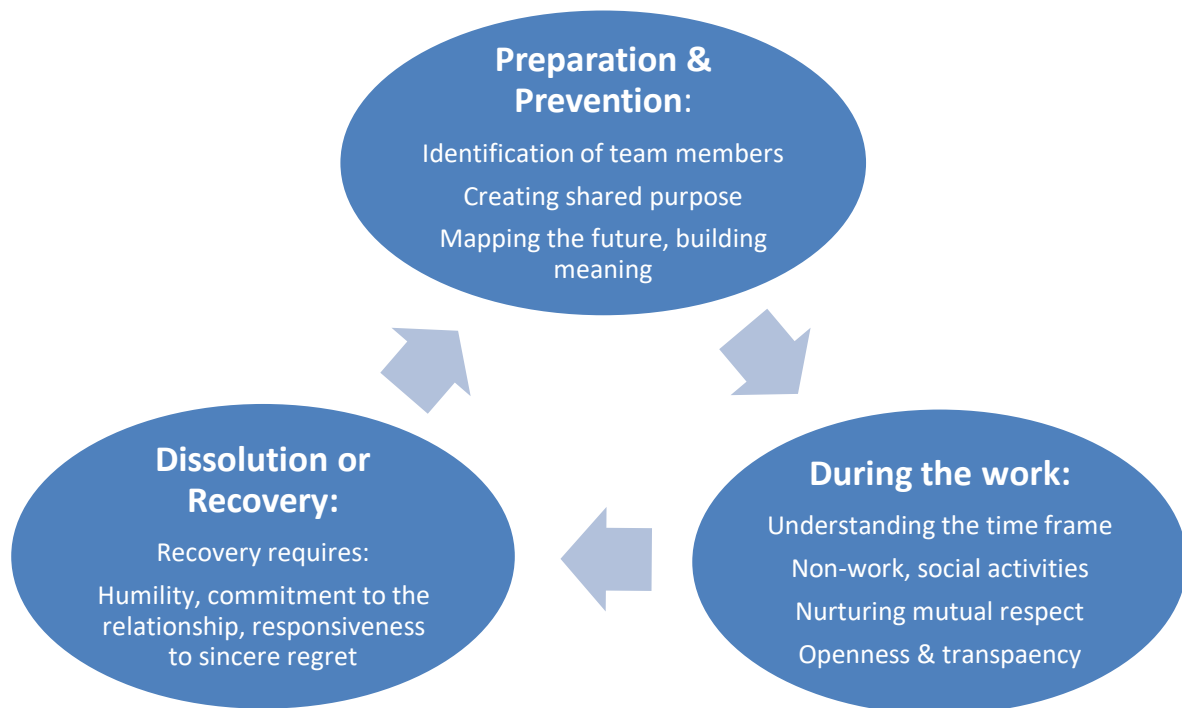
FIGURE 1
FRAMEWORK FOR CREATING INTENTIONAL COVENANTAL RESEARCH RELATIONSHIPS

PREPARATION AND PREVENTION

MEMBERS AND MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

Researchers beginning a covenantal collaboration should try to identify others with whom they have a meaningful shared history. Such persons should be scrupulously ethical with a strong vision of how the discipline or research questions need to develop to serve a common good. Member expectations should be discussed at length in relaxed, nonthreatening, and affirming contexts, including frank discussions of both social and instrumental motivations, along with the expected balance of power within and among team members (Sherwood & Glidewell, 1971). The ongoing process of how the research is being accomplished should be discussed regularly, with expectations that collaborators are willing to self-reflect and modify their behavior and approaches when appropriate. Time for socializing and creating friendship bonds should be included as well as the expectation that conflicts will be managed proactively and respectfully.

CREATING A SHARED PURPOSE

Research team members should have a commitment to a common purpose larger than one individual or research project. Identifying the overall thrust of a research stream, considering why it is important to the science, organizations, workers, and perhaps even humanity as a whole, should frame the research and ensure the work represents a meaningful, intrinsically motivating, and inspiring opportunity. Connecting that sense of shared mission or purpose to the importance of nurturing the scholarly relationship and its output is equally important. Focusing on ethical mandates for good science and admirable human behavior and aligning the partnership's mission and activities is necessary to maintain quality in the work and personal integrity.

MAPPING A FUTURE DEFINING, ILLUSTRATING, AND BUILDING MEANING INTO COLLABORATION

Working together to create a mutual understanding of a covenantal future will enable the partners to identify and prevent or prepare for possible pinch or crunch points – likely events or actions that could threaten the covenantal relationship – but that can be avoided or ameliorated with forethought (Sherwood & Glidewell, 1971).

Consider the likely occurrence that collaborators must work distantly from each other, as would occur during a sabbatical or visiting professorship. Being aware of the threats such distance imposes and preparing to overcome them may allow the covenantal relationship to continue despite physical separation. Though rarely as satisfying as working in close proximity, today's world of virtual, real-time, visual communication – Skype, Google Hangouts, etc. – eases the dilemma of physical distance.

Similarly, challenges imposed by distance or other threats to continued viability of a covenantal research relationship can be set aside when there is a powerful, mutually understood, and meaningful purpose to which the collaborators are committed. Discussing, creating, understanding, and committing to a shared purpose early in the relationship will help the team traverse rocky times and avoid the temptation to go their separate ways.

DURING THE WORK

For successful research collaboration, as in any high performing team, factors such as a shared purpose (Katzenbach & Smith, 2015), consistent and effective communication (Bennett, Gadlin, & Marchand, 2018), mutual trust and respect among partners (Katzenbach & Smith, 2015), shared ownership of outcomes, and meaningful work performed by each partner are critical to ongoing viability and success. Likewise, managing both the workload and relationship so no partner feels unequal is essential to a sustainable covenantal research relationship, as it is in any successful work team (Katzenbach & Smith, 2015).

UNDERSTAND THE TIME FRAME

It is unreasonable to hope that any research collaboration will be eternal. All research teams will have to grapple with the question of "how much longer" at some point. However, working toward a common purpose will encourage the covenantal research team's longevity. Having a commitment to an entire stream of research centered on a larger, important, and compelling question suggests that the researchers are "in it for the long haul." Like any good covenant, members may have to step out, and perhaps back into the team, but the team should strive to maintain its identity over these flexes through creating a culture that is agile enough to change in useful ways when appropriate.

What is a reasonable time frame for team survival? This question must be answered by the research team as it develops and produces its work, but commitment to and operating in sync with the team's common purpose will encourage optimal longevity. Understanding clearly the mutual purpose will help partners to know when it is time to dissolve their team. Dissolution of a covenant is not necessarily failure; many Christians would argue that Christ introduced a "new covenant," but few of these same Christians would claim the original Abrahamic covenant was not of great value.

NON-WORK ACTIVITIES

Many scholars have advocated for the essential bonding that develops as a result of non-work interactions. Socializing together, as did Kahneman and Tversky in their most productive years, builds cohesiveness that goes beyond the bounds of normal working relationships. Purposefully creating mutually enjoyable opportunities will improve the longevity and productivity of a scholarly relationship and enhance its covenantal nature. Non-working lunches or side trips away from conference sites to hike, canoe, or shop can nourish relationships. Even simply spending time chatting or Skyping about families, friends, and personal lives before beginning work can encourage sustainable bonds.

MUTUAL RESPECT

The importance of mutual respect in a covenantal research relationship is difficult to overstate. Trustworthiness, integrity, and appreciation, expressed in casual conversation and illustrated through behavior, are essential to a climate of mutual respect. As an exemplar, the end for Kahneman and Tversky's partnership began in those moments when each started to feel "less than" in the eyes of the other. Small things can become big things – a thoughtless comment perceived as expressing contempt indicates a failing relationship, whether in a research team or any relationship (Gottman & Silver, 2018).

OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY

Researchers intent on a covenantal relationship should immediately address concerns or challenges to the relationship. The most productive scholarly relationships are characterized by frequent, transparent, and forthright communication about work issues as they arise, so they are dealt with before they become unmanageable. A willingness to speak up about things that don't seem right, to test stories and assumptions about a partner's actions, and the ability to clear the air through transparent communication are fundamental to covenantal relationships. Of equal importance, covenantal researchers must be willing to be openly listen to complaints from partners. It must be safe for everyone in the covenantal relationship to initiate and participate in these conversations.

DISSOLUTION OR RECOVERY: HUMILITY

John Gottman (2007) asserts that one of the most powerful predictors of a failed marriage is contempt felt by one or both parties. Such disregard and disrespect were also symptomatic of Kahneman and Tversky's failed relationship (Lewis, 2017). Recovering a relationship from threats of contempt requires, above all, a sense of personal humility and commitment to the relationship, over and above commitment to its hoped-for outcomes (Gottman & Silver, 2018). On one hand, it is essential that partners in a covenantal relationship be willing to express sincere regret and to act on that sincerity in ways that will repair the damage. It is equally essential that partners are willing to receive and respond to the other's expressed regret and restorative actions, extending acceptance of differences and even forgiveness when needed. These intentional acts require a sacrifice of the ego in favor of personal humility.

HOW OMBUDS CAN ASSIST VISITORS TO SHIFT FROM CONTRACTUAL TO COVENANTAL COLLABORATIONS

By understanding how a covenantal collaboration forms, Ombuds can assist visitors in dysfunctional teams to work together to determine if the team is salvageable or is facing its

dissolution. First, suggesting team members begin a conversation to ascertain each member's expectations may clarify if they are ready, willing, or interested in evolving into a covenantal collaboration. What were their initial motivations to begin this project? Whom do they see as its potential recipients? What difference in the world will the research results make? Knowing these answers may make it clear to the visitor whether or not team members share any kind of overarching common purpose. If a common purpose is definable, can it be nurtured and grown to a sound, sustainable motivation for collaboration?

Second, the Ombuds can help visitors explore how they feel about others on the team, beyond the current conflict situation. Do they enjoy spending time with them? Is there trust and mutual respect? Do they have anything in common besides this project? Are they the kind of colleague with whom they would like to enter into a covenantal relationship? This informs whether the visitor wants to put the "sweat equity" into deepening the relationship through dialogue about meaning, how to address potential future conflicts, or apportion work. These deep conversations are part of the fodder that expands and strengthens the common sense of purpose.

Third, Ombuds can assist visitors in exploring their and their colleagues' expectations of the time frame of the collaboration – is it reasonably sustainable? Are the levels of common purpose, trust, and mutual respect sufficient to maintain a sustained covenantal relationship? Would they enjoy spending personal time with these individuals? Based on their initial exploration of the collaboration, is there sufficient material to work to cultivate it into a covenantal relationship? Can the visitor commit to openness and transparency with their colleagues in this team? Answers to these questions will help visitors clarify their desires and expectations of the collaboration and help enable them to make decisions about their commitment to it.

Fourth, Ombuds can help visitors identify and establish a values basis for the covenant, a mutual purpose that brings a higher meaning to the work on which they collaborate. As noted earlier, the unifying force holding a covenantal research relationship together is grounded in a concern for the common good. A covenantal research collaboration concerns itself with the welfare of the targets of the research, ensuring that they will ultimately benefit from the generation of knowledge. That united commitment to a common purpose larger than one individual or research project can help frame the research and align the partnership's mission and research activities.

Fifth, Ombuds can provide tools and guidance to help visitors prepare if they choose to have the conversations that can deepen relationships, resolve conflicts, restore bonds, and provide a map for moving the collaboration into a covenantal relationship. The informal, independent, and neutral pillars of the Ombuds practice provide a fertile ground for helping visitors clarify their expectations, strengthen their commitments, and practice the skills needed to convert their contractual collaborations into budding covenantal ones.

CONCLUSION

Establishing, maintaining, and preserving a covenantal research relationship is essentially about cultivating and nurturing the relationship. For such a collaboration to endure, members must be as intentional about relationship management as they are about workflow management. Research relationships, with their immense potential to be both productive and inspiring, have too often been left to chance, to accidental convergences of talent, time, and effort. When that convenient convergence is no longer effective (as inevitably happens when left to chance), the relationship flounders. Kahneman and Tversky's team failure illustrates this. However, the potential for success in such relationships, in the years of groundbreaking productivity they enjoyed before the relationship's demise, shows the powerful lessons to be gained from enduring, committed endeavors sharing a common purpose, mutual respect, and enduring trust

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