**Session Title**: WOB Live 2.0: A Roundtable for Women in Organizational Behavior

**Abstract:** Many women in academia share a common set of challenges, in the classroom and across their careers. This roundtable is an opportunity for women in organizational behavior and adjacent disciplines (including, but not limited to, organizational theory, leadership, entrepreneurship, strategy, and I/O psychology) to gather and connect for the purpose of sharing their concerns, lessons learned, and best practices. Participants will address topics such as classroom management, teaching best practices, mentorships, and research productivity in a safe space. Through a semi-structured discussion forum, participants will collectively reflect on their experiences and discuss pressing topics in the contemporary classroom, all while building their academic support networks. This forum provides a “bridge” for women in organizational behavior to connect and reinforces existing connections and positivity among participants.

**Keywords**: Women in Academia, Affinity Group, Mentorship

**Session Format:** 75- minute Roundtable

**Resources Needed**: Movable chairs to sit in a circle or move to circles.

**Introduction:**

The Women of Organizational Behavior (WOB) is a Facebook Group open to interested women, including those who identify as women and non-binary, who hold academic positions in Organizational Behavior or related fields. This group was founded in early 2018 as part of a growing trend highlighting the importance of affinity groups similar to the inaugural 2018 Academy of Management session entitled “And Yet She Persisted: Tools for Succeeding as a Woman Academic” (Farkas & Soderstrom, 2020). The group is a vehicle for sharing resources, knowledge, and how to overcome challenges that are unique to female academics. These challenges include slower turnaround times on manuscripts (Hengel, 2019), difficulty receiving maximum credit for research contributions when working in a team (Sarsons, 2017), biased student evaluations (Mengel et al., 2019, Boring et al., 2016), and cultural issues that disregard or undervalue the professionalism of women (Kossek et al., 2017; Rivera, 2017). There are currently over 1,100 members of the WOB group with an average of 1 post on the site per day, ranging from teaching-related questions to resource requests to questions that advance the status of women in the field.

This roundtable will provide a place for current members of WOB as well as other interested individuals to connect and share. Specifically, this will create space for members of this group to meet in person for the first time. While the virtual space has helped many to navigate barriers, advance their careers, and find support especially during the last two years, getting a chance to meet in person would help to create stronger relationships and discuss issues that may not be comfortable or safe to discuss online. Getting a chance to share stories and reflect on previous experiences together can help women educators to feel connected to MOBTS and to academia. The session is open to WOB members and anyone interested in helping to build a supportive community of women academics in organizational behavior.

**Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications**:

For female academics, career progression is often more tumultuous than for their male counterparts (David, 2015). In the US, women are overrepresented in non-tenure-track positions (American Association of University Professors, 2018). Among those who secure a tenure-track position, long-term outcomes differ by gender. Women occupy a smaller proportion of senior and leadership positions (Catalyst, 2020; Debede, 2011; Knipfer et al., 2017), even in fields where they earn the vast majority of doctoral degrees (e.g., psychology; Gruber et al., 2021). These inequalities were once assumed to be consequences of differential research productivity; however, recent evidence suggests that female scholars exhibit comparable or even higher productivity and impact than men (Huang et al., 2020; Nielsen, 2017). Further, reducing the conversation to research productivity neglects other key factors. For example, women are more likely to carry the burden of non-promotable tasks (Babcock et al., 2018). Within the academic context, female faculty are more likely to conduct emotionally taxing activities, including service roles that are critical to institutional functioning but not explicitly valued (Bellas, 1999). As well, female faculty members are less likely to secure the mentoring and support needed to be promoted to the rank of Professor (Geisler et al., 2007). Combined with problematic evaluation structures within academia (e.g., student evaluations; Mengel et al., 2019), women face significant obstacles. Support networks and affinity groups help women to discuss such issues and may also contribute to positive mental wellbeing in educators (Edwards et al., 2021).

Affinity groups like WOB can provide mentoring resources and valuable social capital that may benefit female faculty. Research has shown that high-quality mentoring relationships, whether formal or informal, positively affect proteges' attitudes, including increasing career commitment and lessening their desire to quit (Ragins et al., 2000) and extensive mentoring relationships have been associated with higher salaries and more promotions (Dreher & Ash, 1990). Research indicates that female mentors may provide a particularly valuable resource to female proteges as role models (Ragins & McFarland, 1989). While some colleges and universities have their own mentorship programs, many do not and thus there may be even more value in informal, external mentoring resources. In fact, Ragins and colleagues (2000) found that formal mentoring programs may be less effective for women and in fact may lessen career commitment for them. Their findings also suggest that mentors from the same department as their protege are less effective than cross-departmental relationships. Joshi and colleagues (2015) take this further to suggest that industry-wide mentoring groups may be particularly beneficial, as within-organization groups do not necessarily benefit women’s career advancement (Ibarra et al., 2010). Thus, access to and interaction with faculty from a wide variety of institutions may be particularly beneficial for women. Peripheral interactions with an affinity group like WOB may provide the kind of “weak ties” that are beneficial in finding a job ([Granovetter, 1982](https://journals.aom.org/doi/10.5465/20159624#B84)), whereas more involvement may help build stronger connections to well-connected women in the field, helping gain access to important networks for career advancement (Brass et. al, 2004). Affinity groups can also help women’s search for voice in academia and offer a community to strengthen their voice and encourage others to find theirs (Gallos, 2017).

Furthermore, mentorship groups like WOB help female academics to develop as teachers and advocates for their students. They provide a safe environment to explore, assess, and assist instructors in developing teaching skills, specifically in the last years developing tools and exercises suitable for virtual experiential learning. Members have found that applying what they have learned from others in this group to enhance their students’ engagement and learning. Additionally, these developments have led to publications on synchronous virtual experiential learning (Hearn et al., 2021). Advice shared during synchronous WOB writing retreats have helped members to address inequities in how teaching research and service awards were allocated (Schneider & Radhakrishnan 2018). In this way, the WOB was a source of continued professional support and encouragement for women of color who face both racial and gender inequities in academia (Radhakrishnan et al., 2021) which helps to make management education a more equitable place for all faculty and students. Such groups help women academics handle the unique obstacles they face in becoming leaders in their fields (Sugiyama et al., 2016) and becoming role models for their students.

In terms of communication format, research has pointed to the benefits of combining in-person meetings with distance communication. Peer-to-peer connections over social media platforms can have significant positive impact on well-being, providing people multiple opportunities to share resources and experiences (Rothkrantz, 2015). In-person meetings can further enhance this sense of connection and enhance trust, group identification and engagement by reducing feelings of interpersonal distance experienced in virtual groups (Gibson & Cohen, 2003; Watkins, 2013). The in-person setting at the conference will also provide an avenue for new members to form proximal connections and build new networks. Finally, this roundtable would answer a call from recent research indicating that during Covid women sought more mentorship in general (van Esch, Luse, & Bonner, 2021).

**Session Description:**

The session will begin with short introductions of all facilitators and participants. We will give everyone a chance to share who they are, what aspects of their job they are most excited about, and why they decided to attend the roundtable. We will allow the participants to choose if they would like to break off into smaller groups or to have one large discussion. In the first run of this forum in 2022, participants broke into four groups: Research collaboration, General resources, Mid-career (post-tenure) career planning, and Late-career planning.

The following questions will be provided as a conversation starter.

* Teaching best practices
  + How do we handle some of the unique challenges of women in the classroom?
  + What successful strategies have you employed to overcome the double bind?
  + What mistakes have you made in the classroom or in class administration and what have you learned from them?
  + What metrics does your institution use to measure teaching effectiveness? What are best practices here? How can we sell this issue effectively to upper administration? How should we frame teaching success in tenure and promotion materials?
  + What can we do to minimize the impact of negative comments in teaching evaluations for ourselves and our T&P decisions? How have you been able to process qualitative evaluations in an emotionally healthy and helpful way?
* Mentorship
  + How can you find helpful mentors? What are best practices for managing the mentorship relationship?
  + How can we better support colleagues in their teaching? What approaches to observation, mentoring, and coaching have you seen employed effectively?
  + How can we leverage the expertise within MOBTS to develop mentoring within WOB?
  + What resources (books, professional development seminars, etc.) have helped in navigating an academic career?
* Productivity and wellbeing
  + What instrumental resources have been helpful to you during the pandemic and other stressful points of your career?
  + How can you cultivate social support during difficult times?
  + What tools and systems do you have in place to be productive with your research?

Humility in reflecting on our own experiences will allow the participants to become better educators and reflexive practitioners (Cunliffe, 2016; Edelson et al., 2019) and give everyone a chance to build community with others who share similar aspirations as well as barriers. In the last ten minutes, the facilitators will help to wrap up actionable take-aways for the group and see if there are any actions (such as developing ongoing roundtables or setting up a mentorship program) that groups of facilitators or participants would like to take charge on.

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