Go with Your Gut: Emotion and Evaluation in Job Interviews[1]

Lauren A. Rivera
Northwestern University

This article presents hiring as an emotional process rooted in interpersonal evaluation. Drawing from Randall Collins's theory of interaction ritual, the author offers a qualitative case study of elite professional service firms to unpack how employers' emotional reactions to applicants in job interviews affect hiring evaluations. She finds that employers use subjective feelings of excitement and enthusiasm toward candidates—akin to Collins's concept of emotional energy—to evaluate applicants and make hiring decisions. With these data, she constructs an original theoretical framework of emotional energy development, which highlights the qualities that tend to produce or inhibit the subjective experience of emotional energy in job interviews. Additionally, she outlines the particular phases of an encounter where energy gains and losses are most consequential for influencing hiring outcomes and inequalities. She discusses the implications of these findings for research on hiring, labor market stratification, and interaction rituals.

INTRODUCTION

Hiring is a powerful way in which employers shape economic outcomes (Bills 2003). Despite a surge of research on employers over the past 30 years, our knowledge of how employers hire remains incomplete. Even after accounting for measures of applicants' human capital, social capital, and de-

[1] This research was supported by National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement grant 0727427 and the Ford Foundation. I wish to thank Michèle Lamont, Frank Dobbin, Mary Brinton, Wendy Griswold, Roberto Fernandez, Viviana Zelizer, Brayden

0002-9602/2015/12005-0002$10.00

mographic characteristics, quantitative models of hiring still exhibit significant unexplained variance. Consequently, much of what drives employers' decisions remains to be analyzed by scholars (Heckman and Siegelman 1993).

I argue that much of this gap can be attributed to methodological and data limitations. The bulk of research on hiring uses quantitative data on individuals ultimately hired into an organization that cannot explore how hiring decisions are actually made (Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo 2006). Yet, to fully understand how employers hire, it is necessary to study the process of decision making, analyzing how employers evaluate and select new hires on the ground.

When studying employer hiring, scholars typically analyze applicant, organizational, or institutional factors (see Pager and Shepherd 2008). However, more than just candidates, companies, and contexts, hiring is also a fundamentally interpersonal process. Job interviews are crucial components of hiring in many industries, and the subjective impressions developed through these face-to-face encounters are strong drivers of employers' hiring decisions (Dipboye, Smith, and Howell 1994). Yet, sociologists have historically focused on pre- or postinterview aspects of hiring, including candidates' job search strategies (Granovetter 1995), job advertisements (Gorman 2005), employee referrals (Fernandez, Castilla, and Moore 2000), invitations to interview (Pager 2003; Tilcsik 2011), and who enters an organization (Cohen et al. 1998).

Although scholars in psychology and management have analyzed job interviews in greater detail, they have focused primarily on the effect of applicant traits, such as candidates' sex, race, cognitive skills, or nonverbal styles, on interview scores (Posthuma, Morgeson, and Campion 2002). Perhaps because scholars often conduct such studies in the laboratory (with students simulating the role of decision makers), employers have received less attention in this literature (Fox and Spector 2000). Yet, employers' subjective impressions of candidates are some of the most consequential determinants of interview evaluations. These perceptions do not consistently correspond to applicants' resume qualifications, demographic characteristics, or cognitive skills (Graves and Powell 1996; Huffcutt 2011). Consequently, understanding the processes through which real employers evaluate job candidates in interviews is critical for developing more nuanced and externally valid accounts of hiring. In this article, I focus on one im-

King, Klaus Weber, the *AJS* reviewers, and members of the Culture and Society Workshop at Northwestern University and the Amsterdam Center for Inequality Studies for helpful comments on previous drafts. Direct correspondence to Lauren Rivera, Northwestern University, 2001 Sheridan Road, Evanston, Illinois 60208. E-mail: l-rivera@kellogg.northwestern.edu

portant but undertheorized element of how employers evaluate applicants in interviews: employers' emotional reactions to job candidates.[2]

Emotion in Hiring

The dominant model of hiring in sociology portrays the decision to hire as a straightforward matching process between firms' needs and applicants' skills. Employers are thought to select new hires on the basis of cognitively driven calculations of applicant productivity (Moss and Tilly 2001). Yet, because employers often cannot observe productivity directly, they rely on easily observable applicant "signals" that they believe are correlated with underlying productive capacities. The signals may stem from implicit or explicit stereotypes, perceptions of average group ability, or personal experience (Tilly and Tilly 1998; Spence 2002).

The most commonly studied signals in sociology pertain to candidates' cognitive skills, particularly their years of schooling (Farkas 2003). However, employers may also use the presence or absence of referrals to an organization (Fernandez et al. 2000; Petersen, Saporta, and Seidel 2000) or candidates' sex and race (Pager 2003; Gorman 2005) to infer productivity.

In sum, the dominant theory of hiring in sociology portrays employers' decisions as driven by estimates of candidates' human capital, social capital, and demographic characteristics; the residual is typically attributed to error or discrimination (Pager and Shepherd 2008). Employers' emotions are conspicuously absent from this perspective. When mentioned, they are portrayed as undesirable intrusions into systematic estimates of productivity, in the form of error, noise, or discrimination via racial animus (see Bandelj 2009; Fernandez and Greenberg 2013).

Although applicants' human capital, social capital, and demographic characteristics are important determinants of the decision to hire, they are not the only factors that affect hiring decisions. Employers' emotions matter, too. Contrary to portrayals of *Homo economicus*, emotion is a fundamental basis of decision making (Thoits 1989; Lawler and Thye 1999). How we choose which soap to use, which house to buy, or whom to marry is intimately intertwined with not only how these entities perform but also how they make us feel (Lerner and Tiedens 2006). Furthermore, emotion

[2] There is ongoing debate about the definition of "emotion." I use the term to refer to stimulus-specific emotional states experienced in response to a particular job candidate. I use emotion as opposed to "feelings," which commonly refer to physical drive states (e.g., hunger), "affect," or "mood." The latter are considered to be more enduring states not tied to a particular stimulus (e.g., depression; see Thoits [1989] for more detailed discussion). Although physical drive states, affect, and mood also affect decision making, they are distinct constructs from emotions. I focus on emotions because they are specific to the job candidate and thus likely play a sociologically meaningful role in how employers hire.

does not simply make us feel good after we have made a decision; it serves as a fundamental basis by which we compare, evaluate, and select among alternatives in nearly all domains of social life (see Keltner and Lerner [2010] for a review).[3]

Likewise, in the case of hiring (as those who have ever sat on a recruitment committee can attest), subjective feelings about job candidates—not just concerns about skills or productivity—can sway the direction of a search. Laboratory studies that control for candidates' skills and qualifications have demonstrated that evaluators' emotional reactions to applicants, which these studies show are not reducible to differences in applicant productivity, play a significant role in hiring decisions (for reviews, see Staw, Sutton, and Pelled [1994] Fox and Spector [2000]).

Furthermore, the workplace is not only a site of task execution and skills application but also one of socioemotional experience and intimacy (Hochschild 1983; Pierce 1995; Wharton 2009). Many people spend the bulk of their waking lives at work, and positive emotional connections with coworkers can provide employees with enhanced job satisfaction, organizational attachment, and meaning in their lives (Hodson 2001). Moreover, given increases in work hours over the past several decades, we increasingly find our close friends, intimate partners, and even spouses at work (Zelizer 2009). Consequently, employers may actively seek workers whom they believe will not only successfully execute job functions but also make them feel good on and off the job. Indeed, several recent qualitative studies suggest that employers value feelings of "chemistry" and "fit" with job applicants in the hiring process (Godart and Mears 2009; Rivera 2012; Sharone 2013). Yet, despite their relevance for decision making in general and hiring in particular, employers' emotional reactions have received minimal theoretical and empirical attention in mainstream sociological models of how employers hire.

Just as research on hiring has not yet systematically investigated employers' emotions, sociologists of emotion have undertheorized the emotional processes underlying employers' hiring decisions. Over the past 30 years, scholars have successfully highlighted the relevance of emotional processes for workplace stratification. Although too expansive to systematically review here (and skillfully synthesized elsewhere), sociologists of emotion interested in work have focused on addressing three primary issues. A first group of scholars analyze how cultural prescriptions of emotions considered appropriate for employees to feel and display on the job relate to broader patterns of ascriptive inequalities (for a review, see Wharton [2009]). A second

[3] Emotion and cognition are not orthogonal (Gordon 1981; Hochschild 1983; Turner and Stets 2006). They are two interrelated processes that are essential for effective decision making. Without emotion, individuals tend to suffer significant decrements in decision-making quality and vice versa (Damasio 1994).

group illuminates how employees' emotional experiences at work vary by positions of power and status and reinforce existing demographic inequalities (for a review, see Lively [2006]). A third group explores how positive and negative emotions experienced during group interactions increase the likelihood of repeated exchange (for a review, see Lawler and Thye [1999]).

However, research on the emotional dimensions of decision making has typically occurred in disciplines outside of sociology (Lawler and Thye 1999). Moreover, when discussing hiring, sociologists of emotion have focused almost exclusively on applicants' emotions, noting that employers attune to applicants' emotional displays when selecting personnel (Hochschild 1983; Van Maanan and Kunda 1989; Pierce 1995). However, to fully understand the emotional dimensions of hiring, it is necessary to study how employers' emotional reactions to candidates—which are not reducible to applicants' characteristics or emotional displays—affect hiring decisions.

The goal of this article is to begin to bring employers' emotions into sociological research on hiring. Providing a qualitative case study of elite professional service firms, I investigate the processes through which employers' emotional responses to applicants in job interviews affect real life hiring evaluations. In doing so, I seek to bring center stage a dimension of hiring that has typically been excluded from sociological research. Moreover, although laboratory studies outside of sociology have demonstrated that employers' emotions matter (and that they are not reducible to differences in applicant skill), my analysis illuminates important mechanisms through which employers' emotions influence real life hiring decisions. In doing so, the article (1) addresses calls by sociologists for research on the microlevel mechanisms that produce labor market outcomes and inequalities (Roscigno 2007; Stainback, Tomaskovic-Devey, and Skaggs 2010) and (2) adds important temporal, contextual, and processual dimensions to research on emotion in job interviews in other disciplines. It is important to emphasize that my goal is not to develop an alternative theory of hiring; employers' emotions certainly work in conjunction with human capital, social capital, and discrimination. Rather I aim to analyze in depth an undertheorized but meaningful mechanism by which employers evaluate job candidates and make hiring decisions.

Hiring as Interaction Ritual

As noted earlier, research on emotion in decision making has typically been the purview of disciplines outside of sociology (Lawler and Thye 1999). Within sociology, I argue that Randall Collins's theory of interaction ritual (2004) comes closest to understanding how employers' emotional reactions to job candidates affect hiring decisions. Merging the insights of Durkheim and Goffman, Collins argues that emotions generated in face-to-face in-

teractions drive the feelings of social solidarity that bind individuals and social institutions together; they play integral roles in creating social orders and stratification systems.

According to Collins, this occurs because people are stratified not only by structural and material resources but also by the emotional responses they evoke in others. Collins argues that people find encounters with others who fill them with excitement, enthusiasm, and confidence—emotions he collectively refers to as *emotional energy* (Collins 1990)—to be more rewarding than those that do not elicit these emotions. Individuals gravitate toward people and situations that increase their own stocks of emotional energy and avoid those that do not. Over repeated interactions, such processes provide greater access to opportunities and resources for people who generate excitement and enthusiasm in others.

Collins asserts that individuals do not merely passively receive emotional flows but rather actively seek emotional energy. According to Collins, we are like moths to a light when it comes to emotional energy. In selecting exchange partners, we predict the emotional benefit we will derive from each person and choose the individual who provides the strongest boost in emotional energy. Thus, in Collins's view, emotion is a critical basis of interpersonal evaluation and selection. He argues that analyzing the conditions under which people experience emotional energy in microsocial encounters is crucial for understanding patterns of social sorting and stratification in contexts ranging from marriage markets to labor markets.[4] Most relevant to hiring is Collins's hypothesis that job interviews are prime settings in which emotions serve as bases of social selection, with employers gravitating to those applicants who provide them with emotional energy and excluding those who do not.

Although intriguing, Collins's ideas about emotion and social selection have not yet been investigated empirically. Scholars have successfully investigated Collins's ideas in other domains, analyzing how emotional energy flows relate to social movements (Summers-Effler 2002), educational inequalities (Hallett 2007), and patterns of depression among women (Simon and Lively 2010). Moreover, the content of what produces emotional energy within a particular type of microsocial encounter, such as job interviews, remains unclear. In this article, I undertake—to the best of my knowledge—the first systematic empirical investigation of Collins's ideas about emotion as a basis of interpersonal evaluation and selection in labor markets. Providing a qualitative case study, I analyze how employers' emotional responses to candidates affect hiring evaluations. I also develop an

[4] In this article, I use the term "stratification" to refer to the process by which individuals are sorted into opportunities of unequal material and symbolic resources. This process can result in inequalities by sex, race, or other characteristics such as culture and social class (see Hollander and Howard 2000).

original theoretical model that identifies factors that produce emotional energy in job interviews.

Operationalizing Emotional Energy

Applying Collins's ideas requires a working definition of emotional energy. The concept is rich, and, like other multidimensional constructs such as "inequality," "social class," or "human capital," no single measure is likely to capture its meaning in totality. However, in his work Collins describes emotional energy as having a bodily dimension (i.e., posture, gaze, inflection, heart rate) and an interpretive one (i.e., the subjective experience of excitement). Interestingly, these dimensions correspond roughly to sociologists' and psychologists' understandings of emotions as having physiological (bodily sensations and gestures) as well as interpretive components (appraisals of situations and the cultural labels applied to them; Thoits 1989).[5] When discussing the possibility of testing Collins's ideas, both Collins and his critics have disproportionately focused on the challenges of measuring physiological factors. This focus on the bodily dimension of emotional energy is somewhat surprising. Aside from the fact that modern technology provides opportunities for measuring physiological reactions (Robinson, Rogalin, and Smith-Lovin 2004), it is the second dimension—the subjective and interpretative experience of emotion—that (1) constitutes a significant portion of Collins's analysis, and that (2) sociologists, psychologists, and behavioral economists agree plays a crucial role in orienting action (Thoits 1989; Clore and Storbeck 2006; Turner and Stets 2006). How we label an emotion is critical for shaping whether and how we act on it. For example, even if physiological arousal really stems from fear, if we attribute it to romantic love, this interpretation will affect whether we run toward or away from another.

The interpretive dimension of emotion is particularly salient in hiring. Interviewers do not record their own heart rates, cortisol levels, bodily distance, or even the objective facts of an interaction on written interview forms for use in crafting arguments for or against candidates during group deliberations but rather their subjective interpretations of candidates and interactions.[6] This second but crucial dimension of emotional energy is indeed accessible to sociologists, who have successfully used qualitative techniques to study the interpretive dimensions of emotions (Clark 1987; Pierce 1995; Lois 2003) and selection procedures (Stevens 2007; Lamont 2009).

[5] There is ongoing debate as to whether physiological arousal or interpretation is primary in emotion formation. My purpose is not to settle this debate.

[6] Cognitive interpretations are particularly important for complex, high-stakes decisions or those that involve a sense of personal accountability, such as in hiring (Leach and Tiedens 2004).

Thus, taking the interpretive dimension of emotional energy as my focus of inquiry, I operationalize emotional energy as interviewers' reports of excitement or enthusiasm felt in response to a particular job candidate.[7] In the case of hiring, I focus on evaluators' reports rather than those of job candidates because it is the impressions of the former that are most consequential for employers' decisions.[8] This definition is no doubt imperfect but is a first step toward understanding how employers' emotional responses to job applicants in interviews contribute to hiring evaluations.

Outline of Article

In analyzing how employers' emotions affect hiring evaluations, I proceed as follows. I begin by describing my research context and data collection procedures. Next, I briefly show that—consistent with prior laboratory research—employers used their emotional reactions to candidates (most commonly feelings of excitement akin to Collins's concept of emotional energy) when evaluating candidates and making hiring decisions. I then use my empirical data to extend Collins's work by proposing an original theoretical model of emotional energy development, which highlights specific factors that tend to produce or inhibit feelings of emotional energy in job interviews. Although based on the job interview setting, this model holds the potential to inform future cases of emotion in interpersonal evaluation more broadly. I conclude by discussing the implications of my findings for research on hiring, workplace inequalities, and interaction rituals.

CASE SELECTION

I study emotion in hiring through a qualitative case study. Although not without limitations, case studies are particularly valuable for unpacking the how and why of complex social processes that unravel over time (Yin 2003). Moreover, qualitative research is particularly suited to "the assessment of the mechanisms specified in existing theory, to the production of

[7] Collins largely conceptualizes emotional energy as a positive emotional state; he theorizes about its presence or absence and degree in a given context, rather than developing a comprehensive typology of negative emotional energy (Summers-Effler 2004). For consistency and comparability, I adopt a similar strategy here. I operationalize a lack of emotional energy as the absence of reports of excitement. This can occur when an evaluator explicitly reports not feeling excitement (e.g., "I just wasn't excited") or when he or she does not mention excitement when discussing an interaction with a candidate. Note that the absence of emotional energy does not necessarily entail the presence of negative emotions; one can feel liking or happiness while interacting with a candidate but not feel excitement.

[8] However, one can imagine that candidates' emotions influence their attraction to evaluators and firms.

alternative explanations, and to the generation of new theory" (Ragin, Nagel, and White 2004, p. 12), such as investigating how employers' emotional reactions to job candidates influence hiring evaluations in light of existing theories of hiring and interaction rituals.

Wall Street versus Main Street

I analyze hiring in elite professional service (EPS) firms.[9] Although a focus on elite employers constrains generalizability, it also offers distinct theoretical advantages. First, the majority of hiring studies focus on low-wage or low-skill labor markets. Such analyses are very important, but inequality is driven by privilege as well as underprivilege. To fully understand how employers contribute to labor market sorting and stratification, it is also necessary to understand entry to highly paid and prestigious jobs. Doing so is particularly important given that the top 10% of income earners has disproportionately driven economic inequality in the United States in recent decades (Atkinson, Piketty, and Saez 2011). Because hiring practices tend to be labor market specific (Bills 2003), they may differ between Wall Street and Main Street; both warrant empirical attention.

Second, EPS firms are a fertile ground for analyzing emotion in hiring. Entry-level professional positions typically require a prestigious university credential. These employers also solicit the majority of applications directly through university career centers rather than through informal networks. Consequently, applicant pools are prescreened, minimizing many traditional structural and status differences between applicants. Studying this labor market provides unique opportunities to analyze emotional dynamics in hiring in the absence of stark differences in human capital between applicants.[10] Thus, a focus on elite employers allows for analysis of emotion under the microscope. Although it may magnify the relative importance of emotional reactions in the decision to hire, it can also reveal important insights about emotion in hiring to a level of granularity that may be inaccessible in other settings.

EPS Firms

I analyze hiring for entry-level professional positions in elite investment banks, law firms, and management consulting firms. These firms share important similarities.

[9] *Professional service firm* is a category used by practitioners and scholars to describe businesses—most commonly law, investment, and consulting firms—that sell customized advice to clients.

[10] This helps avoid conflating employers' emotional reactions with stark differences in applicant human capital.

Rewards.—Joining one of these firms catapults recent graduates into the top 10% of household incomes in the United States. Salaries are double to quadruple the amounts earned by graduates from the same universities entering other jobs in the same year (Guren and Sherman 2008; Zimmerman 2009). Additionally, because jobs early in the life course play critical roles in shaping future economic and occupational trajectories (Blau and Duncan 1967), and doing time within these firms is increasingly required for senior positions within the government, nonprofit, and corporate sectors (Kalfayan 2009), these jobs can be thought of as contemporary gateways to the U.S. economic elite. Thus, hiring decisions in these firms have high stakes for applicants, and they are meaningful moments of economic stratification.

Work.—Entry-level professionals execute a combination of research, teamwork, and client interaction; analytic and interpersonal skills are key job requirements. Across firm type, professionals work with similar (if not the exact same) clients, usually large corporations. Professionals face tight deadlines and highly demanding work schedules (65+ hours per week).

Recruitment.—Firms hire the bulk of new entry-level professional employees through annual on-campus recruitment programs operated with career-services offices at elite universities. Firms seek to create a class of new hires that enter the firm as a group and undergo intensive on-the-job training and professional socialization together. Firms identify a set of universities—typically through national prestige rankings—where they accept resumes and interview candidates. At these campuses, any student may apply. Competition is largely closed to students who do not attend prestigious schools. After an initial resume screen,[11] usually based on a basic grade floor and extracurriculars, firms choose a subgroup of applicants for first-round interviews in which applicants meet with one or two employees separately for 20–45 minutes each. Firms typically interview dozens of candidates from a single school back-to-back in a campus career center or nearby hotel. It is crucial to note that candidates are interviewed by revenue-generating professionals (rather than human resources [HR] representatives) who have undergone minimal training in interviewing and could potentially work with hired candidates. Applicants who receive favorable evaluations in first-round interviews participate in a final round of three to six back-to-back interviews either on campus or in the firm's office. Recruiting committees typically weigh interviews more heavily than resumes in final offer decisions.

Candidates.—Firms attract similar applicant pools. The majority of students at elite undergraduate, business, and law schools apply for these jobs. Undergraduates nearing graduation frequently debate whether to go into

[11] The most elite law schools are exceptions; career offices force firms to interview all applicants who sign up.

banking, consulting, or law school; students in business school often apply simultaneously to banks and consulting firms; and newly minted JDs increasingly seek employment in banks and consulting firms in addition to law firms (Rimer 2008; Leonhardt 2011).

Despite these similarities, EPS firms vary along several dimensions. Although I discuss differences and their effect on evaluation extensively elsewhere (Rivera 2015), I focus on one important difference in this article: interview format. Firms vary in the degree to which interviews test technical skills. Law firm interviews are completely unstructured and focus almost exclusively on informal conversations about law school or extracurriculars. Banks follow a similar format but also include rudimentary tests of financial knowledge (e.g., "What is NASDAQ?" "How do you value a company?"). Consulting firms employ the most technical evaluations, consisting of a brief conversational interview, similar to those in banks and law firms, followed by a 20–30-minute "case" in which interviewers describe a hypothetical business problem and ask applicants to talk about how they might solve it. Such variation can illuminate important links between job interview formats and the role of emotion in hiring.

METHODS

I conducted both interviews and participant observation. Because this article focuses on evaluators' subjective experiences of emotion, I draw the bulk of analysis presented here from interviews—which are particularly suited to the study of social processes and subjective interpretations (Weiss 1994)—but use fieldwork to supplement participants' narratives with information about evaluative contexts and behaviors.

Interviews

I conducted 120 semistructured interviews with professionals involved in undergraduate and graduate hiring decisions in top-tier firms (40 per industry).[12] Participants included hiring partners, managing directors, and midlevel employees who conduct interviews and screen resumes. I recruited participants through stratified sampling from public directories of recruiting contacts, university alumni directories, and multisited referral chains. As elite populations are often difficult to access, referrals and my university and prior corporate affiliations were helpful in gaining consent and building rapport with participants. Interviews typically lasted between 40 and 90 minutes, took place at the time and location of the participant's choos-

[12] I identified firms on the basis of national and major market prestige rankings.

ing, and were tape-recorded and transcribed word-for-word when participants consented.

Following Lamont's (2009) protocol for probing evaluative criteria, I asked evaluators specific questions about what qualities they look for and about candidates whom they recently interviewed. Additionally, I asked evaluators who formally screened resumes to verbally evaluate a set of four mock candidate profiles—Blake, Jonathan, Julia, and Sarah. I crafted these resumes to reflect hiring standards for EPS firms; all had attended at least one selective university, met firms' common grade floor, had some prior work experience, and were involved in activities on campus. However, the candidates varied by sex, ethnicity, educational prestige, GPA, prior employer, and extracurriculars. Because more than one characteristic varied between resumes, the profiles were not intended as an experimental manipulation but rather a springboard for discussion that illuminated processes of criteria deployment and interpretation in real time (for sample resumes, see Rivera 2015, pp. 301–5).

Participant Observation

Over nine months in 2006 and 2007, I conducted fieldwork within the recruiting department of one EPS firm, which I refer to by the pseudonym Holt Halliday, or simply Holt. My role was that of a participant observer. Given my prior professional experience, I was brought on through a personal connection as an unpaid "recruiting intern" to help execute recruitment events. In exchange, Holt granted me permission to observe its recruitment process for research purposes. During these months, I shadowed evaluators through full-time and summer associate recruitment from an elite professional school. Because of institutional review board (IRB) restrictions and Holt's request, I was unable to sit in on interviews. However, I attended recruitment events, interacted with candidates, debriefed evaluators about candidates after interviews, and sat in on group deliberations in which candidates were discussed and ultimately selected. In addition to informing my interview protocol, such observation enabled me to examine candidate selection in action and discover patterns outside the awareness of individual evaluators. Although I did not observe interviews directly, witnessing how employers discussed candidates and made decisions behind closed doors provided crucial insights into the hiring process. How we interpret events plays a crucial role in orienting action (Turner and Stets 2006). Similarly, evaluators record subjective impressions—not objective details—of interviews on written reports and use these interpretations to argue for or against candidates in hiring committee deliberations, which I did observe. Although I observed only one firm, these data represent a launching point for understanding basic features of assessment.

Data Analysis

I coded interview transcripts and field notes for criteria and mechanisms of candidate evaluation. Following Charmaz's (2001) approach to grounded theory, I developed coding categories inductively and refined them in tandem with data analysis. In primary coding rounds, I coded transcripts line by line, paying particular attention to mentions of any criterion or mechanism that participants used to evaluate candidates. In inductive fashion, I did not set out to analyze emotion, nor did my interview protocol contain any questions about emotion. In fact, I originally intended to study gender inequality in hiring. However, as is common practice in semistructured interviewing, if participants spontaneously brought up new concepts—such as emotion—I followed up with probes. When first coding the data, I noticed the high frequency with which employers spontaneously reported using emotion in evaluation. I developed secondary codes referring to (1) uses of emotion (i.e., how employers used emotion in evaluation), (2) timing of emotion (i.e., at what phase of the evaluation process emotion was mentioned), (3) descriptions of particular emotions (e.g., excitement, boredom, love, anger), (4) sources of emotion (i.e., qualities that elicited particular emotional responses), and (5) meanings employers attributed to the presence or absence of particular emotions. I then quantified and compared code frequencies using the data analysis software ATLAS-ti.

Inductive qualitative research consists of an iterative relationship between theory and data analysis. Evidence found in the field can be used to generate new theories, revise existing ones, and develop middle-range theories (Miles and Huberman 1994; Charmaz 2001). While coding the data, I began to notice similarities and differences between my data and Collins's theories. I examined my codes and frequencies in light of Collins's ideas in analytic memos and used them to develop tertiary codes that are the basis of my original theoretical model of emotional energy development.

GO WITH YOUR GUT

Whereas traditional accounts of hiring treat employers' emotions as peripheral, evaluators described using their emotional responses to candidates as a central means of assessing candidates and making hiring decisions. Nearly 80% of participants in research interviews spontaneously reported using their emotions to evaluate job candidates (see fig. 1). Emotion was the second most common way they assessed candidates at the job interview stage, ranking only behind homophily in prevalence and frequency.

Evaluators insisted that merit was not something that they could cognitively ascertain from candidates' "paper" resume qualifications alone. Rather, it was something that they felt. "Gut," as evaluators commonly re-

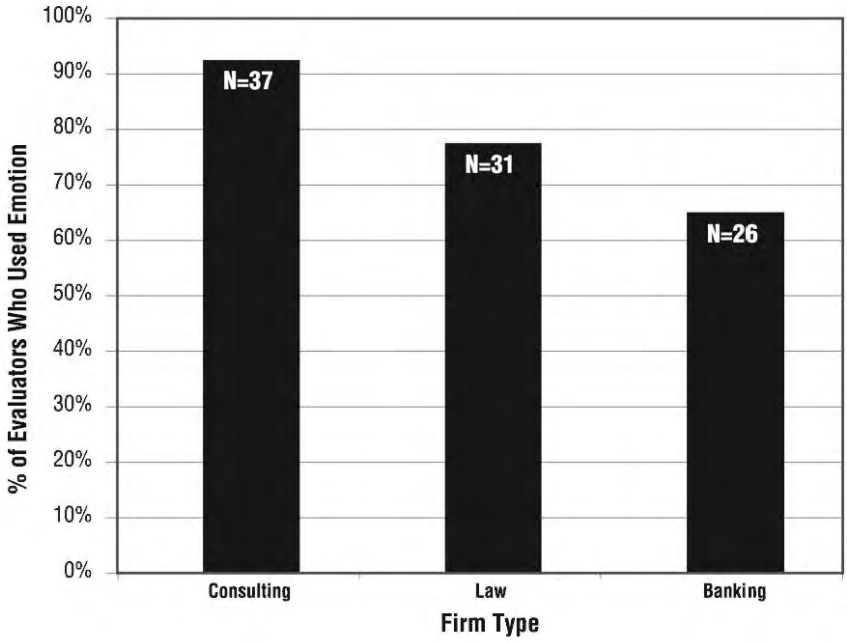

FIG. 1.—Proportion of participants who—in research interviews—used any emotion spontaneously when evaluating the merit of job candidates recently interviewed, ideal candidates, and mock candidate profiles.

ferred to their personal emotional responses to candidates, was a crucial way they evaluated and compared candidates at the job interview stage. When describing how she evaluates candidates, a legal recruitment director (white, female) summarized, "A lot of it is complete gut instinct." Many likened assessing interviewees to the selection of romantic partners, arguing that emotional factors were central. One banker (white, female) summarized, "It's like dating. . . . You meet a lot of people and then sometimes there's just chemistry. You just know it in your gut. We try to make it 'objective' by having trainings to tell us what to ask and what not to ask and by having evaluations, but ultimately it's just something you *feel*."

Many evaluators believed that using emotion in candidate evaluation was inevitable, commonly referring to it in terms of "human nature" or "instinct." However, the emotion culture (Gordon 1989) of these firms was one in which emotions were perceived as legitimate ways to make hiring decisions. The ideal worker (Acker 1990) in these firms was not only a competent colleague but also a fun and exciting playmate. Evaluators sought new hires with whom they could envision themselves developing intimate relationships on and off the job (Rivera 2012). They believed doing so would make long workweeks more enjoyable, although not necessarily more pro-

ductive or successful. A crucial means of assessing whether a candidate would make a good playmate was how he or she made the interviewer feel. A consultant (white, male) explained why emotion was a legitimate selection tool. "It's like a marriage," he asserted. "Would you marry someone who was perfect for you on paper but didn't make you feel good? Of course, you wouldn't. You'd be miserable." Such perspectives were institutionalized in firms' official recruitment policies, which mandated that evaluators select candidates they believed would "fit in" culturally and socially with existing employees (an evaluative criterion known as cultural fit). In resume screening, evaluators typically measured cultural fit by seeking resume similarities between themselves and job candidates. In job interviews, however, they commonly judged cultural fit by whether they experienced feelings of "spark" or "chemistry" when interacting with applicants. Firms encouraged evaluators to judge fit in this manner. At a brief Holt interviewer training I observed, the leader of the session instructed future interviewers to measure fit by "how you feel."

Evaluators saw using emotion in hiring as not only legitimate but also effective. Many believed that their emotional reactions to candidates were more reliable metrics of candidate quality than resume characteristics. They frequently described candidate assessment as "an art, not science." Some insisted that sticking to "paper" qualifications would lead them to miss great candidates who, for some reason, fell below threshold on these metrics. A banker (white, female) explained, "I think I can pick out great people. . . . You shouldn't shun someone based on what's on paper. There's [*sic*] plenty of people I've interviewed [that] . . . don't have the [right work] experience, but I've just gotten good gut feelings about them." In fact, firms purposely structured evaluation around the principle that merit was best assessed subjectively through the eyes and heart of the beholder. Although firms set out specific qualities that evaluators should assess, such as fit, intelligence, and communication skills, they typically left the measurement and weighting of these criteria up to the discretion of individual evaluators. A law firm hiring manager (white, female) described why her firm left evaluation open, asserting, "Our attorneys bring their own styles to interviews. . . . We trust their instincts."[13]

Finally, evaluators believed that using emotions to make hiring decisions was efficient. Firms in these industries have more applicants each year than

[13] Beliefs about appropriate emotional experiences, expressions, and uses are culturally embedded (Thoits 1989; Lively 2006). Likewise, beliefs about emotions as effective decision-making tools are not unique to EPS firms. Inspired by psychological research showing that emotion can facilitate judgment (Damasio 1994) and several high-profile CEOs who publicly attribute their most successful business decisions to gut, an entire industry touting the intelligence of emotions has emerged within the management world (Bandelj 2009). A slew of popular press books, management publications, and self-help

they can hire; many have lower acceptance rates than Ivy League colleges. Even after narrowing resumes by educational prestige, a basic grade floor, and extracurriculars (Rivera 2011), firms still needed to cut down the applicant pool, commonly by more than half. Employers could have screened more intensively on class rank, relevant coursework, relevant work experience, writing skills, standardized test performance, or diversity—as applicants varied substantially along these lines—but they did not. Part of this was driven by the aforementioned distrust of resumes and beliefs that emotions were legitimate, effective decision-making tools. But part was also due to practical constraints. Evaluators in these firms were not HR officials but rather revenue-generating professionals who balanced recruitment with full-time client work. The trade-off between time, effort, and evaluative rigor was top of mind for them; they perceived gut as a fast, easy way to distinguish among multiple applicants. A consultant (Indian, male) explained, "While I don't think it's always fair to base this judgment [of whom to hire] on how you feel. . . . I can't think of a more efficient way of doing it because you know you have to balance the ability to evaluate a candidate with time."

The Importance of Excitement

Most evaluators believed that going with their gut was a legitimate, effective, and efficient means of evaluating job candidates at the job interview stage.[14] They used a number of emotions when evaluating candidates, which I detail in figure 2. As noted in the figure, reports of excitement—akin to Collins's conception of emotional energy—were most common.

Evaluators described how perceptions of competence, although necessary, were insufficient for giving a candidate a positive hiring recommendation. Candidates also had to generate strong, positive emotions—most commonly excitement—from their evaluators in job interviews. A banker (white, male) explained, "Most of the people that are borderline for me . . . they don't really get me excited about them." A consulting partner (white, female) concurred,

gurus depict going with your gut as more effective and efficient than systematic reasoning (Hayashi 2001). Many corporate managers have internalized this notion; one survey estimated that 45% of managers reported relying more on their gut than on facts and figures in running their businesses (Bonabeau 2003). Drawing from such ideas, some evaluators in my sample directly cited popular press articles and books they had read on the wisdom of emotions, such as Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink*, to justify using emotion in hiring.

[14] Although the majority of evaluators viewed the use of emotion as functional in hiring, a few found this practice problematic, citing the possibility of bias. Yet, evaluators did not see clear alternatives. Moreover, those who were most emphatic about the downsides of gut were HR representatives who, although charged with overseeing the administrative aspects of recruitment, had minimal decision-making authority.

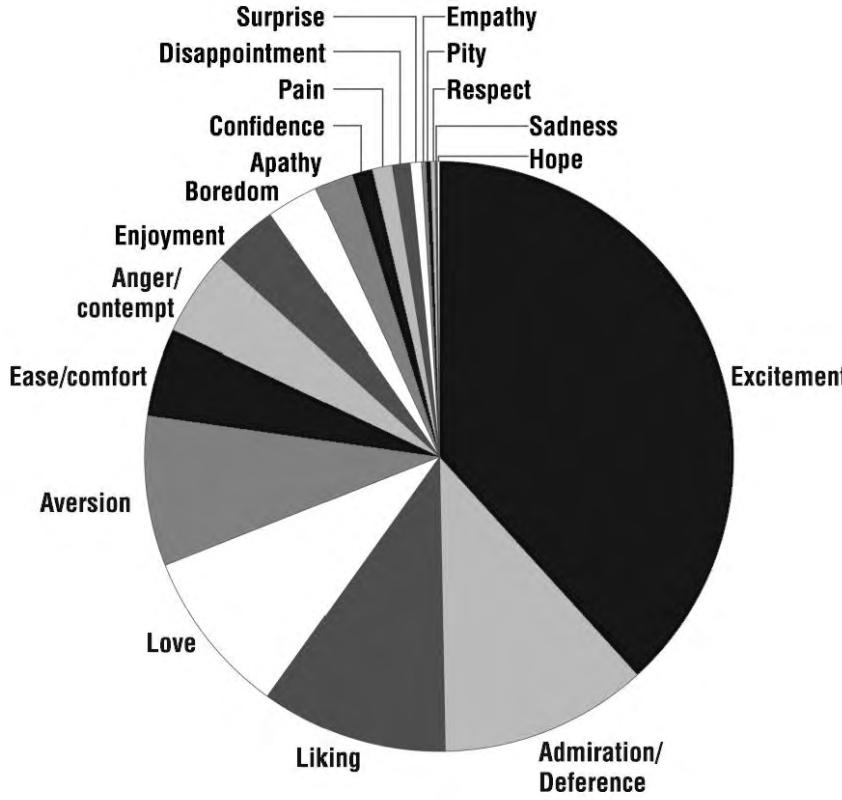

FIG. 2.—Relative prevalence of specific emotions reported when research interview participants described job candidates recently interviewed, ideal candidates, and mock candidate profiles.

"You see people who are like . . . there is nothing wrong . . . they did a solid job but there wasn't a spark." Without generating such emotional sparks in at least one evaluator, even a highly competent candidate was unlikely to receive an offer. A law firm partner (white, female) summarized, "You see people who have got the grades and they have great resumes and good references but you know people are like, 'Where's the enthusiasm [for them]?' . . . Yeah, they got good grades in our range, the resume's solid, but they don't get offers at our firm because it's like, 'Oh well, there's no enthusiasm for this person [from their interviewers].'" An attorney (Asian American, female) elaborated on the tension between competence and excitement in selecting new hires:

> I once read this newspaper article about the Bush-Gore election about how the reason Bush won the election was just because most Americans thought that

> Gore is someone who is really smart, but Bush is someone that they'd rather have a beer with. And I think that quality—it's something that you can't explain or articulate—plays into every interview, whether a person is willing to admit it or not. You think, "Is this someone I want to hang out with? Just someone who'd I'd rather go and get a beer with after work?" They need to be able to *light up* an interview like that; they have to make me think that they're *cool*. . . . You have to be excited about them.

It is important to note that excitement differs from liking. Excitement is a high-arousal, forward-looking state in which one anticipates receiving future social or material rewards (Johnson, Ford, and Kaufman 2000). Liking is a lower-arousal, more generalized positive evaluative sentiment toward another (Thoits 1989; Turner and Stets 2006). Moreover, although they may coexist, liking and excitement do not always co-occur. To use the types of dating analogies common among my participants, in the trope of the "nice" romantic prospect, we may like someone without being excited by them. Conversely, in the case of the "bad" or "dangerous" partner, we may experience intense excitement without stable feelings of liking or respect. Furthermore, evaluators discussed how, while common, liking was not a strong enough emotion to motivate action. A lawyer (white, female) explained, "Most of the people I interview I like. But they don't overwhelm me either way. . . . There has to be something that makes me excited about them [for me] to pass them on." Consequently, although evaluators also used liking in evaluation, feelings of excitement were described as being more crucial in evaluation. Such sentiments are consistent with neuroscience research showing that liking and excitement involve different neurological pathways and that the latter is more consequential for motivating action (Depue and Collins 1999; Berridge and Robinson 2003).

Producing Emotional Energy

Consistent with prior psychological research and Collins's hypothesis, employers used their emotional responses to job candidates, particularly the presence or absence of feelings of excitement—akin to Collins's conception of emotional energy—as bases of interpersonal evaluation and selection in hiring. Yet, how did feelings of excitement, which were so crucial for candidates' fates in the hiring process, develop in job interviews?

In his work, Collins theorizes the structural preconditions for the development of emotional energy across different types of microsocial encounters. He contends that emotional energy will develop when participants share (1) physical copresence, (2) a boundary from outsiders, (3) mutual focus, and (4) shared initial emotion. Without all four dynamics, he argues, encounters are likely to fall flat from the start and are difficult if not impossible to recoup. By design, job interviews fulfill the first three of these

criteria by placing two people in an isolated room for the purpose of joint evaluation. But how does the subjective experience of emotional energy develop within a given type of interaction? On this subject, Collins remains elusive.

In this section, I use my data to propose an original theoretical model of *emotional energy development* in job interviews (see fig. 3). This model highlights the qualities that tend to produce or diminish interviewers' subjective feelings of emotional energy in job interviews. It also identifies the phases of a job interview in which energy gains or losses are particularly consequential for influencing hiring outcomes and inequalities. The framework revises and extends Collins's ideas about emotion in interpersonal evaluation and highlights important microsocial factors that contribute to employers' hiring decisions.

In this model, I argue that the level of emotional energy generated by an encounter begins before face-to-face interaction. Evaluators develop an *energy expectation* of how emotionally rewarding they believe interacting with a candidate will be. They subsequently confirm or revise this estimate into an overall *energy impression* based on initial ice-breaking conversation, which in these firms is typically not related to the job in question. This energy impression heavily colors and often overshadows the formal *performance evaluation* stage of the interview in which directly job-relevant knowledge and skills are systematically tested. After the interview, the *energy trace* that lingers in evaluators' perceptions influences how they recall and rank candidates and contributes to an *energy impulse* that affects their willingness to advocate for a candidate in hiring deliberations. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate how evaluators' subjective experiences of particular emotions wax and wane in job interviews.

Phase 1: Energy Expectation

In contrast to Collins's view, the level of emotional energy produced by an encounter begins to develop before face-to-face interaction. When scanning resumes for conversation topics immediately before meeting a candidate, evaluators reported developing an energy expectation of how exciting or enjoyable interacting with that applicant would be. To participate in on-campus recruitment for these firms, applicants must list on their resumes not only educational and work experiences but also extracurricular and leisure activities. Evaluators reported creating a "rough sketch" of candidates in their minds on the basis of information gleaned from resumes, which included a prediction of how exciting interacting with a candidate would be. Evaluators' assessments of mock candidate profiles were particularly useful for illuminating this initial stage of energy formation. An attorney

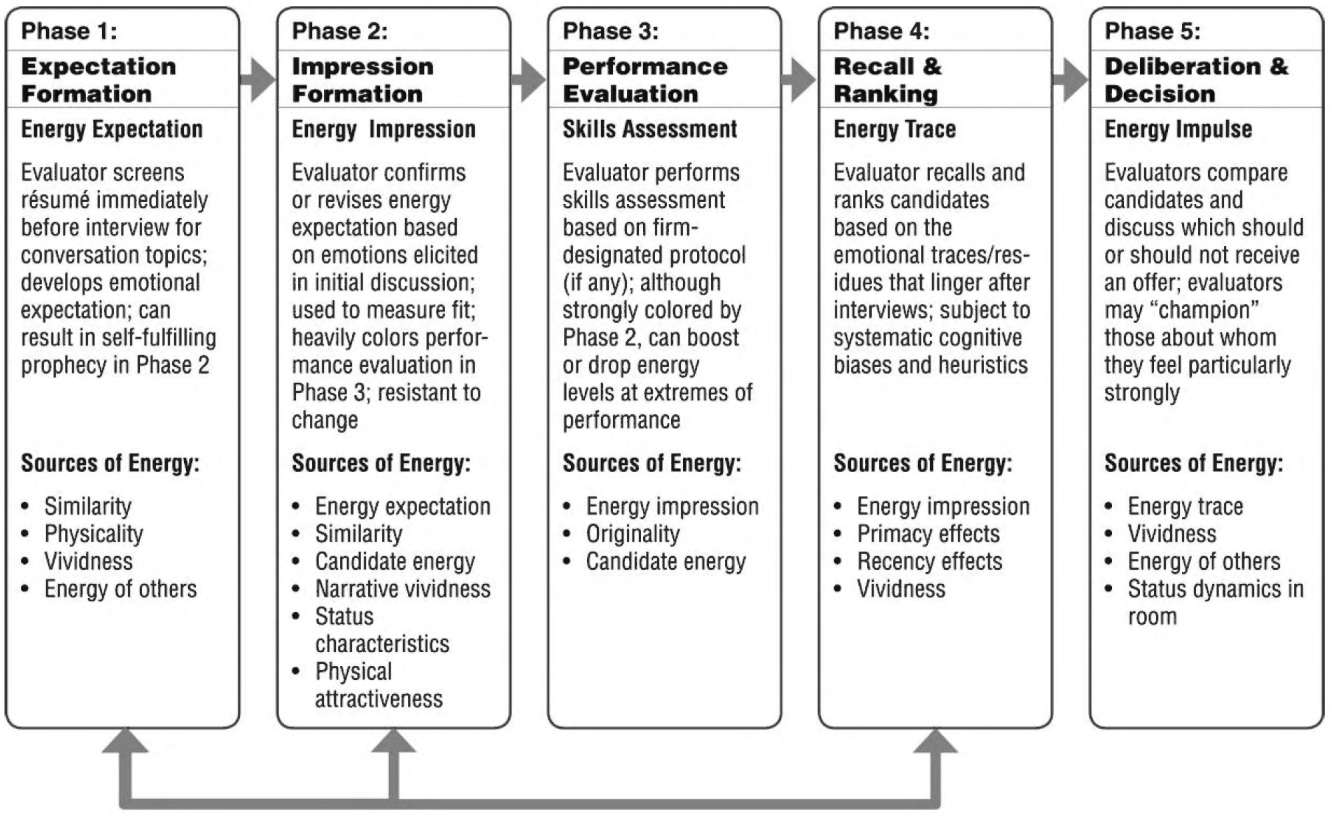

FIG. 3.—Theoretical model of emotional energy development in job interviews

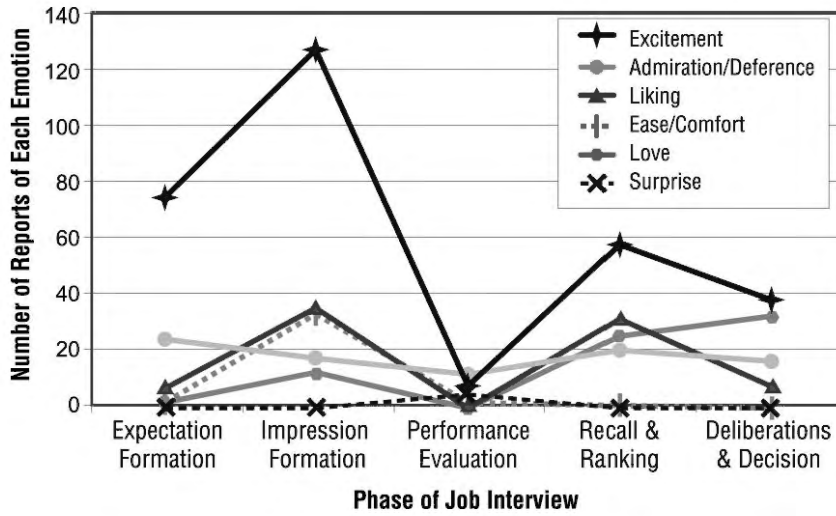

FIG. 4.—Frequency of common positive emotions used to evaluate recently interviewed job applicants, ideal candidates, and mock candidate profiles in research interviews by stage of the evaluation process. Less frequently reported emotions omitted for clarity.

(black, female) contrasted the energy expectations she developed for two mock candidates, which she formed largely on the basis of her interpretation of their social backgrounds. "Blake," an investment banker from the Northeast, who shared few commonalities with her, did not provide an initial energy boost: "When I look at a resume, I try to create a face. I mean honestly this is like a white man who I view as probably like 6′2″, and I say that because he played lacrosse. . . . He certainly looks good on paper, I mean he went to Exeter, which leads me to believe that his family has money. . . . But he doesn't talk about being active in things in law school. . . . Was he doing anything with himself aside from studying and playing beer pong?" She contrasted him to Julia, a Hispanic female who provided her with a distinctive energy boost based on her interest in public service, a passion she shared: "Teach for America [*her face lights up*], *this* is the type of experience that I was talking about . . . like there's something that we can *really talk about*. . . . I like that kind of thing. . . . Oh and then she worked at the battered women's shelter . . . so she is fantastic, she is number one for sure."

Research on *expectation states* (Berger et al. 1977) shows that expectations about performance, often associated with status characteristics such as sex and race, significantly influence evaluations of competence. In addition to such influences (note that the above attorney mentioned sex, race,

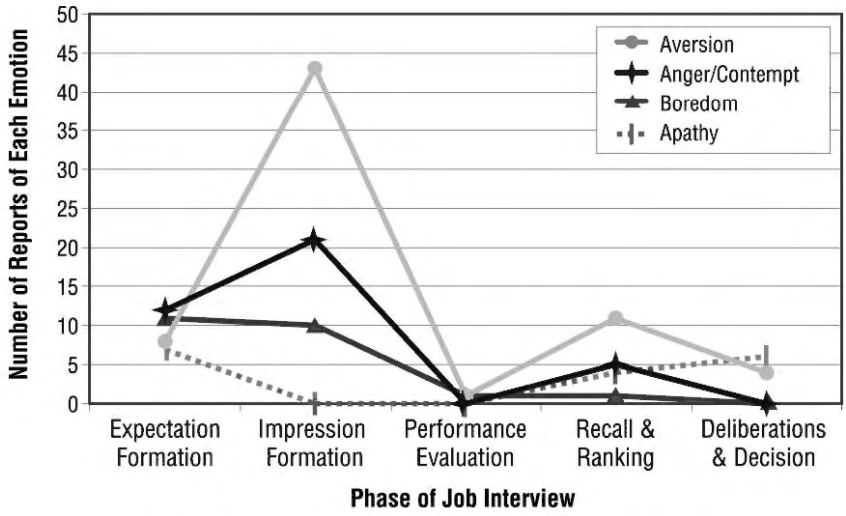

FIG. 5.—Frequency of negative/neutral emotions used to evaluate recently interviewed job applicants, ideal candidates, and mock candidate profiles in research interviews by stage of the evaluation process. Less frequently reported emotions omitted for clarity.

and class when discussing the resumes), I argue that energy expectations also play a meaningful role in evaluation. Energy expectations were distinct from performance expectations and often deviated from them. For example, evaluators frequently expected that "nerds" or "bookworms"—individuals who had impressive academic credentials but lacked "exciting" or "interesting" extracurricular experiences—would be "duds," "boring worker bees," or even "corporate drones" who would be "dull" to interact with in the interview or at work, if hired. Illustrating the difference between competence and energy expectations, the majority of evaluators believed that Julia was the "smartest" candidate, but they varied wildly in how enjoyable they perceived interacting with her would be and how highly they ranked her versus other mock candidates. Whereas the attorney quoted previously found her to be extraordinarily exciting and ranked her first, a consultant (white, female) anticipated she would be "scary" if not "absolutely terrifying." A banker (white, male), however, found her to be lackluster: "These types of extracurriculars like volunteering and tutoring, not to discount what she likes to do, but they seem sort of *canned* as opposed to something like watching sports." He ranked her last among the mock candidates. Evaluators' energy expectations most commonly stemmed from candidates' extracurricular interests. Activities high in similarity to the interviewer, phys-

icality, and vividness tended to produce excitement in expectation formation.[15]

Extracurricular similarity.—Similarity is an important basis of attraction and affiliation (Byrne 1971; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001; Collins 2004). Evaluators described how discovering extracurricular similarities when scanning a candidate's resume before the interview was one of the most potent sources of high energy expectations. Although I discuss the evaluative benefits of similarity extensively elsewhere (Rivera 2012), a banker (white, female) illustrated how shared extracurricular activities could yield excitement before interaction. When reviewing the mock resume of "Jonathan" her face lit up as she exclaimed, "Ooh traveling, running, all things that I like! I'd definitely interview him," and moved his resume to the top of her stack. A consultant (white, female) displayed similar enthusiasm when reviewing Julia's resume: "She's into social enterprise stuff. I *really* dig that. She's in." She ranked Julia first among the mock candidates.[16] Conversely, a lack of commonalities could contribute to a lack of excitement before an interview began. An attorney (white, male) described one candidate who filled him with a sense of dread from the start: "I looked at her resume a few minutes before she came in, as I always do, to figure out what I was going to ask her. But there was nothing on there that I could relate to. I looked at her activities and immediately knew that we'd have *nothing to talk about.*"

Physically demanding activities.—Participation in physically demanding or adrenaline-inducing extracurriculars was also a consistent source of high energy expectations. Evaluators described being especially "pumped up" by candidates who participated extensively in athletics, especially nationally or internationally ranked athletes. A consultant (white, male) asserted, "If you're the captain of a Division I sports team . . . it makes you automatically interesting." In his reaction to mock candidate Sarah, a consultant (Asian American, male) illustrated how this boost was not limited to male candidates or participation in team sports. His face lit up as he reviewed the profile, "Top player in the country for squash is *really* interesting. . . . I would definitely want to interview her." A consultant (Indian, female) recalled one candidate whom she was particularly excited to meet:

[15] Less frequently, word of mouth contributed to energy expectations. Although interviews were typically conducted by independent evaluators separately, evaluators who were particularly excited by a candidate could "spread the word" to other evaluators scheduled to meet with him or her later that day. I witnessed this at Holt.

[16] These types of energy expectations could also occur for shared demographic characteristics. However, in my sample sex and race similarities did not consistently relate to energy reported in this phase of the evaluation or to overall hiring recommendations. Rather, sex and race were more commonly discussed in terms of performance expectations and evaluations.

"She runs a marathon in less than three hours. That's pretty amazing! . . . You read it and it's like, 'Cool!'" Such energy boosts were not simply about being in the presence of a winner, a team player, or someone with a high work ethic. Rather, they were about participation in physically demanding, physiologically arousing activities that vicariously pumped up evaluators with feelings of excitement. Other types of national prizes that were arguably more job-relevant but less physically demanding (e.g., speech and debate, math, moot court champion) did not result in the same affective boosts as accomplished athletes. Athletic honors—even for individual rather than team sports—were described as "fantastic," "cool," and "amazing," while other recognitions were frequently criticized for being "resume" or "filler" activities and their recipients judged as "boring."

However, not all physically demanding activities were equally arousing. Evaluators preferred activities that required significant investments of time, money, and resources and were out of reach for the majority of the population. For example, evaluators differentiated being a varsity college athlete, preferably one who was also a national or Olympic champion, versus playing intramurals or having reached the summit of Mount Everest or Kilimanjaro versus recreational hiking. The former activities were described as particularly "cool," "impressive," or having a significant "wow factor," whereas the latter were activities that "anyone could do."

Vividness.—Additionally, unique extracurricular activities contributed to high energy expectations. In such cases, evaluators reported being excited to talk to the candidate, as opposed to feeling bored or apathetic, which were typical reactions to the prospect of "yet another interview." An attorney (Asian American, male) explained, "I find it exciting if someone had something *interesting* on their resume. . . . Like they did a tour in the military or they were a cattle rancher." Without such vivid activities, candidates ran the risk of being perceived as "dull," "bland," or "ordinary" by evaluators and suffering from low energy expectations from the start.

Energy expectations and inequality.—The importance of extracurricular activities in generating high energy expectations tended to disadvantage job applicants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Working class students are more likely than middle- and upper-middle-class students to believe that achievement in the classroom matters most for future success and invest their energies accordingly (Bergerson 2007; Armstrong and Hamilton 2013). Consequently, their extracurricular profiles tend to be thinner than those of students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (Stuber 2011), giving them less material for high energy expectations. Compounding this, the specific types of extracurricular activities that generated excitement from evaluators had meaningful classed components. Evaluators in these firms were typically Ivy League–educated men and women from upper-class and upper-middle-class backgrounds. They typically participated in and were

most excited by activities associated with white, upper-middle-class culture. Moreover, the specific activities that excited evaluators, in the words of one attorney (Indian American, male), "cost a lot of money to do." In addition to the immediate expense of valued extracurricular pursuits (e.g., equipment, forgone earnings, travel costs), many of the activities prized by evaluators required long periods of *concerted cultivation* (Lareau 2003), often beginning in childhood, and investments not only by job candidates but also by their parents (Friedman 2013). This was true even of varsity athletics—an activity often perceived to be open to all but positively and strongly associated with parental socioeconomic status, particularly at elite universities (Shulman and Bowen 2001; Stevens 2007). Consequently, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tended to face hurdles in fostering high energy expectations from evaluators.

Additionally, the types of activities that excited evaluators tended to be stereotypically masculine. Yet, this did not automatically disadvantage females or advantage males. Perhaps because applicants were prescreened for an elite university credential and were applying to work in traditionally male-dominated fields, sex and experience were only loosely coupled in applicant pools. For example, female professional school applicants at Holt were more likely than males to be competitive athletes. However, these processes tended to disadvantage those female and male applicants who had stereotypically feminine leisure profiles before interviews even began.

Phase 2: Energy Impression

Equipped with rough mental sketches of candidates, evaluators developed fuller impressions during the first minutes of ice-breaking conversation in interviews. Energy expectations were not just noise in the evaluation process; similar to research on decision making (Clore and Storbeck 2006), they created affective frames that biased how evaluators subsequently gathered and interpreted information about candidates in job interviews.

In the majority of firms, there was no formal script for this brief getting-to-know-you portion of the interview. Rather, evaluators identified experiences or interests listed on a candidate's resume that they shared or otherwise found intriguing. An attorney (white, female) explained her strategy for breaking the ice, which was common across evaluators and industries: "Honestly, I don't have a rhyme or reason; I just sort of pick whatever [on the resume] looks interesting to me." As such, having resume activities that the evaluator found personally exciting could not only result in a higher energy expectation for the candidate (phase 1) but also provide more fertile ground for energy-producing discussion in initial interaction (phase 2).

These initial interactions were crucial because evaluators developed an energy impression that pervaded the rest of the interview. A legal recruit-

ing manager (white, female) summarized the importance of these first moments: "Most interviewers will decide right off if they want someone or not.'" Such sentiments are consistent with research showing that interviewers typically make up their minds about candidates in the first five minutes of meeting them and rarely deviate from these initial impressions (Iyengar 2010). In addition, evaluators used the presence or absence of feelings of excitement and "chemistry" experienced in these first moments of ice-breaking conversation to assess candidates' levels of cultural fit.

In line with prior research on emotions and expectations (Johnson et al. 2000), when initial interactions confirmed the energy expectation generated before meeting a candidate, they reinforced or even amplified the evaluator's feelings of being pumped up or drained of energy. A banker (white, male) provided such an example: "I had seen on her resume that she was a diver. So am I, so I started by asking her about that and we had a great discussion about getting certified in Thailand. . . . We just had an instant spark." He ranked her first among all candidates he had interviewed that hiring season and championed her in deliberations. Conversely, the attorney from the previous section who reported having a low energy expectation for a candidate with whom he anticipated having "nothing to talk about" described a negative, self-fulfilling prophecy: "She had great grades and was clearly a bright girl, but I don't know—I simply had nothing to say to her. . . . I couldn't pass her on because I couldn't bore other people [in the office] to death." He declined to pass her on to the second round of interviews.

However, the first moments of the interview also provided opportunities for the revision of energy expectations. Candidates who seemed lackluster on paper could prove to be exciting in person. Conversely, candidates who were thought to be "shoo-ins" from an energy perspective could be "duds" if they did not confirm this expectation. An attorney (white, male) recalled how his high energy expectation created by a candidate's vivid extracurricular pursuit crashed during a dull interaction in phase 2: "This one guy I interviewed listed something about high-stakes dice rolling on his resume. I was like, 'Awesome!' But he couldn't get me excited about it. Here was a really interesting tidbit that could have been really fun to talk about, but he just couldn't get me excited or wow me with it." The interviewer did not forward the candidate to second-round interviews. Similarly, an attorney (white, female) recalled one candidate recently interviewed, "He was great on paper . . . but after three minutes [of the interview] it was just like 'Blech! Get me out!' He was so boring." In some respects, such candidates suffered the worst fate from an energy perspective; interviewers experienced an extreme clash between high expectations and unpleasant initial interaction as disrupting the flow of conversation. Some evaluators referred to such a dramatic drop in their excitement levels as a "bomb" or a

"crash and burn" and reported that such situations were extremely difficult to recover from, partially because they tended to "check out" of interviews that were initially unpleasant.

Thus, although energy expectations were important in setting the initial energy level of an interaction and often influenced an evaluator's subsequent emotional responses, energy levels were often still malleable during the impression formation stage. Candidates needed to generate or maintain excitement from evaluators during the first minutes of the interview in order to hold their evaluator's attention and prevent an energy "crash." Several factors contributed to excitement in this portion of the interview: similarity, candidate energy, narrative vividness, and physical attractiveness.

Similarity.—Resume similarities could not only generate high energy expectations but also provide more fertile ground for developing high energy impressions during interviews on the basis of energizing conversations about commonalities. A lawyer (white, female) described one candidate who confirmed her high energy expectation, which stemmed from a mutual interest in baseball, through exciting conversation about the sport: "I can't remember where he went to law school. But what stood out for me is that he did sports broadcasting on . . . the major AM station in the New York area and he did all the Yankee games for them, and I thought that was so cool. . . . We had a lot to talk about because of that."

However, resume similarities alone were insufficient for producing high energy impressions. Rather, similarities needed to be accompanied by feelings of excitement experienced when discussing them during the interview. A banker (white, female) described a case in which a shared alma mater produced a high energy expectation but failed to materialize into a high energy impression: "I was really excited to interview another Yalie, and so I asked him, 'Why did you go [to Yale]?' And most people say that they felt like at [prefreshman] weekend everyone was like smart or interesting. . . . But he was like, 'I don't know.' It was like . . . a giant thud [in the room]." She described immediately "checking out" of the interview and rejected the candidate. A banker (white, male) and active marathoner described another case in which resume similarities failed to produce a high energy impression: "One person said . . . [on his resume], 'Ran Boston Marathon blah, blah, blah.' Well, you have to qualify for Boston . . . [I asked], 'So what marathon did you qualify for Boston in?' . . . He had gotten in through a charity slot and had run a leg of it, and claimed to have run the Boston Marathon. It was like, no. They're out." He reported being "pissed" by the interaction and rejected the candidate.[17]

[17] Anger was—in my participants' words—a "deal breaker" that extinguished positive feelings experienced up to that point and often led interviewers to "check out" of an interview. Although there were few overall differences between the emotional reports of

Conversely, the discovery of commonalities not listed on a resume during the first few minutes of the interview could create high energy impressions. Two lawyers recalled how they personally benefited from such discovered similarities when they were job candidates. A lawyer (Indian, male) recalled the interview with the partner (white, male) that got him his job:

> It was cold [on the day of the interview], and for whatever reason I was wearing a Harley Davidson jacket over my suit when I walked in the room. I was about to take it off when he pointed to my jacket and said, "Harley Davidson? That's amazing!" Then he asks, "Do you have the Harley Davidson magazine?" And then he takes out his Harley Davidson cuff links to show me. . . . And then he says, "Let me show you pictures of my babies." On his computer right? And he shows me pictures of all his Harley Davidson motorcycles the whole time. . . . He told me on the spot that I had the job.

A recently hired female attorney described a similar case of discovered commonalities when she was an interviewee at her elite law firm. She entered the interview room and sat down with the evaluator, who was a white female. After a brief pause, she said to the interviewer, "I like your belt." The interviewer responded by saying thank you. "If you don't mind my saying so," the candidate added, "it's a little bit pirate-y." The interviewer looked down at her belt and replied, "Well, I always have thought of myself as somewhat of a pirate." The two then exchanged pirate jokes for the duration of the 20-minute interview. The interviewer championed her throughout the recruitment process and successfully pushed for her to receive a job offer, which was the only offer she received. Thus, similarities confirmed or discovered during initial ice-breaking conversation in interviews were sources of high energy impressions; similarities disconfirmed or not met with excitement inhibited or decreased emotional energy in this phase of the interview.

Candidate energy.—As Collins notes, successful interaction rituals are characterized by shared initial emotion. As such, perceptions of candidates' energy levels were important sources of evaluators' energy impressions. Collins argues that energy levels are contagious; individuals who bring high levels of energy to a situation will boost others' energy, provided the other prerequisites for an interaction ritual are met. Conversely, those who enter an interaction without a sense of enthusiasm will likely bring

male and female evaluators, consistent with gendered prescriptions of emotion (Simon and Lively 2010), men were more likely to report experiencing anger toward candidates, especially other males. Anger most commonly arose when evaluators believed candidates were inauthentic in their self-presentation, in terms of exaggerating information on their resumes or trying to "fake" extracurricular activities (perceptions of authenticity, however, were not common sources of energy boosts). Thus, although candidates could try to "pad" their resumes with activities they believed evaluators would find to be exciting, such a strategy was risky.

down the energy of those around them. However, according to Collins, individuals are attracted to the highest-energy alters.

Evaluators in my sample reported that a candidate's energy level was a crucial source of their own excitement. They reported gravitating toward high-energy candidates because they felt their own stocks of energy were depleted during the recruitment process, particularly during on-campus interviews. Many traveled long distances the night before a campus visit to arrive on site for an 8:00 a.m. or 9:00 a.m. start, went through a full day of interviews with rare breaks, sat through deliberations, attended recruitment dinners and receptions afterward, often came home to a full day's load of client work to complete in their hotel room, and then repeated this schedule for one or more additional days. Moreover, although many enjoyed speaking with candidates, they also found sitting through long hours asking similar questions to people "draining" if not "mind-blowingly dull." Consequently, they relied on candidates to combat boredom and boost (or at least replenish) their own energy throughout the day. A consultant (Indian, male) stated: "The number two thing [I look for] is energy level. . . . Interview as if you are excited to be there. Because there is a chance that this is my tenth interview of the day. Honestly, I am tired myself. I have been doing it all day. So the more energetic you are, the more you engage me in a conversation, the better it is." In addition to acute fatigue, interviewers also described a more chronic energy drain due to the demanding and often mundane nature of their work that made them more susceptible to enthusiastic candidates. A banker (white, male) explained: "I really like it when candidates are excited. This job is really rough. It's repetitive and long hours and is often times just painful. It's nice when you go back [to campus to interview students] when you've been here [at the firm] a while and are jaded, like we all are, to see these bright, enthusiastic faces that would do anything to have your job. It really pumps you up."[18] Additionally, a baseline level of enthusiasm in candidates was seen as a sign of underlying stamina, an asset when coping with demanding work schedules.

When asked how they judge a candidate's energy level, evaluators often struggled, explaining it as something they again felt in their gut. When probed deeper, evaluators highlighted factors such as posture, gaze, and inflection. Collins considers these manifestations of the physiological dimensions of emotional energy, and psychologists have demonstrated that they are correlated with perceptions of both likability and competence (Palmer

[18] Such processes may help to explain why firms spend hundreds of thousands (some, millions) of dollars per year removing revenue-generating professionals from client matters and flying them around the globe to interview candidates on elite campuses rather than outsourcing this function to local HR staff. "Going back to campus" may help generate ritual attachment to the firm and periodically reinforce employee commitment to energy-draining jobs.

and Simmons 1995). However, candidate energy was a more effervescent quality not reducible to nonverbal skill alone. A consultant (white, female) summarized, "Some of it is body language, just about eye contact and leaning forward, showing interest in what the person is saying. But honestly, I am afraid there isn't a science to it. . . . An important part of that is just energy."

Upon further probing, demonstrating "good energy" seemed to have several components. First, whereas Collins suggests that obeying traditional order-giving and order-taking relations produces emotional energy for those in positions of power in interactions, evaluators reported being more energized by candidates who minimized or even reversed the traditional hierarchy between interviewer and interviewee. A consultant (white, male) explained, "The best ones start the interview process off by asking *you* questions." He gave one example: "We were walking from the room where the candidates congregate . . . to where we were actually conducting the interviews. . . . She was instantly asking questions about my bio that were on my bio card. . . . That kind of engagement initially I think really helps. And it also turns it directly into the kind of dialogue that I was talking about because it instantly kind of subverts the traditional interviewer-interviewee relationship. You sort of straight away start out with the interviewer answering questions." Another evaluator (Hispanic, male) described a highly qualified candidate who lacked good energy: "I like to make my interviews like conversations. . . . He [the candidate] liked it formal. . . . He had this attitude that he was like subordinate because I was the professional." As such, contrary to Collins, it was not conformity to order-giving and order-taking relations that provided evaluators with emotional energy in the EPS job interview setting but rather reversals of the interviewer-interviewee hierarchy.

Second, although candidates needed to demonstrate excitement in interaction, they could not come in with too much enthusiasm or they ran the risk of overwhelming their evaluators. An attorney (white, female) described one such example: "He was like super gung ho and really wanted to work for [FIRM] because [FIRM] has a great reputation for [PRACTICE AREA], and that's what he really wanted to do and had wanted to do for five years and was really excited and knew everything about [FIRM]. . . . We didn't give him a callback. . . . It's like in a romantic relationship. . . . Nobody wants the guy that is falling all over you."[19]

Consequently, the "feeling rules" and display norms (Hochschild 1983) that governed the interview exchange in these firms was a delicate balance

[19] Such aversion was not an artifact of inauthentic self-presentation, as "overly enthusiastic" candidates could be sincere in their enthusiasm, but still perceived as "desperate" or even "creepy."

between excitement and reserve. Yet, highlighting how display rules are embedded not only in organizational or occupational norms but also in the identities of individual gatekeepers performing evaluations, what constituted good but not overwhelming energy varied by the energy level of the specific interviewer. Interviewers sought a degree of affective match in job candidates. For example, an extraordinarily energetic attorney (white, female), who spoke rapidly and emphatically in our conversation, said of her best candidate, "She was incredibly high energy and just funny and interesting and stood out a mile away from anyone else. She had so much energy; I thought she was a little bit crazy! But she was just so ambitious and so intense and so bright." A more mellow attorney, also a white female, described the importance of affective matching: "I think if you go into an interview and the person you're interviewing with is very laid back, you need to meet their level. And if you come into an interview and the person you're interviewing with is very serious . . . you need to meet that level as well." Consequently, evaluators sought candidates who displayed elevated but not overwhelmingly high energy and often favored candidates whose energy levels matched their own. Thus, individuals may bear closer resemblances to energy balancers rather than maximizers, as posited by Collins.

Finally, status characteristics affected perceptions of candidate energy. Members of lower-status groups are more likely to experience and express negative emotions (Collins 2004; Simon and Lively 2010). Yet, emotional experiences, displays, and energy can vary among members of a categorical group (Summers-Effler 2002). In my sample, there were few differences in perceived energy levels by applicants' sex and race.[20] This may be because applicants to EPS firms were prescreened for elite university credentials and thus had alternative sources of status and high emotional energy. However, Asian (interestingly, not Asian American) females were exceptions. Consistent with racial stereotypes of passivity, these candidates were frequently described as "dull" or displaying energy levels that were "too low." Likewise, perceptions of good energy had important classed dimensions. Taking charge of interview conversations and treating authority figures as equals is a hallmark of socioeconomic elites (Ostrander 1993; Khan 2010). As such, due to perceptions of low energy, Asian females and candidates from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tended to face barriers in fostering high energy impressions among evaluators.

Narrative vividness.—Storytelling was an essential part of the interview process. Whereas in the expectation formation phase, evaluators constructed an energy-boosting, neutral, or draining story about candidates in their own minds on the basis of resumes, in the impression formation phase, candi-

[20] Likewise, at Holt, women and most ethnic minorities were hired at slightly higher rates than white or male applicants (see the appendix).

dates were charged with crafting their own narratives. Just as the vigor with which candidates described their interests and backgrounds (candidate energy) influenced evaluators' levels of excitement, the vividness of candidates' narrative content also affected energy levels. People are more likely to give greater weight to and be emotionally moved by visceral and easy-to-imagine events and images (Kahneman, Lovallo, and Sibony 2011). In job interviews, narrative plot lines that were sufficiently dramatic or unique could arouse excitement and contribute to high energy impressions. A consultant (white, female) recalled one such candidate (Indian American, female), whom she gave the highest interview marks: "This lady is telling me about staying in India after her holiday break after the tsunami hit. . . . She's helping fishermen in villages who are terrified of the water and getting psychological treatment for women who lost their babies—just, like, incredible stuff. . . . I immediately knew I *had to* have her." Although activities and qualities associated with high socioeconomic status typically produced emotional energy, narrative vividness could serve as an alternative route of energy production for candidates from less privileged backgrounds. This occurred when candidates conveyed dramatic "rags-to-riches" narratives of overcoming hardship to their interviewer.[21] These types of stories, however, provided boosts from admiration rather than excitement.[22] A legal hiring manager (white, female) provided one such example: "He told me this awesome story about how he immigrated to the U.S. He was like a Vietnamese boat person and talked about the travel in the boat and the pirates that were in Vietnam. . . . He said, 'I went from not speaking English to being the valedictorian graduating summa of my undergrad class.' I mean those kinds of stories are so impressive because this is someone who kind of worked his way up."

The dramatic plotline of rags-to-riches narratives could elicit feelings of admiration that could compensate for a lack of excitement derived through similarity to interviewers, resource-intensive extracurricular activities, elite interactional styles, or other class-based signals. However, candidates needed not only to have dramatic plotlines—which not all socioeconomically disadvantaged students do—but also to know "to tell their story" and weave it into a particular type of emotionally arousing bootstrapping narrative. The latter is knowledge that members of traditionally underrepresented groups may not have without coaching from cultural insiders (Phillips, Rothbard, and Dumas 2009).[23]

[21] Stories had to have positive resolutions, however, in order to produce this boost.

[22] This is consistent with Hallett's (2007) notion that feelings of admiration and deference can contribute to emotional energy levels.

[23] Often individuals who come from disadvantaged economic backgrounds try to conceal rather than call attention to their origins (Granfield 1992; Lumbrano 2005).

Physical attractiveness.—Beauty is a potent status characteristic that influences interpersonal attraction and evaluation (Webster 2003), including hiring (Hamermesh 2011). Although the effect of physical attractiveness is difficult to analyze through self-report due to social desirability concerns, several evaluators—disproportionately male investment bankers—explicitly mentioned this quality as producing energy sparks. A banker (Indian, male) candidly admitted, "I don't know if I'm too easy especially on pretty girls. Because it's fun to talk to them; of course, you'd want to have them around!" Another banker (white, male) described a candidate who had recently excited him: "I mean we don't usually get blond girls. If we get a girl, we usually get Asians. I know it's a stereotype, but it's true."

I also witnessed examples of the energizing effect of physical attractiveness while at Holt. In debriefing evaluators after interviews, I occasionally heard comments about a candidate's physical appearance. For example, one consultant (Asian, female) started her description of a candidate's performance by sighing and saying with a smile, "He just had the most amazing blue eyes." Another (white, female) downloaded a photo of a candidate she found particularly attractive and informed passersby of his "hotness" and instructed interviewers to "be nice to my future husband!" The latter example illustrates how physical attraction could contribute not only to evaluators' energy impressions but also to other evaluators' future energy expectations through word of mouth. Although such anecdotes are descriptive at best, such energy-boosting sparks of physical attraction could help explain why in such firms candidates paired with a cross-sex rather than same-sex interviewer often fared better in evaluation (Rivera, Owens, and Gan 2014).

Phase 3: Performance Evaluation

Whereas energy expectations were easily revised, energy impressions were not. They tended to result in self-fulfilling prophecies of excitement or boredom. People have short attention spans. They typically develop an impression of people within minutes or even seconds of encountering them; these initial impressions are very resistant to change (Ambady and Weisbuch 2010). In hiring, interviewers tend to decide whether they will recommend candidates within the first five minutes of meeting them and subsequently cherry-pick information to confirm their initial impressions (Iyengar 2010). Similarly, my participants described how they and other interviewers tended to "check out" from an interview or "fall in love" with a candidate on the basis of the first few minutes of conversation.

Furthermore, a high energy impression could result in a halo effect that cast a positive light on evaluations of job-relevant skills. Psychologists have shown that individuals experiencing positive feelings such as excitement

will overweigh other people's strengths in evaluation and discount their weaknesses. Conversely, those experiencing negative feelings will exaggerate others' weaknesses and discount their strengths. Moreover, people use their feelings as measures of quality, assuming that people who make them feel good are good (Clore and Storbeck 2006). A consulting partner (Indian, male) observed similar trends over his years running recruitment for his office: "Interviewers tend to fall in love with candidates. If they really like them from the first few moments of conversation, they'll be rooting for them throughout the rest of the interview. They'll end up overrating them on all the dimensions. And if they don't fall in love, they overweigh the candidate's weak spots." In turn, interviewers' emotional displays could influence candidates' interview performance (Word, Zanna, and Cooper 1974). Net of these factors, several interviewers admitted that they occasionally lowered the technical bar for candidates with whom they had great sparks. A banker (white, male) said, "You know, if I'm really hitting it off with them, I won't give them the numbers [the technical portion of the interview] because I don't want to see them flounder. I want to be able to go back [to the hiring committee] and say, 'Things went well' and pass them on."

However, it was during the formal performance evaluation phase—when interviewers specifically tested job-relevant knowledge and skills—that technical competence was most likely to produce an energy boost. The degree to which this phase emotionally aroused evaluators corresponded to the extent to which interview formats incorporated tests of job-relevant knowledge. Consultants, who administer lengthy semistructured business case questions, were most likely to express excitement (or any other emotion) during this phase, followed by bankers; reports in law were rare. Technical tests, such as case questions, provided stimuli other than extracurriculars or biographies about which to become emotionally aroused.

Even though performance on job-relevant tests could produce emotional boosts in interviews, because they took place in the middle of the interview—after energy impressions had already developed—performance in this phase commonly served to maintain previously established energy levels. Performance on technical tests affected emotional energy most at the extremes. Severely poor performance could extinguish emotional energy accumulated to that point, even for the most exciting candidates, and disqualify them from further consideration. A managing director (white, male) at Holt gave one such example in a postinterview debrief: "He [white, male] has one of the best resumes I've ever seen. He worked at Parthenon, Pfizer, went to Stanford and had a 3.9. . . . Confident guy. . . . But his case performance was *bad*," he said, elongating the vowel. "I was *flabbergasted*. I thought he would be a 10, but he was like a zero." He argued strongly for rejecting the candidate who was then "dinged." Conversely, stellar performance could produce a significant emotional boost that could propel a previ-

ously average candidate to hire. Such instances occurred almost exclusively in consulting. A consultant (Asian American, female) described a candidate who was "pretty unremarkable" interpersonally but "case wise, he cracked it. It was clear; this person was a phenomenal businessperson. . . . I was just blown away by him." She later championed him in deliberations. Two factors seemed to provide such energy boosts at this stage of candidate evaluation: originality and candidate energy.

Originality.—Creativity in answers to job-relevant questions was one of the most potent sources of emotional boosts in performance evaluation. A consultant (white, female) summarized, "You want someone who can somehow *surprise* you a bit, and so seeing someone who thinks of things in a way that is new is really exciting." However, candidates were typically not penalized for a lack of originality unless evaluators perceived their answers to be disingenuous or, in consulting case interviews, "too framework-y" or "lifted" from prep books such as *Case in Point*, which coach candidates in answering case interview questions.

Candidate energy.—In addition, the enthusiasm with which a candidate tackled a problem was important for an evaluator's level of excitement. A consulting partner (white, female) explained: "I think you can tell whether someone is thinking on the spot and enjoying problem solving or just going through a series of sort of rehearsed steps. . . . There is just something in terms of spark and creativity that comes out and stuff like that. . . . I just feel like you can *see* it."

Although energy boosts that occurred during the performance evaluation phase were perhaps the most directly job relevant, it is important to note that even in consulting—where such boosts were most likely to occur—energy felt during other portions of the interview had evaluative primacy. Even with a stellar resume and strong case interview performance, a lack of excitement about a candidate was a valid criterion for rejection. Conversely, high energy apart from technical performance could carry a candidate to offer. A consultant (white, male) stated: "If you are kind of C+ or B– on the case, but you know people are excited about you, they are energized since the time they spoke with you . . . then you know, we will go ahead and go forward. We have plenty of stories of the person who just aces it [the case], but you're just not quite sure how you *feel* about them."

Phase 4: Recall and Ranking

After having interviewed nearly a dozen candidates in a single day, each interviewer had to rank them according to his or her personal preferences. Interviewers typically took notes during their interactions with candidates. However, because interviews were often scheduled back-to-back, they

usually did not have time to complete written evaluations in real time. Instead, they finished them at the end of the day. To do so, they relied on their recall of candidates and interviews. I argue that much of what recruiters evaluated in this stage was the candidate's *energy trace*, or the feelings of excitement that lingered in the hours after the interaction occurred.

Cognitive psychology provides an important base for understanding the dynamics of recall. Research on social cognition demonstrates that human recall is subject to several systematic biases (for a review, see Kahneman et al. 2011). *Primacy* and *recency* effects suggest that evaluators would be more likely to remember the first and last candidate of the day, regardless of the emotional responses evoked by these particular individuals. Net of these positional effects, the *availability heuristic* suggests that individuals are more likely to remember people and objects they can easily imagine. Two factors facilitate such a process. First, individuals are more likely to remember people and events that excite their senses and are emotionally arousing. In the case of job interviews, this translates into candidates who elicited especially strong positive or negative emotional reactions from their evaluators. My data support this notion. When I asked evaluators to recall candidates from their most recent interviewing experience, they typically described stellar and abhorrent candidates with surprising ease. However, they often struggled to describe a candidate who was "borderline." As one participant expressed, "The reason that someone is borderline is that they're just average. They're not memorable." Because evaluators relied on recall to rank candidates, candidates who had the most positive energy traces at the end of the interview tended to fare better in evaluation.

Second, vividness and distinctiveness could aid in recall. A lawyer (Asian American, female) explained, "Just being good enough isn't going to make you memorable in somebody's mind; you want to be remembered *for something*." A banker (white, female) gave an example: "The ones that stuck out were the ones that had interesting little quirks—and obviously we're not hiring them because they've seen all the movies on the AFI 100. But having something *interesting* helps." Thus, high emotional energy generated during interaction not only provided evaluators with a feeling of "fit" with applicants and a halo under which they evaluated job-relevant skills but also aided in candidate recall and ranking after interviews.[24]

Phase 5: Deliberation and Decision

The culmination of emotional energy development was the deliberation phase, in which evaluators came together to make decisions about whether

[24] Energy traces likely affected energy expectations and impressions of future candidates, through a feedback loop driven by contrast effects.

to advance candidates to the next round of interviews, to give them offers, or to "let them go." It was during deliberations that evaluators' subjective feelings of emotional energy were most crucial for hiring outcomes. I observed during deliberations at Holt how consensus quickly formed around the very best ("rock stars") and the very worst candidates ("rejects"). However, the vast majority of candidates would fall somewhere in between and need a champion, someone willing to advocate passionately on their behalf. When articulating this role to me, evaluators commonly used the language of love. They discussed how candidates had to get at least one of their interviewers "passionate," "riled up," "fired up," or "jonesing" for them in order to be considered for an offer. As a consulting partner (white, female) summarized, "Three different people interview any given candidate in the final round, and it's reconciling those points of view. It's understanding when people really have a *passion* for a candidate versus, like, 'Yeah, I think probably they will do just fine.'"

Collins (2004) argues that emotional energy affects social structure largely through its motivational properties; the experience of being pumped up with emotional energy compels individuals to action. Likewise, candidates' energy traces influenced evaluators' willingness to mobilize on their behalf during deliberations. Unless truly passionate about a candidate, evaluators were unlikely to serve as champions because they did not want to "waste time and capital." A consultant (Asian, female) explained, "Particularly if it's late at night and I want to go home or if I have to go back and do more client work, unless I really feel strongly about someone, I'll give in to others' opinions." Without an advocate, candidates were likely to become rejects. A consultant (Asian American, male) recalled one such candidate:

> One in particular is an MIT candidate, really nice guy, actually very, very solid on his interviews and he was really proficient in the cases. But this is an example, this is a great example of someone who's just sort of solid in everything, but they are a little bit flat on the just sort of, like, passion [from his interviewers]. . . . There was no compelling reason to fight for him. So there was no reason necessarily to ding him, but when it came down to it, no office wanted to fight for him. And when that happens in the case of limited spots, you know, the perfect, most competent person just doesn't get through.

In the emotion culture (Gordon 1989) of these firms, effective arguments for or against candidates were framed in terms of evaluators' feelings rather than applicants' academic or professional qualifications. Tellingly, as I witnessed at Holt, deliberations commonly began by a partner reading the candidate's name aloud, turning to one of the interviewers and asking, "What was your *feel*?" On occasion, an evaluator argued for a candidate on the basis of credentials or case performance alone. But more commonly, other evaluators in the room wanted to know how excited an interviewer was about the candidate. Were they "smitten" or "blah"? Were

they "blown away" or "on the fence"? A negative emotional reaction from one evaluator was a sufficient basis for rejection, even for candidates who had impressive credentials and who performed well on technical questions. For example, two managers at Holt, both white men who had graduated from the same professional school the same year and were friends outside the office, had different impressions of one job candidate, also a white male. During deliberations, they argued:

> Manager 1: He was one of the best [case] performances of the day . . .
> Manager 2: Don't get me wrong, he's a nice guy and has done interesting things. There's nothing particularly wrong with him. . . . [He shrugged.] I just wasn't feeling it.

The pair rejected the candidate.

Although arguments for or against candidates on the basis of gut typically went unchallenged, two additional factors affected candidates' fates in deliberations. The first was the champion's status in the firm. One banker confessed, "If it's a senior partner, you shut your mouth." The second was the ability to present a vivid, emotionally arousing narrative to the group. In this respect, candidates who conveyed vivid experiences or personal narratives to evaluators during the job interview benefited not only from higher energy impressions but also from giving evaluators greater emotional "meat" on which to construct compelling cases for hire during group deliberations. A law firm partner (white, female) illustrated how vividness could help counteract otherwise homophilous tendencies in hiring. She recalled of one candidate:

> He wasn't a great interview. I mean he wasn't very poised. . . . He was white—but he'd grown up in, like, kind of South Central [Los Angeles], like, Compton kind of thing. And there were, like, all these shootings at the school, and he had a single mom, and he was the first person in his family ever to go to college. And then after college he went back into South Central and taught high school for a couple of years to kind of give back to the community. . . . He had a really good story, but he wasn't super. I mean this was probably his first time interviewing for, like, a *real* job. . . . He probably has no one in his family to go to to talk to about it. So, he had a very compelling story. We ended up making him an offer to come back because of *his story*, not because his grades were off the chart, not because he interviewed so well.

Summary

Evaluators used their emotional responses to candidates, most commonly feelings of excitement, to assess candidates in job interviews. Evaluators developed energy expectations about how emotionally rewarding interacting with particular candidates would be. They revised expectations into energy impressions in initial interaction, usually on the basis of conversation about extracurricular interests. Energy impressions heavily colored how

evaluators assessed, recalled, and ranked candidates. The energy traces that lingered after interviews influenced the likelihood that evaluators would champion candidates to receive job offers in hiring committee deliberations. Although what energized evaluators varied between interviewers, similarity, candidate energy, and vivid or visceral conversational content most commonly produced excitement.

Alternative accounts.—It is important to consider whether evaluators' feelings of excitement are solely by-products of interacting with applicants with superior human capital. Just as emotion and reason are not orthogonal (Damasio 1994), neither are employers' emotions and applicants' human capital. Yet, although employers' emotional responses to candidates are signals they use to judge merit (especially fit), these emotional reactions are not reducible to candidates' skills or qualifications. As noted earlier, prior research shows that employers' emotional reactions to applicants play significant roles in hiring decisions, controlling for all applicant characteristics. With respect to qualifications, at Holt, resume characteristics predicted neither interview evaluations nor hiring decisions. Furthermore, feelings of excitement were not reducible to superior applicant social skill. As illustrated most poignantly by the Harley Davidson jacket and pirate belt examples discussed in phase 2, factors that energized evaluators were often not related to the job and varied with the identity of the evaluator. In fact, one can imagine wearing a motorcycle jacket over a suit to a professional job interview or likening one's interviewer to a pirate as evidence of a lack of social skill.

This leads to the next issue. Are employers' emotional reactions to candidates just noise or random error, as currently portrayed in mainstream sociological models of hiring? Although what excited evaluators was highly personal, it was not random. There were systematic relationships between evaluators' emotional responses and similarities in extracurricular interests, biographies, and energy levels; candidates' energy levels in interaction; and the vividness of conversational content.

Additionally, it is important to address whether employers use emotion because applicant pools are so prescreened that they have nothing else with which to differentiate candidates. Although they are a select group, graduating classes at elite universities—like other universities—display internal heterogeneity.[25] Given that the majority of students at top-tier undergraduate and professional schools typically apply to these firms, employers had bases other than gut on which to differentiate candidates. They could have screened more intensively on relevant coursework, relevant work experience, writing skills, standardized test performance, or even diversity—

[25] Cognitive ability is only one avenue for admission to elite universities (Shulman and Bowen 2001).

as candidates did vary substantially along these lines—but they did not. Instead, evaluators prioritized their personal emotional reactions to candidates, believing that emotion was a legitimate, effective, and efficient means of evaluating candidates and making hiring decisions. Thus, although more subjective factors tend to be more salient in evaluation when gross differences in quality are minimized (Lamont 2009), such as when employers narrow a long list of candidates to a short list or make final hiring decisions, their use is not an artifact of having no alternative screening mechanisms.

Likewise, one must consider whether going with your gut is merely a code for discrimination based on sex or race. Although prejudice has important emotional components, which can affect hiring decisions, the uses of emotions described here are not reducible to discrimination. In the firms studied here, the majority of interview dyads consisted of whites evaluating other whites and males evaluating other males, yet positive and negative emotions were still highly salient bases of evaluation within same-sex and same-race dyads. Similarly, although the majority of interviewers at Holt were white or male, women and nonwhites were hired at higher rates than were white and male applicants (see the appendix).

Finally, the use of emotion as a decision-making tool in hiring is not purely an elite phenomenon. In addition to laboratory evidence, there is burgeoning qualitative research showing that American employers prioritize feelings of "chemistry" with job applicants when hiring for a wide array of jobs, ranging from restaurant servers and fashion models to high-tech workers (Bills 1988; Godart and Mears 2009; Sharone 2013). Instead, employers' emotions likely play an important role in hiring when employers have (1) multiple applicants who pass a basic threshold of competence and (2) discretion about whom they hire. Future research should examine how the relative weight of employers' emotional reactions versus other factors in hiring varies between jobs of different technical, social, and cultural requirements as well as selectivity.

Limitations and future research.—The intention of this article was not to develop an alternative theory of hiring but rather to unpack a meaningful but understudied dimension of the hiring process. Nevertheless, it is far from perfect. First, the analysis centers on the impressions of evaluators. Just as candidates' energy levels influenced those of evaluators, evaluators' emotions likely affect candidates' emotions and interview performance. Future research should probe the factors that contribute to emotional waxes and wanes on the candidate side, an endeavor that was not possible here due to data limitations.

Second, the article focuses only on the interpretive dimension of emotional energy and relies largely on retrospective self-report. It is possible that levels of physiological arousal beyond the awareness of evaluators

played a significant role in candidate evaluation. Additionally, evaluators' reports to me in research interviews may be subject to the very same biases in information processing as their evaluations of candidates in ranking and recall (phase 4). However, as noted previously, evaluators usually do not complete written interview reports in real time but do so at the end of a day. They rely on subjective recall of an interaction to complete these forms and to construct narratives for or against candidates in deliberations. These types of biases, thus, are integral parts of how evaluators actually compare and select candidates in real life. Similarly, psychologists have argued that how we remember feeling during an interaction is most important for orienting action (Schwartz 2004). Thus, although not without limitations, studying these impressions has a substantial degree of external validity for understanding how employers' emotional reactions to job candidates affect their hiring evaluations.

Finally, although the proposed theoretical framework of emotional energy development can be used to inform other cases of hiring or interpersonal evaluation, the sequencing of phases or the specific content valued by gatekeepers may vary by context. Future research should investigate how the energy dynamics outlined here vary between different types of interaction formats and settings.

CONCLUSION

Employers' emotional reactions to applicants in job interviews are meaningful contributors to hiring decisions. The fate of similarly credentialed students in the competition for elite jobs was linked to the emotional experiences of their interviewers. Applicants whose interviewers felt excitement when interacting with them could cash in these emotional responses for jobs offering salaries two to four times higher than those of their classmates and for admission to a prestigious occupational group that serves as a gateway to the contemporary American economic elite. Candidates that failed to elicit excitement or who elicited feelings of anger, aversion, or boredom from their interviewers were strongly penalized. As such, employers' emotions are important bases of labor market sorting and economic stratification. More broadly, my findings suggest that eliciting excitement from gatekeepers is a form of *emotional capital* that has economic conversion value (Bourdieu 1986) in labor markets.

Implications for Hiring Research

When articulating the criteria they use to evaluate candidates in job interviews, less than a quarter of participants listed competence, intelligence, or any technical skill as the most important. Instead, they emphasized their

personal emotional reactions to candidates. They sought new hires who not only were competent but who also pumped them up with feelings of excitement; with whom they personally feel a sense of fit and chemistry; and with whom they can foresee developing intimate, personally gratifying relationships (not just collegial or trusting ones) on and off the job. In many respects, the way employers hire may bear a closer resemblance to the selection of friends or romantic partners than how sociologists typically portray the decision to hire. Thus, far from mere error, noise, or discrimination, employers' emotional reactions to job candidates are active, meaningful, and patterned bases on which real life employers evaluate applicants and make hiring decisions. Far from just an elite phenomenon, the use of emotion in decision making—including personnel decisions—is a broader feature of American labor markets and business culture (Hayashi 2001; Bandelj 2009; Sharone 2013). It is important to emphasize that my argument is not that emotion and human capital are orthogonal. Nor is it that resume metrics do not matter in hiring; indeed in this and other contexts they do. Rather, to fully understand how employers make hiring decisions in real life, it is necessary to consider emotional factors in addition to more commonly studied evaluative metrics and processes.

Moreover, my findings call attention to the interpersonal dimensions of the hiring process. Interviewers' personal identities, preferences, and experiences played important roles in shaping their emotional reactions to candidates, their rankings of candidates, and their choices of whom to champion. Thus, in contrast to mainstream sociological theories, which explain hiring as driven primarily by applicant characteristics, my findings highlight the importance of including information about both employers and applicants (and the interaction between the two) in modeling the decision to hire. Incorporating emotional and interpersonal factors can help scholars more accurately model reality from the perspective of employers and better understand the mechanisms underlying the hiring decisions they make.

Emotional Energy and Labor Market Inequalities

Excitement and stratification.—When studying emotion and stratification, scholars tend to analyze negative emotions. Indeed, interviewers in my sample penalized applicants of all sexes and races who elicited negative feelings, particularly anger, aversion, or boredom, during interviews. However, my findings also call attention to the stratifying power of positive emotions, particularly feelings of excitement, in labor markets. In the firms studied here, the qualities that excited evaluators were gendered; evaluators reported being pumped up by activities and experiences that were physically demand-

ing, adrenaline inducing, and stereotypically masculine. Because sex and experience were largely decoupled in this population, emotional energy dynamics did not automatically create sex inequalities in hiring. Instead, they contributed to homosocial reproduction (Kanter 1977) in these traditionally male-dominated firms in which new hires—both male and female—tended to display stereotypically masculine interests and experiences. Thus, emotional energy dynamics may help explain why, despite the significant increase in sex diversity in these firms in recent decades, the male-oriented culture of these organizations persists (Pierce 1995; Roth 2006). In applicant pools where sex and experience are more tightly coupled, emotional energy dynamics could directly contribute to sex inequalities in hiring, net of biases in evaluations of women's competence (Ridgeway 2006).

Additionally, the qualities that produced excitement had important socioeconomic dimensions. The importance of extracurriculars—especially time- and resource-intensive activities associated with upper-middle-class culture—in producing high energy expectations and impressions tended to disadvantage applicants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Moreover, the interactional styles evaluators took as evidence of good "candidate energy" tended to be associated with socioeconomic elites (Ostrander 1993; Khan 2010). Emotional processes can illuminate one reason why, even after controlling for traditional human capital characteristics, students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to enter these highly paid and prestigious jobs than are students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Bowen and Bok 1998; Shulman and Bowen 2001; Dinovitzer and Garth 2007). More broadly, they highlight social class biases in hiring, which have received minimal attention in American sociology.

Admiration as an alternative pathway.—Sociological research tends to focus on the reproduction of inequalities rather than factors that can mitigate them (Ridgeway 2006). Likewise, emotional energy dynamics can not only reinforce but also challenge existing social arrangements (Summers-Effler 2002). In the case of hiring, feelings of admiration served as an alternative means of energy production and occupational entry for particular groups of socioeconomically disadvantaged applicants. Future research should further examine the potential of emotions, including admiration, experienced in gatekeeping interactions to circumvent as well as reproduce social inequalities.

Considering both demography and culture.—Taken together, my findings highlight the importance of considering both categorical group membership and cultural characteristics in studies of hiring and the sociology of emotions. Women with stereotypically male interests were able to circumvent emotional disadvantages in hiring as were Asian American (vs. Asian)

females and applicants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who conveyed specific type narratives to interviewers. Thus, when studying labor market inequalities, it is necessary to consider not only categorical group membership (as is current convention) but also applicants' stocks of cultural signals and experiences. While the latter are certainly influenced by the former (Swidler 1986), there is not a one-to-one relationship between structure and culture; significant variation in cultural signals and styles exists within members of a given categorical group (Lamont and Small 2008).

Emotion and homophily.—Finally, the article calls attention to the emotional underpinnings of homophily and homosocial reproduction (Kanter 1977) in organizations. Although similarity is often portrayed as having a constant, positive effect on interpersonal evaluation, in reality the evidence—particularly in hiring—is quite mixed (Huffcutt 2011). In EPS hiring, actual similarities between interviewers and applicants alone were insufficient for generating positive hiring recommendations. Rather, similarities had to be coupled with feelings of excitement experienced by interviewers during interaction to produce favorable results. Consequently, my findings suggest that emotions may mediate the relationship between similarity and evaluative outcomes; emotions may help account for demonstrated equivocal effects of evaluator-candidate similarity on hiring decisions. Feelings of excitement in particular may mediate perceptions of "fit" between employers and job applicants, which are important drivers of hiring decisions (Chatman 1991; Rivera 2012).

Implications for Organizational Performance

Because of data limitations, I cannot analyze whether using emotion in hiring increases or decreases the performance of new employees. However, going with your gut versus more systematic, standardized tests of directly job-relevant skills likely poses both advantages and disadvantages for EPS firms. On the positive side, emotion provides a simple, fast heuristic to distinguish among multiple candidates who meet a basic threshold of resume qualifications. In addition, given the time-intensive and client-facing demands of the work, selecting hires who provide others with surges of excitement could increase employee satisfaction, worker morale, and client satisfaction, possibly contributing to employee or client retention.

However, relying so heavily on gut reactions may also pose important downsides for firms. Although emotions can be smart (Damasio 1994), they tend to be so with practice—when an individual has extensive experience making a particular type of decision and has received accurate information on the effectiveness of his or her choices (Iyengar 2010). Yet, in these firms, evaluators receive only minimal training in interviewing, use their personal theories of what constitutes merit and how best to judge it, and receive little

feedback on the quality of their decisions.[26] As such, future research should use longitudinal data to investigate under what conditions going with one's gut produces better or worse hires. Organizations that seek to harness emotional processes in a manner more closely tied to directly job-relevant qualities could include more structured tests of job-relevant skills—such as the case interviews implemented in consulting—to provide opportunities for sparks to develop on that basis. Moreover, they should present candidates with such tests at the beginning of interviews so that evaluators' initial energy impressions are anchored on test performance rather than conversations about leisure experiences.

Implications for Interaction Ritual Theory

My empirical findings confirm Collins's hypothesis that emotional energy in the form of excitement is an important basis of interpersonal evaluation and selection in hiring. The model of emotional energy development presented here adds important temporal and processual dimensions to Collins's work and highlights qualities that produce excitement within job interviews. This model also suggests five points of refinement to his theories. First, the development of emotional energy seems to begin before face-to-face interaction through the construction of an energy expectation. Second, shared initial emotion is not a sufficient ingredient for a successful interaction. Rather, as demonstrated in the case of "crash and burns," feelings of excitement and enthusiasm need to be maintained or reinforced, not only between encounters as Collins suggests but also at key moments within a single encounter to successfully compel evaluators to action. Third, although excitement was the most common source of high emotional energy, my findings call attention to other emotions that affect emotional energy flows within an interaction, such as admiration, anger, and love (see also Hallett 2007). Fourth, my finding that evaluators gravitated toward candidates who demonstrated high but not overwhelming energy as well as some degree of affective match with their own energy levels calls into question Collins's claim that individuals are energy maximizers—a proposition that has come under attack from critics for its rational choice underpinnings (Fine 2005; Münch 2005). Instead, my findings suggest that individuals actively seek to increase their own stocks of emotional energy in interaction, but they do so within limits. They may bear a closer resemblance to energy balancers than maximizers.

[26] It is possible that evaluators will work with candidates they hire, but this happens relatively infrequently due to the large size of these organizations and frequent turnover. Also, few firms systematically track the relationship between prehire characteristics and on-the-job performance.

Finally, job interviews may be one example of a specific type of interaction ritual not specified by Collins. In addition to the four criteria he lists as prerequisites for successful interaction rituals, Collins specifies additional ingredients for successful interactions directly linked to stratification processes. In so-called *power rituals*—interactions between parties of unequal resources—he argues that obedience to hierarchical order-giving and order-taking relations yields the highest amounts of emotional energy for those in positions of authority. Conversely, in *status rituals*—interactions that affirm or deny group membership boundaries—feelings of belonging are most crucial. Although Collins argues that most interactions have an element of each, job interviews represent an interesting hybrid. They are interactions between individuals of vastly unequal situational power that are used to judge suitability for future membership in a status group (i.e., a firm or occupation). Successful job interviews require the feelings of similarity, commonality, and attachment that exemplify effective status rituals. Yet, those in power are energized by feelings of situational deference and status reversal (i.e., that the candidate "impresses," "wows," or is otherwise a "rock star") rather than dominance. These sorts of *gatekeeping rituals* represent an important microsocial foundation of macrolevel inequalities; their dynamics warrant further theoretical and empirical attention.

APPENDIX

Demographic Composition of Applicants in Ethnographic Sample

I provide the sex and racial/ethnic composition of interview candidates by round, the callback rate (from first interview to second interview), percentage of new hires, and rate of hire from my ethnographic sample at Holt. These figures represent interview and hire pools for one professional school rather than all applicants. Although women and ethnic minorities were underrepresented among evaluators, and Hispanics and blacks had lower rates of callback than other groups, all minorities except Hispanics had a higher rate of hire than whites. I report only percentages to protect Holt's identity and its employees.

TABLE A1
Sex Compositions of Interview Candidates and New Hires (%)

	Applicant Sex	
	Male	Female
First-round interview pool	66	34
Second-round interview pool	64	36
Callback rate	41	45
Proportion of new hires	60	40
Rate of hire	16	20

Note.—Figures rounded to the nearest percentage.

TABLE A2
Ethnic/Racial Compositions of Interview Candidates and New Hires (%)

	Applicant Race/Ethnicity				
	White/ Caucasian	Asian/ Asian American	Indian/ Indian American	Black/ African-American	Hispanic/ Latino
First-round interview pool	54	18	13	8	7
Second-round interview pool	56	17	17	6	5
Callback rate	43	41	55	30	29
Proportion of new hires	51	21	14	9	5
Rate of hire	16	20	18	20	12

Note.—Figures rounded to the nearest percentage.

REFERENCES

Acker, Joan. 1990. "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations." *Gender and Society* 4:139–58.

Ambady, Nalini, and Max Weisbuch. 2010. "Nonverbal Behavior." Pp. 464–97 in *Handbook of Social Psychology*, edited by Susan Fiske and Daniel Gilbert. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

Armstrong, Elizabeth, and Laura Hamilton. 2013. *Paying for the Party*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Atkinson, Anthony, Thomas Piketty, and Emmanuel Saez. 2011. "Top Incomes in the Long Run of History." *Journal of Economic Literature* 49:3–71.

Bandelj, Nina. 2009. "Emotions in Economic Action and Interaction." *Theory and Society* 8:347–66.

Berger, Joseph, et al. 1977. *Status Characteristics and Social Interaction*. New York: Elsevier.

Bergerson, Amy. 2007. "Exploring the Impact of Social Class on Adjustment to College." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 20:99–119.

Berridge, Kent, and Terry Robinson. 2003. "Parsing Reward." *TRENDS in Neurosciences* 26:507–13.

Bills, David. 1988. "Educational Credentials and Promotions: Does Schooling Do More than Get You in the Door?" *Sociology of Education* 61:52–60.
———. 2003. "Credentials, Signals, and Screens: Explaining the Relationship between Schooling and Job Assignment." *Review of Educational Research* 73:441–69.
Blau, Peter, and Otis Duncan. 1967. *The American Occupational Structure*. New York: Wiley.
Bonabeau, Eric. 2003. "Don't Trust Your Gut." *Harvard Business Review*, May.
Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." Pp. 241–58 in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John Richardson. New York: Greenwood.
Bowen, William, and Derek Bok. 1998. *The Shape of the River*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Byrne, Donn. 1971. *The Attraction Paradigm*. New York: Academic Press.
Charmaz, Kathy. 2001. "Grounded Theory." Pp. 335–52 in *Contemporary Field Research*, edited by Robert Emerson. Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland.
Chatman, Jennifer. 1991. "Matching People and Organizations: Selection and Socialization in Public Accounting Firms." *Administrative Sciences Quarterly* 36:459–84.
Clark, Candace. 1987. "Sympathy Biography and Sympathy Margin." *American Journal of Sociology* 93:290–321.
Clore, Gerald, and Justin Storbeck. 2006. "Affect as Information about Liking, Efficacy, and Importance." Pp. 123–42 in *Hearts and Minds: Affective Influences on Social Thinking and Behavior*, edited by Joseph P. Forgas. New York: Psychology Press.
Cohen, Lisa, Joseph Broschak, and Heather Haveman. 1988. "And Then There Were More? The Effect of Organizational Sex Composition on the Hiring and Promotion of Managers." *American Sociological Review* 63:711–27.
Collins, Randall. 1990. "Stratification, Emotional Energy, and the Transient Emotions." Pp. 27–57 in *Research Agendas in the Sociology of Emotions*, edited by Theodore Kemper. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press.
———. 2004. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Damasio, Antonio. 1994. *Descartes' Error*. New York: Penguin.
Depue, Richard, and Paul Collins. 1999. "Neurobiology of the Structure of Personality: Dopamine, Facilitation, and Extraversion." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 22:491–569.
Dinovitzer, Ronit, and Bryant Garth. 2007. "Lawyer Satisfaction in the Process of Structuring Legal Careers." *Law and Society Review* 41:1–50.
Dipboye, Robert, Carla Smith, and William Howell. 1994. *Understanding Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
Farkas, George. 2003. "Cognitive Skills and Noncognitive Traits and Behaviors in Stratification Processes." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29:541–62.
Fernandez, Roberto, Emilio Castilla, and Paul Moore. 2000. "Social Capital at Work: Networks and Employment at a Phone Center." *American Journal of Sociology* 105: 1288–1356.
Fernandez, Roberto, and Isabel Fernandez-Mateo. 2006. "Networks, Race, and Hiring." *American Sociological Review* 71:42–71.
Fernandez, Roberto, and Jason Greenberg. 2013. "Race, Network Hiring, and Statistical Discrimination." *Research in the Sociology of Work* 24:81–102.
Fine, Gary. 2005. Review of *Interaction Ritual Chains*, by Randall Collins. *Social Forces* 83:1287–88.
Fox, Suzy, and Paul Spector. 2000. "Relations of Emotional Intelligence, Practical Intelligence, and Trait Affectivity with Interview Outcomes: It's Not All Just 'G.'" *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 21:203–20.
Friedman, Hilary. 2013. *Playing to Win*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Godart, Fréderic, and Ashley Mears. 2009. "How Do Cultural Producers Make Creative Decisions? Lessons from the Catwalk." *Social Forces* 88:671–92.
Gordon, Steven. 1981. "The Sociology of Sentiments and Emotions." Pp. 562–92 in *Social Psychology*, edited by Morris Rosenberg and Ralph Turner. New York: Basic.
———. 1989. "The Socialization of Children's Emotions: Emotional Culture, Competence and Exposure." Pp. 319–49 in *Children's Understanding of Emotion*, edited by Carolyn Saarni and Paul Harris. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Gorman, Elizabeth. 2005. "Gender Stereotypes, Same-Gender Preferences, and Organizational Variation in the Hiring of Women: Evidence from Law Firms." *American Sociological Review* 70:702–28.
Granfield, Robert. 1992. *Making Elite Lawyers*. New York: Routledge.
Granovetter, Mark. 1995. *Getting a Job*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Graves, Laura, and Gary Powell. 1996. "Sex Similarity, Quality of the Employment Interview, and Recruiters' Evaluations of Actual Applicants." *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 69:243–61.
Guren, Adam, and Natalie Sherman. 2008. "Harvard Graduates Head to Investment Banking, Consulting." *Harvard Crimson*, June 22.
Hallett, Tim. 2007. "Between Deference and Distinction: Interaction Ritual through Symbolic Power in an Educational Institution." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 2:148–71.
Hamermesh, Daniel. 2011. *Beauty Pays*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Hayashi, Alden. 2001. "When to Trust Your Gut." *Harvard Business Review*, February.
Heckman, James, and Peter Siegelman. 1993. "The Urban Institute Audit Studies: Their Methods and Findings." Pp. 187–258 in *Clear and Convincing Evidence*, edited by Michael Fix and Raymond Struyk. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America.
Hochschild, Arlie. 1983. *The Managed Heart*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Hodson, Randy. 2001. *Dignity at Work*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Hollander, Jocelyn, and Judith Howard. 2000. "Social Psychological Theories on Social Inequalities." *Social Psychological Quarterly* 63:338–51.
Huffcutt, Allen. 2011. "An Empirical Review of the Employment Interview Construct Literature." *International Journal of Selection and Assessment* 19:62–81.
Iyengar, Sheena. 2010. *The Art of Choosing*. New York: Twelve Books.
Johnson, Cathryn, Rebecca Ford, and Joanne Kaufman. 2000. "Emotional Reactions to Conflict: Do Dependence and Legitimacy Matter?" *Social Forces* 79:107–37.
Kahneman, Daniel, Dan Lovallo, and Olivier Sibony. 2011. "Before You Make That Big Decision." *Harvard Business Review*, June–July.
Kalfayan, Michael. 2009. "Choosing Financial Careers at Harvard." Senior Honors Thesis. Harvard University.
Kanter, Rosabeth. 1977. *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic.
Keltner, Dacher, and Jennifer Lerner. 2010. "Emotion." Pp. 317–52 in *Handbook of Social Psychology*, edited by Susan Fiske and Daniel Gilbert. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.
Khan, Shamus. 2010. *Privilege*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Lamont, Michèle. 2009. *How Professors Think*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Lamont, Michèle, and Mario Small. 2008. "How Culture Matters: Enriching Our Understanding of Poverty." Pp. 76–102 in *The Colors of Poverty*, edited by David Harris and Ann Lin. New York: Russell Sage.
Lareau, Annette. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Lawler, Edward, and Shane Thye. 1999. "Bringing Emotions into Social Exchange Theory." *Annual Review of Sociology* 25:217–44.
Leach, Colin, and Larissa Tiedens. 2004. "Introduction: A World of Emotions." Pp. 1–18 in *The Social Life of Emotions*, edited by Larissa Tiedens and Colin Leach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leonhardt, David. 2011. "Consultant Nation." *New York Times*, December 10.
Lerner, Jennifer, and Larissa Tiedens. 2006. "Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker: How Appraisal Tendencies Shape Anger's Influence on Cognition." *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making* 19:115–37.
Lively, Katherine. 2006. "Emotions in the Workplace." Pp. 569–90 in *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*, edited by Jonathan Turner. New York: Springer.
Lois, Jennifer. 2003. *Heroic Efforts*. New York: New York University Press.
Lumbrano, Alfred. 2005. *Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.
McPherson, Miller, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James Cook. 2001. "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27:415–44.
Miles, Matthew, and Michael Huberman. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
Moss, Phillip, and Chris Tilly. 2001. *Stories Employers Tell*. New York: Russell Sage.
Münch, Richard. 2005. Review of *Interaction Ritual Chains*, by Randall Collins. *American Journal of Sociology* 110:1531–33.
Ostrander, Susan. 1993. "Surely You're Not in This Just to Be Helpful: Access, Rapport, and Interviews in Three Studies of Elites." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22:7–27.
Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108:937–75.
Pager, Devah, and Hana Shepherd. 2008. "The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34:181–208.
Palmer, Mark, and Karl Simmons. 1995. "Communicating Intentions through Nonverbal Behaviors: Conscious and Nonconscious Encoding of Liking." *Human Communication Research* 22:128–60.
Petersen, Trond, Ishak Saporta, and Marc-David Seidel. 2000. "Offering a Job: Meritocracy and Social Networks." *American Journal of Sociology* 106:763–816.
Phillips, Katherine, Nancy Rothbard, and Tracy Dumas. 2009. "To Disclose or Not to Disclose? Status Distance and Self-Disclosure in Diverse Environments." *Academy of Management Review* 34:710–32.
Pierce, Jennifer. 1995. *Gender Trials*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Posthuma, Richard, Frederick Morgeson, and Michael Campion. 2002. "Beyond Employment Interview Validity: A Comprehensive Narrative Review of Recent Research and Trends over Time." *Personnel Psychology* 55:1–81.
Ragin, Charles, Joane Nagel, and Patricia White. 2004. "Executive Summary." Pp. 9–17 in *Workshop on Scientific Foundations of Qualitative Research*. Washington, D.C.: National Science Foundation.
Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2006. "Gender as an Organizing Force in Social Relations: Implications for the Future of Inequality." Pp. 265–87 in *The Declining Significance of Gender?* edited by Francine Blau, Mary Brinton, and David Grusky. New York: Russell Sage.
Rimer, Sara. 2008. "Big Paycheck or Service? Students Are Put to Test." *New York Times*, June 23.
Rivera, Lauren. 2011. "Ivies, Extracurriculars, and Exclusion: Elite Employers' Use of Educational Credentials." *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 29:71–90.
———. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching." *American Sociological Review* 77:999–1022.
———. 2015. *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Rivera, Lauren A., Jayanti Owens, and Katherine Gan. 2014. "Glass Floors and Glass Ceilings: The Effect of Matching Female Job Applicants with Female Interviewers

on Hiring Decisions." Working Paper. Northwestern University, Department of Management and Organizations.
Robinson, Dawn, Christabel Rogalin, and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 2004. "Psychological Measures of Theoretical Concepts: Some Ideas for Linking Deflection and Emotion to Physical Responses during Interaction." *Advances in Group Processes* 21:77–115.
Roscigno, Vincent. 2007. *The Face of Discrimination*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
Roth, Louise. 2006. *Selling Women Short*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Schwartz, Barry. 2004. *The Paradox of Choice*. New York: HarperCollins.
Sharone, Ofer. 2013. *Flawed System/Flawed Self*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Shulman, James, and William Bowen. 2001. *The Game of Life*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Simon, Robin, and Kathryn Lively. 2010. "Sex, Anger, and Depression." *Social Forces* 88:1543–68.
Spence, Michael. 2002. "Signaling in Retrospect and the Informational Structure of Markets." *American Economic Review* 92:434–59.
Stainback, Kevin, Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, and Sheryl Skaggs. 2010. "Organizational Approaches to Inequality: Inertia, Relative Power, and Environments." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36:225–47.
Staw, Barry, Robert Sutton, and Lisa Pelled. 1994. "Employee Positive Emotion and Favorable Outcomes at the Workplace." *Organization Science* 5:51–71.
Stevens, Mitchell. 2007. *Creating a Class*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Stuber, Jenny. 2011. *Inside the College Gates*. Lanham, Md.: Lexington.
Summers-Effler, Erika. 2002. "The Micro Potential for Social Change: Emotion, Consciousness, and Social Movement Formation." *Sociological Theory* 20:41–60.
———. 2004. "Defensive Strategies: The Formation and Social Implications of Patterned Self-Destructive Behavior." *Advances in Group Processes* 21:309–26.
Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* 51:273–86.
Thoits, Peggy. 1989. "The Sociology of Emotions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 15:317–42.
Tilcsik, Andras. 2011. "Pride and Prejudice: Employment Discrimination against Openly Gay Men in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 117:586–626.
Tilly, Chris, and Charles Tilly. 1998. *Work under Capitalism*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.
Turner, Jonathan, and Jan Stets. 2006. "Sociological Theories of Human Emotions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 32:25–52.
Van Maanan, John, and Gideon Kunda. 1989. "'Real Feelings': Emotional Expression and Organizational Culture." *Research in Organizational Behavior* 11:43–103.
Word, Carl, Mark Zanna, and Joel Cooper. 1974. "The Nonverbal Mediation of Self-fulfilling Prophecies in Interracial Interaction." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 10:109–20.
Webster, Murray. 2003. "Working on Status Puzzles." Pp. 173–215 in *Power and Status*, edited by Shane Thye and John Skvoretz. Advances in Group Processes 20. New York: Elsevier.
Weiss, Robert. 1994. *Learning from Strangers*. New York: Free Press.
Wharton, Amy. 2009. "The Sociology of Emotional Labor." *Annual Review of Sociology* 35:147–65.
Yin, Robert. 2003. *Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
Zelizer, Viviana. 2009. "Intimacy in Economic Organizations." *Research in the Sociology of Work* 18:23–55.
Zimmerman, Eilene. 2009. "Chill of Salary Freezes Reaches Top Law Firms." *New York Times*, January 24.