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# Gender and Emotions at Work: Organizational Rank Has Greater Emotional Benefits for Men than Women

Christa L. Taylor, Zorana Ivcevic, Julia Moeller, Jochen I. Menges, Roni ReiterPalmon, Marc A. Brackett<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The way people feel is important for how they behave and perform in the workplace. Experiencing more positive—and less negative—emotions at work is often associated with greater status and power. But there may be differences in how men and women feel at work, particularly at different levels in their organizations. Using data from a nation-wide sample of working adults, we examine differences in the emotions that men and women experience at work, how gender interacts with rank to predict emotions, if the association between gender and emotions is accounted for by emotional labor demands, and if this relationship differs according to the proportion of women in an industry or organizational rank. Results demonstrate that women experience emotions associated with disvalue and strain at work more frequently than men and that organizational rank moderates the relationship between gender and several discrete emotions. Some of the effects are partially accounted for by occupational emotion demands, differing by organizational rank and/or the proportion of women employed in an industry.

## Keywords

Gender, Emotions, Organizational rank, Work

Women are underrepresented in the workplace at every level of leadership (McKinsey & Company, 2018). This discrepancy increases sharply with increases in organizational rank, from entry-level positions to the C-suite: Women are less likely than men to be hired or promoted into management roles (79 women for every 100 men) and hold only one in five C-suite leadership roles (McKinsey & Company, 2018). Many reasons have been cited for this inequity, including gender bias, attrition, and differences in leadership style (Appelbaum et al., 2003; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Paustian Underdahl et al., 2014).

One potential reason that has been neglected, however, is that women may *feel* different from men at work, including when women rise to positions of power. Despite decades of research showing that emotional experiences have profound effects on workplace behavior and performance (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017; Elfenbein, 2007),

there is surprisingly little research that sheds light on gender differences in emotions at work. Although evidence generally suggests, for example, that greater status and power are associated with experiencing more positive and less negative emotions (Sherman et al., 2012), much less is known about whether men and women differ in how they feel in high-status/high-power positions in the upper ranks of organizational hierarchies.

Emotions influence nearly every organizationally relevant behavior – be it job performance, decision-making, creativity, absence, prosocial behavior, conflict resolution, or leadership effectiveness (Barsade & Gibson, 2007). Thus, understanding differences in the emotions that male and female employees experience at work across organizational ranks is important. Gender-based discrepancies in the emotional benefits of increased rank may provide insight into why women's advancement in organizations continues to be slower than men's despite decades of research and current organizational initiatives seeking to rectify this injustice (Carter & Silva, 2010). A better understanding of gender differences in emotions at work, as well as the underlying mechanisms of such differences, is important to help solve the puzzle of why gender-discrepancies in leadership positions persist.

### **Gender Differences in Emotions**

Although far from unanimous, a sizable number of studies have found gender differences in emotions in the general population wherein women tend to report more negative and less positive-emotions than men in their everyday experiences (Brody & Hall, 2008; Hess et al., 2000; Simon & Nath, 2004). For instance, Simon and Nath (2004) used survey data from a nationally representative sample of adults in the U.S. to test whether men experience positive emotions more frequently, whereas women experience negative emotions more frequently, due to their unequal social status. Men reported positive emotions more frequently than women, even after accounting for sociodemographic characteristics (i.e., age, race, education, and income) and social status (i.e., marital, parental, and employment status). Although women reported experiencing negative emotions more frequently than men, this difference was accounted for by sociodemographic characteristics, primarily household income. When examining the specific emotions, men reported feeling more excitement (i.e., excited and proud), whereas women reported feeling more sadness (i.e., blue, sad, and lonely), independent of social status. Other studies using large-scale surveys of the general population have found that women tend to report feeling sad, anxious, and angry more frequently than men, whereas men report feeling happy, excited, and calm more frequently than women (Ross & Willigen, 1996; Simon & Lively, 2010; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2009). However, Brody and Hall (2008) have highlighted that gender differences in emotion are context dependent. For instance, men with children have been found to be happier at home than at work, whereas the reverse was true for women (Larson et al., 1994).

*Organizational* studies examining gender differences tend to focus on the regulation or expression of emotion, rather than on differences in subjective experience.

For instance, some studies have found that women manage anger more frequently, and express it less frequently, than men at work (Domagalski & Steelman, 2007). Others have found no gender differences in managing or expressing anger at work (e.g., Gianakos, 2002) or that differences in managing anger are a function of gender differences in status (Sloan, 2012). Women (compared to men) are believed to be more emotionally expressive, and specifically express more emotions associated with powerlessness (e.g., sadness or worry; Fischbach et al., 2015; Ragins & Winkel, 2011). Although studies exploring differences in the way men and women express emotions have important implications (e.g., for how women are perceived as they advance in an organization), they overlook the role of subjective emotional experience. One notable exception is a study by Liu et al. (2008), in which women qualitatively reported experiencing more emotions associated with psychological strain (e.g., anger, frustration, anxiety, overwhelm, and sadness) than men under similar working conditions. Quantitative research examining differences in the emotions men and women experience at work has not yet been reported.

### **Emotions, Status, and Power**

Being in a position of power (such as higher organizational rank) affects emotional experiences, increasing positive emotions and decreasing negative emotions (Berdahl & Martorana, 2006; Sherman et al., 2012). According to Kemper (1990, 1991), a person's emotional reaction to a social situation is influenced by their power and status in relation to their interaction partner, as emotions are the result of a gain or loss of status and/or power. Those with greater power and status (e.g., those with higher ranking in an organization) are likely to have more frequent interactions with lower-status others, resulting in more frequent positive emotions. Additionally, individuals with greater power have access to more resources and freedom, activating the behavioral approach system, which is associated with positive emotions (Keltner et al., 2003). In contrast, those low in power have access to less resources and face more external constraints, activating the behavioral inhibition system, which is associated with negative emotions (Carver & White, 1994; Higgins, 1997). Given that these theories suggest that the mechanisms underlying the power-emotion relationship are universal, both men and women should experience greater positive-and less negative-emotions with increases in organizational rank.

However, because the relative influence of position power (i.e., power afforded a person by their role in a particular context, such as organizational rank) and felt power (the control a person feels in a particular context; Bombari et al., 2017) on emotions is unknown, objective rank within an organization may not relate to the emotions of men and women in the same way. Although studies have found that position power influences emotions (Berdahl & Martorana, 2006; Sherman et al., 2012), Bombari et al. (2017) found that felt power, rather than position power, significantly influenced positive and negative emotions across a series of studies. Thus, the extent to which women in higher ranking positions feel that they have less power and status than men in a similar

position may create gender differences in how rank influences emotions. Differences in men and women's felt power (holding position power constant) may be influenced by a broad range of factors. For example, women's attempts to exert social influence are more likely to be ignored than men's (Carli, 2001). This is consistent with theory relating to how organizational rank relates to feelings in men and women, whereby the interplay between stereotyped perceptions of women's power and emotions negatively influences their emotional experience in the workplace (e.g., Ragins & Winkel, 2011). However, how power relates to gender differences in workplace emotions, and whether men and women at the same organizational rank experience different emotions, has not yet been tested.

### **The Role of Emotional Labor**

One explanation for differences in the way men and women feel at work is gender differences in emotional labor (i.e., expending effort to change an emotion; Hochschild, 1979). Women are more likely than men to be employed in occupations that highlight nurturing skills (Cortes & Pan, 2018; e.g., health care and social services), which are higher in emotional labor demands (i.e., require a relatively greater degree of emotional control). Inhibiting negative emotions for a prolonged period of time increases burnout (Andrew Morris & Feldman, 1996) and negatively impacts performance and personal wellbeing (Gross & John, 2003; Kenworthy et al., 2014).

However, women may also engage in greater emotional labor independent of occupational requirements (Grandey, 2000). One reason for this is the greater complexity of women's emotional display rules (i.e., stereotype-based social expectations of the type, timing, and intensity of emotions displayed by men and women). The emotions that women are expected to display are associated with powerlessness (e.g., compassion), which directly conflicts with the emotions expected to be displayed by leaders (e.g., pride; Shields, 2010). However, women who display emotions that are inconsistent with feminine stereotypes, such as anger, are judged more harshly than their male counterparts who display the same emotions (Lewis, 2000). Thus, emotional display rules in the workplace may create a greater mismatch between experienced and expected emotions for women than for men (Ragins & Winkel, 2011; Shields, 2010). However, the appropriate emotional response for a given situation is determined by the dominant group (Shields, 2005). Industries in which the dominant group is comprised primarily of women may provide a greater match between women's experienced and expected emotional displays, placing less emotional burden on women working in these industries. Therefore, although the emotional labor demands of an occupation likely accounts for differences in the way that men and women feel at work, the greater negative emotions that women experience on average may be mitigated in industries which employ a greater proportion of women. The

### **Present Study**

The purpose of the present study is to examine how the emotional experiences of men and women differ at work. To accomplish this, we used data from a nation-wide sample of workers across industries in the U.S. to test 1) differences in the emotions that men and women experience at work; 2) if gender interacts with rank to predict emotions; 3) whether the association between gender and emotions is mediated by emotional labor demands; 4) if this relationship differs as a function of the proportion of women in an industry or organizational rank.

Although previous research shows that women report experiencing more negative and less positive emotions than men in general, extant theory and research offer little guidance for conceptualizing gender differences in felt emotions at work. Therefore, although we expect that women will report experiencing more negative emotions and less positive emotions than men at work (Hypothesis 1), we have no expectations regarding specific emotions (e.g., anxiety).

Based on power and status theories of emotion (e.g., Keltner et al., 2003; Kemper, 1990), relatively greater position power, represented by organizational rank, should lead to experiencing more positive and less negative emotions. However, because women may feel less powerful than men at the same organizational rank, the emotional benefits of rank may be greater for men. Thus, we expect that the discrepancy in positive and negative emotions reported by men and women will vary by organizational rank (Hypothesis 2). Specifically, rank will have a greater positive impact on men's emotions than women's, such that men's positive emotions will increase (and negative emotions decrease) with increases in organizational rank to a greater extent than those of women.

Additionally, emotional display rules based on feminine typed expectations may conflict with workplace emotional display rules, creating less positive and more negative emotions for women compared to men (Ragins & Winkel, 2011; Shields, 2010). However, because emotional display rules are determined by the dominant group (Shields, 2005), the negative emotional consequences of conflicting emotional display rules may be ameliorated for women employed in industries that employ a greater proportion of women. Thus, we expect that the discrepancy in positive and negative emotions reported by men and women will vary by the proportion of women in an industry (Hypothesis 3). Specifically, the proportion of women employed in an industry will have a positive impact on women's (but not men's) emotions, such that women's positive emotions will increase (and negative emotions decrease) with increases in the proportion of women.

Women's greater employment in occupations with higher emotional labor demands (Cortes & Pan, 2018) may account for differences in the way men and women feel at work. Although greater occupational emotion demands may in turn lead to more negative and less positive emotions, this relationship may differ based on the contextual factors outlined above (i.e., proportion of female employees and organizational rank). Women, but not men, in occupations with high emotional demands may face an added

burden of conflicting display rules in male-dominated industries (Ragins & Winkel, 2011). Therefore, we expect that the proportion of female employees in an industry will moderate the effect of gender on emotions through emotion labor demands (Hypothesis 4). Further, if higher organizational rank has greater emotional benefits for men than women, then rank should also have a greater ameliorating effect for men (compared to women) from the negative emotional consequences of occupational emotion demands. Therefore, we expect that organizational rank will moderate the effect of gender on emotions through emotion labor demands.

## **Method**

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Yale University (approval # 1605017769).

### **Sample**

Participants were recruited using Qualtrics panels, with quotas reflecting distributions of gender, geographical region, race/ethnicity, and age representative of the 2013–2016 U.S. workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). Participants completed the surveys online, via Qualtrics, along with a series of surveys assessing occupational and personal characteristics not addressed in the current study.

The original dataset was comprised of 20,079 participants, of which 5,434 participants were removed because they failed more than two (out of 13) attention checks (72.94% of the sample remained in the final cleaned dataset). Attention checks were items asking participants to select a specific answer (e.g., “Select the 'never / almost never' choice here, please”). The cleaned sample included 14,645 U.S. adults older than 18 years. (See Tables S1 and S2 in the online supplement for comparisons of the different demographic groups in the original and cleaned samples and the U.S. workforce overall.)

Participants who did not indicate their gender as “male” or “female” ( $n = 27$ ) were excluded from analyses, resulting in a final sample of 14,618 participants (male = 50.70%, female = 49.30%). Participants’ mean age was 40.8 years ( $SD = 14.1$ ). Ethnicity was distributed as follows: 82.7% White/Caucasian, 9.4% Black/African American, 4.2% Asian/Asian-American, 1.6% American Natives or Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders, 2.2% Biracial or Multiracial, with 2.4% reporting other identities; 9.8% identified as Hispanic/Latino.

## **Measures**

### **Emotions**

Emotions were assessed using two different methods: Participants rated 23 emotion items and provided up to three open-ended responses about their typical feelings at work. Participants were asked to use a slider to indicate how often they experienced each of 23 emotions at work in the previous three months on a scale from



0 (never/almost never) to 100 (always/almost always). The items included ten positive emotions: interested, proud, confident, inspired, happy, connected, respected, content, passionate, and safe; and 13 negative emotions: bored, afraid, discouraged, indifferent, frustrated, disgusted, stressed, angry, guilty, envious, tense, overwhelmed, and miserable. The choice of items was guided by previous research linking emotions to relevant work outcomes and therefore included items that appear in classic emotion measures, such as the PANAS (e.g., happy, angry; Watson et al., 1988), feelings related to work demands (e.g., overwhelmed, frustrated), personal resources (interested, passionate), and social emotions (envious, respected).

Participants were also asked to report their typical feelings about their work tasks in open-ended responses. The open-ended question was, "Over the last 6 months, how did your job make you feel? Which specific emotions did you experience most frequently because of your specific tasks and responsibilities?" The question was followed by three text entry boxes.

Responses were cleaned so that all variations of an affective term were assigned the same label. For instance, "stressed," "stress," "stressed out," "I feel stressed," and "I am stressed most of the time" were assigned the label "stressed." No high inference coding was done, such as creating conceptual categories by combining synonyms, near synonyms, or terms from the same broader emotion categories (such as combining responses "stressed," "nervous," "tense," "worried," and "anxious" into a single category of anxiety). Terms were checked for accuracy after being completed by two research staff members.

### **Organizational Rank**

To assess positional power, participants were asked the following question: "What is your rank/position in the hierarchy of the organization where you work? Think of a ladder with ten steps representing where people stand in your organization. At step ten are the people who are at the top of the hierarchy – those who are at the chief executive/director level (such as the CEO or director). At step zero are the people who are at the bottom of the hierarchy – those who are at the entry level (such as newcomers or recent graduates). Where on this ladder would you position yourself?" The question was followed by a picture of a ladder and participants were asked to select a number from zero to ten to indicate their rank in the organization.

### **Proportion of Gender in Industry**

The average annual proportion of women employed in each industry was obtained from the Current Population Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). Participants' job industry was identified by asking, "Which industry category best captures the activities of the organization for which you work?" Response options included all super-sectors in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Data for participants who did not report an industry (N = 2,474) or who reported "other" (N = 1,799) were excluded from the relevant models.

## Emotion Labor Demands

The level of emotion labor demands required by a participant's occupation was estimated by averaging two variables obtained from the Occupational Information Network (O\*NET; Peterson et al., 1999), which provides quantified occupational information. The survey asked a series of questions to obtain a specific occupation corresponding to O\*NET classification of occupations. The questions first asked about broad job groups (e.g., management occupations, legal occupations, life, physical, and social science occupations) and then increasingly narrowed down to more specific job classifications (e.g., life scientists, physical scientists, social and scientists and related workers, and life, physical, and social science technicians).

Our variable was computed by averaging the level of self-control (i.e., "maintaining composure, keeping emotions in check, controlling anger, and avoiding aggressive behavior, even in very difficult situations"; National Center for O\*NET Development, n.d.) and the level of stress tolerance required in an occupation (i.e., "accepting criticism and dealing calmly and effectively with high stress situations"; National Center for O\*NET Development, n.d.). The values reported by O\*NET are determined by surveying randomly selected workers in each occupation (updated annually; <https://www.onetcenter.org/dataCollection.html>), and range from 1 to 100, with higher values corresponding to greater self-control or stress tolerance requirements.

## Results

We tested our hypotheses using three sets of analyses. First, gender differences in emotions that men and women experience at work were examined in two ways. Rated emotions were examined using a multivariate group comparison test (Hotelling's  $t^2$ ) with a follow-up discriminant function analysis, to determine which emotions most strongly differentiated between the groups. In addition, responses to the open-ended question asking how participants feel at their job were analyzed using logistic regression. Second, organizational rank and the proportion of women employed in an industry were used as potential moderators of the association between gender and rated emotions. This was examined using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018). PROCESS employs listwise deletion for cases with missing values, which substantially reduced the sample for analyses including emotion labor demands as a mediator (i.e., the conditional process models). Thus, we tested moderators of the direct path between gender and emotions on the larger sample first. Third, conditional process models (i.e., moderated mediation models) were used to test if gender was associated with emotions through occupational emotion demands, as a function of either organizational rank or the proportion of women employed in an industry.

As a preliminary step, two separate linear regressions were used to examine whether organizational rank positively predicted more frequent positive emotions, and negatively predicted more frequent negative emotions. Rank was entered as the predictor and the mean average of all rated positive and negative emotions as the

outcomes. Indeed, organizational rank was a significant predictor in both analyses, positively predicting positive emotions,  $F(1, 14530) = 1601.07, p < .01, R^2 = .10$ , and negatively predicting negative emotions,  $F(1, 14483) = 306.71, p < .01, R^2 = .02$ . In other words, as organizational rank increased, the frequency of positive emotions increased, and the frequency of negative emotions decreased.

## **Gender based Differences in Emotions at Work**

### **-Rated Emotions**

A Hotelling's  $t^2$  test was conducted to examine differences in ratings of how frequently men and women experience a set of 23 emotions at work (see Table 1). Results were statistically significant: Hotelling's  $t^2 = .07, F(23, 10,382) = 30.11, p < .01$ . A follow-up discriminant function analysis, conducted to determine which emotions discriminated between men and women, was significant, Wilks  $\Lambda = .94, \chi^2(23) = 671.10, p < .01$ ; seven of the rated emotions had discriminant loadings of at least  $|.30|$ , indicating sufficient discriminatory power for interpretation (Harlow, 2014): overwhelmed, stressed, frustrated, tense, discouraged, respected, and confident (Table 2). Women (compared to men) reported feeling more overwhelmed, stressed, frustrated, tense, and discouraged, and less respected and confident. The linear composite of the seven differentiating emotions reflects greater disvalue and strain reported by women, defined as follows: overwhelmed(.017) + stressed(.009) + frustrated(.014) + respected(-.011) + tense(.000) + confident(-.010) + discouraged(.003). However, we examine each emotion separately in the analyses below.

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics for Rated Emotions by Gender

Feeling	Male			Female		
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Afraid	6,572	21.97	25.92	5,927	22.70	26.72
Angry	6,988	34.42	29.83	6,683	38.61	30.51
Bored	6,907	33.73	30.20	6,510	35.03	30.58
Confident	7,259	72.29	25.63	7,051	68.26	27.06
Connected	7,172	60.87	29.46	6,886	57.47	30.20
Content	7,184	59.31	29.23	6,925	57.32	29.91
Discouraged	6,911	37.14	30.93	6,617	43.10	32.02
Disgusted	6,742	31.14	30.56	6,316	33.40	31.43
Envious	6,559	23.37	26.01	5,857	21.80	24.77
Frustrated	7,117	46.74	31.62	6,939	55.35	31.03
Guilty	6,385	16.97	22.34	5,640	14.98	20.23
Happy	7,281	65.36	28.19	7,035	62.68	28.75
Indifferent	6,795	35.47	29.15	6,333	35.64	28.71
Inspired	7,149	55.98	30.85	6,815	52.45	31.42
Interested	7,221	67.26	27.37	6,973	64.41	28.98
Miserable	6,763	29.52	30.65	6,329	33.52	32.52
Overwhelmed	7,017	42.70	31.34	6,916	52.96	32.10
Passionate	7,148	61.42	30.96	6,884	60.35	32.19
Proud	7,232	66.08	29.31	6,963	62.98	30.31
Respected	7,253	65.71	29.53	6,977	60.66	30.67
Safe	7,256	73.42	27.61	6,979	73.17	29.22
Stressed	7,130	50.01	31.47	6,996	58.86	31.17
Tense	7,012	43.03	30.67	6,773	49.14	31.23

## Open-ended Responses

-Because gender differences in subjective emotional experiences have been found to differ according to the method of assessment (Brody & Hall, 2008), we also used logistic regression models to determine if gender and rank predicted the probability of providing three of the differentiating emotions (overwhelmed, stressed, and frustrated) in the open-ended response field. These three emotions were the only differentiating emotions that had enough open-ended responses to conduct the analyses (overwhelmed  $N = 758$ , stressed  $N = 2,589$ , frustrated  $N = 2,582$ ). The number of open-ended responses for the other differentiating emotions were as follows: respected ( $n = 67$ ), tense ( $n = 34$ ), confident ( $n = 187$ ), and discouraged ( $n = 36$ ). Table 3 shows the logistic regression coefficient and odds ratio for the predictors in each of the models.

A test of the full model of the probability of reporting feeling overwhelmed versus an intercept only model was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(2) = 265.08$ ,  $p < .001$ . However, gender was the only significant predictor. The odds ratio for gender indicated that when holding rank constant, a woman was 3.74 times more likely than a man to report feeling overwhelmed in response to the open-ended question regarding how their job made them feel.

test for the full model for the probability of feeling stressed versus an intercept only model was also statistically significant,  $\chi^2(2) = 207.42$ ,  $p < .001$ , with gender and rank as significant predictors. The odds of reporting feeling stressed in response to the open-ended question was more than 1.81 times more likely for women than for men. The effect for rank was significant, but quite small, wherein the likelihood that a person reported feeling stressed decreased by a multiplicative factor of .98 with every one-step increase on the organizational ladder.

For the probability of reporting feeling frustrated, the full model versus an intercept only model was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(2) = 127.02$ ,  $p < .001$ , with gender and rank as significant predictors. The odds of reporting feeling frustrated in response to the open-ended question was 1.26 times more likely for a woman than for a man. The likelihood of reporting feeling frustrated decreased by a multiplicative factor of .93 with every one-step increase on the organizational ladder.

### **Moderators of the Association Between Gender and Differentiating Emotions**

Simple moderation models were used to determine if differences between men and women in each of the seven differentiating emotions (overwhelmed, stressed, frustrated, tense, discouraged, respected, and confident) were moderated by organizational rank or the proportion of women employed in an industry. The PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018) was used to test all models, with gender as a dichotomous predictor (women = 0, men = 1), organizational rank or proportion of women in an industry as a moderator, and the emotion composite or each emotion rating as the outcome. Significant moderators were further examined using the Johnson-Neyman technique, to examine the statistical significance of the gender effect across the levels of the moderator and illustrated with the pick-a-point approach (values at the mean and  $\pm 1$  SD from the mean). Standardized mean differences at given values of the moderator ( $\delta_{\gamma|M_i}$ ) were calculated in accordance with the procedures outlined by Bodner (2017) and may be interpreted using conventional guidelines for standardized mean differences (i.e., small effect = .10, medium effect = .30, and large effect = .50; Cohen, 1988).

**Table 2** Discriminant Loadings for Rated Emotions

Feeling	Function
Overwhelmed	<b>.59</b>
Stressed	<b>.54</b>
Frustrated	<b>.50</b>
Respected	<b>-.37</b>
Tense	<b>.35</b>
Confident	<b>-.33</b>
Discouraged	<b>.30</b>
Inspired	-.29
Proud	-.26
Connected	-.26
Interested	-.23
Happy	-.22
Angry	.21
Guilty	-.20
Miserable	.16
Content	.15
Envious	-.15
Passionate	-.14
Safe	-.08
Disgusted	.05
Bored	.03
Indifferent	-.02
Afraid	.01

Coefficients represent the correlation between a variable and discriminant function controlling for other variables, coefficients in bold meet the criteria to suggest importance ( $\geq 1.30$ ; see Harlow, 2014)

**Table 3** Predictors of the Probability of Providing Emotion as Open-ended Response

Predictors	<i>b</i>	<i>OR</i>	95% <i>CI</i>
<b>Overwhelmed</b>			
Gender	1.32**	3.74	[3.15, 4.47]
Rank	-.00	1.00	[.97, 1.03]
<b>Stressed</b>			
Gender	.60**	1.81	[1.66, 1.98]
Rank	-.03**	.98	[.96, .99]
<b>Frustrated</b>			
Gender	.23**	1.26	[1.15, 1.37]
Rank	-.08**	.93	[.91, .94]

*N* = 14,570, *OR* odds ratio, *CI* confidence intervals for odds ratios

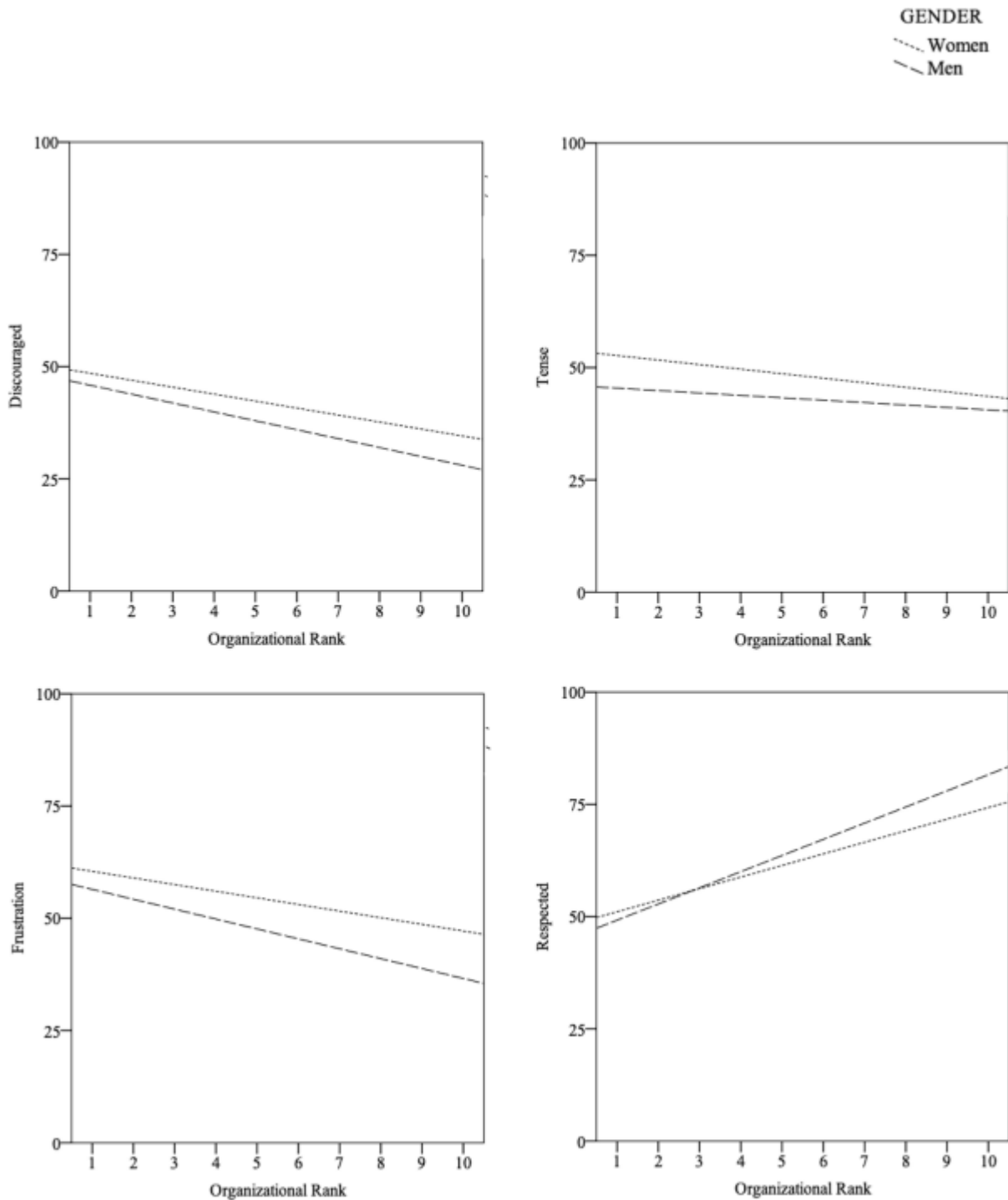
\*\* *p* < .01

### Organizational Rank

Organizational rank significantly moderated the association between gender and four of the differentiating emotions (frustrated, discouraged, tense, and respected; Fig. 1). The results for all models using organizational rank as the moderator are reported in Table 4.

Organizational rank significantly moderated the relationship between gender and frustration  $F(1, 14081) = 13.08, p < .01$ , with women’s scores significantly greater than men’s (at  $p < .01$ ) across all levels of rank and increasing slightly with relatively higher levels of rank. Standardized mean differences at different values of the moderator for frustration ranged from small to medium ( $\delta_{Y|M_i} = -.11$  to  $-.34$ ). Organizational rank significantly moderated the relationship between gender and discouragement,  $F(1, 13489) = 4.41, p < .05$ , with women reporting greater discouragement than men across all levels of rank, and the difference becoming increasingly larger as rank increased. However, whereas the difference between men and women was not statistically significant at a rank of zero (entry level employees), gender differences at all other ranks were significant at  $p < .05$  ( $\delta_{Y|M_i} = -.09$  to  $-.21$ ).

Organizational rank significantly moderated the relationship between gender and reports of feeling tense,  $F(1, 13746) = 5.42, p < .05$ , with women reporting significantly greater feelings of tension than men across all levels of rank (at  $p < .05$ ). However, gender discrepancies became *smaller* as rank increased, with effect sizes decreasing from  $\delta_{Y|M_i} = -.25$  to  $-.10$ . At increasingly greater levels of rank both men and women reported feeling less tense, but men’s scores declined more steeply than women’s scores.



**Fig. 1** Visual Representation of the Moderation Between Gender and Emotions by Organizational Rank

The relationship between gender and feeling respected was also significantly moderated by organizational rank,  $F(1, 14190) = 24.89, p < .01$ . Women reported feeling respected more than men at lower levels of rank, whereas this effect reversed (with men feeling greater respect than women) and became larger as rank increased (see Fig. 1). The effect of gender on feeling respected was significant (at  $p < .05$ ) for



those at a rank of zero ( $\delta \gamma | M_i = -.09$ ), with women reporting greater feelings of respect, and above a rank of four ( $\delta \gamma | M_i = .04$  to  $.23$ ), with men reporting greater feelings of respect.

**Table 4** Coefficients for Models with Organizational Rank as Moderator

Emotion (Y)	N	Gender (X)	Rank (W)	X*W
Overwhelmed	13,899	-9.23 (1.16)**	-.40 (.15)**	-.12 (.21)
		$F(3, 13,895) = 128.41, p < .01, R^2 = .03$		
Stressed	14,091	-6.10 (1.13)**	-.89 (.15)**	-.35 (.20)
		$F(3, 14,087) = 133.24, p < .01, R^2 = .03$		
Frustrated	14,022	-3.29 (1.12)**	-1.48 (.15)**	-.73 (.20)**
		$F(3, 14,018) = 209.40, p < .01, R^2 = .04$		
Tense	13,750	-7.73 (1.14)**	-1.01 (.15)**	.47 (.20)*
		$F(3, 13,746) = 65.69, p < .01, R^2 = .01$		
Discouraged	13,493	-2.21 (1.16)	-1.55 (.15)**	-.44 (.21)*
		$F(3, 13,489) = 142.17, p < .01, R^2 = .03$		
Respected	14,194	-2.60 (1.05)*	1.82 (.30)**	.93 (.19)**
		$F(3, 14,190) = 448.29, p < .01, R^2 = .09$		
Confident	14,274	3.02 (.93)**	2.30 (.12)**	-.21 (.17)
		$F(3, 14,270) = 265.24, p < .01, R^2 = .05$		

Standard error in parentheses, Coefficients for gender are conditioned on lowest level of rank and coefficients for rank are conditioned on gender (i.e., they estimate the effect of rank on outcomes for women)

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

### Proportion of Women Employed in an Industry

The proportion of women employed in an industry significantly moderated the association between gender and four of the emotions (overwhelmed, tense, respected, and confident; Fig. 2). The results for all models using proportion of women in an industry as the moderator are reported in Table 5.

The proportion of women employed in an industry significantly moderated the relationship between gender and reports of feeling overwhelmed,  $F(1, 9937) = 14.48, p < .01$ , and tense,  $F(1, 9853) = 9.07, p < .01$ , with women reporting greater scores than men on both outcomes across the entire range of proportion of women employed in an industry and gender discrepancies becoming larger with increases in the proportion of women. According to the Johnson-Neyman test, gender differences for feeling

overwhelmed were significantly different (at  $p < .05$ ) across the entire range of women in an industry, with standardized mean differences ranging from small to approaching large ( $\delta_{Y|M_i} = -.12$  to  $-.41$ ). The difference between men and women for feeling tense became statistically significant (at  $p < .05$ ) when there were at least 14.92% women in an industry, with effect sizes ranging from small to medium ( $\delta_{Y|M_i} = -.09$  to  $-.29$ ).

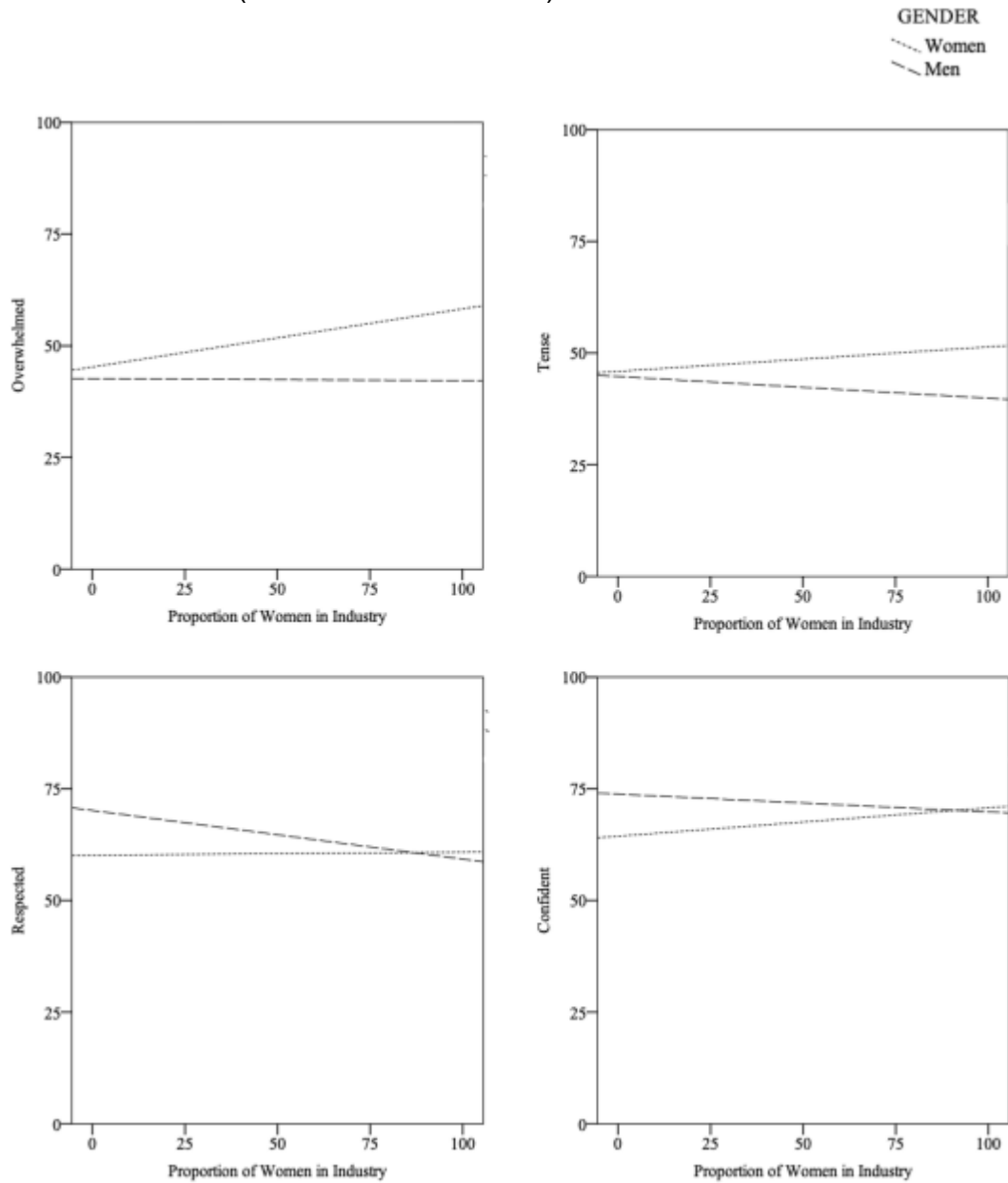
The proportion of women employed in an industry significantly moderated the relationship between gender and feeling respected,  $F(1, 10083) = 12.26$ ,  $p < .01$ , and confident,  $F(1, 10130) = 13.06$ ,  $p < .01$ , in similar ways. Men reported feeling significantly more respected and confident than women in all cases with the discrepancy between men and women decreasing as the proportion of women employed in an industry increased. According to the Johnson-Neyman test, the difference between men and women was statistically significant (at  $p < .05$ ) for feeling respected when the proportion of women employed in an industry was below 70.68%, with positive effect sizes decreasing from medium to small ( $\delta_{Y|M_i} = .30$  to  $.05$ ), and for feeling confident when below 74.31%, with positive effect sizes decreasing from medium to small ( $\delta_{Y|M_i} = .33$  to  $.08$ ).

### **The Role of Occupational Emotion Demands**

The PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018) was also used to test all conditional process (i.e., moderated mediation) models. Conditional process models (Fig. 3) were used to test if gender (X) is associated with emotions (Y) through occupational emotion labor demands (M), as a function of the proportion of women employed in an industry (W). The moderated mediation index was significant for the model including feeling overwhelmed as the outcome, as the 95% confidence intervals based on 5,000 bootstrapped samples did not encompass zero ( $N = 6,670$ , index =  $-.04$ , 95% CI =  $-.06$  to  $-.01$ ). Examining the conditional indirect effects among people who work in industries with relatively low, moderate, and high proportions of women (at the mean and  $\pm 1$  SD from the mean) demonstrated that occupational emotion labor demands functioned as a mediator of the effect of gender on feeling overwhelmed. Among people who work in industries with low proportions of female employees ( $-1$  SD = 31.97%), the conditional indirect effect was estimated as  $.11$  and was not statistically significant (95% CI =  $-.51$  to  $.74$ ). However, the effect was statistically significant among people who work in industries with moderate proportions of female employees ( $M = 51.27\%$ ), for which the conditional indirect effect was estimated as  $-.59$  (95% CI =  $-1.09$  to  $-.07$ ), and among people who work with relatively high proportions of female employees ( $+1$  SD = 70.56%), for which the conditional indirect effect was estimated as  $-1.30$  (95% CI =  $-2.06$  to  $-.56$ ). Moderated mediation effects were not found for any other emotion.

Conditional process models were also used to test if gender (X) was associated with emotions (Y) through occupational emotion demands (M), as a function of organizational rank (W). Here too, the moderated mediation index was significant for the model including feeling overwhelmed as the outcome ( $N = 9,080$ , index =  $.15$ , 95% CI =

.01 to .30). Examining the conditional indirect effects among people relatively low, moderate, and high in organizational rank (at the mean and  $\pm 1$  SD from the mean) demonstrated that occupational emotion labor demands functions as a mediator of the effect of gender on feeling overwhelmed. Effects were statistically significant for all groups: Among people relatively low in rank (-1 SD = 2.22) the conditional indirect effect was estimated as -.128 (95% CI = -1.82 to -.76), among those at a moderate rank (M = 4.79) the conditional indirect effect was estimated as -.90 (95% CI = -1.26 to -.55), and among people relatively high in rank (+1 SD = 7.37) the conditional indirect effect was estimated as -.51 (95% CI = -1.02 to -.01).



**Fig. 2** Visual Representation of Moderation Between Gender and Emotions by the Proportion of Women Employed in an Industry

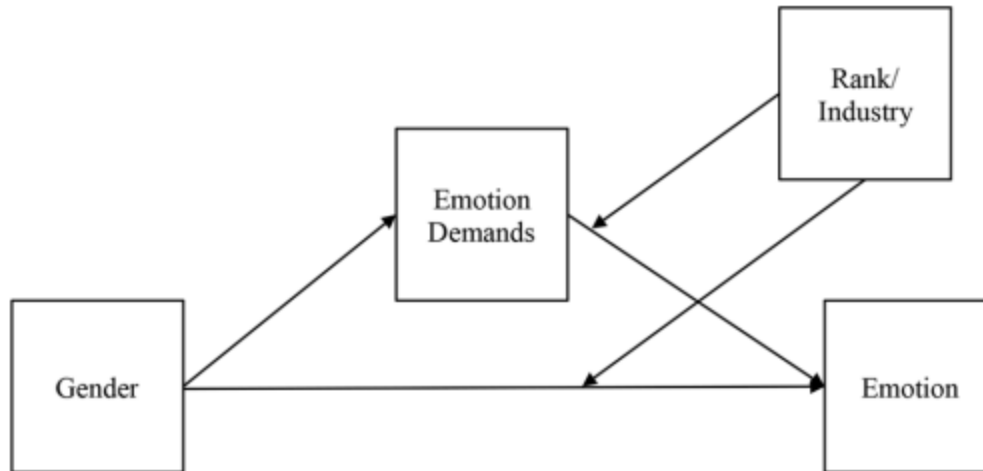
The moderated mediation index was also significant for the model including feeling respected as the outcome ( $N = 9,244$ , index = .13, 95% CI = .01 to .26). The effect was statistically significant among people relatively low in rank ( $-1$  SD = 2.25), for which the conditional indirect effect was estimated as  $-.73$  (95% CI =  $-1.27$  to  $-.20$ ), and among those at a moderate level of rank ( $M = 4.82$ ), for which the conditional indirect effect was estimated as  $-.39$  (95% CI =  $-.74$  to  $-.05$ ). However, among people relatively high in rank ( $+1$  SD = 7.40) the conditional indirect effect was estimated as  $-.04$  and was no longer statistically significant (95% CI =  $-.46$  to  $.38$ ). Moderated mediation effects were not found for any other emotion.

**Table 5** Coefficients for Models with Percent of Female Employees in Industry as Moderator

Emotion (Y)	N	Gender (X)	% Female (W)	X*W
Overwhelmed	9,941	-2.66 (1.87)	.13 (.03)**	-.13 (.04)**
		$F(3, 9,937) = 92.95, p < .01, R^2 = .03$		
Stressed	10,056	-4.88 (1.83)*	.11 (.03)**	-.06 (.03)
		$F(3, 10,052) = 75.78, p < .01, R^2 = .02$		
Frustrated	10,013	-7.31 (1.83)**	.08 (.03)**	.00 (.03)
		$F(3, 10,009) = 69.24, p < .01, R^2 = .02$		
Tense	9,857	-1.13 (1.83)	.05 (.03)*	-.10 (.03)**
		$F(3, 9,853) = 37.06, p < .01, R^2 = .01$		
Discouraged	9,692	-5.86 (1.87)**	.04 (.03)	.01 (.04)
		$F(3, 9,688) = 30.25, p < .01, R^2 = .01$		
Respected	10,087	10.00 (1.76)**	.01 (.02)	-.12 (.03)**
		$F(3, 10,083) = 31.30, p < .01, R^2 = .01$		
Confident	10,134	9.43 (1.52)**	.06 (.02)**	-.10 (.03)**
		$F(3, 10,130) = 26.67, p < .01, R^2 = .01$		

Standard error in parentheses; Coefficients for gender are conditioned on percent of female employees equal to zero and coefficients for moderator are conditioned on gender (i.e., they estimate the effect of the percent of female employees on outcomes for women)

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$



**Fig. 3** Conceptual diagram of the conditional process models. *Note.* The diagram reflects two versions of the model. One model includes the percent of women employed in an industry as the moderator and one model includes organizational rank as the moderator

## Discussion

Our results suggest that gender does make a difference for the emotions that employees experience at work. Women (compared to men) reported feeling more overwhelmed, stressed, frustrated, tense, and discouraged, and less respected and confident. Organizational rank moderated the relationship between gender and four of the seven feelings (i.e., frustrated, discouraged, tense, and respected), such that rank was associated with greater emotional benefits for men than women. Women reported greater negative feelings than men across all ranks. Although these feelings decreased for both men and women as they moved up in rank, the extent to which rank diminished negative feelings differed for men and women. For instance, moving up in rank did alleviate frustration and discouragement in both men and women, but it did so more for men than for women.

The proportion of women employed in an industry influenced the association between gender and emotions at work. Women reported more negative feelings (i.e., frustrated and tense) and less positive feelings (i.e., respected and confident) than men across all industries. However, as the proportion of women employed in an industry increased, gender discrepancies in negative emotions increased and gender discrepancies in positive emotions decreased. Gender differences in feeling overwhelmed were partially accounted for by women working in roles with greater emotional labor demands than men, with effects differing by organizational rank and the proportion of women in an industry. Gender differences in feeling respected were also

partially accounted for by women working in roles with greater emotional labor demands, with effects differing by organizational rank.

The most striking effect was for the feeling of being respected. At the lowest levels of rank, women reported feeling significantly more respected than men. Yet, advances in rank were associated with a reverse trend, resulting in men feeling significantly more respected than women at higher levels of rank. Gender continued to be a strong predictor of feeling respected after accounting for emotional labor demands. Given that respect, “an individual’s assessment of how they are evaluated by those with whom they share common group membership” (Huo & Binning, 2008, p. 1571), is internalized based on others’ behavior towards us (Rogers & Ashforth, 2017), this may suggest that men experience increasingly more displays of respect than women as they advance within an organization.

Although the proportion of women employed in an industry moderated the effect of gender on feeling respected, this relationship was not explained by occupational emotion labor demands. In contrast to our expectations, this effect appears to be driven by men feeling less respected as the proportion of women employed in an industry increases (see Fig. 2). Although the cause of this is unknown, it aligns with scholarship on occupational segregation asserting that female-typed jobs are devalued to a greater extent than male-typed jobs (e.g., Maume, 1999). This effect is also consistent with previous work demonstrating that men working in female-typed occupations are seen as less desirable employees than both men working in male-typed occupations and women working in female-typed occupations (e.g., Judd & Oswald, 1997).

The effect for feeling overwhelmed was also noteworthy. Both organizational rank and the proportion of women employed in an industry moderated the effect of gender on feeling overwhelmed through emotional labor demands. Women’s occupations required more emotional labor and, although those with relatively lower organizational ranking reported feeling more overwhelmed at all levels of emotional labor, differences in feeling overwhelmed among those with different organizational ranking were larger as emotional labor demands increased. The interaction between gender and rank was not associated with feeling overwhelmed after accounting for emotional labor demands. Thus, feeling overwhelmed increased more for women than men with advances in rank, because they are advancing in occupations with greater emotion labor demands. Similarly, women reported feeling increasingly more overwhelmed with increases in the proportion of female employees, due to women’s greater employment in occupations with greater emotion labor demands.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Although previous research has demonstrated that status and power (such as that related to organizational rank) influence the emotions one experiences (Berdahl & Martorana, 2006; Sherman et al., 2012), our results demonstrate that organizational rank relates to the emotions of men and women differently. Consistent with Bombari

et al. (2017) findings that felt power may be more predictive of affect than position power, this points to differences in how men and women experience power afforded them based on their role (i.e., position power). Structural theories of emotion, which suggest that the emotions one experiences are the result of individuals' status, have been used in the past to explain differences in emotions between men and women. For instance, Simon and Nath (2004) demonstrated that women's more frequent experience of negative emotions may be due to lower social status. However, rather than controlling for status, we probed the interaction between gender and status (i.e., organizational rank) and found that women report experiencing several negative emotions (i.e., frustration, tension, and discouragement) to a greater extent than men who are at an identical rank. We propose that this is due to differences in how men and women experience the position power afforded them by organizational rank, whereby women may feel less power due to lower societal status or their minority status; emotional events arising from greater mistreatment within an organization may add to these feelings (Turban et al., 2017). A

According to expectation states theory (Wagner & Berger, 1997), status beliefs (i.e., cultural schemas regarding the relative hierarchical position of groups) may influence the way that men and women view power in others and in themselves (Ridgeway, 2001). Because gender-based status beliefs confer an advantage to men, women's experience of position power within an organization may differ from men's in situations in which their gender is salient (e.g., in mixed gender groups or for gender-typed tasks). The "think manager, think male" stereotype demonstrates that leadership in organizations is viewed as a male-typed task (Fischbach et al., 2015; Schein & Mueller, 1992; Schein et al., 1996). This is consistent with findings that gender differences in leadership emergence, whereby men emerge as leaders to a greater extent than women (Eagly & Karau, 1991), are not due to differences in leadership styles or effectiveness (Badura et al., 2018; Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). Thus, our results fit well with existing theories of emotions and power, but also advance our understanding of this issue by demonstrating that position power may not relate to the emotions of men and women in identical ways.

A greater proportion of women (as opposed to men) tend to be employed in occupations that require relatively more emotion labor (such as in health care and social services). Occupational segregation based on gender, which refers to men and women's tendency to work in different occupations, has been well-documented (see Baker & Cornelson, 2018) and demonstrates that women tend to select, be hired into, and remain in jobs that highlight nurturing skills to a greater extent than men do (Cortes & Pan, 2018). However, women experiencing more negative-and less positive-emotions than men at work may translate into greater emotional labor for women regardless of the emotional demands of a specific occupation. Although failing to effectively regulate emotions negatively impacts performance, successfully inhibiting negative emotions for a prolonged period of time may also negatively impact performance (e.g., by impairing behavioral self-control, cognitive functioning, and future emotional regulation) and

personal well-being (Gross & John, 2003; Kenworthy et al., 2014). Thus, differences in emotional demands and regulation may lead to differences in behavior and work outcomes resulting from emotional experience in the workplace.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

The results of our study highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of the conceptualization of power in relation to emotions. In the present study, we drew on the distinction between positional and felt power to describe why men and women with the same level of positional power (i.e., organizational rank) may experience different emotions. However, because the extent to which respondents' felt powerful was not measured, we cannot determine the role of felt power in our model. It is possible that the observed discrepancies in emotions for men and women at the same organizational rank are the result of other factors unrelated to felt power. For example, men's faster promotion rate (compared to women), despite identical work behaviors (Turban et al., 2017), may lead directly to frustration and discouragement without necessarily influencing how powerful one feels. However, more work is necessary to determine if this is the case. Future models should incorporate both positional power and felt power to determine if gender discrepancies in emotions at the same level of positional power, represented by organizational rank, are indeed due to differences in felt power.

The indicator of occupational emotion demands included in the model was an objective assessment of emotional labor demands in the occupations in which respondents were employed, so results more closely reflect gender differences in occupational choice than greater demands placed on women due to gender. As such, it signifies the fact that a greater proportion of women (as opposed to men) tend to be employed in occupations that require relatively more emotion regulation (such as in health care and social services). Due to occupational segregation based on gender, it may be difficult to disentangle occupational emotion requirements from greater demands due to gender in studies that include participants from many different industries, occupations, and organizations. A more thorough examination of how gender influences emotions through emotional labor demands may include comparing scores on self-assessments of such demands for men and women in the same occupation, within the same organization.

Additionally, our study focuses on gender, without accounting for how gender interacts with other categories of identity (e.g., race/ethnicity, social class, sexuality). Intersectionality should be considered when examining issues of disadvantage (Cole, 2009). For instance, women of color face stronger glass ceiling effects than white women and have to simultaneously navigate bias and discrimination based on their gender and race (Purcell et al., 2010; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). It is reasonable to assume that gender interacts with other categories of social memberships to influence emotions in the workplace. Although beyond the scope of this study, it represents a rich area for future research.



There is likely a reciprocal relationship between the emotions that women experience and their organizational rank that our study does not explain. Ragins and Winkel (2011) provide a theoretical account of how emotions may influence women's advancement in organizations. They suggest that although power does influence the emotions that women experience in the workplace, emotions in turn influence the power that women are afforded, creating a cycle that impedes women's power and progress. Although we are unable to account for this relationship, due to the cross sectional nature of our data, longitudinal studies assessing how emotions and rank change over time could be conducted in the future.

Finally, the glass ceiling effect shows the existence of external barriers to women's advancement and that these barriers increasingly disadvantage women at higher levels of an organizational hierarchy (Cotter et al., 2007). Glass ceiling effects have been demonstrated for a variety of outcomes related to workplace achievement, including advancements in income, promotions, and authority (see Purcell et al., 2010). Our research advances the study of affect and gender in organizations, but it does not demonstrate that gender differences in emotional experiences of work have an adverse effect on women's career progression. To the extent that emotions affect decision making, including career decision making (Krieshok et al., 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2010), it could be hypothesized that encountering external barriers, such as unequal treatment at work, engenders discrete emotions (e.g., feeling disrespected), which in turn become an additional barrier to advancement. Future research will have to address this hypothesis by explicitly assessing experiences of discrimination, experienced emotions, and felt power in relation to women's own decisions relevant to career advancement and evaluations relevant to career progression (e.g., performance reviews and supervisor ratings). Such an effect could provide evidence of a point where subjective experience becomes a kind of emotional glass ceiling.

### **Practice Implications**

It is imperative that leaders work to identify the circumstances that create gender differences in emotions within their organization. Although it may be difficult to know where to begin, many of the circumstances that create well-known obstacles for women's advancement in the workplace also likely contribute to women's relatively greater experience of emotions associated with disvalue and strain. These include gender bias, resistance to women's leadership, perceptions of women's leadership style, work-family balance, microaggressions, sexual harassment, and a lack of support and socialization with managers and senior leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007; McKinsey & Company, 2018). Pinpointing the exact causes of the discrepancy in how men and women feel in the workplace will be necessary to formulate actionable steps to remedy this issue.

Industries aiming to increase the representation of women should not be deterred by the observed changes in emotions associated with greater proportions of female employees. Women's greater feelings of overwhelm were explained by their greater

employment in occupations with more emotional demands. Additionally, men and women in industries which employed larger proportions of women reported more similar levels of feeling respected and confident. However, this is in contrast with industries employing fewer women, in which men reported much higher levels of respect and confidence than women. Men's declining feelings of respect and confidence as the proportion of female employees increases is likely due to being employed in industries which are undervalued as a result of being female-typed, rather than working with a greater proportion of women per se. Male-typed jobs are associated with higher prestige and salary (Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Glick, 1991; Glick et al., 1995) and men employed in female-typed occupations may be evaluated negatively (Judd & Oswald, 1997). Thus, increasing the representation of women in other industries that do not have high emotional occupation demands and are not stereotypically female-typed industries should have no negative emotional impact on these industries for men or women. The remedy to men feeling less respected and confident when working in these industries may be to combat the undervaluation of female-typed industries (Cortes & Pan, 2018).

Given the added obstacles women must face to advance in an organization (e.g., Eagly & Carli, 2007; McKinsey & Company, 2018), it stands to reason that climbing the ladder would be associated with more negative-and less positive-feelings for women than for men. However, because emotions are important for leadership (Gooty et al., 2010), this puts women at a disadvantage akin to running with leaded shoes. This emotional burden may not only impede the progress of female employees but may also negatively impact their ability to contribute to an organization to the best of their ability. Thus, it is particularly important that women receive support as they advance within an organization. Creating more inclusive formal mentoring relationships and networking groups may provide female employees with more opportunities to deal with emotions effectively, as well as feel supported while rising through the ranks of an organization.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we demonstrated that women (compared to men) experience more emotions at work associated with disvalue and strain (i.e., they feel less respected and confident, and more overwhelmed, frustrated, tense, discouraged, and stressed). Further, organizational rank does not relate to emotional experiences at work for men and women in the same way; increases in rank seem to be more beneficial for the subjective emotional experience of men in the workplace. However, some of these differences are partially accounted for by contextual factors (e.g., women tending to work in occupations with greater emotional labor demands). Given the role of emotions in work outcomes (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017; Elfenbein, 2007), gender differences in the emotions experienced at work have direct implications for organizations. As efforts continue to increase equity for women and men in their professional lives, our research indicates that such efforts also need to be directed towards leveling the playing field when it comes to the emotional burdens at work. It would be hard for anyone to break

through a glass ceiling when they feel overwhelmed, stressed, frustrated, tense, discouraged, and less respected and confident.

### **Supplementary Information**

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Availability of Data and Material Data and material are available upon request.

### **Declarations**

#### **Ethics Approval**

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Yale University.

#### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors have no conflicts of interest to report.

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