Journal of the International Ombudsman Association

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ABSTRACT

As the Founding Editor of the *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association* (*JIOA*), Alan Lincoln has made a significant and lasting contribution to the International Ombudsman Association and to the organizational Ombudsman profession. This article provides a brief overview of Lincoln's personal and professional life, describes his involvement in the origins of *JIOA*, challenges and key decisions along the way, sources of satisfaction for him in this effort, his current view of the journal, and activities in his post-retirement life.

KEY WORDS: Ombudsman, Alan Lincoln, Founding Editor, Journal, *JIOA*

ABSTRACT

Courage, which means acting despite fear, is an essential characteristic for Ombuds. Ombuds have many opportunities to display courage in their work, from providing unwelcome feedback to visitors to identifying trends within their organizations. The most profound opportunity for courage is when Ombuds speak up to or prepare to leave their organizations in order to protect the integrity of their practice and their offices. Despite the risks of courageous actions, the benefits are profound. Displaying courage helps Ombuds develop their roles to their fullest and can fundamentally change how they as individuals and their offices as resources are perceived in their organizations.

KEY WORDS: Ombuds, Courage

Andrea Schenck and John W. Zinsser

ABSTRACT

Organizational Ombuds, known for their expertise in reframing communications, would benefit from advancing a conversation about Ombuds program sustainability. Organizational Ombuds and host organizations wish to account for the benefits Ombuds programs' presence and activities generate. This is a long-standing interest. Qualitative and quantitative efforts from "usefulness" to "return on investment," have been promulgated with reactions from "essential" to "inappropriate." The topic has created vast discussions, but limited actions and agreement.

The status and privileges conferred on organizational Ombuds programs — allowing Ombuds to act differently than all others as embodied in the defining characteristics of Independence, Neutrality, Informality and Confidentiality — forge the additional responsibility for programs to demonstrate and deliver actual benefit.

The authors' core thesis asserts an expanded paradigm, recommending new specific actions, which will allow programs, host organizations, and the public to better understand how the myriad of contributions programs make can be acknowledged and in some instances quantified as value additions. Optimally, these new patterns will overcome low usage rates, promote existent programs' sustainability, and increase the introduction of new programs.

Key Words: Ombuds program, integration, contribution, value

Don Noack

KEY WORDS: Neutrality, fairness, objectivity, power, authority, courage

EDITORIAL STAFF

The Worth of an Ombudsman and the Value of Values

David Miller, Editor

What makes an Organisational Ombudsman worthwhile? Where does our value — our sense of professional worth — lie? Is it the esteem of others and for ourselves that we have as members of a noble profession, is it in the values we embody from our Ethical Principles and Standards of Practice, is it in the fact of existing as a profession which embodies and emphasises neo-liberal aspirations of inclusiveness, egalitarian accessibility and omerta? Or is it in the likely fact that we save money for our organisations through avoided staff turnover and legal costs? Of course, our value — and our self-worth — lie in all these things and in much more. For example, it lies for many in the knowledge that we are helping others, even as we may become drenched as the "keeper of their tears".

The Oxford English Dictionary defines worth and value interchangeably. Thus, worth is:
     "1. The relative value of a thing in respect of its qualities or the estimation in which it is held.
      2. The character or standing of a person in respect of moral and intellectual qualities."
Similarly, *value* is defined as:
     "1. The material or monetary worth of a thing.
      2. The relative status of a thing, or the estimate in which it is held, according to its real or
          supposed worth, usefulness, or importance."

I am an Ombudsman because I value — indeed, I am proud to occupy — a role in which I may serve others, and which is founded on principles and standards. It is more than just a job because, in its appropriate execution, Ombudsmen embody values underlying those principles and standards that I find admirable. Our worth to an organisation is assessable in relation to our Ethical Principles and SoPs — which are, reassuringly, increasingly becoming substantiated by empirical and functional evidence — but the adherence to our values can be a solitary and taxing endeavour. Ombudsmanry can be, for many, a lonely profession in practice, while being a very conspicuously public and vulnerable profession when value is questioned and assigned by non-Ombudsmen.

We have been reluctant empiricists when it comes to revealing our worth and our value, it seems, but we have to face up to a stark reality — we must work smarter in demonstrating our worth, and the value associated with that worth. This requires that we ask our profession and ourselves to become much more open to critical empirical enquiry that will enable frank scrutiny of our real roles and the ways we implement them. There is also an obligation, in my view, to assist our employers and our constituents in being able to see how we add value. Our worth is not merely a function of our asserting it, so we should be able to demonstrate it. We must also be clear to ourselves and to those for whom we strive about the 'why' of our worth!

I and, I suspect, many of us have faced some hesitation over our assertions of the intrinsic and extrinsic merits of the Ombudsman role because we have been unsure how best to demonstrate them. Yes, we may attempt to lead by example (a poignant aspect of our practitioner loneliness), but how to quantify the sheer courage required in standing up to authority, or the hitherto unquantified effort involved in simply being what we are? And there is always the threat that, by inviting examination of our methods and processes, we become vulnerable to predatory rivals within the corporate maze — those who say they can do better for less or, worse, say that what we do is less worthy, less valuable than we would wish.

This Volume of the *JIOA* contains contributions that address some of these issues. One of the pointers to value in any profession is the examples set by those esteemed within it. **Tom Sebok** has revealed the remarkable example and value added to our profession by Alan Jay Lincoln, our Founding Editor. It is our intention to continue honouring the efforts of pioneers (as we started to do in *JIOA* 6[2]) in future Volumes but, as the Journal is a part of Alan's legacy to our profession, this offering is something we on the Editorial Team take especial pride in. Thank you, Alan, for all you have done for us!

Cynthia Joyce has done a remarkable service in opening up discussion of courage in Ombudsman work. Using examples provided by the IOA membership, Cynthia explicates how our courage is tested and how it may be supported, if we ask for it.

Andrea Schenck and **John Zinsser** have provided a crucial paper on how Ombudsman programs and their host organizations can explicate and appreciate — and quantify — the multiple and diverse contributions of Ombudsmen as value added. This long-overdue paper enables us to re-frame our meditations on Ombudsman value in the context of strengthening program — and organisational -sustainability.

And **Don Noack** has written on questioning authority in his informal "I was just thinking…" contribution. Don's considerations are of such importance for us all — questioning authority is what we invariably find ourselves doing if we are doing our jobs properly, yet doing so invariably challenges our programmes and our professional sense of worth. As with life in general, the real world application of our SoPs is not at all necessarily linear, and courage is a draught of which we may all wish to deeply imbibe from time to time.

To all our contributors, and to those who gave helpful guidance and reviewer comments to received manuscripts (often with cruelly short notice), our continued and heart-felt gratitude.

This Volume also marks processes of significant change on the Journal. For a start, *JIOA* production has now passed to the graphics and publication team — **Amy Lydic, Jill Hronek**, **Erica Battaglia** and **Brian McGowan** — at The Sherwood Group and, to them all, our grateful thanks for the open spirit and warmth of our new collaboration. We on the Editorial Team also wish to acknowledge and warmly thank our former graphics guru, **Wendy Webber**, for literally making our Journal for the past four years (Volumes 3 to 6, inclusive) and for doing so with flair, such helpful enthusiasm and grace.

Additionally, we are almost at the point of a complete transition to the new Editorial team — a transition that commenced at the end of 2013 and which will be complete with the publication of Volume 7(2) later this year. The 'old guard' of Alan Lincoln (our Founding Editor), Brian Bloch, Laurie Miller-Patterson, Mary Rowe, Tom Sebok and myself have warmly welcomed the 'new guard' of Howard Gadlin, Cynthia Joyce, Samantha Levine-Finley, Ennis McCrery and Sandra Morrison. To our brilliant replacements we say this: may you all have as much enrichment, stimulation, exhilaration, and pride in producing the *JIOA* as we — colleagues now firm friends — have done!

Brian Bloch   **Alan Lincoln**   **Laurie Miller-Patterson**

David Miller   **Mary Rowe**   **Tom Sebok**

See you in Denver!

David Miller

Interview with a Pioneer: Alan Lincoln, Founding Editor of the Journal of the International Ombudsman Association (JIOA)

TOM SEBOK
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ABSTRACT

As the Founding Editor of the *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association (JIOA),* Alan Lincoln has made a significant and lasting contribution to the International Ombudsman Association and to the organizational Ombudsman profession. This article provides a brief overview of Lincoln's personal and professional life, describes his involvement in the origins of JIOA, challenges and key decisions along the way, sources of satisfaction for him in this effort, his current view of the journal, and activities in his post-retirement life.

TOM SEBOK

Tom Sebok is Director of the University of Colorado Boulder Ombuds Office. He was Associate Editor for the Journal of the International Ombudsman Association and was Secretary on the Board of Directors of the International Ombudsman Association. He helped teach the IOA course, Foundations of Organizational Ombudsman Practice and chaired a task force which developed a system to classify the issues with which organizational Ombuds assist constituents. Tom is the author of many publications on Ombuds practice and he has presented on those topics at numerous conferences. He helped create the first restorative justice program in the U.S. in higher education and holds a Master's degree from the University of Delaware.

KEY WORDS

Ombudsman, Alan Lincoln, Founding Editor, Journal, JIOA

Interview with a Pioneer: Alan Lincoln, Founding Editor of the *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association (JIOA)*

Early in his career Alan Lincoln held academic positions at Virginia Tech, American University, and the University of New Hampshire. In 1977 he took what he expected to be a one-year appointment at the University of Massachusetts Lowell and wound up staying for 32 years. According to his *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association (JIOA) Inaugural Edition* "Biographical Statement," Lincoln served as Special Assistant to the Graduate Dean at the University of Massachusetts Lowell and was on the Institutional Review Board for human subject research. He has published numerous articles and three books on crime and violence, and had previous experience editing the Journal of Library and Archival Security. In 2001, after becoming the first Ombuds at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, he also served on the editorial board of the *Journal of the California Caucus of College and University Ombuds* and on The Ombudsman Association (TOA) Research Committee (Lincoln, 2008).

REFLECTIONS ON CAREER AND FAMILY INFLUENCE

In a telephone interview in October of 2013, Lincoln told the author that his background in social psychology and sociology was "a perfect blend" for him as an Ombuds. He understood individual behavior and social influences on it through the lens of social psychology. And, as a sociologist he understood how systems work and don't work. Upon becoming an Ombuds he needed to learn to integrate the University and College Ombuds Association (UCOA) Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice into the work. Lincoln explained that some of this was accomplished through UCOA training, some through ongoing experience and much came from the guidance of other Ombuds. But, he felt fortunate to start with this background.

Lincoln grew up in Bangor, Maine in the 1950's and 1960's. As he revealed in the biographical statement accompanying his contribution to the spring 2013 *JIOA* (Creative Edition), "I was part of the fairly large and vibrant Jewish community. Life was OK. I could play basketball at the YMCA, Jewish doctors had been granted hospital privileges, and neighborhoods were becoming more diverse. Reminding us of earlier times when Jews could not be buried within many city limits, we still had to play golf out of town." He added, "I was fortunate that my parents modeled and I was taught tolerance. Table talk often turned to the dangers of intolerance and the role of the individual in social remedies." Finally, he said, "As an Ombuds and social scientist I still notice barriers, the frustrations they cause, and how people attempt to maneuver through these barriers and boundaries" (Lincoln, 2013). He added later, "being denied access to resources continues to be a problem for many and I am delighted when we, as Ombuds, can ease this journey."

ORIGINS OF JIOA

When TOA and UCOA merged in 2005, it occurred to Lincoln that this might be an opportunity to create a new journal - one consistent with IOA Standards of Practice. Although he had only been an Ombuds for five or six years, he had experience on the editorial board of another Ombuds journal. And, he had been a member of many other associations, including the American Psychological Association, the American Sociological Association, and various criminal justice professional organizations. It occurred to him that, "We needed something scholarly; something that focused a little more from a scientific or empirical standpoint on what we do and how we do it, what our issues

are…and to start to study the profession the way other professions have been studied." Lincoln also thought the diversity of backgrounds among organizational Ombudsmen – especially in contrast to most other professions – was fascinating. "Members of every other profession (e.g., dentists, lawyers, etc.) all come from and progress through a very rigid preparation, education, and training and we come from all over the place. There's a whole field of the 'sociology of occupations' and we're as interesting as any of them - and in some cases even more so." As he saw it, questions of "who we are," "what we do," and "how effective we are" were all questions that were open for discussion and he thought the membership could provide some good answers. "The people working in the field knew best. And whether it was from their experiences - observational research or something a little more systematic – a journal would "bring the discipline several steps forward…"

THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE AND THE FIRST IOA CONFERENCE

Lincoln approached the Communications Committee with the idea of starting a journal. He recalls hearing the suggestion that the first annual conference — scheduled to occur in La Jolla, CA in April 2006 — would be an ideal opportunity to find out whether there was interest among other IOA members in starting a journal. Lincoln agreed. At the conference, he sat at a table near the exhibitors with a sign saying simply: "Journal" inviting attendees who might be interested to discuss the idea with him. And there was a round-table discussion at a meal involving 15 and 20 people who expressed interest. Lincoln still remembers some of the questions the group initially discussed:

- "Why and how would we do this?"
- "How do we contact publishers?"
- "How much will it cost?"
- "How much work will it be?"

HARD COPY OR ELECTRONIC?

Soon after the conference, those who had expressed interest were contacted again. He recalled that Wendell Jones (former Ombudsman from Sandia National Labs) suggested an electronic publication format. But, Lincoln said, "There was some concern about whether it was a "real" journal if it was online." At that time Lincoln was still reading 'hard copy' journals only. "We were used to holding something in our hands . . . bound, nice logo on the cover… you could put it on a shelf." Looking back, Lincoln recalled, "Deciding about the format was probably the biggest challenge. We didn't realize how much flexibility we'd have with an online journal." Lincoln spoke with a few publishers and learned, "We were just on the borderline of the size of membership the publishers needed (for a 'hard copy' journal)." As he recalls, "I wasn't getting a lot of encouragement from publishers. It was a lot of work (proposals, estimates of membership and cost). It would've cost members between $20 and $75 per year to publish a hard copy journal." By contrast, the cost of an online journal (involving mostly volunteer labor) "… was "almost nothing." In hindsight, the decision to publish electronically looks like a very wise one. Sounding amazed, Lincoln commented, "We made corrections *after* things had gone to press! When you have good people working on it, it could happen overnight. We weren't aware of the subtle advantages at that point. And, PMA (IOA's association management company) was able to get the journal out in a timely way and learned along with us."

THE INAUGURAL JOURNAL

The Inaugural *JIOA* was published in 2008. It was a respectable 72 pages long and included three articles, three columns, a book review, biographies of the authors, and, of course, an editorial by Lincoln. In the editorial, he presented some of the potential benefits of the new journal:

> "We believe that this new journal will be beneficial to the membership and to our relatively new profession. Most professional associations have an avenue to disseminate scholarly information for and about the profession. We need to continuously understand, define and clarify the role and function of the professional organizational Ombuds. A professional journal will help us and others understand who we are and what we do. We need to foster recognition that what we do for our agencies, corporations, colleges and universities is valuable and worthy of study." He further elaborated, "…we can … study and be studied to understand what works, what doesn't work, what our options are, how social, technical and legal changes may impact us, the profile and career development of Ombuds professionals, and so on. Scholars and practitioners outside of our profession have an interest in what we do and how we do it. A scholarly journal can facilitate a greater interest in Ombudsing, enhance our professional standing, and serve to give us a better understanding of our dynamic roles. The journal also will allow IOA members, other Ombuds, and other professionals to reach out to their colleagues with their ideas, findings, recommendations for best practices, and engage in ongoing discussions of critical issues" (Lincoln, 2008).

CHALLENGES

Lincoln recalled, "I thought it would be a challenge to develop an editorial board but it was not. We put out a call for volunteers and accepted all those who expressed an interest." But, with only an editor and two associate editors at the time, Lincoln recalls, "We didn't want to be in the position of judging people's credentials, qualifications, and interest. So, we took everybody on and decided that as we sent out papers for review we would be able to determine who responds, who responds well, and then a year or two down the road we could thank people for their service or thank people and encourage them to stay on hope they stayed on. There were 17 people we called the 'Editorial Board' who promised to be available to review articles. Not all did but most did. And a number of them are still involved today."

Neil Milner (former Ombudsman at the University of Hawaii), agreed to serve as book reviewer, and, according to Lincoln, "… got us on the path" but he soon found himself in transition (out of the profession) and, according to Lincoln, it was difficult to find someone else to review books. Brian Bloch (longtime Ombudsman at ISKCONResolve and Ombudsman with the Special Trustee for American Indians in the Department of the Interior) did provide a review in the Inaugural Issue. But, Lincoln says the book reviewer role is one he would like to see *JIOA* resume because he believes it fits in well with a scholarly journal.

Another challenge Lincoln believes *JIOA* will continue to face is, "… staying in touch with the changing needs of the membership and, to make sure we continue to get quality submissions. He also suggested that, although he recognizes they are incredibly busy, it would be helpful for the IOA Board to specify a few questions or areas about which it would like to encourage research on a regular (e.g., annual) basis.

Finally, he would like to see the editorial board do more outreach to academic departments in colleges and universities with a natural interest in conflict management or conflict resolution to encourage additional research by non-Ombuds about what Ombuds do. In fact, Lincoln suggested that *JIOA* is probably now a "legitimate enough avenue" for publication by assistant professors pursuing tenure because it has been in existence for seven years now, there are some recognizable names who have already published there, and it's online, which means that every major academic library is likely to have access to it."

SOURCES OF SATISFACTION

When asked about what he found most satisfying about the experience of serving as *JIOA's* Founding Editor, Lincoln said, "Being able to contribute and leave something lasting to my new profession has been very, very gratifying. And I think we emphatically can now say it's sustainable." He also recalled that he didn't know many people when he started pursuing *JIOA*. "I'd been to a few of UCOA conferences and knew some (Ombuds) in New England. So it really helped when Mary Rowe (longtime MIT Ombudsperson) and Tom Sebok joined as Associate Editors. "They had been in the profession for a longer period of time, had been writing, and were more well-known than I was at the time. It may have caused more interest among the membership and then the quality of the journal took over and people continued to read it."

CURRENT VIEW OF JIOA

When asked about how he views the *JIOA* now, his immediate response was, "The quality has improved. The breadth of coverage and the breadth of the editorial board has grown with better coverage of the sectors and both local and international representation." He noted that more unsolicited articles are being submitted now which he sees as an indication of growing interest among the membership in contributing to the journal.

POST-RETIREMENT ACTIVITIES

Lincoln retired from the University of Massachusetts Lowell as Professor Emeritus of Criminal Justice and Criminology in 2009. After publishing the first two issues he turned over the Editor responsibilities to David Miller (Ombudsman for the Global Fund). But Lincoln has remained an active member of the *JIOA* Editorial Board and continued to contribute as an author. He is easing into retirement slowly with selected Ombuds influenced work. He served as a Fulbright Specialist in Ghana collaborating with administrators, staff and students at Ashesi University as they revised their policies including student judiciary, sexual harassment, and research ethics. Lincoln stated that his work and experience as an Ombuds which often involved review, interpretation and consideration of the intended and unintended impact of policy made the task manageable. He followed this experience by serving as an evaluator/reviewer for a new federal program to bring 500 young African leaders to the U.S. Most recently, his creative writing contribution to the 2013 "Creative Issue" is a called "The Suit" [IOA Journal Volume 6, Issue 1 (The Creative Issue)]. Lincoln described this writing as "…not just a fantasy piece of a would-be soul artist struggling for acceptance, but a reminder of how music has and will continue to bring people together" (Lincoln, 2013). Not unlike the character he created in "The Suit," his contributions to the *JIOA* "will continue to bring people together." As the Founding Editor of *JIOA* he created a vehicle to help push the boundaries of knowledge for current and future organizational Ombudsmen. For that, Lincoln deserves enormous appreciation from every organizational Ombudsman and from everyone aspiring to become, write about, or research the field. As a result of this lasting contribution, he is, without a doubt, a pioneer in the organizational Ombudsman profession.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

ENDNOTES

Lincoln, A., Journal Development, *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association,* Volume 1, Number 1, 2008, 63.

Lincoln, A., The Suit, *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association,* Volume 6, Issue 1 (the Creative Edition), 2013, 33-34.

Courage in Ombuds Work

Cynthia M. Joyce

Ombuds face many challenges in our work that draw on our courage. This article seeks to highlight the need for courage in Ombuds work and to propose a way of thinking about the opportunities we have to display courage with our visitors, with supervisors and administrators, and with our organizations, as well as to protect our offices and address concerns about the International Ombudsman Association (IOA). My interest in this subject has been sparked by several serious challenges to my office's confidentiality, although I share other anecdotes about situations that have called on my courage. In addition to numerous conversations over the years with colleagues about courage, I also had contact with four Ombuds who responded to my query on the IOA Discussion List seeking examples of Ombuds courage.

WHAT IS COURAGE?
Courage means acting despite fear, or, from Merriam-Webster.com:

> the ability to do something that you know is difficult or dangerous; the mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear or difficulty.

Ira Chaleff is an executive coach who has studied followers. His book *The Courageous Follower* (2009) offers a number of insights relevant to Ombuds work, since Ombuds typically do not have the power to make decisions. He states, "Courage implies risk. If there is no risk, courage is not needed…Courage requires a willingness to consciously raise our level of risk, at least in the short term" (2009, p. 20). *New York Times* columnist Charles Blow quotes Nelson Mandela: "Courage [is] not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it" (2013).

For Ombuds, fear might be of the unknown, professional fear, or personal fear. Fear of the unknown, which our visitors frequently experience, is the worry that we do not know what might happen if we take action, we do not know if we will be able to handle what happens mentally or emotionally, and what happens might be worse than what we do know, or the status quo. Professional fear includes possible damage to our own or our office's credibility and reputation, or, in a worst case scenario, loss of our job. Personal fear includes fear of embarrassment, fear of pain, and fear of isolation and loneliness. Most people want to be liked by others, and taking courageous action can risk our relationships with others.

Despite the risks and fear, we need to keep in mind that, as Ombuds, we serve as role models to our institutions for ethical and courageous behavior. As one Ombuds put it, "Behaving the way we would wish to be seen behaving is such a useful mantra." In Ombuds work, however, courage alone is not enough, but must be tempered with other characteristics such as patience and wisdom. We need to understand and respect our organizations as we figure out when and how and with whom it is best to act. We need to balance the courage to act with knowledge, experience, and the optimism that things will improve with time.

COURAGE WITH VISITORS

We express courage with our visitors every day as we listen to them tell their difficult stories and express strong emotions. In addition to this profound display of courage, we offer difficult feedback to visitors and provide reality checks.

It requires courage for an Ombuds to provide useful, but possibly upsetting, feedback to a visitor. Of course, how we do this, including the language we use and the timing given the development of our relationship with the visitor, makes a huge difference in how these conversations go. I had one visitor who appeared very depressed in meetings with me as he discussed his frustration about not being given opportunities to advance in his work place. He seemed to lack energy and expressed feelings of hopelessness. I wondered if the visitor's affect was influencing departmental decisions and decided to summon the courage to share with the visitor how he appeared. The visitor was very surprised that someone could tell how he was feeling, and he ended up being admitted to a psychiatric program within a week.

As difficult as it is to offer feedback to visitors in this kind of situation, the Ombuds may be the only one to do so. The Ombuds risks alienating the visitor, but the information still may be of great value to him/her. A notable exception to this can be offering feedback to visitors whom you believe may have a mental health problem. These visitors may not be able to perceive the feedback in the way it is intended but may see it colored by their own issues and be even more inclined to respond badly. In these cases, it may be effective to try offering the feedback in a very gentle way, to choose not to give feedback at all, or to refer the visitor to other resources that might be able to help, such as counseling.

Less personal but sometimes no less challenging is summoning the courage to give a visitor a reality check, to let him or her know that his/her expectations for resolution are unrealistic given the organization, environment, policies and laws. For example, a visitor may be deeply offended by the behavior of an administrator and want the person fired. Given the particular behavior and possible policy violation, this sanction may be highly unlikely. It is important to tell the visitor this information, but doing so risks damaging the Ombuds/visitor relationship.

COURAGE WITH SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Several types of interactions with supervisors, managers, administrators, and/or human resource staff can draw on an Ombuds' courage, including calling others about a conflict, encouraging resolution of unaddressed problems, and giving unwelcome news.

Often, Ombuds are asked by visitors to call someone involved in the situation, when the person to be contacted is not expecting the call. Due to frequent misunderstandings about the role of the Ombuds, the person called may be startled, frightened, angry, defensive, or even overwhelmed. It can take courage to make these calls and fortitude to cope with the response, explain the Ombuds role, and prepare the person to discuss the issue at hand and work collaboratively to resolve it.

One of the functions of an Ombuds office that takes courage is to give others the courage to do what they know they need to do but have, to date, successfully avoided doing. For example, an Ombuds may hear concerns about an employee's behavior. If given permission to contact the supervisor, the Ombuds may then hear that the employee has exhibited problematic behavior for years, but that no one has addressed this problem. (One of the responses may be, "We'll just wait until he/she retires.") This situation may call on the courage of the Ombuds to give the supervisor feedback about how the situation has been handled and to help the supervisor realize that, if unaddressed, this problem will continue.

Another kind of situation that can draw on an Ombuds' courage is raising an issue with supervisors, managers, or administrators, when it is clear that this will be unwelcome. In one example, I heard a large number of concerns about a new director and became concerned about the stability of the area. The administrator in charge, who was very protective of the new director, did not believe there was a problem and was not receptive to my initial concerns. The problem escalated, and I visited the administrator again to reiterate the concerns, again with a negative response. Unfortunately, the problem escalated and was covered by the media. Eventually, the director resigned.

COURAGE WITH OUR ORGANIZATIONS

Another responsibility that calls on the courage of an Ombuds is the identification of trends in our organizations, such as an abusive or bullying administrator or a new policy that is not working. Especially when the issue is contentious and/or the organization is trying to ignore it, it can take a lot of courage for an Ombuds to raise concerns. It is even more difficult when Ombuds know that sometimes we are blamed for being the messenger; occasionally, there even can be the implication that, by speaking about the problem, the Ombuds has caused it.

Once the Ombuds has decided to raise an issue, he/she must decide with whom to talk about the problem, when and how to raise the issue, when and how to follow up, and what to do if the person contacted does not respond or responds negatively. Chaleff (2009) offers numerous scripts throughout *The Courageous Follower* for respectful but clear ways to raise issues with leaders. Another resource is Mary Gentile's book , G*iving Voice to Values* (2010). Gentile, a consultant specializing in values-driven leadership, offers approaches to speaking up about values within organizations and describes a number of ways of thinking strategically about how to raise concerns, including analyzing the organizational culture, the styles of key individuals, and what has worked in the past.

If an Ombuds has raised an issue with an organization's leadership but no action has been taken, it can be challenging to decide when to revisit the problem, when to raise it with someone higher in the hierarchy, and when to be patient. There is a balance between being assertive about an issue and alienating the people with whom you have discussed the problem. It takes judgment to determine when to give feedback and patience to wait to see if there will be a response. In a large, slow-moving organization, it can take years for a needed change to happen. This includes time for decision makers to process the Ombuds concern, to hear related concerns from other sources, possibly to see a change in administration or a change in context, to decide how to handle a situation, and to summon the courage to start the process of taking action.

Chaleff (2009) writes extensively about the need to balance understanding and respecting the culture of an organization with challenging the culture, and about the importance of not allowing personal values to be overwhelmed by the values of the organization.

> *A follower's ability to remain his own person while bonding with the group is the same ability that allows a follower to challenge the group or its leaders when the need to do so arises. Followers who successfully influence a group by modeling other behaviors in a nonconfrontational mode establish their integrity and earn the group's respect. They are in a strong position to challenge the group if that is needed at a future point.* (Chaleff, 2009, p. 50-51)

For example, I found as a new Ombuds that sometimes organizational policies were being implemented to the letter, but the outcome was not necessarily kind to the individual. I spoke up about the importance of kindness, which is a value that resonated with my organization, and people responded with surprise and appreciation.

One opportunity to demonstrate courage with our organizations is to write about significant organizational issues in an annual report that may be publicly accessible (at least to members of the organization). One ombuds who contacted me described writing annual reports over a period of several years that discussed serious internal problems facing the organization. Saying the "unsayable" in annual reports may foster open discussion of issues and of options for resolution and may strengthen respect for the ombuds role. In this instance, in the short term, the ombuds was perceived to be a critic of respected and admired colleagues, risked the loss of friendships and collaborative relationships, and faced the possibility of legal action. In the long run, having the courage to address serious organizational issues led to the ombuds being seen as a reliable, constructive presence, whose concerns for organizational welfare became the basis for development of a new organizational culture. Eventually, every one of the ombud's recommendations were implemented by new management.

COURAGE TO PROTECT AN OMBUDS OFFICE

Perhaps the most obviously profound opportunity to draw on our courage is when we need to stand up for our offices' confidentiality, neutrality, informality, and independence . A challenge to the ability of an Ombuds office to follow IOA Standards of Practice not only affects the individual Ombuds in the office at the time, but also affects the future ability of the office to effectively serve the organization.

Many organizations have a deep ambivalence about their Ombuds offices. The value of the office as a resource and problem-solver is weighed against the discomfort of knowing that an Ombuds receives information about issues that the broader organization may not be aware of, especially issues that could put the organization at risk. Although there are steps that may be able to reduce this ambivalence, such as education about the Ombuds profession and the IOA Standards of Practice and building relationships with key decision makers with an emphasis on shared goals, the ambivalence remains.

In addition to this ambivalence, there are different stresses on Ombuds offices across sectors. For example, changes in federal laws or the interpretation of laws may affect different sectors in different ways. In the academic sector, Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, which guarantees equal treatment of men and women in educational institutions, has been interpreted as requiring academic Ombuds to report cases involving sexual harassment. Likewise, the Clery Act requires colleges and universities to report crimes and has been interpreted as requiring academic Ombuds to report criminal activities. As a result of changes like these, organizations may try to limit an Ombuds' ability to adhere to the Standards of Practice. A monumental challenge for an Ombuds is to decide how to respond to these situations.

Albert Hirschman, a well-known economist, described a way of thinking about responses to organizational decline in his classic book *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (1970). The two main options members of an organization can pursue when things are going wrong are exit, or leaving the organization, and voice, or speaking up about the problem. Loyalty, or attachment to an organization, makes exit less likely and voice more likely, because there is more incentive to try to improve the situation. However, having an exit strategy gives more power to voice. The organization's leaders may listen and take the speaker more seriously if it is clear that the speaker may exercise the option to exit. As Chaleff states:

> *Although moral action does not always require leaving a group or organization, it always implies the potential of leaving if the offending situation is not corrected…* (Chaleff, 2009, p. 151)

The concepts of exit and voice can clarify the options for Ombuds who face pressure to limit their adherence to the Standards of Practice. Ombuds can accept the directive from their organizations and make the corresponding changes in practice. They also can choose to resist through voice or exit. Many Ombuds use voice, marshaling information and arguments to present to decision makers. Gentile (2010) offers a number of strategies for speaking effectively about values (such as the Standards of Practice). Sometimes organizational decision makers accept the Ombuds' arguments and allow the office to continue to function in compliance with the Standards of Practice. Sometimes

creative solutions are possible. For example, I have been able to avert two challenges to my office's adherence to the Standards of Practice, once by agreeing to complete training by our local rape victim advocacy organization and once by agreeing to pursue certification through the Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner program.

What if organizational leaders insist on limitations to the Ombuds' adherence to the Standards of Practice? Some Ombuds then accept the imposed limitations and change their practices. Some state their willingness to use exit as a strategy, by saying they will no longer serve in their roles if the integrity of the office is jeopardized. This indicates that they are prepared to give up work that is important to them, give up their salaries and benefits, negatively affect their families, and possibly move in order to obtain another position. For those of us committed to remaining in the field, it is obvious that open Ombuds positions are relatively rare, and there is tremendous competition for them, so we may not be able to serve as an Ombuds in the future. It is a major sacrifice to say to organizational leaders that protecting the integrity of the office is so important that we will no longer continue in our role and possibly even our profession if the office is not allowed to adhere to the Standards of Practice. We are sending a large signal when we do this, which can lead organizational leaders to respond differently than they otherwise would. Chaleff writes:

> The implicit power to withdraw support is one of the powers that permits a follower to influence events. It is always present and is usually unstated…Not only must we tell leaders how we feel, but we must tell them how intensely we feel about issues that concern us…The warning of impending resignation, if not used lightly, is one of the legitimate ways to voice the depth of our concern. If we are viewed as a loyal follower, the fact that we would consider leaving over the issue strengthens the impact of what we are saying….If we communicate that the potential consequences…include our resignation, we may elevate an issue so it is viewed with sufficient gravity for change to occur. (2009, p. 164-165)

Chaleff encourages consultation with others before taking the step of indicating a readiness to resign, to get some perspective and to make sure our own blind spots (such as issues with authority, failing to see the larger picture, emotional response, overreacting) are not unduly influencing us. He also encourages taking steps in advance to minimize the negative impact of leaving an organization, such as savings, establishing a line of credit, agreement with a spouse or partner that each will support the other if either must leave his/her employment, taking steps to be visible in the field and attractive for hiring (such as continued professional development or becoming an IOA Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner), and/or negotiating a contract with terms of severance. Gentile reinforces the importance of preparing for possible career-ending risks:

> By anticipating or normalizing the idea that we will have to take risks — even career-threatening ones — in service of our values at some point in our work lives, we expand our vision of what degree of freedom we have in our decision making. The explicit decision to prepare for that eventuality…again makes this kind of choice both easier to imagine and more practical to enact. This is not to say that such a choice will never be painless but, rather, that looking at such choices in this way — as normal and survivable — makes them seem possible. (2010, p. 78-79)

In some situations in which an Ombuds office's integrity is challenged, the Ombuds actually leaves. For many Ombuds, this is the ultimate in displaying courage in our work. Most of the examples that practicing Ombuds shared with me related to leaving an Ombuds position or being willing to leave a position because of threats to confidentiality. Two Ombuds spoke with me about situations in which their organizational leaders decided not to allow them to follow IOA Standards of Practice. In both cases, the Ombuds ended up leaving their jobs and had to search for new positions. Both ended up ultimately landing new positions but had to move for these new jobs. In one of these cases, the Ombuds was ordered to reveal the identity of visitors who complained about the organization and was told that if he refused, the office would be reconfigured and would no longer be compliant with IOA standards. The Ombuds, however, was asked to continue with the title of Ombuds under these new circumstances. This Ombuds pointed out a bind for Ombuds in this type of situation: if you stand up for your office and the profession, you may lose your job; if you comply with your organization's requirements that violate IOA Standards of Practice and this becomes known to others, your reputation will be damaged and you may not be able to get another job as an Ombuds.

One Ombuds was told by the attorney representing his organization that he had to provide information for an investigation resulting from a former visitor's formal complaint. The Ombuds refused and took the risk of writing an extensive memo challenging the attorney's interpretation of the relevant laws and IOA Standards of Practice.

One Ombuds was told during an interview for a new Ombuds position that, if he took the job, he would be required to report sexual harassment cases. The Ombuds refused but ended up being offered the job anyway, possibly because he stood up for the IOA Standards of Practice.

As another Ombuds said,

> Living our Standards means there are lines we should not cross or be pressured to bend, operationally. In the situations described…I was ready to lose the job rather than compromise on the principles upon which the job is predicated. What surprises me is how often I have had to bring this readiness to mind. I don't think I am a rabid evangelical, blinded by ardour for our IOA Principles and Standards (indeed, I have problems with some of them)….But this is a role in which employment security has often seemed like a distant dream!

COURAGE TO ADDRESS CONCERNS ABOUT IOA

IOA provides a critical service for organizational Ombuds by codifying the Standards of Practice and promoting adherence to these values through different membership categories and professional certification. However, there can be conflict between IOA and members when Ombuds are told by their organizations that they are not permitted to comply with IOA standards. One academic Ombuds described taking multiple steps to convince her organization to preserve Ombuds confidentiality in cases involving sexual harassment, without success. If the Ombuds decides to continue in her role, there will probably be changes to her IOA membership, with consequences for her voting privileges, and changes to her status with the Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner program. The Ombuds perceives this as deeply unfair, and she has drawn on her courage to speak to IOA about this situation.

WHAT CAN HELP OMBUDS BE COURAGEOUS?

Courage helps us develop our roles as Ombuds to their fullest and can fundamentally change how we as individuals and our offices as resources are perceived in our organizations. A number of factors can help us as we display courage in our work.

- Recognize the importance of displaying courage. Gentile writes:

    For many, the most powerful "courage enabler" is the recognition of what truly is at stake. We can do almost anything in the service of a purpose that is important enough because it is in those instances that we can recognize the true power and influence of our choices…Thus, it seems that one way to enable courage is to know that not *acting is untenable. The other is to believe that by acting, you can have a positive impact…courage is available to all of us.* (2010, p. 220)

- Anticipate and prepare for the need for courage. Gentile (2010) writes about the critical importance of normalizing opportunities for voicing values in organizations and preparing for these opportunities in advance. Clearly, Ombuds face frequent opportunities to display courage in our work, and the more we can identify these, prepare for them by developing plans and scripts, and learn from our mistakes, the better we will be able to rise to these challenges. One approach Gentile suggests is to develop a "self-story" of who we are and who we want to be, our personal goals, our professional goals, and our goals for our organization, and to align this self-story with the opportunities to display courage. She also states:

    If we approach our…careers with the expectation that we will face values conflicts and have anticipated some of the most common types in our intended [profession], not only can we minimize the disabling effect of surprise, but also we will likely find ourselves framing attempts to speak about these issues in a less alarmist or emotional manner and more as a matter of course. Such an approach can have the effect of normalizing and defusing the topic for ourselves as well as for the individuals with whom we hope to discuss it. (2010, p. 76)

    My experience has been that, as I have faced more challenges to my office's integrity, my response has become less emotional and more matter of fact, and also less surprising to decision makers in my organization. This has made finding win-win solutions more likely.

- Get support from IOA. The IOA Board and committees, resources such as the *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association* and the IOA newsletter *The Independent Voice,* and conferences and other professional development opportunities all can provide information and support to members facing situations that call for courage. However, I believe we need more help from IOA when Ombuds face serious challenges. One approach would be to continue to develop task forces to explore and address new concerns that affect all organizational Ombuds or Ombuds in different sectors, which could lead to clarification of conflicts between the Standards of Practice and legal obligations, revisions of the Standards of Practice, and re-evaluation of IOA membership categories.

- Encourage more discussion and research. More open conversations at IOA conferences and other venues about courage in Ombuds work will enable us to better understand the challenges Ombuds face. Further investigation of this topic also would be invaluable. Important questions that could be addressed include how courage plays out in different sectors, how courage is different for solo compared with group practitioners, and how courage in Ombuds work differs from courage displayed in other professions.
- Support our Ombuds colleagues. One Ombuds who contributed his stories of courage emphasizes the importance of this. Too often, we are critical of one another, rather than recognizing that we are from different sectors and different organizations and have different personalities, life circumstances, and backgrounds. We need to support one another and help one another to be as courageous as possible. We also need to be supportive of colleagues who decide that they cannot display courage in certain situations.
- Get support from other colleagues. An Ombuds also pointed out the need for support from non-Ombuds colleagues within our organizations, who can be sounding boards and allies.
- Get support from our institutions. One Ombuds pointed out that organizational administrators need to demonstrate the courage to support adherence to the Standards of Practice for their Ombuds offices, rather than viewing the Standards as buffet options from which they can pick and choose. This is especially important for new Ombuds offices.
- Retain independent legal counsel. When we are in disagreement with our organizations, consulting legal counsel may provide advice and support.

CONCLUSION

Greater clarity about the role of courage in Ombuds work may help Ombuds display courage when it is needed. Our courage is often concealed by our confidentiality, which makes it even more important to discuss. Because our colleagues display courage behind closed doors, we may need to look beyond the boundaries of our profession for role models as we seek to become more courageous.

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Prepared to be Valuable: Positioning Ombuds Programs

ANDREA SCHENCK AND JOHN W. ZINSSER

ABSTRACT

The status and privileges conferred on organizational Ombuds programs — allowing Ombuds to work differently in the organization than all others — forge the additional responsibility for programs to deliver and demonstrate actual value.

Organizational Ombuds, expert in reframing communications, stand to benefit from a new conversation about Ombuds program sustainability. Organizational Ombuds and host organizations wish to account for the value Ombuds programs' presence and activities generate. This long-standing interest promulgated qualitative (usefulness) and quantitative (return on investment) efforts. Despite this debate, few have enacted the leading practice to fully measure and properly communicate their programs' contributions and value.

The authors' core thesis asserts an expanded paradigm will allow programs, host organizations, and the public to better understand how the contributions programs make can be acknowledged and recognized as value additions. Optimally, these new patterns will stimulate higher usage rates, promote existent programs' sustainability, and increase the introduction of new programs.

KEY WORDS

Ombuds program, integration, contribution, value

INTRODUCTION

"For every major organization to have an Organizational Ombudsman Office" is the guiding principle of the International Ombudsman Association's newly announced (February 11, 2014) strategic plan. This vast goal, one which the authors fully endorse, becomes a reality only when the field changes how it both envisions and values itself.

Similar to the typical case brought to an Ombuds, this article is about two or three inter-related issues. And, like the typical case, what matters is that the process generates sound options and choices which, when chosen and enacted, lead to a better future.

This article's purpose is to stimulate discussion, advance new actions, and consolidate a lexicon for the broadly defined arena of organizational Ombuds program value. It outlines how a program can responsibly position[1] itself so both the program and its organization recognize the program's contributions as 'value.'

The authors propose that the Ombuds program, which is aligned, embedded and integrated, within its organization increases potential users' (including management) program awareness, understanding and therefore trust, resulting in higher usage and therefore value.

This is not a pursuit of equations aimed at quickly measuring program cost effectiveness, or return on investment (ROI). (With attention to particular design and processes, each is possible without violating or diminishing independence or confidentiality.) Value addition requires a foundational approach, to enable the responsible execution of data collection activities and equations. For this, the authors promote an expanded paradigm; one that extends from the typical and primarily Ombuds-centric, individual level perspective to a more programmatic effort, which generates a systems level perspective.[2] Next, designing activities for alignment, embedment and integration (AEI) an Ombuds program with its organization will maximize both Ombuds and program contributions. The AEI informed contributions are pre-requisites to adequately determine the full humanistic, economic and organizational[3] value created by Ombuds programs.

The authors assert that when Ombuds AND their organizations engage this new mindset and corresponding activities, they will: Cease to miss opportunities to create value; Ensure program sustainability; Increase the professionalization of Ombudsing; and Speed the growth of the field.

Two long-standing questions drive the authors' encouragement for this change. The first: Why do such a small percentage of potential program users (less than 5 percent in most reported examples and as low as 1 percent, especially in large organizations[4]) seek assistance from Ombuds programs? Given the considerable research-based evidence[5] of growth in work place dis-satisfaction, harassment, discrimination, wrong-doing and more, it seems many more employees would want

to use a program. Certainly there could be instances of low program usage as a consequence of an Ombuds not being a good fit for the organization or an Ombuds' lack of connection, rapport or trust with the members of the organization, due to some other inadequacy. For example, a program could be designed improperly with the Ombuds assigned collateral duty or the position established merely as "window dressing."

The second: What inhibits the ubiquity of organizational Ombuds programs, especially in the corporate setting? Given the ever present and costly work place challenges, why are there not more Ombuds programs coming on-line to address the dominant negative organizational climate.[6]

The intersection of these questions points to the reality — organizational Ombuds programs are still not well understood, either for what they offer individuals or organizations. This appears as true as it did 15 years ago when considered by Marsha Wagner.[7] Consequently, few leaders — people committed to advancing their organizations from point A to point B — decide to implement Ombuds programs. Since few programs have documented usage rates that exceed four percent[8] of the potential user population and even fewer programs measure and publicly declare their contributions and full value, how could leaders know, appreciate or be motivated to initiate Ombuds programs?

DEFINING PROGRAMMATIC ALIGNMENT, EMBEDMENT, AND INTEGRATION REQUIRES SHARED UNDERSTANDING[9]

This article's key concepts have not been widely used in the field. To advance meaningful discussion requires shared understanding. When an Ombuds program's activities and the outcome of these activities intentionally connect with and support the host organization's mission, goal and objectives alignment exists. Embedment by contrast is the necessary positioning of the Ombuds program in the organization's existent structures. Integration refers to the myriad network of connections the Ombuds and its program requires with the formal functions and others.

CONTRIBUTION AND VALUE: AN ADVANCING INTEREST

IOA's new strategic plan and vision, which includes, "…demonstrating the effectiveness of the Organizational Ombudsman role to organizational leaders, policy makers, other professionals and associations and the public." provides a valuable stanchion for this article's discussion.

Careful not to confuse the Association with the field, this interest in "demonstrating effectiveness" or "value" to others has not always been universally supported. While several voices (notably Rowe, Zeigenfuss, and Munzenrider[10]) prompted the field to measure activities to create meaningful declarations of "cost-effectiveness" or "usefulness" these encouragements often lead to more deliberation than activity. Harrison presented a concise statement of this debate.[11]

The focus on an Ombuds helping an individual program user dominated the beginnings of the contemporary organizational Ombuds field. Many early Ombuds practitioners became Ombuds by way of social work, teaching, or similar fields with a focus on one-to-one communications. The host organization and especially its leadership while recognized, at times, as stakeholders,[12] were also considered as potentially destabilizing influences on Ombuds' abilities to uphold the four defining characteristics.[13]

This one-to-one emphasis and the one person Ombuds office led to the field's synonymous use of Ombuds and Ombuds program. Though often used interchangeably they do not mean the same. The responsibilities of the *practitioner* and the *program* differ. To ignore the distinction limits the effectiveness and potential of each.[14]

Through the 1980s and '90s advancements in systems became more common. The practice of holding departments accountable for their costs and returns increased, extending even to Ombuds programs. As programs with well-regarded Ombuds, such as Coors and Pace University[15] closed the question of value drew greater notice. The lens, however, remained largely fixed on what an *Ombuds* was doing vis a vis his or her assistance to those contacting the office, while excluding or neglecting how the *program* aligned and contributed to the organization. Harrison described this perspective when he wrote, "With the exception of Robbins's convenience sample (1993), Ombuds research has not reported how disputants evaluate an Ombuds, choosing instead to focus from *the Ombuds perspective* (*authors' emphasis)* on how Ombuds benefit organizations."[16] Despite the synonymous usage of *Ombuds* and *program*, the essential point is that the organization's perspective (meaning the organization as an entity unto itself and not represented by any subset of stakeholders) is absent. This absence of the programmatic and organizational perspectives remains the challenge today.

The debate about the appropriateness of measuring and sharing data on Ombuds programs' contributions continued. Voices such as Buss,[17] Fowlie,[18] Miller,[19] and Zinsser[20] began calling for increased efforts on program evaluation, which could make clear claims on value addition. Yet, only a very few organizations have assessed their program's contributions to estimate value, especially with an actual monetary figure. Even fewer have made such information public. Halliburton, ICANN, Shell, and The World Bank are notable exceptions which have had external parties assay their Ombuds programs and present the findings to the field.

There appears to be continuing interest in the process and models to make legitimate claims of value addition.[21] It is the authors' hope this article will lead Ombuds and their programs as Rowe put it to, "...describe short-term and long-term tangible and intangible contributions in ways that are relevant to their own stakeholders." [22]

EVIDENCE OF PROGRAMATIC NEED FOR AEI

It appears likely that the absence of programmatic AEI contributes to low program usage rates; limited knowledge on the part of leaders and others about their Ombuds programs' contributions and value; and fewer programs.

According to the *OMV Petrom 2013 Survey of Organizational Ombuds Practices* (an informal sample conducted during the annual IOA conference) it seems that individual Ombuds' practices remain focused on how to "craft an elegant — and often unique — resolution to each particular situation..."[23] while neglecting the at least equally important programmatic focus, by which an Ombuds program can contribute to its organization. The survey responses suggested some still do not recognize the value of an organizationally aligned and interconnected program. For example, when asked to rate the quality of executive leadership's support of the Ombuds office, respondents indicated that the Executive Board (15 percent); CFO or Financial officers (14 percent); and other Executives' (23 percent) support was not only not present, but actually not applicable.[24] When asked to rate different areas' attitudes about their program, respondents stated that such related functions as: Compliance (10 percent); HR (7 percent); and Legal (6 percent) were also not applicable. These responses hint that some Ombuds practitioners see themselves as not just 'independent,' but organizationally disconnected.

The Case To Expect More Cases

In her TED Talk *Dare to Disagree*, Margaret Heffernan notes that 85 percent of American and European managers are afraid of what conflict provokes; afraid to get into arguments they are unsure how to manage or believe they would lose.[25] Countless issues and concerns go unraised, costing organizations unquantifiable expense in missed deadlines, failed projects, ill-equipped personnel or faulty products (at best) and massive lawsuits, damaged reputations or bankrupt businesses (at worst). To illustrate, imagine a hypothetical 1,000-person organization, with a management tier of 250. This 85 percent equates to 212 managers, who could be high quality potential users of an Ombuds program. If only half accessed the Ombuds program (106) the usage rate (10 percent) would more than double the widely "accepted" normal rate.

The Ethics Research Center (ERC) 2013 National Business Ethics Survey noted 41 percent of those surveyed observed misconduct in the work place.[26] In 2013, of those who observed misconduct, 37 percent answered they did not report what they saw. Of the 63 percent who did report misconduct, more than one-in-five workers said they experienced retaliation. What does this suggest for Ombuds programs? Returning to the hypothetical organization the 41 percent who observed misconduct equals 410 people. Of these 152 or 37 percent did not report the observed misconduct. A sub group of these non-reporters is especially startling: nearly 20 percent of non-reporters (30 people in the 1,000 people company) wanted to report, *but did not know where to go in the organization.*

Regardless of the reason for not reporting, the math results in 15 percent of the organization as having had reason to access the Ombuds regarding the issue of misconduct alone. Furthermore, of those 410 who observed misconduct, 63 percent reported it and, of that group, 21 percent or 54 people were retaliated against. This is another pool of high-potential Ombuds users in the organization. As these two groups are NOT exclusive, combining these groups means 206 individuals had solid motivations to access the Ombuds. That equals 20 percent of the organization!

If even half this group accessed the program, it would be another "record-setting" Ombuds usage rate of 10 percent. (Note: this percentage only includes issues of misconduct, it does not include the most typical Ombuds program case types such as: compensation or career development.) Given either example, what is the explanation for the typical, reported usage rate of only 1 - 4 percent? The difference suggests a significant number of potential users are for some reason not accessing Ombuds programs.

One additional reference of work place need for Ombuds programs — Gallup's *2013 State of the Global Work place* concludes, "…63 percent of the world's employees have essentially checked out, and an additional 24 percent are acting out their unhappiness and undermining the accomplishments of the 13 percent who are committed to innovation and organizational progress."[27]

Considering these wide ranging topics from engagement, loyalty, and wrong doing, if only 20 percent percent of all the people experiencing just these challenges found their way to the Ombuds program, one could anticipate, at the very least, double digit usage rates to be the norm. But, they are not. The authors contend that it is not because so few employees want help, but because too few are aware, understand or trust Ombuds programs.

Based on the literature, very few programs know or publish the actual percentages of people in the organization who are: 1) **aware** of the Ombuds program; 2) **understand** the program, such that they can differentiate it from the other related functions and communications channels; and therefore 3) **trust**, in advance of need, that the Ombuds is truly independent and confidential, and can actually be of meaningful assistance. The authors know of only one organization that annually queries their entire potential user population on the issues of awareness and understanding and subsequently reports the results to the entire workforce, accompanied by a message of support from the CEO. During interviews for this article and elsewhere, Ombuds have repeatedly stated they would like to do such surveys but do not have the resources or support to do so. Others have explained their organizations are not interested in such information, so they do not pursue it. This in turn expands the Ombuds program's capacity to reach and inform all potential users, as well as help all actual program users.

Whether reading a report issued by the ERC, Gallup, KPMG or any number of other polls or surveys about the work place, the common findings are today's work experience for most is disengaged, unsatisfied, and fearful. This suggests a large population with issues and concerns appropriate for Ombuds programs. Yet they do not use the programs. Why?

It is unreasonable to expect that everyone with an issue would seek help from an Ombuds program. Research shows the challenges of coming forward and seeking help are far greater than generally thought. Help-providers, in particular, can overestimate the likelihood of people seeking help.[28] However, nothing in this literature suggests the Ombuds community or host organizations should be satisfied with usage rates of 1 - 4 percent.

The Case To Expect More Programs

In 1992, the then Ombudsman Association and University and College Ombudsman Association's memberships totaled slightly more than 150. That same year, the Ethics and Compliance Officers Association (ECOA) was founded with 12 total members. This year, IOA has an approximate membership of 850; ECOA's membership equals 1,322. An additional 700 belong to another competing association for a total of approximately 2,000 "qualified" ethics officers.[29] Had the Ombuds community grown at the same rate as the ethics officer community, there would be more than 24,000 IOA members.[30]

Those original 12 members of the ECOA were all in then Fortune 500 organizations. Today, more than 66 percent (330) of the Fortune 500 are represented in ECOA membership. By contrast, IOA's total Fortune 500 representation is no more than 5 percent (25).[31]

Several factors, which this article does not have the space to address, contribute to the comparatively slow growth of organizational Ombuds programs in the Fortune 500. However, the authors believe the primary reason is that too few understand or appreciate the function's benefits. The field has been reluctant to enact the leading practice of programs fully declaring their contributions and value. Consequently, the function remains largely unknown and even less understood.

These inactions have contributed to the constrained growth of the field and the detriment of individual programs. While writing this article, the authors became aware of two corporate programs that were eliminated and one, which was "reduced." Value is not just a corporate issue. Also while writing this article, The University of Colorado Boulder presented its Ombuds program and all the other university departments and programs, with an *Administrative Program Prioritization Self-Study Form* to complete. Comprised of more than 63 questions, the form's introduction explained:

> The University of Colorado Boulder is undertaking a program prioritization initiative to help us make strategic decisions about the prioritization of core academic and administrative resources *in support of our mission*. …The prioritization of administrative programs at CU Boulder is intended to be an objective and *evidence-based* process.
> (*authors' emphasis*)

The *Administrative Program Prioritization Self-Study Form* questions included:
- How does your program align with the University's strategic plan?
- Is it essential that the University offer this service?
- What would be the impact if the University did not offer this service?
- Does your program align with the University's signature areas of research? Consider:
  → Is your program necessary or beneficial for the promotion of research, teaching and outreach;
  → Is your program value-added, although not required, to educate students and enhance their success and/or support other University goals; or
  → Is your program critical to teaching, learning, research and discovery to take place?

These and other questions, demonstrate this organization's interest in how all program activities, including the Ombuds program, align, and contribute to the University's mission.

Conversely, the authors became aware of two programs (one corporate and one NGO) expanded or were considering expansion, during the writing of this article, because the organizations recognized the contributions and how those contributions were value additions to the organization. The International Committee of the Red Cross's Deputy Director General Balthasar Staehelin described the plan to expand their Ombuds function as a "…logical and important step aligned with our strategic 'one global workforce' initiative."

The Case From Other Functions About Value

Ombuds are not alone in the challenge to identify their contributions. *The University Administrative Program Prioritization Self-Study Form* queried all functions. Simple searches reveal dozens of articles attempting to demonstrate the "value," "ROI," or "cost-benefits" of related formal functions such as: Human Resources, Ethics/Compliance, and Employee Assistance Programs. Measurement is an issue of the times. However, those other related, formal functions have better "foot holds" — that is they are better understood and represented in organizations. More organizational leaders are aware of and understand these other functions. Many leaders have staffed these other functions (more than 20 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs have been high level HR managers, for example; none have been Ombuds).

Considering the related field of Human Resources, it is generally accepted that an HR system effects its organization's overall outcomes. Research by Nishii and others puts forth otherwise, "…the effect of HR practices is not likely to be automatic and always as expected; instead, their effect will reside in

the meanings that employees attach to those practices."[32] Accordingly, employee perception, knowledge and belief about an Ombuds program then becomes paramount to a program's capacity and the corresponding value addition.

In 2012, KPMG reported the annual cost of Governance, Risk, and Compliance (GRC) consumes more than 6 percent of an organization's annual revenues. This vastly exceeds the cost of any Ombuds program. Almost two-thirds of respondents to the KPMG study considered GRC "convergence" (bringing GRC into a single systemic unit) a cost, rather than an investment, and only 31 percent said that they were effective at quantifying the benefits of these activities. The GRC codified List of Benefits includes:

- Smarter strategic decision-making
- Effective resource management
- Lowered risk and control costs
- Eliminated silos
- Optimized capital allocations
- Automated workflows
- Minimized duplication of effort
- Lowered vulnerability to attrition
- Reduced insurance premiums[33]

With the exception of automated workflows, Ombuds programs also claim these contributions.

These examples suggest employee attitude and what others in organizations are actively making a case about what they contribute and why they should be valued. Additionally, many of the outcomes parallel Ombuds function contributions. Given that most other functions are more common and therefore more understood, Ombuds programs appear to have more work to ensure organizations can recognize their unique contributions and value. As an Ombuds from a corporate program explained,

> We are called on to do that which is beyond the standard expectation of managing the individual problem on a case by case basis. We are here to aid leaders in thinking and complex problem solving. We are sought out for our opinion on important organizational decisions because of our connection. We are key thought partners to leaders and managers of all levels. This is where our greatest value is.[34]

Greater degrees of AEI are essential to achieve this program's degree of organizational trust and involvement.

CONTRIBUTION AND VALUE ADDITION

Contribution refers to everything the organization gains, everything that happens, intended and unintended, because the Ombuds program exists. Contribution is a way to "bundle" all the activities of the Ombuds *program* and the Ombuds *practitioner,* but also a way to think of the impacts on those organizational members who do not have direct interface with the program, yet are affected by it. Andy O'Donnell, former executive vice president in the Office of the CEO at Baker Hughes, Inc., who was involved in the development of the o3, his company's Ombuds program, described this phenomenon saying, "For employees, knowing the program exists is just as important as using it." This view point exists at the International Committee of the Red Cross as well. The Deputy Director General Balthasar Staehelin, explained, " [The Ombuds program] is an expression of interest in possible problems..." He continued, "[We] are interested in a platform and a space for dialogue for preventative action."

By contrast, value addition is a smaller set. Value addition is what the *organization recognizes and appreciates* as occurring, due to a program's presence and activities. These additions can be both intended and unintended, but the key is the organization's recognition.

AEI Ombuds programs provide greater value addition, as the program and the organization have negotiated the hoped for gains. Jointly created and enacted appropriate processes (data sharing, definition generation) executed under the heading of integration, enable both the program to account for its contributions and then consequently for the organization to acknowledge the value. For example, Eaton's Office of the Ombuds has a global mandate, which continues to expand annually. Business needs, identified through a collaborative communicative process inform the choices regarding where the Eaton program will next provide Ombuds services.[35]

Such an AEI program also connects with other functions. Thus, others can declare the value additions made by the Ombuds program. For example, if because of the Ombuds program, compliance experiences a reduction in the number of hotline calls that do not need investigation, because they did not rise to the legal threshold, compliance could be one to suggest the Ombuds program impacted the situation.

Where a program's contributions exist on the spectrum of "just knowing" value exists to the organization relying on the program as a valued thought partner, depends on the degree of AEI. A program, designed, implemented and operated with a commitment to its alignment, embedment and integration, will be a resource to the entire organization including leadership. The organization and the program will be in healthy dialogue about what is possible and needed from each to the other.

ICRC Ombudsman Reto Meister described this challenge for Ombuds saying:

> If we hide behind the Independence, Neutrality, Informality, and Confidentiality, we are under-exploiting the richness of the relationships and the position. We are not helping others to see the bigger picture; we are not being a good Ombuds if we only focus on resolving individual issues and copings. We must also empower ourselves to take a step beyond,

PREPARING TO ADD VALUE
Becoming Aligned, Embedded and Integrated

Value addition and its measurement depend upon a program's AEI. Opportunities to increase AEI are available to new and established programs alike. Those organizations just beginning to consider a program have the chance to "design-in" AEI. Established programs can enhance their AEI through changing program management activities, with the intent to improve and expand communications, relations and perceptions. For either a new or established program the organization's mission, goals and objectives are the starting point to develop a program's AEI. These elements also inform the value addition measurement criteria. "Where performance is measured, performance improves. Where performance is measured and reported the rate of improvement accelerates."[36]

Intentionality added to this prescription, as the field of visualization has repeatedly demonstrated yields even greater outcomes. Several essential actions which require careful organizational and Ombuds program interface exist, in order to create value. These points, listed in Figure 1, could be considered the antecedents of contribution and value addition. *How* these activities are enacted and achieved establishes the tone and commitment of a program's AEI.

Figure 1

Essential Elements to Position Program for Contribution and Value Addition	
Structural	**Communications &
Information Management**
• Charter or Terms of Reference, which is cross-referenced and congruent with other organization policies
• Program design process aligned with mission, values and culture of the organization
• Program design process conducted utilizing essentials of Ombuds practice: dialogue based, open involvement including volunteers, confidentiality for critical inputs, and broad organizational representation
• Protocols and materials tuned to organizational values, culture, and objectives
• Program governing body established
• AEI informed program database
• Information Specialist position charged to connect the program's knowledge gains with the organization, as appropriate	• Orchestrated, strategic communications plan, including way to address crisis situation
• Intra-net web site page, which updates with new information and engages page-viewers
• External facing web page
• Ombuds referenced and linked on other functions Intra-net pages, materials and policies as appropriate and possible
• Other functions referenced and linked on Ombuds intra-net pages, materials and policies as appropriate and possible
• Regular connection meetings at predetermined and agreed to intervals with executive and management level heads of functional areas — especially those with whom program does not otherwise regularly meet

With these essential elements in place, a foundation exists for programs to engage in the following five activities to support and enhance their contributions.

1. Talk About Value

While an organization identifies the value addition, the Ombuds needs to initiate the dialogue, which will establish what value is possible. So contributions can be fully recognized, Ombuds must communicate with users, potential users, the authorizing environment, and other stakeholders what potential value the program could create. Recognizing contribution as a value addition is more likely when the expectation that it might happen and the framework to appreciate it already exists. This communication occurs optimally as part of the program design and implementation, but can begin at any point. This dialogue should be repeated consistently, as part of a program's introduction and at regular intervals, jointly re-examined with the authorizing environment.

Providing a compilation of potential program value (see Figure 2) and engaging stakeholders in discussions of the organizational goals, as well as what would "evidence" the value addition (i.e. how would they know it was occurred) prepares an organization to both expect contributions and to recognize how the Ombuds program directly or indirectly facilitated these.

Figure 2

Framework of Potential Ombuds Program Value Additions		
Economic	**Organizational**	**Humanistic**
• Expanded productivity • Increased retention • Preserved management time • Enhanced operational efficiency • Advanced individual and team development • Reduced disputing process and outcome costs • Improved reputation/brand protection • Reduced incivility (sabotage/ theft) • Lowered or eliminated insurance costs	• Supplemented programs • Navigated systems • Heightened transparency • Enhanced accountability • Protected and maximized personal responsibility • Increased ethical and compliant behavior • Advanced pre/pro-ventative conflict-posture • Advantaged under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines if wrong doing is proven	• Increased engagement • Strengthened organizational trust • Expanded fairness • Enhanced creativity and risk taking • Augmented individualized-career development • Heightened respect • Improved and preserved working relationships • Reduced incivility (bullying/ mobbing / isolating)

2. Target Current Concerns / Communicate Selected Focus

Whether initiating or refreshing a program, understanding the organizational concerns, which the Ombuds program could impact and describing those as a focal effort for the program, helps users, potential users and the organization to understand why the program exists. A simple statement of "supporting engagement efforts" or "augmenting ethics and compliance capacity" can move the sometimes nebulous program into a more understandable shape. Most programs are designed to receive any work place issue or concern. But, with limited resources, it's advantageous for a program to concentrate its attention (e.g. resources, marketing materials, educational subjects etc.) to the areas of most need.

A program cannot fully function if it operates in a vacuum. Doing so threatens a program's long-term sustainability and limits an Ombuds' capacity to raise or support any recommended systemic change. In the majority of instances, one person's issue is a topic of concern for others. As an Ombuds program has the capacity to hear all types of concerns, proclaiming those of particular interest to the organization writ large is quintessentially an "aligning" activity. Such targets are best defined annually in concert with the organization. The organization's goal and annual objectives offer a starting point.

3. Broaden and Deepen Relationships

When understood, championed and intentionally linked to all the stakeholders, but especially the authorizing environment, a program is not only well supported, but AEI reinforces and sustains program independence and neutrality. Too few programs have been AEI designed for any conclusive research at this time. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests an AEI program generates greater

program awareness, understanding and trust, especially when supported by a governing or oversight body. The governing body serves several purposes including to:

- Support and monitor program's administrative responsibilities
- Consider and define, in conjunction with the principal Ombuds, the program's annual objectives and the degree to which objectives are obtained;
- Review the principal Ombuds' program (not case) management performance
- Augment program communications;
- Identify and enable opportunities for the program to improve integration with the organization; and
- Ensure, where appropriate, the program and its staff practice in accordance with the IOA Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics (SOPCOE).

This cross-functional committee, comprised of seven to eleven members, includes varying organizational levels (including top-tier leadership)and other personal attributes, which are representational. Functional representation from the organization's core activities (e.g. medical staff for healthcare organizations, teaching staff for educational organizations, etc.) not only the related, formal functions (legal, human resources, etc.) is essential. This group, supported and prepared with training is fully knowledgeable about the responsibilities and limitations of organizational Ombuds programs, the SOPCOE, so it can contribute to defining intended and desired impacts.

With a governing body, a program's viability is less likely to be determined by a single person or function. A governing body ensures greater reach via interpersonal networks. This group also provides an "advocate voice" to support the principal Ombuds and the program, with respect to additional resources, e.g. different office locale, or other needs that might need to be "fought" for. Having this body pursue these discussions or needs helps preserve the perception of Ombuds and program neutrality and independence.

This group in no way replaces the essential connection to the President of the University, CEO, or an organization's pinnacle leader, as recommended by the IOA Standards of Practice.[37] However, a program built with only this dotted line to the pinnacle leader effectively limits the program's opportunity to integrate fully and to gain additional and diverse supportive voices. With a reporting structure only to one, a program can be jeopardized when this relationship falters or the individual leaves the organization.

4. Establish a Mechanism to Manage Perceived Ombuds or Program Shortcomings

Almost no Ombuds programs have been designed or operate with a mechanism to address complaints or concerns about an Ombuds or the program itself. How does this effect perceptions about a program? Could low program usage rates also be an indicator of lack of trust or confidence in a program with no complaint mechanism for its own actions? Ombuds are human and the possibility exists for misjudgment or misconduct. It is critical to establish a protocol to manage such situations. Human Resources, Legal or Compliance are ill-equipped to receive such an issue, particularly if the person coming forward requires anonymity or cannot afford for others to know they worked with an Ombuds. The governing body described above is an appropriate locus for raising and addressing such a concern.

Even if the mechanism is never used to raise an issue, which is the case to date with the program known to have this mechanism, having and communicating the existence of such a process could provide reassurance for some, thus increasing the comfort and confidence for those seeking help from a program. This mechanism also alleviates others' concerns that an Ombuds' independence and confidentiality could cover Ombuds misbehavior.

5. Leverage Learning

Ombuds often site as a purpose "to help employees help themselves." Accordingly, serving as an educational development and information resource offers another way to build a program's AEI. Developing training, whether in concert with other functions or independently based on identified issues emerging from Ombuds cases allows an Ombuds to show they recognize the needs of users, potential users and the organization as a whole. Whether authoring the content for a web-based training, reviewing articles, and posting suggestions on their own website, Ombuds programs can provide numerous learning and development activities.

These learning vehicle examples, as listed in Figure 3, serve several purposes. Learning creates contributions, which can be recognized as value, as they enhance knowledge and skills. Secondly, these interactions afford another opportunity for employees to know and further their trust in the program and practitioners. The chance to meet and talk to an Ombuds outside the parameters of conflict or difficulty, can significantly personalize the Ombuds.
Even this limited set of five necessary activities could challenge the staffing levels of even multi-

Figure 3

Learning & Development Opportunities for Increased Integrationn
• Host webinars for knowledge and skill development on negotiation and other conflict management areas
• Recommend and/or deliver training on topics which emerge from observed trends and issues
• Provide library on communication skills, conflict, negotiation, problem solving, etc.
• Develop and institute e-learning modules, which could flexibly cover multiple subjects
• Participate in new hire, new manager orientations and development
• Expand practioners' own professional development to gain competency in related areas such as: Intercultural Communications, Appreciative Inquiry, Training design, Organizational Development, etc.
• Use program's website organization's publications and other venues to provide information, resources and guidance about related topics

member Ombuds programs, let alone a sole practitioner. There is no doubt that becoming and maintaining an AEI program requires additional steps and more attention than the current standard. Resource needs, including staffing present an opportunity to advance integration. Involving other parts of the organization, including the recommended governing body, can lead to more connections and understanding. In most organizations, access to greater resources is best assured by creating value.

It may be necessary for existent programs to re-examine their time allocations to various tasks and reallocate activity to tasks intended to expan AEI. A 'lead' Ombuds of a program could spend up to 50 percent of their time on AEI-related activities. This is a stark contrast to the 10 percent reported in a 1999 Simon and Rowe presentation at the IOA annual meeting.[38] More recently, over half of the *OMV Petrom 2013 Organizational Ombuds Practices* Survey respondents did not include "Feedback and Reporting" in their top three activities.[39] Additionally, the significant increased data needs of an AEI program recommend a dedicated information specialist. This individual's responsibilities include connecting with other parts of the organization to establish shared definitions and defensible data sharing protocols, while managing data basing, informatics and report production. The expertise and demands of this position mean they are not available for case-related work. This position is beginning to appear in larger Ombuds programs and could become an essential element of the fully aligned, embedded and integrated Ombuds program of the future.

THE ASCENDING SPIRAL OF VALUE RETURN FROM AN AEI PROGRAM

> A company that communicates throughout the work place in an effective manner is more likely to avoid problems with completing the daily procedures, and less likely to have a problem with improper occurrence and will generate a stronger morale and a more positive attitude towards work. When employees communicate effectively with each other, productivity will increase because effective communication means less complaints and more work getting done.[40]

Organizational Ombuds programs properly positioned and structure, foster effective communication to deliver all the benefits and the inherent value described above. As both implicit and explicit communication multipliers, Ombuds augment both the performance and humanity of organizations.

Andy O'Donnell championed the development of the o3, Baker Hughes' Ombuds program. Upon first learning about the concept, he thought the program could be a useful safety valve to relieve pressure for people when they had a problem and as another way to resolve issues without having to resort to legal procedures; two typical descriptions of what programs can provide.

Now more than a year into operations, O'Donnell, the first Chair of the Ombuds Governance Committee, still sees pressure release as an important point for the program, but he also sees other contributions as a key value addition made by the o3: the creation of a more positive environment. "…it sets an atmosphere that the company cares and values its employees."

He added, "It's also a channel for leadership to learn things it does not know, have an expanded understanding of where people are and what they are thinking. Especially from those who feel disenfranchised. All of this helps managers be more informed so they can make better decisions."

This example shows how as a program moves toward its AEI it gains greater opportunities to add recognized value through more diverse activities, which tie into the organization's broad needs.

Alignment, embedment, and integration set a context where more people in the organization will be aware of the program, understand the program's intent and activities on a higher level, and therefore "trust" the program more. There is every indication that this will lead to higher case-loads. Higher case-loads, in-turn generate greater opportunities for more program contribution, in a high AEI setting, these became recognized as value additions. This organizational recognition will increase both the perceived value of the function and almost certainly the real value addition. Those in organizations talk about that which they value, that which they benefit from, that which aids them in advancing their mission and achieving their intended goal. They build processes to secure and ensure viability for such functions. In so doing, they guarantee greater awareness, and provide greater resources, which further strengthen the alignment and integration and continually envalue the embedding. Then, the cycle begins again and ascends. An ascending spiral that mirrors the organizations aspiration ascent is the demonstrative image for this process.

Figure 4
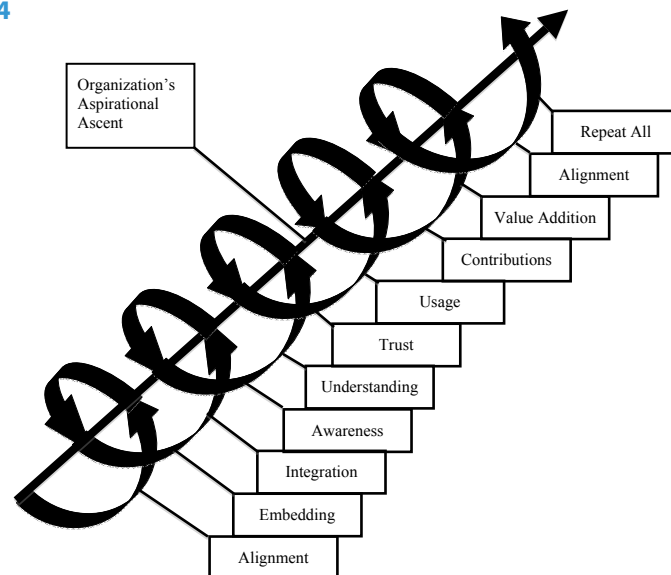
CONCLUSION

The last decade's increasing interest in determining organizational Ombuds program contribution and value creation is a much needed development. To be a widely recognized and well understood profession, with an increasingly common presence, practitioners and the field need a broader commitment to align, embed and integrate programs in order to first better serve program users and second to account for their contributions and fully measure their value.

Legitimate challenges clearly exist. The particular cultural context of Ombuds programs will always mean diverse operating realities and specific adjustments organization to organization. Rowe writes, "There is no single … method of measuring cost effectiveness."[41] And, there is no single method for an Ombuds program to be properly aligned, embedded and integrated. And, there is no single way to account for all Ombuds programs' contributions and value additions. Each program must undertake organization specific activities to become AEI in order to inventory their contributions as value additions and report what is discovered.

Full and proper value recognition actually protects an Ombuds program's defining characteristics. Recognizing value reinforces the importance of the defining characteristics, by generating for the stakeholders a clear understanding and correlation of the organizational benefit, as well as individual Ombuds program users' gain, through the unique value proposition of the characteristics. The defining characteristics require practitioners to behave differently than all other members of a given organization. This organizationally provided privilege — the ability to do that which no one else may — is rare and valuable. It must be "traded." The organization bold enough to allow one of its functions and a number of its members to behave "outside the norms" — to the extent that Ombuds must — deserves to expect gains from the function and to understand clearly and accurately just what contributions and value have been made.

Likewise, the Ombuds role as a voice of conscience, a monitor of organizational fairness, does not require the program to disconnect from the organization for "perspective" or hold high moral ground which determining contribution would diminish. Without legitimate and defensible processes to determine and demonstrate value additions, the Ombuds program becomes ancillary and, thus, dispensable. However, an aligned, embedded, and integrated Ombuds function, which expends the needed energy to help a broad internal constituency, and especially those shareholders identified as the authorizing environment, has a workable preconception of possible value along with intentional predetermined desired effects, and will be best able to recognize Ombuds program contributions as value additions. This program will become the type of sought out and trusted advisor, capable of returning the greatest possible value. This emergent paradigm is currently demonstrating its worth in limited applications. Additional research (such as ROI studies, leadership support surveys, and assessing potential user perceptions of awareness, understanding and trust) and especially, additional enactment of this AEI framework are needed to demonstrate that it is repeatable and universally valuable.

ENDNOTES

1. "Responsibly position" refers to the International Ombudsman Association Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics or SOPCOE. The authors in their own practice respect and uphold the SOPCOE and require the same of any client or collaborating partner. The authors do not condone or promote any action or inaction that in fact or appearance would undermine or diminish the SOPCOE.

2. This article distinguishes between an Ombuds *program* and an Ombuds *practitioner*. Though each are quite different, it is common, even within the field, to use Ombuds — i.e. the practitioner when one actually means the program. Especially when only one person staffs a program, confusing the program with the person is understandable. Throughout the authors' discussions and interviews, as well as writing this article, the authors too found they sometimes used "Ombuds" when they intended Ombuds program. It is imperative to distinguish the program from the practitioner, as each has distinct roles and responsibilities. Thinking of both as one in the same creates rate limiting factors on: What a practitioner can do for users; What a program can contribute to its organization; and How the organization recognizes the value added; as well as the general public's understanding of the field. A program should not be a person; and a person is not a program. For one, the SOPCOE manifests differently for both. For example, while a program should never be positioned or placed such that it takes "a side" (and nor should the Ombuds practitioner) a program's existence is not to be "neutral." What then, would be the

point? An organization implements an organizational Ombuds program for a variety of reasons, but the underlying expectation is that it will contribute to creating a better environment for all. This article emphasizes programmatic necessities — alignment, embedding and integration — in order to expand contributions and the recognized value additions a program can make. Of course, these activities are executed by people; they do not, however, all have to be executed solely by the Ombuds. Organizational leaders, personnel from related functions, administrators, managers, an Ombuds program's governing body, and even external consultants can contribute, and may, in fact, be better positioned in some instances, to ensure some of these programmatic activities occur, and in so doing, protect the independence, neutrality, confidentiality and informality of the Ombuds practitioner.

3. Frank Fowlie and John W. Zinsser, "Evaluating Ombudsmen Offices" (presentation, 2008 International Ombudsman Association Annual Conference, Boston, MA, April 14, 2008).

4. In his 2012 University Ombuds Office Annual Report, James S. Wohl, Ombudsperson and professor at Auburn University noted, "Approximate employee usage rates of Ombuds offices at colleges and universities range from 1 percent to 5 percent of the constituency population. The employee usage rate in the current year of the Auburn University Ombuds Office was 2.47 percent."

5. The three following works combine to present a picture of the modern work environment. Each offers particular advantages and all are worth pursuing, even if not all data corresponds.

    Richard H. Girgenti, "KPMG 2013 Integrity Survey." KPMG 2013. https://www.kpmg.com/CN/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/Pages/Integrity-Survey-2013-O-201307.aspx

    E. O'Boyle, Jim Harter, "Gallup's 2013 State of the Global Workplace," Gallup, 2013. http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/164735/state-global-workplace.aspx

    "National Business Ethics Survey of the U.S. Workforce." Ethics Resource Center. (2013). http://www.ethics.org/nbes/download-reports/

    For further consideration of the continuing impact of discriminatory behavior in the workplace, "A Workplace Divided" is useful in its clarity.

    K.A. Dixon, Duke Storen, and Carl E. Van Horn, "A Workplace Divided: How Americans View Discrimination and Race on the Job. Work Trends: Americans' Attitudes about Work, Employers and Government," John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, NJ and The Center for Survey Research and Analysis, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT. January 2002. eric.ed.gov/?id+ED480971

6. While the number of Ombuds programs in higher education has continued to grow and the most recent decade has shown increases in the U.S. Federal government and health care, corporate sector Ombuds program growth is essentially flat, and dramatically lags behind other functions such as ethics and compliance.

7. M. L. Wagner, "The Organizational Ombudsman as Change Agent," *Negotiation Journal*, 16: 99–114. doi: 10.1111/j.1571-9979.2000.tb00205.x Wagner's interest in seeing Ombuds change and advance organizations through rigorous connective communications provided the authors with support for the concepts presented in this article. She encouraged all Ombuds to take action and to interface on a high level with their organizations.

8. "...with utilization at the 4 percent level probably closer to normal." Charles L. Howard, *The Organizational Ombudsman: Origins, Roles, and Operations A Legal Guide* (Chicago: American Bar Association, 2010), 177.

9. Alignment relates to the connection and commitment an Ombuds program has with the purpose or mission of the host organization. Alignment includes the recognition by the Ombuds program personnel that they have something to add to the organization, something which makes the organization better than it would be without the program, but also moves the organization ahead to achieving the organizational mission, vision and goals. Ideally, all in the organization perceive and appreciate this alignment of purpose — especially those who use the program.

To be clear, the authors are advocating for a programmatic alignment. That is, the Ombuds program needs to be aligned, while the Ombuds practitioner remains independent, neutral, informal and confidential. Especially as regards "neutrality" there must be clarity. Neutrality pertains to Ombuds' management of a case or interfaces in the public venue (such as an Ombuds not being an official voting member of a committee or taking part in a formal process). The program must be a functional addition to the organization. It must provide a contribution, which the organization sees as value. If the program is judged to be neutral, as regards its contribution and value addition, the organization will by necessity jettison it.

• Embedment is the proper structural placement of an Ombuds program throughout the organization, including mechanisms for oversight or governance, access to all types of power, means of correction and redress for Ombuds actions/inactions. Embedding is also aided by a proper description of these aspects in the terms of reference or charter.

• Integration references the many workable connections between an Ombuds program and those other functions in the organization, especially those with which there is the greatest need to interact to achieve the Ombuds program's mission and goals. Different organizations, having different needs and desires from an Ombuds program, will lead to the program integrating with different functions at various levels (e.g. an organization desiring an increase in workforce engagement might lead the Ombuds program to integrate more highly with Organizational Development and Learning to a greater extent than the organization looking to the Ombuds program for a dramatic increase in ethics and compliance reporting). Integration looks like appropriate regular communications, the establishment of

appropriate shared criteria for events and data exchange, so that a coordinated understanding of what each function — Ombuds and ethics for example — receive and experience from the other.

10. James T. Ziegenfuss, "Perspectives on Costs and Cost Effectiveness of Ombudsman Programs in Four Fields. Case 4: Hospital Case (a client Ombudsman)," *Journal of Health and Human Resources Administration* 15, no. 3 (January 1993): 302-305.

11. T. R. Harrison, "What Is Success in Ombuds Processes? Evaluation of a University Ombudsman," *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* (Spring 2004): 315.

Harrison writes, "Although these descriptions tell us what skills are necessary for one to be an Ombuds, they do little to tell us why or if they are effective. Evaluation of Ombuds processes comes primarily from surveys and self-reports of practicing Ombuds and focuses primarily on the number of grievances heard and resolved (Netting, Paton, and Huber, 1992; Ziegenfuss, Rowe, and Munzenrider, 1993), cost effectiveness (Rowe and Ziegenfuss, 1993; Perneski and Rowe, 1993; Hall, 1993; Rowe, 1993a; Ziegenfuss, 1993a; Lux, 1993), and Ombuds' perceptions of disputant satisfaction (Robbins, 1993)."

This aptly catches the Ombuds-centric nature, and the absence of an organizational alignment.

12. Mary Simon and Mary Rowe, "Benchmarking and Metrics for Ombuds Programs or Of What Use Are We Anyway?" (presentation, 1999 Annual Conference of The Ombudsman Association, Phoenix, AZ, April 1999).

This presentation presented an extensive list of stakeholders. Mary Rowe has spent considerable time and energy employing her singular ability to build what must be considered the definitive list of organizational stakeholders who connect with the Ombuds and Ombuds programs.

13. On Thursday, May 21, 2009, at the semi-regular meeting of the East Coast Ombuds Group, a whole group discussion on the issue of alignment, value return and its potential impact on neutrality occurred. Among the many voices heard were Mary Rowe and John W. Zinsser who disagreed about the use of the word "alignment." The group struggled with the notion of who "received" the value created by an Ombuds. There is question as to whether the group considered Ombuds "programs" rather than only Ombuds practitioners. It is clear now, however, the discussion needed to extend to include the Ombuds program as well.

14. Just as the authors encourage a distinction between "practitioner" and "program," they also separate management or leadership from the organization. The authors use the term "organization" to refer to the entire entity — the collective of all that comprise it, not just the ownership or designated leaders.

15. http://Ombuds-blog.blogspot.com/2009/06/pace-university-closing-Ombuds-office.html

16. T. R. Harrison, "What is success in Ombuds processes? Evaluation of a University Ombudsman," *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 316.

17. Helmut Buss, "Controlling Conflict Costs: The Business Case of Conflict Management," *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association* 4, no. 1, 62.

18. Frank Fowlie, "*A Blueprint for the Evaluation of an Ombudsman's Office: A Case Study of the ICANN Office of the Ombudsman*" http://www.icann.org/Ombudsman/blueprint-for-evaluation-of-an- Ombudsman-nov08.pdf p. 1.

19. David Miller, "Editorial: Measuring Up?" *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association* 3, no. 1 (2010): 6.

20. John W. Zinsser and Lawrence A. Jagneaux, Jr., "The Untold Millions; Demonstrating Organizational Ombuds Programs' Value Return." (presentation, 2010 International Ombudsman Association Annual Conference, Portland, OR, April 2010).

21. Practitioners continue to request presentations and more content specific to measurement and evaluation from IOA's Professional Development Committee. The authors receive requests for assistance and information on the subject from practitioners and organizations.

22. Mary Rowe, "Identifying and Communicating the Usefulness of Organizational Ombuds with Ideas About OO Effectiveness and Cost-effectiveness," Journal of the International Ombudsman Association 3, no. 1 (2010): 19.

23. M. L. Wagner, "The Organizational Ombudsman as Change Agent," *Negotiation Journal,* 16 (January 2000): 111. doi: 10.1111/j.1571-9979.2000.tb00205.x

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As well, see, Vanessa K. Bohns, Francis J. Flynn, "'Why didn't you just ask?' Underestimating the discomfort of help-seeking," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, volume 46, issue 2 (March 2010): 402-409.

Bohns and Flynn's work examines how and why help-seekers come forward.

It would be useful to examine if their findings are applicable to the potential population of users wanting help from an organizational Ombuds.

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30. 2000/12=166.666. Rounding the ethics officer growth rate down to 165 and multiplying by the 1992 existent Ombuds membership population (150) provides the result of 24,750.

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35. Ilene Butensky (vice president, Office of the Ombuds, Eaton Corporation) in a teleconference interview with the authors, January 10, 2014.

36. Thomas Monson, publicquotes.com/quote/35700.

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I Was Just Thinking About Ombuds Questioning Authority

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KEY WORDS
Neutrality, fairness, objectivity, power, authority, courage

Introduction

I've been retired as an organizational Ombudsman (OO) for two years. I was thinking about questioning authority in my OO role a decade before retiring, but the passage of time since has allowed me to reflect on what seems most important to share on the topic now. This proved difficult to write both because I have too many thoughts and experiences for a single article and the topic is a complex and often uncomfortable part of my OO career. The writing feels more like a small research project with my career as the subject that is bringing me to a different conclusion than I predicted.

That "research" included looking at why engaging with — and especially questioning — authority figures was such a challenge, often leaving me feeling quite ineffective. I intended these encounters to be opportunities that would help them see their unique and controllable contributions to organizational conflict. This meant directly or indirectly questioning how they viewed their role and actions, if not their self-image. These situations were opportunities to acknowledge and manage my own limitations, biases, personality preferences and passion about and orientation to authority, so that I could help rather than hinder my effectiveness in questioning. Many times I succeeded. Too many times, I did not. I considered each interaction an important opportunity to have a high-leverage dialog for positive change. Of course, that loaded the encounters with much higher risks of failure and damage to the OO brand, whether real or imagined. My costlier mistakes — at least as I defined errors of practice at the time — usually involved cases of honest and candid discussion with

authority figures. Once every few years authority reactions to those mistakes seemed so detrimental to the OO reputation, I'd question whether I had the skills or sufficient credibility to remain in the job — or should resign. With less emotional hindsight and feedback that even imperfect handling of each situation yielded some positive results, I'd rethink bailing out of the OO enterprise. To para-phrase an American Revolutionary era figure, Thomas Payne, *these were the cases that tried my OO soul*! They were seldom comfortable interactions no matter how solid and respectful the relationship. It helped to balance my critical sense of ineffectiveness by appreciating that I'd been authentically present with good intentions, even when falling far short of perfect practice. A dozen OO and non-OO colleagues I contacted who negotiate with, coach, and question authority figures have shared similar experiences and challenges. Apparently all of us had walked — and tripped over — the fine line between an authority figure's acceptance of our helpful intentions and their perception that their prerogative was being unhelpfully questioned.

I gradually came to view questioning authority as an archetypal dilemma for all humans, with unique challenges for OOs. It has been and will continue to be a growth and development process for me, as much personal as professional. My post-career volunteer activities in a religious hierarchy present the same challenges and uncomfortable theme as in my role as an OO: *When it comes to questioning authority, I was not and am not a neutral*. Not that I was unable to engage neutrally in my OO career. While maintaining neutrality is one of the practical requirements that allows OOs to get through the door of authority figures easier, it was not reflective of my inner orientation to authority. Rowe and Gadlin (2012) wrote this about a related OO fundamental: *"From the perspective of any of the sophisti-cated frameworks from which we now understand organizational dynamics — systems theory, network theory, complexity theory — it is difficult to believe that an effective OO can really be <u>independent</u> in the full sense of that term."* Based on experiences of interacting with and questioning authority and my understanding of human dynamics, I am equally disbelieving that I could be an effective OO *and <u>neutral</u>* in the full sense of that term. I managed my *judgment* of authority figures and their decisions thanks to a general compassion for struggling humans at any level, especially when they betray even a modicum of vulnerability, fear, and willingness to learn. However, when those characteristics were displaced by tunnel vision, hubris, or the preference to exercise rights and power, I could feel judg-ment rising and my neutrality slipping. Ironically, it felt less risky to question authority figures with whom I had a respectful and mutually understanding relationship, but I was clearly no more neutral. In considering whether, when, and how I had questioned authority as an OO, I thought it helpful to reflect on the progression (or perhaps regression) in my career from mostly positive to respectfully cynical biases toward authority, in general and individually. Perhaps you'll now read this as a caution-ary OO tale.

Rather than mine the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Standards of Practice (SOPs), Code of Ethics, Best Practices, and Sources of Power for strategies to question authority, I focus on the less concrete aspects of the topic. These are admittedly personal opinion based on professional experience and may touch on aspects the reader will label as sociological, psychological, and philosophical. Whatever the labels the thoughts below help me understand the complexity I experienced of this essential OO role and provide clues to my struggles with it. I welcome — and I think IOA practitioners need — countering thoughts and viewpoints about questioning authority.
  - Who is an Authority and What Might an OO Question Them About?
  - A Charter Helps but an OO Conundrum Persists
  - But I Don't *Feel* Neutral – An OO's Self-Awareness
  - Nature of Organizational Authority: Necessary and Parental

WHO IS AN AUTHORITY AND WHAT MIGHT AN OO QUESTION THEM ABOUT?

An authority is someone near the top of any hierarchical organization or its constituent units: regents; board chairs; executives; directors; bishops and priests; managers; members of government agencies, either oversight or investigative; members of congress or other governing bodies; supervisors; team and project leaders; those in human resources/personnel, legal, ethics, compliance, security, or other administrative, investigative, or decision-making offices.

It's fair to also consider authority in the form of policies, procedures, laws, by-laws, and rules. However, I could not interact with or question a policy. I would need to question someone charged with the stewardship of these documents and invested in preserving their authority. That person would exercise various sources of power over the policy's application, and protect it from weakening. I was most effective when I gauged such investment accurately. I was most ineffective when I forgot that questioning the policy under their stewardship could be interpreted as undermining it… *or devaluing their role in the organization*.

The American Bar Association's Standards for the Establishment of Ombuds Offices provides other examples of areas about which an OO might question authority: "… *allegations of unfairness, maladministration, abuse of power, abuse of discretion, discourteous behavior or incivility, inappropriate application of law or policy, inefficiency, decision unsupported by fact, and illegal or inappropriate behavior."* Rowe and Gadlin note additional situations in "The Organizational Ombudsman" (2012). An OO might *"…critique managerial policies and the actions of managers and employees… question both leaders and employees if they do not honor the organization's values or properly implement its policies and procedures… [identify] mistakes, omissions, problems, conflicts and wrongdoing… [surface] serious infractions of policies, rules and laws, acts of omission and commission against the organizational mission."*

I recalled other risky and mostly unofficial areas about which I had questioned authorities: competing professional, personal, or business values; possible downsides of exercising power and rights; ineffective, emotionally-charged (and possibly threatening) communications and behaviors; actual or perceived damage to a subordinate's or peer's professional standing; low trustworthiness hindering organizational partnerships. Such topics came from visitors asking the OO to take the question forward, independent observations, direct experience of authority figures, or aggregate visitor data. The issue could be urgent, high risk, high consequence, or have more obvious impact on the authority figure and those under that authority. However, the majority of situations of questionable authority were of lower urgency, risk, or tangible consequence. They collectively represented a negative impact for the organization's efficiency and mission that was more insidious and difficult to question authorities about, let alone help them generate the energy to address. Seldom did I encounter an issue rising to the level of formal whistleblowing. However, I observed that dismissive, abusive, or threatening responses by an authority to the questioner increased the odds of creating just such a formal charge.

A broader range of scenarios in which I'd been *perceived* as questioning authority presented risks that were much more subtle, but no less real. An authority could feel questioned in a coaching session or routine trend meeting. Reporting on an organizational assessment requested by an authority could indirectly question their decisions, skills, and awareness of the people they managed. Beyond my own experiences, I wondered how many times an OO was seen as questioning the validity of authorities' information simply by requesting information relevant to a complaint? How many times has an OO preserved confidentiality and visitor anonymity, only to be interpreted as questioning whether the authority could be trusted to remain non-retaliatory? How many times have authority figures questioned OO fairness and neutrality upon hearing of their subordinates' perceptions of the authority's "mistakes, omissions, problems, conflicts and wrongdoing"? I can recall a management-employee situation in which I was judged to be blocking a visitor's multi-month termination process simply by asking clarifying questions of the managers, human resources, and medical and legal departments. Any of the above situations can unexpectedly change an authority's perception of the OO from helpful resource to judge.

I feel it necessary to note that questioning authority *is not* about challenging the *prerogative* of an authority figure to take action or make decisions, which easily launches an unnecessary and unhelpful power struggle. However, it is possible that certain situations might call for taking the question of an authority figure's misappropriation or abuse of prerogative to a higher level of authority.

Finally, feedback from a small number of authority figures led me to understand that even silent OO presence, or offering no more than a single reframe, in a tough discussion left them feeling questioned. And to the extreme I discovered that some authority figures considered *the mere existence* of an Ombuds office in the organization an unappreciated statement that organizational authority could be questioned. The impact of unsupportive authority figures was mitigated somewhat by years of building effective relationships with those authority figures supportive of the OO office.

A CHARTER HELPS BUT AN OO CONUNDRUM PERSISTS

The relationship between OO and organizational authority starts wonderfully enough even as it establishes the OO conundrum: ***"The President of the XYZ Corporation (or University) is pleased to announce Board of Directors (or Regents) approval of the charter for an Ombudsman Office. The Ombudsman and office assistant have been selected through an open process. The Ombudsman will serve as a confidential, neutral, and independent conflict resolution specialist for all employees and management (or faculty, students, and staff)."*** The IOA and Ombuds Blog trumpet this press release about the move by an obviously enlightened XYZ management to provide a beneficial office for all. That charter based on IOA guidelines undoubtedly serves as an essential cornerstone for the OO role, with boundaries and roles in black and white for all to agree on. Indeed, if authority figures at all levels of the organization revered and demonstrably supported the terms within the IOA SOP, Code of Ethics and Best Practices *as much as OOs do*, this article would be unnecessary.

The hard truth, however, is that this announcement initiates a tension, a dance of competing interests, between the OO and the authorities who charter the office. I summarize the conundrum this presents in two questions: *How able and willing is an OO to question decision making information and processes or to point out unproductive or abusive behaviors by those authorities who support, fund, and promote the use of an OO office? How willing are such authorities to be questioned by an OO?* These

are obvious enough that even new hires in their weekly intake orientations would ask the skeptical questions about my neutrality: "Who is it you work for again?" and "Where does your paycheck come from?"

Rowe, Wilcox and Gadlin (2009) described the value of an OO office in helping those who "*perceive unacceptable behavior… fear loss of relationships, loss of privacy, retaliation, or just 'bad consequences.' People may worry about being seen as a troublemaker. Many do not feel sure of themselves. Many feel they do not have 'enough evidence' to act".* How often might these words describe the concerns of an OO, especially when they're "*able to see through the pretenses and subterfuges by which abusive or overbearing managers maintain their organizational empires*"? Questioning an "empire", in my experience, was seldom received well, but Howard Gadlin offered a mitigating strategy at the 2013 IOA Conference. His approach is to use the early conversations in a new relationship with an authority figure to let them know that he may need to make difficult observations that could be perceived as questioning their authority. This suggests that by stating his or her professional role and explaining that such questioning could be uncomfortable for both in a stressful or difficult case, the OO could assure the authority figure that the intention is to resolve the issue as respectfully as possible.

This conundrum became more real to me during the last three years before retiring. I was battling for sufficient annual budgets from management. I was also watching other corporate offices coveting and competing for the same organizational role (and credibility) as a trusted OO office. What of this was visible to the work place community? How did the optics affect the perceived levels of credibility, trustworthiness, and courage of the OO office to put needed information and questions on the table of authorities? How effective could the OO be as truth-teller or questioner to those controlling budget or having no real stake in the OO office? These were unanswerable and yet helpful questions since they raised the awareness of those of us in the OO office about the fragility of neutrality, objectivity, and independence. Fortunately these questions surfaced late in my career when I was more straightforward in presenting them to upper management as risks the OO office must acknowledge and manage.

BUT I DON'T *FEEL* NEUTRAL — AN OO'S SELF-AWARENESS

I reflected on when and why in my career I had spoken truth to power effectively and courageously. In the early years I don't recall it being often. I tended to believe that management tries hard, is benevolently inclined, views employees fairly, gets most decisions right, and could do with less questioning of its authority. Neither incorrect nor the whole story, it was a pleasant and crippling bias for an OO! During the first half of my career, unfortunately, I recall delaying tough conversations with authorities at least partly due to my struggle with maintaining the ideals of neutrality, independence, impartiality, and objectivity. After my retirement I read and identified with the descriptions by Rowe and Gadlin of the *"problematic"* OO principles of independence and neutrality. (*The Organizational Ombudsman*; 2012; Dilemmas and Challenges) Looking back I comfort myself about the gap between preserving these ideals and my imperfect practices by focusing on a helpful word in IOA Standard of Practice 2.2: *"The Ombudsman **strives** for impartiality, fairness and objectivity…"* Did I navigate the SOPs in ways that maintained neutrality, but still gave authority figures or offices necessary feedback that was uncomfortable to hear or challenging to respond to? Sure. But when had I misapplied (or hidden behind) the SOPs, using vagueness to soften the information and preserve a favorable authority relationship? In which situations had I protected such personal or professional interests by remaining silent, failing to either find a credible way for me to

question or to cultivate an alternate questioner? In these failings had I colluded with authorities to maintain an unhealthy organizational status quo or, worse, not done enough to prevent an unethical corporate outcome?

I am uncomfortable considering these answers, but they're keys to gaining integrity around neutrality and in decisions about questioning authority. By mid-career I had broadened my biases to a more neutral, less rose-colored balance. I grew more clear-eyed about error prone human authorities, especially in groups. I noticed more instances in which they were at least as likely to make "woodenheaded" (*March of Folly*, Barbara Tuchman) and myopic decisions as courageous, mutually-beneficial, and higher-minded decisions. From then on it seemed wise to be skeptically respectful if secretly cynical of authorities. I was more straightforward with them, too. At times I had consciously — and appropriately, I rationalized — risked objectivity and impartiality to make a point for a greater good or fairness for all. Looking honestly at these situations, I've also concluded that *there is nothing neutral about wanting a situation to turn out better for all*. I was more aware of gradually developing more realistic but risky negative biases about authority figures and groups. These were as unhealthy for an OO as early-career positive biases toward them had been! Unfortunately, I wasn't always fully aware that they were affecting how I questioned authority, which was often with an excess of passion intended to break through an authority's resistance rather than work with it. Was I fooling myself into thinking I could practice neutrally with these biases? What had helped me build this negative bias? The short answer is *many experiences with authority holders*. The longer answer is at least partially described in the sections below.

Coaching and mediation gave me a sense of professional accomplishment. However, witnessing when unquestioned authority would decide and act in ways detrimental to the organization added a personal mission to take on the responsibility to speak truth to power. It also clarified that I was not as skilled and grounded as I needed to be to do so effectively. I grew to appreciate the occasional experiences of authority displeasure and "threat" — especially when I'd done my best to be respectful, served higher values, whether I stayed attentive to the IOA SOPs or stretched their interpretation. Through these cases I gained insight into my OO visitors' experiences of both obvious and skillfully veiled reprisal. I also lost my naiveté that the OO charter, office alignment with power, and adherence to the SOPs served to buffer, if not indemnify, OOs and their offices. They are necessary and helpful, but not guarantees.

A discussion of self-awareness about an OO's orientation to authority doesn't seem complete without a nod to the human development path. With apologies to the reader for my presumptions, I suspect that most of us learned early in life who is "boss" and about the authority of rules. We learned of responses that felt good when we stayed within the lines and pleased authority figures, and of consequences that felt uncomfortable when we strayed. Perhaps you can recall your experiences that might have included the pain of corporal punishment, the shame of the "time out", the guilt at dad's judgmental glance, or the anxiety of the silent treatment from mom? As we grew up we obeyed many authorities, followed most of the rules, tested both forms of authority, chafed against some, and violated others. Through adolescent years we traveled the rocky road of learning to negotiate with authority holders to meet mutual interests. Some of us master this by adulthood, but certainly not everyone — one reason we have OO visitors. As we entered the world of employment for compensation from a corporate authority (with new policies and rules), we sensed the whole journey starting over with a different yet somehow familiar kind of "parental" authority relationship. We relearned that following the dictates of authority offered the opportunity for hefty

rewards, and questioning them could carry tangible, costly risks. If we're prudent adults, we never stop refining our understanding of the nature of authority and its relationship with us.

NATURE OF ORGANIZATIONAL AUTHORITY — NECESSARY AND PARENTAL

Even though an oversimplified view of human development, it helps me make sense of my relationship to and fear of authority. The fear seems deeper than the possible loss of livelihood or community, although both are daunting enough. As an OO I became a student of the language, behaviors, and decisions made in the work place. These led me to posit that adults at all levels of the organizational hierarchy are still rooted in the universally-experienced parental authority model. Much like the operating system on our computers, I imagine it as the controlling program behind the relationship between those with and those under authority. As such it influences both our inclination to follow authority and our trepidation at questioning it. "This is not a democracy", uttered by an authority irritated at being questioned by subordinates (or an OO) is strikingly similar to the words a parent uses when irritated at a child or teenager. This phrase unambiguously and parentally marks authority as unquestionable. The home and the work place are the only two places I've ever heard the phrase uttered, and always with an energy intended to sharpen the point. It was only one of many indicators I noticed that hierarchical structures lean toward the parental authority model. Does it sufficiently validate my theory? No. But it has helped me, visitors — and, yes, authority holders — make sense of many an OO situation in which questioning authority causes difficult behaviors to emerge.

The risks of questioning increase because hierarchical authority is rightly considered the source of order, stability, effectiveness, and organizational mission success. Absent or weakened authority yields disastrous results. It seems prudent then to assume authority holders are deeply invested in preserving authority. Once they take on that "sacred" role, we can add a host of unique factors and characteristics in considering how they might respond to questioning: hierarchical level and comfort in it, temperament and personality preferences (Myers-Briggs), personal and career missions, beliefs and values, emotional-intelligence level, pressures on them from authorities to whom they report, family background and life experiences, and whether they were "having a bad day". The list is long and mostly unknowable, but OOs can be in a position to discover and weigh these factors more than others in an organization to help decide when and how to question authority holders.

Clearly authorities' decisions must weigh broader organizational values and sustainability more heavily than the values of individuals over whom authority is exercised. This makes situational, if not systemic imbalances, injustice, and unfairness unavoidable, regardless of their best intentions. OOs have visitors because of these imbalances. But if not questioned, such imbalances are not manageable. Unfortunately, hierarchical authority systems are less adept at identifying, acknowledging, and managing the downsides of decisions. Indeed, single-minded focus on the decision's benefits is a natural defense for authorities against questioning they believe will undermine or stall execution of the decision. They've told me so.

To put a finer point on it, I experienced that most authority figures believe that ***authority questioned on a situational basis weakens or undermines authority writ large.*** This describes a factor of constant threat that I've failed to account for at my peril, even in authority relationships I thought were stable and trusting. I can only guess that this vigilance required against any threat to authority explains the need for whistleblower protection laws like the No Fear Act. The authority questioner

must be viewed, at least initially, as an adversary of organizational order and stability. I recall the old managerial dictum, "Lead, follow, or get out of the way." No wonder questioning authority is perceived as risky business.

OUTSIDE WORLD INFLUENCES BOTH QUESTIONABILITY AND FEAR OF QUESTIONING AUTHORITY FOR VISITORS, AUTHORITIES, AND OOS

Reading of historic and current events contributed to my biases about the inherent questionability of authority. While still an OO I noticed how relatively recent events in society influenced OO visitors' and authorities' thoughts, fears, and actions inside the organization. The corporate setting of my practice was a microcosm of the outside world but was often treated by authorities as if isolated from it. This seemed quite unrealistic given the twenty-four hour news cycle employing instant and investigative, if not exploitive, journalism to relate many stories of questionable authority.

In *The March of Folly — From Troy to Vietnam,* Barbara Tuchman describes this folly through examples in which authorities blocked or ignored contemporary questioning. In addition they were deaf to disaffection of those under their authority, blind to alternative ideas, unconcerned by the dismay at their misconduct, and stubborn in their refusal to change. In such cases authorities' unquestioned decisions often worked against the best interest of the authorities themselves, as well as those under the authority, sometimes for decades.

In my lifetime alone instances of such folly serve as instructive examples: military and political mismanagement of the Vietnam War; the run-up to the Savings and Loan Crisis of the 1980s; both of NASA's Space Shuttle disasters; dubiously launched global military interventions like the Iraq War, prosecuted primarily on assumptions of weapons of mass destruction never found; the Wall-Street myopia and ethical lapses leading up to the Financial Collapse of 2008, including the lack of accountability among bad actors now reaping record profits; the LIBORS scandal in Europe in which financial institutions were convicted of colluding to manipulate interest rates to their favor, only to be deemed un-punishable — "too big to jail"; a plethora of governmental and corporate whistleblower cases that historically do not turn out well for the whistleblower (e.g., Edward Snowden, Daniel Manning).

In the aftermath of the Snowden case, the President of the U.S. reasserted the No Fear Act to urge people to question authority through proper channels without fear of retribution. By most reports and the history of whistleblowers, there's more good intention than credibility in his words. We're all familiar with a similar corporate statement: "Employees should report issues without fear of retribution." There was no statement its equal for creating incredulity in employees in my former corporate culture.

There are other examples of the apparent questionability of authority in these stories. The American public has rightfully questioned the credibility of the federal lawmaking authorities, the current Congress, with good reason: it continues its inexorable march toward the highest multi-partisan contention levels and lowest productivity (and public approval) levels of any Congress in decades. The U.S. military adds its example with a deplorable record in acknowledging and addressing the rape of female service members. Even under congressional scrutiny, the military command resists external prosecution of such cases, apparently intending to preserve internal hierarchical prerogative at the cost of preventing or limiting justice.

A recent National Public Radio report hailed the courage of Robert Gates, formerly President Obama's Secretary of Defense, for writing a behind-the-scenes, critical account of inconsistencies in government resolve and decision making as it prosecuted war. Two of the reporter's statements reflect our national norm about speaking truth to power: 1) He dared to publish before the President was out of office, 2) but after *he knew there was little hope of serving again in government*!

To pull me out of depression about these examples, I note the recent celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's speech at the march for civil rights and jobs. While no human endeavor is perfect and the full story is more complex, on balance the Civil Rights Movement is one of the better examples of the power of persistent, ethical, and effective questioning of the authority of a majority to control a minority.

Authority has rarely seemed as questionable as it is now, or as unsafe for the questioner, but Tuchman's writings remind me this has been going on since humans organized, carrying even higher risks in distant history. Indeed, Craig Mousin — clergyperson, OO at DePaul University, and conference panel member — added the historical perspective of the experiences of Biblical prophets, not to mention the namesake of the Christian faith. None survived speaking ethical but inconvenient truths to authorities in both the religious institutions and governments of their times.

Why mention such stark responses to speaking truth to power? Because they seem embedded in a collective human psyche already programmed to yield to authority unless pushed to moral action. Speaking truth to power today in the U.S. seldom results in death, but it still results in adverse consequences in the work place where economic, reputational, and social connection losses can be just as large and threatening for modern-day truth-tellers. This is the world OOs deal with daily, in situations large and small. What might increase their effectiveness?

HELPFUL RESOURCES

I've appreciated three resources for developing strengths in deciding whether, when and how to question authority while better managing my biases and weaknesses:

The Courageous Follower

I write of OOs as if we are like any other member or employee of an organization. Of course, we are and we are not, adding to the already long list of contradictory obligations, competing values, and oxymoronic aspects of OO practice (Bloch, Gadlin, Rowe). I came to grips with this particular con-tradiction in 2006 as I considered my *follower role* as an OO after reading *The Courageous Follower: Standing Up To and For Our Leaders* by Ira Chaleff. In his third edition, the author added a sixth and quite timely trait followers should develop: Courage to Speak to the Hierarchy. The final chapter encourages authority figures to develop the Courage to Listen to Followers. The entire book, and especially these two chapters, should be required reading for OOs and authority figures with whom they interact. It provided many examples for coaching both visitors and me to effectively and coura-geously speak truth to power. It has also aided my personal and OO growth in managing my weak-nesses better as I tried to model for those in and under authority what respectful questioning looks like in a hierarchy.

Polarity Management

OOs are uniquely equipped to assist authority figures, even in the midst of questioning them, by appreciating their tough tasks and providing a model to them for balance seemingly polar opposite viewpoints or needs. Barry Johnson's book, *Polarity Management: Identifying and Managing Unsolvable Problems*, has been invaluable to me in supplying a process to help authorities fully understand and manage both intended effects and unintended consequences of their decisions. It supplies a more complete picture of reality to increase their effectiveness in communicating, taking action, and mitigating the downsides of exercised authority.

A Field Guide to Good Decisions

What has further helped me and my OO visitors is a value-based decision making process for determining when to "stand up ***to***" and when to "stand up ***for***" authorities. Such a process is outlined by Mark Bennett and Joan Gibson in the book, *A Field Guide to Good Decisions* (2006). It is a straightforward approach to weighing what's most important to visitors, authorities, and the OO, including a summary of human biases that skew decisions. I find it critical to acknowledge and manage several of these biases in deciding whether to question authority. *Rationalization Bias* might find me justifying my decision based on a story I've constructed about authority, rather than the values of the visitor or organization. *Status Quo Bias* is important for thinking through whether a greater good might be served in leaving a situation related to authority just as it is — or not. *Framing Bias* and *Loss Aversion* each contribute to faulty inflation of what's at stake if my questioning were experienced by the authority figure as ineffective, or worse, non-neutral and judgmental.

CLOSING

I was fortunate to amass a considerable supply of benevolent social capital as an OO by way of effectively helping all parties — a result of my commitment to multi-partiality. Management on balance was supportive, appreciating the need for OO adherence to the IOA SOPs and Code of Ethics. This was due in no small part to consistency between my presentations and practices. In some cases, however, I found that more practical, if *impure,* definitions of neutrality and objectivity increased my ability to help all parties and the organization find the greater good. For novice and veteran OOs reading this as a rationalization, perhaps you are correct. I spent many years wrestling with the real world application of our SOPs, comforted only by feedback that I was, at least, *more* neutral and *more* objective than any of the deeply invested or polarized parties in the situation. I knew that neutrality referenced in the OO charter was an important entrée for questioning authority, but I also knew that pristine neutrality is, at best, fragile and fleeting. I occasionally struggled with honoring both the spirit and letter of the IOA SOPs through my practices, but without them I had no touchstones. They were and are reasoned and wisely drawn maps of OO territory, but more research, dialog, and mentoring would help OOs deal with the paradoxes they present in a hierarchical world. Without more such supporting contributions from learned and experienced OOs, the SOPs are no more accurate in helping an OO with reality than a map of northern Arizona provides the experience of visiting the Grand Canyon. They are necessary but insufficient.

I end with a few random thoughts about questioning authority that invite feedback:

- Managing any negative biases toward them, a wise OO finds and encourages authority holders' constructive strengths through regular relationship and trust building that opens the door to credible questioning. Managing any positive biases is equally important to an OO so that the impetus for questioning authority is not weakened in critically important situations.

- Authority, especially as exercised by authority groups, must be questionable by those under that authority if there's a commitment to preventing groupthink and sustaining organizational learning and improvement.
- While a questioning OO provides an authority with important preventive and consequential feedback about management decisions and policies, the act of questioning is equally important as modeling of healthy upward interactions in a hierarchy. Resistance to this orientation can signal that a holder believes that questioning their authority will weaken or undermine it.
- The OO is well-positioned to build authentic relationships with authority holders and a capacity for having tough, candid, questioning conversations. But the OO is not "bulletproof" and must be wise in taking and managing risks. Reese Ramos, who at the IOA Conference framed his OO role as that of a court jester, embraces in this role the responsibility to be the one person in the organization who can more safely question or "tell the emperor he has no clothes."
- There will be both benefits and consequences for doing so, but exercising the courage to speak truth to power is a necessary responsibility of followers. OOs are uniquely positioned to model this for both followers and leaders. That courage is most effective when joined with tangible skills and an intangible faith that benefits will outweigh negative consequences for the messenger.

I continue to deal with both learned and chosen orientations to authority holders, managing my weaknesses and limitations in questioning them and looking for guideposts to develop my strengths and be encouraged. One such guidepost is in the last paragraph of the Preamble of the Code of Ethics: *"The Ombudsman shall be truthful and act with integrity, shall foster respect for all members of the organization he or she serves, and shall promote procedural fairness in the content and administration of those organizations' practices, processes, and policies."*

I found these words resonating with me, as well: *"When an institution specifically establishes an office — outside the hierarchical structure and with access to the entire system, with the expectation that this person is to keep an eye on the whole, rooted in the values and conscience of the institution — persons will turn to that office to relieve the tension produced by their role in the organization and help them to be just."* (Robert Shelton, 2011) I invested many years building relationships with authority to "help them to be just," which necessarily included questioning that authority. Perfectly and neutrally practiced or not, it was a noble cause and a fulfilling career!

AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES

Cynthia Joyce has been University Ombudsperson at The University of Iowa and a member of IOA since 2005. She works with a half-time faculty colleague to provide Ombuds services to a population of over 50,000 students, staff and faculty. She has been a mediator for more than 20 years and also provides meeting facilitation and workshops in a variety of conflict management concepts and skills. Cynthia-joyce@uiowa.edu

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John W. Zinsser believes anyone facing a challenge at work who wants help, deserves it. For more than 20 years, teaming with Andrea Schenck at Pacifica, he has aided global companies, U.S. government agencies, private institutions and others to consider, implement, assess and improve organizational Ombuds programs. Whether as consultant, researcher, Columbia University professor, activist citizen or award winning Ombuds, he continuously raises his voice for the capacity and value of organizational Ombuds. His Master's degree in conflict resolution from Antioch University featured a thesis demonstrating Ombuds to be the most valuable form of conflict management in the non-union work environment. He is a graduate of Kenyon College. jwzinsser@conflictbenefit.com

MISSION STATEMENT

The *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association (JIOA)* is a peer-reviewed online journal for scholarly articles and information relevant to the Ombudsman profession. As members of a relatively new profession, we continually strive to understand, define and clarify the role and function of the professional organizational Ombudsman. *JIOA* will help foster recognition that what we do for our agencies, corporations, colleges and universities is worthy of study. While we must vigorously protect the confidentiality of our interactions, we can still study and be studied to understand what we do and how we do it; what works well and what doesn't work; what our options are; how social, technical and legal changes may impact us; what the profile and career development of Ombudsman professionals might be, and other matters of interest. The *JIOA* can facilitate a greater interest in Ombudsing, enhance our professional standing, and serve to give us a better understanding of our dynamic roles and the impact on our institutions and agencies. The journal also will allow IOA members, other Ombudsmen, and other professionals to reach out to their colleagues with their ideas, research findings, theories, and recommendations for best practices and to engage in ongoing discussions of critical issues.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

The Journal of the International Ombudsman Association (JIOA) is a peer-reviewed online journal for scholarly articles about the Ombudsman profession. JIOA aims to foster recognition and understanding of the roles and impact of Ombudsman offices in a variety of institutions and sectors. JIOA is a unique publication for organizational Ombudsmen and other professionals to reach out to their colleagues with ideas, findings, recommendations for best practices, and engage in ongoing discussions of critical issues.

ELIGIBLE CONTRIBUTORS

Submissions are encouraged from all responsible contributors regardless of affiliation with the International Ombudsman Association. JIOA encourages contributions relevant to the work of Ombudsmen in any setting. JIOA is a peer-refereed journal and articles are accepted without remuneration. Authors wishing to discuss submission ideas are encouraged to contact the Editor or a member of JIOA's editorial board.

LANGUAGE OF MANUSCRIPTS

JIOA will accept manuscripts in all major languages for review for publication. Where manuscripts are submitted in languages other than English, an English 'Abstract' must be supplied. Subject to the paper being published in JIOA, this English 'Abstract' will be published alongside the 'Abstract' in the author's original language. Occasionally, at the discretion of the Editor, the paper will be published with a full- English translation. As with all submissions, authors wishing to discuss potential submissions in languages other than English are encouraged to contact the Editor or members of JIOA's editorial board.

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Please send an electronic copy of your article as an attachment to info@ Ombudsassociation.org. JIOA's editor will send a reply when the email has been received and the attachment(s) are opened successfully. Submissions should conform to the following guidelines.

Originality

A cover letter should be submitted with your submission and must include a statement that neither the paper nor its essential content has been published or is under consideration for publication elsewhere. It will be presumed that all listed authors of a manuscript have agreed to the listing and have seen and approved the manuscript.

Authorship

All persons designated as authors should qualify for authorship. Each author should have participated significantly to the concept and design of the work and writing the manuscript to take public responsibility for it. The editor may request justification of assignment of authorship. Names of those who contributed general support or technical help may be listed in an acknowledgment.

TYPE OF SUBMISSION

We accept submissions in the form of articles, commentaries, book reviews, essays, short reports, and letters to the editor.

Articles of any length will be considered, although JIOA is particularly interested in publishing concise scholarship generally between 1,500 and 5,000 words. Commentaries and book reviews should be no longer than 1000 words.

Essays and short reports that advance an idea, summarize a development, or initiate or engage in a discussion are solicited.

Letters to the editor are encouraged, but may be edited for length.

FORMAT

Manuscripts should be double spaced, with ample margins of at least one inch. Pages should be numbered. All identifying information should be removed from the manuscript files themselves prior to submission. Proofs for checking will normally be sent to the first author named to whom any correspondence and reprints will also be addressed. Footnotes to the text should be avoided wherever this is reasonably possible.

All manuscripts should be made anonymous by the principal submitting author. This involves the following:

1. Removing all identifiable properties from the Word file "Properties" (particularly the author name and organisation) – this can be done as a single operation in Vista, and manually in Word.

2. Ensure the manuscript contains no mention of the authors' organisations, names, or the names of key colleagues. Substitute real names with "X" throughout – they can be placed in the article after review.

3. Similarly, all those who are being acknowledged as informal reviewers, discussants or inspirations for the submitted article should be anonymised in the manuscript. Where acknowledgements are being made, a separate section for this should appear on the front page of the manuscript, along with the key words, author's name and affiliation, a brief author biography and an abstract of not more than 150 words.

4. Where author names and organisation names cannot be avoided, then authors must accept that their article will not be anonymous. This is not preferred by the JIOA but, where inevitable, authors are required to state that they waive the right of an anonymous review. JIOA prefers submissions prepared in Microsoft Word. Word Perfect, ASCII and RTF are also acceptable.

TITLE PAGE, KEY WORDS AND AUTHOR INFORMATION:

The name(s) of the author(s) should appear only on a separate title page which should also include the author(s) affiliation and mailing address. The title page should also include a biographical note of no more than 100 words. Contact information, including telephone numbers and mailing addresses, should be provided for each author. Additionally, the Title page should include up to six key words, including the word "Ombudsman" (or whichever variant of this the author has employed in the article). A sample title page is attached. Author(s) should also submit a statement indicating all affiliations, financial or otherwise, that may compromise or appear to compromise the objectivity or unbiased nature of their submission. Such conflicts of interest may arise out of commitments involving honoraria, consultant relationships, participation in a speakers' bureau, stock holdings or options, royalties, ownership of a company or patent, research contracts or grants, and, in some instances, being an official representative of another organization. Any conflict of interest will be included as a footnote in the published manuscript.

Abstract: Please supply an abstract of 100 or fewer words with your submission. The abstract should also include a word count of the article, excluding references.

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Arabic numerals (e.g. Fig. 3). Captions for the figures should be provided and should make interpretation possible without reference to the text. Captions should include keys to symbols.

Tables should be submitted as separate files and should be given Arabic numbers (e.g. Table 3). Their approximate position in the text should be indicated. Units should appear in parentheses in the column heading but not in the body of the table. Words or numerals should be repeated on successive lines; 'ditto' or 'do' should not be used.

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Authors should conform to the Chicago Manual of Style. Authors will be consulted during the editing process, but are expected to permit minor standardizations and corrections (i.e., headings, alignments, citation formatting, standard American English spelling, and minor punctuation). JIOA encourages and promotes the use of gender-neutral language.

Please note that the Journal publishes manuscripts in accordance with the linguistic and grammatical conventions of the author's country of writing. This means that spelling ('colour' or 'color'; 'organization' or 'organisation') may vary, and Editorial and grammatical conventions may also vary (e.g., placement of citations). While the Journal will normally publish accepted manuscripts in the linguistic style and grammatical conventions of the author, the final say on this rests with the Editor.

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prepared to provide access to copies of all materials cited.

Examples of citations:

Kosakowski, T., & Miller, D. (2007). Why we get no sleep at night. *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association,* 1, 100-101.

Rowe, M.P. (1977). Go Find Yourself a Mentor. In P. Bourne & V. Parness (Eds), *Proceedings of the NSF Conference on Women's Leadership and Authority, University of California, Santa Cruz, California,* 1977 (pp 120-140). Santa Cruz: University of California Press.

Miller, D. (2000). Dying to care? Work, stress and burnout in HIV/AIDS carers. London: Taylor & Francis.

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COMPREHENSION: The Journal and its reviewers pay much attention to ease of comprehension of manuscripts. For example, is jargon used without explanation, do sentences contain more than one idea per sentence, and are paragraphs and sentences too long? Authors are requested to avoid such concerns by avoiding jargon, keeping to one idea per sentence, and keeping sentences and paragraphs short.

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JIOA accepts submissions on a rolling basis throughout the calendar year. The review process starts on the first day of every month. It is intended that decisions on publication will be made within three months of receipt of a submitted manuscript.

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JIOA will attempt to honor reasonable requests for an expedited review of submissions. However, if we are unable to give an expedited review by the date requested, you will be notified that the article has been withdrawn from consideration. To request an expedited review, please contact the JIOA Editor and provide: your name, phone number, and e-mail address; the title of the article; your deadline for a decision.

Publication Dates
JIOA is published biannually. Articles are finalized for publication in September and March.

Antidiscrimination Policy
It is the policy of JIOA not to discriminate on the basis of race, gender, age, religion, ethnic background, marital status, disability, or sexual orientation.

SAMPLE FRONT PAGE

THE WAY THINGS ARE, HAVE BEEN AND WILL BE
John Doe
Organizational Ombudsman
ABC Inc.

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Abstract:
It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, and Ombudsmen saved the day by offering ethically based, neutral, independent and confidential services to their organization ("X") and staff. This paper dissects how Ombudsmen worked in the circumstances of concern and how they might systematise future interventions, using validated procedures described in detail in the article. The outcomes are identified, quantified, and a conceptual structure for applying the lessons learned is presented.

John Doe:
John Doe is a native of Equanimity and Hard Work, and has post-graduate degrees in thinking and doing from the School of Hard Knocks in the University of Life. He has worked as an organisational Ombudsman for 30 years and in his present position (at "X") for ten.

REVIEW PROCEDURES

RESPONSIBILITIES OF EDITORS AND EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS

JIOA editors are designated as the Editor and up to four Associate Editors. The editors collaborate with an editorial board comprised of approximately twenty participants with IOA membership. The editorial board is intended to reflect the diversity of the association as best we can.

The primary contact for JIOA is the Editor who is responsible for the journal publication process and the journal website. The Editor directs the processing of manuscripts and maintains communication with the IOA Board of Directors, the Associate Editors, editorial board members/reviewers, and authors.

Editorial board members, and other IOA members designated by the Editor in special cases, are responsible for the peer reviews of the submitted manuscripts.

REVIEW PROCESS

JIOA uses a blind review process and all references to the author(s) and author's work place are removed prior to the manuscript being distributed to reviewers.

The Editor and/or Associate Editors will review each submitted manuscript to determine if the topic is appropriate for publication in JIOA. Acceptable manuscripts will be distributed electronically to three editorial board members selected by the Editor for peer review.

Manuscripts judged by the Editor and/or Associate Editors as inconsistent with the general mission of JIOA or the recognized Standards of Practice will be returned to the primary author with comments and possible suggestions for revision.

Reviewers will use a consistent and systematic set of criteria to evaluate the quality and potential of a manuscript. These criteria include items related to content, organization, style, and relevance. Review forms and comments will be returned to the Editor.

Each reviewer will recommend one of the following:

- Accept for publication as is
- Accept for publication with minor revisions as indicated
- Accept for publication after major revisions by author(s)
- Revision and resubmission for subsequent review
- Reject manuscript

The final decision on whether to publish a manuscript is made by the Editor and is based upon recommendations from the peer reviewers. If there is significant variation among the reviewers regarding the status of a manuscript the Editor may:

- Seek additional input from the reviewers
- Request an additional review
- Seek additional input from the Associate Editors

Reviewers' comments will be provided to the primary author. However, the reviewers of a specific manuscript will remain anonymous. It is the policy of JIOA to work with authors to facilitate quality publications. The Editor may suggest or an author may request that a member of the editorial board be available to provide assistance at various stages of the preparation and publication process.

NOTES FOR JIOA REVIEWERS

Reviewing manuscripts for JIOA must be undertaken in accordance with the principles of the IOA — by demonstrating independence, neutrality and confidentiality. This requires that manuscripts be accorded the status of office visitors. The content of reviewed manuscripts and of reviews should not be shared with anyone other than the Editor of the JIOA.

It is important for reviews to have a forward-looking, beneficial intent – this is an opportunity to give feedback that will help nurture, guide and develop authorship. It is not an exercise in showing you know more, are wiser or more clever and literate in the subject matter! Authors should learn from reviews and take away from the review a sense of future direction and beneficial development for their paper.

The aim of the review is to strengthen contributions to the JIOA, and thereby strengthen the Ombudsman profession. In this sense, a review is as much a critique of the reviewer as of the manuscript. Accordingly, it is a requirement that all reviews offer information that can help guide the author. Although reviews are confidential (i.e., the manuscript author does not know who the reviewers are), they are best written as though the author is in the room. Accordingly, a useful test of the reviewers' assertions is the "Old Bailey" test: If they were standing in the dock at the Old Bailey, would they be able to justify their assertions to the author? Are they making statements that are justifiable, verifiable and credible, or just say-so? Does the tone of their review convey the IOA Standards of Practice in practice?

Reviewers are asked to look out for issues of comprehension in manuscripts, particularly:

- Make strong recommendations, where appropriate, for authors to break up long paragraphs;

- Avoid and, where possible, eliminate jargon;

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IOA STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

PREAMBLE

The IOA Standards of Practice are based upon and derived from the ethical principles stated in the IOA Code of Ethics. Each Ombudsman office should have an organizational Charter or Terms of Reference, approved by senior management, articulating the principles of the Ombudsman function in that organization and their consistency with the IOA Standards of Practice.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE
INDEPENDENCE

1.1 The Ombudsman Office and the Ombudsman are independent from other organizational entities.

1.2 The Ombudsman holds no other position within the organization which might compromise independence.

1.3 The Ombudsman exercises sole discretion over whether or how to act regarding an individual's concern, a trend or concerns of multiple individuals over time. The Ombudsman may also initiate action on a concern identified through the Ombudsman' direct observation.

1.4 The Ombudsman has access to all information and all individuals in the organization, as permitted by law.

1.5 The Ombudsman has authority to select Ombudsman Office staff and manage Ombudsman Office budget and operations.

NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

2.1 The Ombudsman is neutral, impartial, and unaligned.

2.2 The Ombudsman strives for impartiality, fairness and objectivity in the treatment of people and the consideration of issues. The Ombudsman advocates for fair and equitably administered processes and does not advocate on behalf of any individual within the organization.

2.3 The Ombudsman is a designated neutral reporting to the highest possible level of the organization and operating independent of ordinary line and staff structures. The Ombudsman should not report to nor be structurally affiliated with any compliance function of the organization.

2.4 The Ombudsman serves in no additional role within the organization which would compromise the Ombudsman' neutrality. The Ombudsman should not be aligned with any formal or informal associations within the organization in a way that might create actual or perceived conflicts of interest for the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman should have no personal interest or stake in, and incur no gain or loss from, the outcome of an issue.

2.5 The Ombudsman has a responsibility to consider the legitimate concerns and interests of all individuals affected by the matter under consideration.

2.6 The Ombudsman helps develop a range of responsible options to resolve problems and facilitate discussion to identify the best options.

CONFIDENTIALITY

3.1 The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and takes all reasonable steps to safeguard confidentiality, including the following:

The Ombudsman does not reveal, and must not be required to reveal, the identity of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, nor does the Ombudsman reveal information provided in confidence that could lead to the identification of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, without that individual's express permission, given in the course of informal discussions with the Ombudsman; the

Ombudsman takes specific action related to an individual's issue only with the individual's express permission and only to the extent permitted, and even then at the sole discretion of the Ombudsman, unless such action can be taken in a way that safeguards the identity of the individual contacting the Ombudsman Office. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm, and where there is no other reasonable option. Whether this risk exists is a determination to be made by the Ombudsman.

3.2 Communications between the Ombudsman and others (made while the Ombudsman is serving in that capacity) are considered privileged. The privilege belongs to the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman Office, rather than to any party to an issue. Others cannot waive this privilege.

3.3 The Ombudsman does not testify in any formal process inside the organization and resists testifying in any formal process outside of the organization regarding a visitor's contact with the Ombudsman or confidential information communicated to the Ombudsman, even if given permission or requested to do so. The Ombudsman may, however, provide general, non-confidential information about the Ombudsman Office or the Ombudsman profession.

3.4 If the Ombudsman pursues an issue systemically (e.g., provides feedback on trends, issues, policies and practices) the Ombudsman does so in a way that safeguards the identity of individuals.

3.5 The Ombudsman keeps no records containing identifying information on behalf of the organization.

3.6 The Ombudsman maintains information (e.g., notes, phone messages, appointment calendars) in a secure location and manner, protected from inspection by others (including management), and has

a consistent and standard practice for the destruction of such information.

3.7 The Ombudsman prepares any data and/or reports in a manner that protects confidentiality.

3.8 Communications made to the Ombudsman are not notice to the organization. The Ombudsman neither acts as agent for, nor accepts notice on behalf of, the organization and shall not serve in a position or role that is designated by the organization as a place to receive notice on behalf of the organization. However, the Ombudsman mayvrefer individuals to the appropriate place where formal notice can be made.

INFORMALITY AND OTHER STANDARDS

4.1 The Ombudsman functions on an informal basis by such means as: listening, providing and receiving information, identifying and reframing issues, developing a range of responsible options, and – with permission and at Ombudsman discretion – engaging in informal third-party intervention.When possible, the Ombudsman helps people develop new ways to solve problems themselves.

4.2 The Ombudsman as an informal and off-therecord resource pursues resolution of concerns and looks into procedural irregularities and/or broader systemic problems when appropriate.

4.3 The Ombudsman does not make binding decisions,

mandate policies, or formally adjudicate issues for the organization.

4.4 The Ombudsman supplements, but does not replace, any formal channels. Use of the Ombudsman Office is voluntary, and is not a required step in any grievance process or organizational policy.

4.5 The Ombudsman does not participate in any formal investigative or adjudicative procedures. Formal investigations should be conducted by others. When a formal investigation is requested, the Ombudsman refers individuals to the appropriate offices or individual.

4.6 The Ombudsman identifies trends, issues and concerns about policies and procedures, including potential future issues and concerns, without breaching confidentiality or anonymity, and provides recommendations for responsibly addressing them.

4.7 The Ombudsman acts in accordance with the IOA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, keeps professionally current by pursuing continuing education, and provides opportunities for staff to pursue professional training.

4.8 The Ombudsman endeavors to be worthy of the trust placed in the Ombudsman Office.

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