



BEYOND PROBLEMS: THE WHAT, WHY, AND HOW OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL OMBUDS

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes the strategic integration of positive psychology research and interventions into the work of organizational ombuds. The purpose of that integration is to advance the wellbeing of ombuds, our visitors and organizations, and our field. The paper will review the *what*, *why*, and *how* of positive psychology, emphasizing that *when* to integrate positive psychology into ombuds work is now.

KEYWORDS

positive psychology, ombuds, positive organizations

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This paper is dedicated to my mentor and friend, Howard Gadlin, with heartfelt gratitude. I extend that gratitude to my family and friends, my MAPP advisor Jane Dutton, and the MAPP community. I also acknowledge with deep appreciation the support of Ron Vale and Janelia/HHMI, and the thoughtful feedback from the *JIOA* review process.



INTRODUCTION

This paper proposes the strategic integration of positive psychology research and interventions into the work of organizational ombuds. The purpose of that integration is to advance the wellbeing of ombuds, our visitors and organizations, and our field. The paper will review the *what*, *why*, and *how* of positive psychology, emphasizing that *when* to integrate positive psychology into ombuds work is now. Although the paper primarily focuses on research and practices relevant to organizational ombuds in the United States, the intent is to prompt a global dialogue through this publication in the *Journal of the International Ombuds Association* following my presentation on this topic at the annual conference of the International Ombuds Association.

As a point of ongoing emphasis, advocating for the use of positive psychology research as a tool to advance ombuds practice does not explicitly or implicitly suggest that ombuds assume or substitute for the role of psychologists. To the contrary, I have emphasized that ombuds must be mindful that we do not diagnose or treat mental illness. We must continue to be vigilant in coordinating with and referring to mental health experts as appropriate. In a similar vein, ombuds' application of our knowledge of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and other relevant laws to our work does not necessarily encroach on the turf of lawyers or require a law degree. Accordingly, my argument is that organizational ombuds can- and must- continue to expand our knowledge, reinforce our impact, and advance our field while respecting the boundaries of our role relative to the role of other experts.

WHAT IS POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY?

Positive psychology is defined as the “science of positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). To support an accurate understanding and application of that definition, however, it is important to consider the context of how the field of positive psychology has evolved. That analysis reveals several parallels or synergies with the organizational ombuds field in the United States.

First, as detailed below, the field of positive psychology is still relatively new to the United States, as is the organizational ombuds field, which can increase vulnerability to confusion or misunderstanding by the public. That vulnerability can jeopardize the credibility of positive psychology, reinforcing the ongoing need for empirical support and the broad dissemination of accurate information and research findings. Otherwise, positive psychology can be conflated with a “toxic” positivity that is not genuine, realistic, or sustainable- when to the contrary, positive psychology promotes wellbeing that is authentic and attainable and inspires research to make that status of wellbeing sustainable (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Second, as a restatement of the thesis of this paper: while the positive psychology field, similar to the ombuds field, is informed by what is, was, or could be wrong with the population it serves, positive psychology leverages research-based theories and interventions to maximize what is or can be right. More specifically, a key connection between the ombuds field and the positive psychology field is their common objective to promote wellbeing. For positive psychology, that goal signifies a deliberate return to the broader construct of psychology before World War II (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). During that time, psychology focused not only on the assessment and treatment of mental illness but also on helping people to lead more productive and fulfilling lives (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). After World War II, the former focus eclipsed the latter until the end of the twentieth century (Seligman, 2018).

In 1998, Dr. Martin Seligman's presidential address to the American Psychological Association advocated reclaiming psychology's emphasis on optimal wellbeing or human flourishing, launching the science of positive psychology in the United States (Seligman, 2018).

Notably, the reference to positive psychology as a “science” underscores the importance of ongoing empirical support for the progress and credibility of the field. Additionally, the term “positive” is technical, capturing a status of wellbeing beyond a fleeting sense of happiness or pleasure, and beyond a neutral point that marks the absence of ill-being (Pawelski, 2016). Over the past few decades, there has been a trend of research supporting the application of positive psychology to work settings (Martín-del-Río et al., 2021; Donaldson et al, 2019). That trend has established the subdiscipline of *positive organizational psychology*, as the “scientific study of positive subjective experiences and traits in the workplace and positive organizations, and its application to improve the effectiveness and quality of life in organizations” (Donaldson & Ko, 2010, p.177).

For the reasons argued throughout this paper, it is time for ombuds to tap into that domain of positive organizational psychology, to help us explain, perform, and evaluate our work, advancing our field. As a first step to that end, ombuds can consider Dr. Seligman’s (2011) *PERMA* framework for flourishing. PERMA is an acronym that represents five measurable elements of psychological wellbeing that enable flourishing: (1) **p**ositive emotions, (2) **e**ngagement, (3) **r**elationships, (4) **m**eaning, and (5) **a**ccomplishment. Each of these elements is elaborated below, in the specific context of ombuds work. To date, the five elements of the PERMA model have been widely researched and validated, although scholars have proposed the inclusion of additional elements (Donaldson et al., 2022).

WHY IS POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY RELEVANT TO OMBUDS?

Positive psychology is relevant to organizational ombuds because it can help to advance our practices and our field in at least two important ways: (1) by promoting awareness of the broader scope of ombuds’ roles and services beyond conflict resolution; and (2) by providing research-based theories and practices that can improve ombuds’ efficacy and credibility.

PROMOTING AWARENESS OF OMBUDS’ BROADER ROLE AND SERVICES

Integrating positive psychology theories and practices into ombuds work can improve the understanding and appreciation- by ombuds’ organizations and visitors and by the public- of ombuds’ value. Specifically, ombuds can leverage positive psychology to reinforce the fact that we are not just brokers of problems in organizations. For many years, when I answered the inevitable question of what an organizational ombuds is or does, I defaulted to the response that I address work-related problems. I still consider that response to be accurate, especially since the International Ombuds Association (n.d.) has summarized the mission of ombuds as helping individuals and groups to resolve conflicts or concerns. Yet as I gained further experience as an organizational ombuds, I began to view that framing as incomplete and potentially problematic for three main reasons.

First, it can be misleading to associate organizational ombuds exclusively with problems. It is not always accurate or useful to assume the existence or threat of a conflict when an ombuds is involved. Plenty of visitors have engaged me under circumstances unrelated to conflict, such as preparing for a new role or promotion, or to better understand a policy or process, or to brainstorm options or implementation strategies for a new initiative, among other considerations. While it may be argued that those types of cases mitigate future conflicts, I consider their primary intent as maximizing options, productivity, and positive experiences or outcomes at work. Likewise, ombuds can use our annual reports to reflect on our cases in a way that identifies and leverages what is going well in our organizations. For example, one of my reports highlighted the trend of managers engaging me to facilitate meaningful discussions and connections with their teams relating to the new set of institutional values that our organization announced.



Second, associating ombuds exclusively with problems can fuel concerns and stigma about the ombuds role. That negativity can translate to barriers in creating or retaining ombuds positions and/or visitor engagement, to the extent that organization members (perhaps especially leaders) perceive the risk of reputational costs to outweigh potential benefits from ombuds work. Over the years, I have fielded many questions about whether the presence of an ombuds automatically signals to stakeholders, including members of the organization and the public, that we are a “problem organization,” or whether the presence or increase of ombuds cases indicates a predominance of “problem employees.” Ultimately, that perception can undermine the progress of individual ombuds, our programs, and our field. For example, by that logic, the lack of an ombuds or a decrease in ombuds cases could be interpreted unequivocally as a positive sign of their organization’s wellbeing, whereas organizational ombuds understand that the meaning can be far more nuanced.

Third, it is not always valid to assume that conflicts are possible or appropriate for organizational ombuds to resolve. For example, visitors may not have sufficient desire, perspective, or capacity to invest in conflict resolution. In some of my cases, visitors have been unable or unwilling to do the work to improve their circumstances; they seemed to expect that I wave a magic wand to eliminate in a single session the complex interpersonal tensions that had compounded over many years! Additionally, there may be legal or technical issues or implications that are beyond the scope of ombuds practice. Among other considerations, and especially given the mental health crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Antonova et al., 2021), it is beyond the scope of ombuds practice to diagnose or treat mental health issues that can contribute to conflicts.

Finally, the resolution of conflicts by ombuds may not even be desirable, at least in some cases. Although conflicts within groups can have detrimental effects on the progress of group projects and relationships of group members, not all conflicts are destructive to group dynamics (Deutsch, 1994). For example, conflicts within groups can be constructive to the extent that group members express disagreement or different perspectives respectfully, such as focusing criticism on tasks instead of on people (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Encouraging constructive conflict as a social norm can enhance group communication, creativity, and productivity by freeing ideas from perceived or actual threats of being silenced, regulated, or punished (Nemeth et al., 2004). There is potential to derive similar benefits from constructive conflicts even within dyads at work (Van de Vliert et al., 1999). Accordingly, instead of aiming exclusively to resolve all conflicts, ombuds can add value by facilitating the respectful expression and understanding of different perspectives.

Given all the considerations above, typecasting organizational ombuds as problem-solvers ultimately can impede our practices and field. Therefore, ombuds can benefit from a new narrative about our work that accommodates the broader scope of our role and services beyond conflict management or resolution, to address the nuanced needs of our visitors and organizations and to advance our field. That type of narrative aligns with prior calls to reimagine organizational ombuds as transformational leaders with an activist orientation to systemic challenges (Blair, 2017; Houk et al., 2016; Gadlin, 2014). Collectively, these circumstances elevate the potential of integrating positive psychology into organizational ombuds practices to maximize what is or can be right about our organizations, instead of focusing exclusively on what is, has been, or could be wrong.

Accordingly, organizational ombuds can use positive psychology to reframe our mission: ombuds not only seek to mitigate conflict or concerns but also seek to enhance the wellbeing of our visitors and organizations. That restatement is timely. A study of academic ombuds offices in Texas reported an increase in cases focused on visitors’ desire to improve their wellbeing (Hijal-Moghrabi, 2023). That increase may represent a broader trend that reflects the current mental health crisis exacerbated by the pandemic, as previously noted. Indeed, a 2023 article by the president of IOA’s International Committee, analyzing the profound effects of COVID-19 on



ombuds, visitors, and organizations, noted a higher prevalence of fatigue, anxiety, stress, and emotionally-charged issues in casework in his office and his colleagues' offices (Wright, 2023). While I emphasized above that it is beyond the scope of ombuds to diagnose or treat mental illness, I believe this context of a heightened sensitivity to wellbeing provides a sense of opportunity, if not urgency, to reaffirm ombuds' value beyond conflict resolution by applying positive psychology as a tool to optimize the wellbeing of our visitors, our organizations, and ourselves.

PROMOTING OMBUDS' EFFICACY AND CREDIBILITY

A second way that positive psychology can help to advance ombuds work and the ombuds field is by providing a growing base of research to inform and support ombuds' strategies. Incorporating research more transparently and consistently can bolster the credibility and perceived value of ombuds work, beyond the subjective experiences and opinions of individual ombuds. Research in positive psychology can illuminate correlations or even causal relationships between specific strategies or interventions and wellbeing, as referenced below. Especially when replicated by other researchers in subsequent studies, that research can indicate how and why certain ombuds strategies are (not) effective, which can contribute to a better understanding and uptake of promising practices in the ombuds field.

As the largest global society of professional organizational ombuds, the International Ombuds Association (IOA) can be an important convener for discussions about those promising practices and the risks of using and/or conducting research. That deliberation is important to ensure adherence to IOA's (2022) Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. For example, it can be challenging on many levels for ombuds to conduct research related to our practices. We must navigate barriers beyond the typical constraints of costs and time, such as the expectation of confidentiality and lack of formal recordkeeping, among other considerations. Ombuds also must beware of limitations to the generalizability of research findings. For example, the typical use of Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (*WEIRD*) study participants in academic research can be problematic on many levels, as relatively wealthy and predominantly white American undergraduate students who participate disproportionately in research studies are not representative of the world's population (Henrich et al., 2010). Accordingly, ombuds must proceed with caution in interpreting, applying, and conducting research. We must cater our approaches to best suit the specific needs of our visitors and organizations, and we must remain vigilant about acknowledging and mitigating biases and inequities.

HOW CAN OMBUDS USE POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY?

Organizational ombuds can use positive psychology to help us articulate, accomplish, and assess our work, ultimately advancing our field. More specifically, PERMA can serve as a framework to explain the full scope and significance of ombuds services, and as a foundation to enhance those services through research-based theories and interventions. To that end, ombuds can be more intentional about addressing the elements of PERMA in our work and our communication about our work.

POSITIVE EMOTIONS

First, ombuds can capitalize on positive psychology research to be even more effective in reinforcing authentic *positive emotions*, such as hope, gratitude, and joy (Fredrickson, 2009), within our visitors and throughout our organizations. Ombuds can evoke positive emotions in many ways, including active listening and ongoing support to help others feel welcome, seen,



heard, and valued. Consistent with the *broaden-and-build* theory (Fredrickson, 2009, p.12) that is central to positive psychology, positive emotions not only increase subjective wellbeing but also motivate action by broadening one's mind to build new options. For instance, if a visitor is feeling discouraged or stuck by his perception that nothing is going well at work, the ombuds can spread the positive emotion of hope by surfacing a new perspective or by sharing information about and referrals to additional resources, such as mental health experts.

Ombuds also can consult positive psychology research to recommend actions to visitors that can bolster positive emotions and motivate constructive action. In the case described above involving a discouraged visitor, options may include asking the visitor to record at least one item at work that did go well and the cause(s) for the item(s) every night for at least one week; and/or asking the visitor to write a letter expressing gratitude to someone who positively impacted his career or life, and then delivering and reading that letter in person (Seligman et al., 2005). As detailed below, because positive emotions are contagious, with potential to elevate the wellbeing of an organization (Fowler & Christakis, 2008), those types of efforts can yield individual and systemic benefits that enhance the wellbeing of ombuds and our visitors and organizations.

Even in cases that focus on helping individual visitors or relatively small groups of visitors, promoting positive emotions in the deliberate ways referenced above can fuel "upward spirals" (Fredrickson, 2009, p.16) of positivity that boost the wellbeing of ombuds, visitors, and other people throughout our organizations, due to social networks in which each visitor and ombuds are embedded (Fowler & Christakis, 2008). Indeed, research indicates that people surrounded by and connected to happy people are more likely to be happy, and that happiness can spread three degrees, to friends of friends (Fowler & Christakis, 2008). Accordingly, organizations can reap systemic benefits of positive emotions that are harvested in individual ombuds cases. That potential to elevate the wellbeing of visitors, ombuds, and organizations underscores the value of ombuds work and demonstrates the compelling benefits of integrating positive psychology into our work and our field.

ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOMPLISHMENT

Second, ombuds can address two additional elements of PERMA by connecting our work in conflict management to the objective of increasing visitors' engagement and accomplishment. Those two PERMA elements encapsulate how ombuds can use positive psychology to help our visitors maximize productivity at work. Specifically, ombuds' assistance with conflict management can mitigate workplace disruptions and distractions, enabling our visitors and their colleagues to focus more intently on their jobs. That heightened focus can translate to a level of complete absorption or *engagement* (Seligman, 2011) in work-related tasks, which can enhance the capacity and motivation to accomplish those tasks (Davis et al., 2016). That dynamic can drive workers' further investment in and service to their organizations, which can boost wellbeing for all involved (Smith, 2017).

Positive psychology can provide ombuds with research-based strategies to facilitate engagement and accomplishment at work. One strategy is for ombuds to identify and engage visitors' *character strengths*, positive traits demonstrated in feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that boost individual and collective wellbeing (Niemi, 2019). To that end, ombuds can guide clients through the *Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA)*, an evidence-based survey that generates a unique profile for individuals, indicating the relative prominence of 24 character strengths that map to the six core virtues of wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Greater awareness and utility of those strengths can boost visitors' wellbeing by reorienting visitors to what is positive in themselves and others, and by inspiring visitors to use their strengths in new and more deliberate ways (Schutte & Malouff, 2019).



On a related note, a second positive psychology strategy to fuel the cycle of engagement and accomplishment at work is *job-crafting*, a brainstorming process designed to promote greater alignment between one's character strengths and one's work-related tasks, to boost wellbeing (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Ombuds can use that process to empower visitors (or themselves) to reframe or reprioritize certain aspects or boundaries of their jobs in ways that remain consistent with the expectations and approval of their organization (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). For instance, through the process of job crafting, one of my visitors realized that she was spending a disproportionate amount of time on tasks that were not central to her role and that she did not enjoy. She discovered that she did not need to change her job to improve her personal and professional wellbeing; she just needed to be more vigilant about preventing extraneous tasks from overwhelming or undermining the core responsibilities in her job description. While that realization may seem simple, it motivated her to develop a concrete plan to streamline or delegate those extraneous tasks and to communicate more clearly and widely about her main responsibilities. Even if visitors do not or cannot actualize their job-crafted ideal immediately in their current roles, the job crafting process can help to clarify the type of job that could be a better fit in the future.

RELATIONSHIPS

A third way that ombuds can use positive psychology research is to advance our efforts to strengthen interpersonal relationships in our organizations. Ombuds nurture social relationships in many ways. Specifically, we improve our visitors' communication and collaboration through services such as facilitated discussions, shuttle diplomacy, and coaching. Research has confirmed that positive relationships can elevate wellbeing by benefiting mental health, physical health, and mortality risk (Umberson & Montez, 2010). For visitors- perhaps especially those in senior leadership roles- who consider social relationships at work to be unnecessary or distracting, ombuds also can point to research indicating that such relationships not only can improve wellbeing but also can boost productivity (Park et al., 2004). Accordingly, developing and sustaining positive relationships at work can improve the wellbeing of organizations and their members, as evidenced by increases in morale, recruitment and retention, and other factors involving organizations' culture and bottom line (Smith, 2017).

Research in positive psychology can offer additional strategies for ombuds to strengthen interpersonal relationships at work. For example, ombuds can incorporate research on *high-quality connections* to facilitate social interactions that support positive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral experiences at an individual level and that generate benefits at a systemic level, enhancing organizational culture (Dutton, 2003). Specifically, ombuds can support visitors in addressing the three main components of high-quality connections by helping visitors engage respectfully with colleagues, facilitate the completion of work-related tasks, and build trust (Dutton, 2003). Ombuds can target one or more of those components in casework that centers on developing or restoring visitors' relationships. For example, ombuds can help visitors build trust by emphasizing the benefits of having and assuming positive intentions; being forthcoming with relevant and appropriate information; and requesting and responding to input in a positive way (Dutton, 2003). Ombuds also can model those behaviors during our interactions with visitors, to promote trust within the ombuds/visitor relationship.

Active-constructive responding (Gable et al., 2004) is a second positive psychology intervention that ombuds can consider to enhance interpersonal relationships and wellbeing at work. That strategy focuses on how a listener responds when others share good news about themselves, when the news does not directly affect the listener. Instead of just offering a platitude such as, "That's nice," an active-constructive response acknowledges why and how the news is positive and important to the person who is sharing it (Gable et al., 2004). For instance, if a colleague tells our visitor about that colleague's outstanding performance review, our visitor can acknowledge



the colleague's tireless efforts, perhaps referencing a specific project or two, and can emphasize how meaningful it must be to have that work appreciated by the organization. Ombuds also can use active-constructive responding in our interactions with our visitors and colleagues, to be more intentional about reacting in ways that boost wellbeing.

There is promising empirical support for the potential of active-constructive responding to strengthen relationships and wellbeing, as indicated by measures of commitment and satisfaction of both parties in the relationship (Gable et al., 2006). In fact, how listeners respond to positive event disclosures can be more predictive of relationship wellbeing than responses to negative event disclosures (Gable et al., 2006). That research finding- that responses to the good news of others can matter more than responses to their bad news- supports the value and impact of ombuds beyond circumstances of conflicts or concerns. For example, ombuds can suggest active-constructive responding as a strategy in cases with managers who do not present specific conflicts or concerns yet want to sustain or enhance the morale of their teams. In those and other cases, ombuds can help to model and encourage active-constructive responding to mobilize a vision of progress and a culture of camaraderie. Indeed, research indicates that active-constructive responding can promote positive emotions and wellbeing for all involved in the communication (Gable et al., 2004). That dynamic is consistent with the "virtuous cycle" of affirming behavior that Mary Rowe (2023, p.5) has encouraged ombuds to model and facilitate, to reinforce a culture of belonging in organizations. Given how wellbeing spreads through social networks, the benefits of active-constructive responding can extend to ombuds in our casework, to our visitors who learn, apply, and share that practice, and to members of our organizations included in our social networks.

MEANING

Finally, ombuds can use positive psychology research to enrich *meaning* at work by helping to address visitors' sense of purpose, values, efficacy, and self-worth (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). Specifically, ombuds can use positive psychology as a tool to facilitate visitors' sense of belonging. For example, ombuds can encourage visitors to participate (more) actively in their organizations' communities by forming or joining groups based on their social or cultural identities or other interests, ranging from a choir to an affinity group (Smith, 2017). Additionally, in annual reports or other channels for systemic recommendations, ombuds can suggest that organizations consider employee appreciation initiatives, such as congratulatory notes or tokens to commemorate employees' work anniversaries or other milestones. Cultivating meaning through belonging in these and other ways can improve visitors' wellbeing by validating the sense that they *matter*: that they are valued by their organizations, and that they can add value to their organizations (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021).

The connection between feeling valued and adding value underscores that employee wellbeing translates to the wellbeing of organizations, affecting employee productivity, morale, recruitment, and retention (Smith, 2017). There is promising research to support those links (Krekel et al., 2019). Generally, employees' perception that their organization advances the wellbeing of its members can foster a culture that focuses on collective strengths and promotes cohesion, empowerment, and progress (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021). Ombuds can help to advance that culture, especially through casework and systemic work promoting belonging. For example, ombuds can consider recommending and/or facilitating listening sessions between our organizations' leadership and broader communities, to improve the awareness and understanding of different perspectives and needs, and to expand the channels for constructive communication and actions.

Another way that ombuds can use positive psychology to unlock meaning is by helping visitors reframe and navigate work-related challenges. Especially given IOA standards of confidentiality



and informality, ombuds sessions can serve as a relatively protected space for visitors to share stories of adversity and process the meaning of those events. In those cases, ombuds can use research-based techniques to guide visitors in becoming the architects of their meaning and wellbeing. For example, *meaning-making* is the process of interpreting adversity through the lens of a central life purpose (e.g., an opportunity for visitors to reinforce their commitment to the standards of their religion) or through the lens of personal or professional development (Kashdan & McKnight, 2009). That process can improve visitors' understanding of how and why those inflection points impacted their careers and lives (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002), which can increase visitors' self-awareness, improve their subjective wellbeing, enhance their communication and collaboration with colleagues, and boost their capacity to transcend current or future adversity (Smith, 2017). Ombuds must be alert, however, that the storytelling process can be associated with a decrease in visitors' affect, at least in the immediate short-term (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). That prospect underscores the potential need for coordination with and/or referrals to mental health experts, especially if visitors do not feel willing or able to move beyond the adversity.

Supporting visitors through the meaning-making process can reinforce the meaning of ombuds work and the ombuds role, promoting wellbeing for ombuds and our visitors. Specifically, ombuds' awareness that boosting visitors' wellbeing can elevate our wellbeing contributes to a joint or reciprocal experience of positive emotions, such as gratitude (Fletcher, 2021). As explained above, those positive emotions can generate upward spirals of positivity that broaden and build (Fredrickson, 2009), extending to ombuds' organizations and ultimately to the progress of our field.

CONCLUSION

The exclusive focus on mitigating problems has diminished the full potential of organizational ombuds in the United States, just as it diminished the field of psychology. As an antidote, ombuds can use research-based theories and interventions in positive psychology to highlight our value and impact beyond problem-solving. Specifically, the PERMA framework of optimal wellbeing offers five measurable and validated components of flourishing, which can help ombuds explain, accomplish, and assess our work. While conflict management still has an important role in that work, the PERMA framework provides context and clarity to put that responsibility into perspective as one dimension of the multi-dimensional role, purpose, and value of organizational ombuds.



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