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The Pursuit of Passion Propagates Privilege

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Data/Scripts/Materials to reproduce our results available on the OSF at:

https://osf.io/qpgu3/?view_only=bfcf23e3e0a84cf4b0d5ab8e1d1099cc

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ABSTRACT

For many graduating college students entering the workforce, “pursue your passion” is not only a frequently repeated graduation mantra but also a commonly embraced ideal. In line with this view, prior academic research finds that passion connotes work-related benefits, including higher job satisfaction and performance. Here, we bring together social psychological, sociological, and organizational perspectives to suggest that the inclination to work in jobs that enable graduating students to pursue their passion differs based on their socioeconomic status (SES): those from lower SES backgrounds view the pursuit of passion as a privilege that excludes them. Across two correlational and experimental studies (N = 510; k = 1,562), we find that students from lower SES backgrounds feel that they are a worse fit for and lack the skills to thrive in jobs that call for passion, i.e., that they perceive the pursuit of passion as a privilege. We next examine whether this belief is accurate from the perspective of recruiters, and—across two additional experimental studies designed to test both overt and covert discrimination (N = 1,005; k = 9,713)—do not find supporting empirical evidence for discrimination against students from lower SES backgrounds in jobs that emphasize the pursuit of passion. These results suggest that the pursuit of passion may serve as an—unintentionally—exclusionary signal to graduating students from lower SES backgrounds, making them less likely to apply, and ultimately less likely to be hired. The pursuit of passion thus reflects a privilege that perpetuates inequalities along socioeconomic lines.

Keywords: passion, careers, socioeconomic status, discrimination

Nearly four million students graduate from college every year, and many are told to "pursue their passion." Steve Jobs famously gave a commencement speech in 2005 at Stanford in which he conveyed to graduates that "the only way to do great work is to love what you do." In graduation remarks given in 2009, former Associate Justice Yvette McGee Brown noted, "Therein lies the truth of what your life's work should really be. [...] Something that you have a passion for." These speeches highlight one of the many sources where graduating students receive the advice from to pursue their "true passions" (Sharone, 2013)—advice which may be doled out with good intentions. Indeed, prior academic research highlights the many benefits of the pursuit of passion, including higher levels of engagement (Vallerand et al., 2003; Zigarmi, Nimon, Houson, Witt, & Diehl, 2009), self-efficacy (Baum & Locke, 2004), job satisfaction (Burke & Fiksenbaum, 2009) and job performance (Astakhova & Porter, 2015; Dubreuil, Forest, & Courcy, 2014; Ho & Astakhova, 2017). Viewed through this lens, encouraging the pursuit of passion may represent worthy advice for graduating students newly entering the workforce.

While graduating students on the whole seem to embrace the pursuit of passion (Cech, 2018), we suggest that students' socioeconomic status (SES) is a key predictor of their inclination to pursue jobs that afford them to pursue their passion. More specifically, we bring together social psychological, sociological, and organizational perspectives of the pursuit of passion to hypothesize that graduating students from lower SES backgrounds view the pursuit of passion as a privilege that excludes them (Rao & Tobias Neely, 2019; Tokumitsu, 2014).[1] As a result, we suggest that students from lower SES backgrounds are less likely to feel that they are a fit for and have the skills to thrive in a job that calls for passion. Consider that higher-income parents are more likely to encourage their children to identify activities they are passionate about and could potentially build a career with (Nelson, 2010; Pugh, 2018; Rao & Tobias Neely, 2019); similarly, schools in higher-income communities are more likely to emphasize individual self-expression, which includes student's passions (Stephens, Markus, & Phillips,

[1] We note that throughout the current research, we take "lower SES background" to mean lower self-rated perceptions of childhood SES, aligned with prior research (Griskevicius et al., 2011), e.g., on items such as, "My family usually had enough money for things when I was growing up."

2014). Because graduating students from lower SES backgrounds may not feel like they fit or are equipped to thrive in a culture that fosters the development and expression of passion (Phillips, Stephens, Townsend, & Goudeau, 2020; Stephens et al., 2014; Stephens, Townsend, & Dittmann, 2019), they may view the pursuit of passion as a form of "veiled privilege" (Duffy, 2017) that does not include people "like them."

In addition to their own beliefs, graduating students from lower SES backgrounds may also be discriminated against by recruiters in the hiring process of jobs that emphasize the pursuit of passion. Given that hiring managers are often given little or no formal guidelines on the interview process (Rivera, 2012, 2015), hiring is frequently considered a form of "cultural matching," with recruiters prioritizing candidates who demonstrate "cultural fit" (Rivera, 2012; Stephens et al., 2014). Because students from lower SES backgrounds may have had less experience in cultural settings that emphasize the pursuit of passion, (Rao, 2018; Rao & Tobias Neely, 2019; Tokumitsu, 2014), recruiters may pick up on their difficulty to signal their fit for a job that emphasizes the pursuit of passion (Fiske & Markus, 2012; Rivera, 2012; Stephens et al., 2014). Students from lower SES backgrounds may also find it more challenging to demonstrate that their skill level is sufficient for the "ideal" candidate for a job that calls for passion (Rivera, 2015). As a result, hiring managers may view applicants from lower SES backgrounds as lacking the skills needed to be successful, and may view them as less of a good fit for a job that emphasizes the pursuit of passion (Fiske & Markus, 2012; Rivera, 2012).

In the pursuit of passion, discrimination may thus occur at two ends: students from lower SES backgrounds may not view themselves as having sufficient fit or skills for a job that emphasizes the pursuit of passion; and hiring managers may discriminate against students from lower SES backgrounds when hiring for a job that emphasizes the pursuit of passion. Even if discrimination were to occur at only the applicant's end but not the recruiter's end (i.e., self-selecting out), organizations hiring for a job that calls for passion may inadvertently create applicant pools with less SES background diversity, reducing the likelihood that they are hired (Sonia K. Kang, DeCelles, Tilcsik, & Jun, 2016). Given that jobs that emphasize the pursuit of passion are also often seen as having higher status (Kim, Campbell, Shepherd, &

Kay, 2020), this confluence of factors may serve to perpetuate inequality along socioeconomic lines (Rao, 2018).[2]

THEORY

The Pursuit of Passion

Pursuing one's passion is considered the "unofficial work mantra of our time" (Tokumitsu, 2014), with numerous popular and academic writing touting its benefits. To the best of our knowledge, this notion was first proposed in the top-selling self-help book for job seekers, *What Color is Your Parachute?* (Bolles, 1970), which introduced the importance of connecting work to love, and suggested that discovering and expressing one's passion is a necessary step to reach new heights in one's career. In the ensuing decades, passion for work has become highly prized among employers (Gershon, 2017; Neely, 2020; Reid, 2015; Rivera, 2015; Wolf, Lee, Sah, & Brooks, 2016) who view passion as a signal for an employee's ability to excel at their work (Gershon, 2017; Rao & Tobias Neely, 2019; Reid, 2015; Sharone, 2013). Indeed, because of the expectation that passionate employees go above and beyond the scope of their job (Kim et al., 2020), cultivating passionate employees is seen as a crucial aspect of running a successful business (e.g., Hagel, Brown, & Samoylova, 2013; Whitehurst, 2016).

To illustrate just how widespread the pursuit of passion is among employers, we accessed a dataset containing all job postings listed on the career portal of a major US business school between 2013 and 2020, where 8,227 jobs were posted (see Supplementary Information for more details). We conducted a face valid text analysis, exploring the frequency with which the word "passion" was contained in the description of employers' ideal candidate, in comparison to ten other categories listed by a leading job site as important (TargetJobs, 2020). This analysis reveals that 20.30% of all job postings described their ideal candidate with the word "passion," a high number compared to other key qualities including "teamwork" and "problem solving", which were present in 3.10% and 7.34% of job postings respectively

[2] There are some jobs that require a lot of passion but are not considered high paying (e.g., craftsman, chef, artist, etc.). In general, higher status jobs are often correlated with higher passion (Kim et al., 2020).

(see Table S1 for all qualities).[3] This analysis further underscores previous findings that employers highly value passion among potential employees.

Why Students from Lower SES Backgrounds Avoid Jobs that Call for Passion

While passion for work is highly prized among employers, we suggest that some potential applicants may not feel that they have the luxury to pursue their passion, which may differ as a function of their SES background. Specifically, because lower SES contexts are characterized by a reduced access to economic capital and fewer opportunities for choice, control, and influence (Day & Newburger, 2002; Kohn, 1969; Stephens et al., 2014), students from lower SES backgrounds may have experienced less freedom to pursue and express their passion, compared to their middle- and upper-class counterparts (Nelson, 2010; Rao, 2018; Stephens et al., 2014). This is reflected in how working-class communities socialize children in such environments. Consider that working-class parents are less tolerant when children exhibit self-expression, and that schools in working-class communities are more likely to be comprised of routine activities regimented by teachers (Lareau, 2003). This leads children from lower SES backgrounds, for example, to be better equipped in more collaborative settings (e.g., see Dittmann, Stephens, & Townsend, 2020a)

In contrast, to prepare their children to succeed in a stable, predictable environment, middle- and upper-class parents actively guide their children to "flourish" as an adult by strategically planning educational, social developmental, and extra-curricular activities to ensure their future career success (Lareau, 2003). Similarly, schools in middle- and upper-class communities prepare children to identify and express their preferences for activities they are passionate about (Anyon, 1980; Stephens et al., 2014). Compared to students from middle- and upper-class contexts, students from working-class backgrounds thus experienced fewer opportunities to develop their passion (Rao & Tobias Neely, 2019), and may view

[3] For instance, a job posting describing a passionate applicant reads, "Are you passionate about impacting the life of millions of people in Latin America? […] This leader will ignite passion and leverage the efforts of a range of individual talents. We're looking for someone who has: Energy, ambitious, enthusiasm and passion to dream." Another job posting wrote, "Are you passionate about solving society's toughest problems? […] Are you looking for a team-based working environment where your colleagues would share your passion for social impact?"

the pursuit of passion as an “unmerited privilege” that “is not for them” (Tokumitsu, 2014). More specifically, we propose that in a job that emphasizes the pursuit of passion, students from lower SES backgrounds are less likely to feel that they are a fit for and have the necessary skills to thrive, detailed as follows.

Prior research on person-culture fit suggests that individuals feel more comfortable when organizations they belong to share similar values as them (Morse, 1975; Swann, 1983). Cultural mismatch between an individual and an organization may prompt individuals to experience a reduced sense of fit, i.e., the feeling of being included, welcomed, and recognized (Belmi & Laurin, 2016; O’Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991; Shnabel, Purdie-Vaughns, Cook, Garcia, & Cohen, 2013; Walton & Cohen, 2011, 2007). Likewise, college students from working-class backgrounds report lower levels of fit and belonging in colleges, which prioritize values like personal preference and passion (Nguyen, Herron, Nguyen, & Herron, 2020; Phillips, Stephens, Townsend, & Goudeau, 2020; Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012; Stephens & Townsend, 2015). Along those lines, we propose that students from lower SES backgrounds may anticipate a cultural mismatch, whereby the values embedded in a job that emphasizes the pursuit of passion may not match with their own (Belmi & Laurin, 2016). As a result, graduating students from lower SES backgrounds may thus be more likely to indicate that they are a poorer fit for a job that calls for passion.

Students from lower SES backgrounds may also believe that they do not have the necessary skills for a job that emphasizes the pursuit of passion. The previously discussed literature highlights that working-class students may have had fewer experiences with the pursuit of passion, and thus have developed fewer skills to navigate a cultural environment that emphasizes passion (e.g., Stephens et al., 2012, 2019). This may feed into a belief held by students from lower SES backgrounds that they are not sufficiently equipped to work in environments that call on them (and others) to pursue their passion. Feelings of discomfort, or perceptions that a job for passion may fall out of their reach, may be further amplified by working-class students’ lower propensity to be overconfident (Belmi, Neale, Reiff, & Ulfe, 2019; Varnum, 2015) and entitled (Côté et al., 2020). That is, students from lower SES backgrounds may

both consider jobs that call for passion a stretch for them and be less likely to believe they can withstand this stretch. When considering a job that emphasizes the pursuit of passion—an attribute unfamiliar to many students from lower SES backgrounds—they may thus be more likely to feel that they lack the skills needed to succeed in this position.

Why Recruiters May Select Against Working-Class Students in Jobs that Call for Passion

Students may also be disadvantaged in jobs that emphasize the pursuit of passion if hiring managers are more likely to discriminate against them (compared other jobs that do not emphasize the pursuit of passion). More specifically, we focus on the same two dimensions as before: an assessment of whether an applicant is a good fit for the job, and an evaluation of whether an applicant has the necessary skills for the job.

Perceived applicant fit is one of the most important criteria that hiring recruiters use in their assessment (Chatman, 1991; Rivera, 2015; Sharone, 2013). Given the association between passion and higher status (Kim et al., 2020), recruiting managers for jobs that emphasize passion may define fit in terms of middle- and upper-class culture (Rivera, 2012; Stephens et al., 2014). This may lead them to select against applicants that display working-class markers, e.g., on the basis of listed extracurriculars (e.g., lacrosse and squash are seen as higher-status, while soccer and basketball are seen as lower-status). In addition, applicants from lower SES backgrounds—because of their lower experience with the passion "narrative"—may face difficulty in communicating or signaling passion in a manner that is deemed "appropriate" (Jachimowicz, To, Agasi, Côté, & Galinsky, 2019). Thus, applicants from lower SES background may be viewed as being a poorer fit for jobs that call for the pursuit of passion (vis-à-vis other jobs that do not emphasize passion).

When considering an applicant for a position that emphasizes passion, recruiters may also expect that applicants demonstrate skills that make them particularly suitable for the role. One important skill inherent in the pursuit of passion is autonomy, i.e., the ability to self-initiate and pursue goals that are personally meaningful (Mageau et al., 2009). As a result, employers may expect employees in jobs that call for passion to "probe, test and push boundaries" (Hagel et al., 2013: 10) in their pursuit of passion

and go the extra mile to achieve those goals (Kim et al., 2020). In contrast, because students from lower SES backgrounds are likely to have less familiarity in self-expression and autonomy (Lareau, 2003; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003), recruiters may find that these students are less able to demonstrate that they have the necessary skills to pursue their passion. As a result, applicants from low SES background may be viewed by recruiters as lacking the skills necessary for a position that requires passion.

Overview of Studies

We next present four studies that tested (a) whether students from lower SES backgrounds are less likely to believe they are a good fit and have the necessary skills for a job that emphasizes passion (Studies 1 and 2), and (b) whether recruiters are less likely to believe that students from lower SES backgrounds are a good fit and have the necessary skills for a job that emphasizes passion (Studies 3 and 4). In Study 1, we use real job postings taken from college job boards, and adopt a within-participant correlational design to examine whether graduating college students from lower SES backgrounds believe that they are less of a fit for and have fewer skills to thrive in positions that emphasize the pursuit of passion. In Study 2, we recruit a new sample of graduating students, and experimentally manipulate whether they respond to a job posting that emphasizes the pursuit of passion or a similar job posting that does not, providing causal evidence for the direction of our effects. In both Studies 3 and 4, we yoked cover letters written by participants in Study 2. In Study 3, we conducted a within-participant experiment to test whether recruiters *overtly* discriminate against graduating students from lower SES backgrounds when hiring for a job that emphasizes the pursuit of passion. In Study 4, we conducted a within-participant experiment to test whether recruiters *covertly* discriminate against graduating students from lower SES backgrounds when hiring for a job that emphasizes the pursuit of passion.

STUDY 1

Study 1 tests the hypothesis that students from lower SES backgrounds believe that they are less of a fit and have less skills for a position that emphasizes passion (vis-à-vis another job that does not emphasize passion). To do so, we used a within-subjects design, where each participant rated a total of five job postings. To situate the study in a real-life context, we conducted a correlational study using

actual job postings catered to final year students posted on U.S. colleges' job boards. We also recruited U.S. final-year undergraduates who indicated that they were looking for a job after they graduate. This correlational study allows us to test our hypothesis that students from lower SES backgrounds perceive the pursuit of passion as a privilege in a relatively externally valid setting.

Methods

Participants. We recruited 263 U.S. final-year undergraduate students (*M*age = 22.47, *SDage* = 2.22; min_{age} = 20, max_{age} = 29; 60.00% female, 42.71% non-white) who indicated that they were currently looking for a full-time job from Prolific, an online survey provider. Participants were only allowed to participate if they passed screening tests that confirmed their current student status at a 4-year U.S. undergraduate institution, and if they did, were paid $1.50 for their participation.

We used a simulation approach to estimate our observed statistical power for the focal two-way interaction given our within-participant study design using the *simr* package in *R*, based on 1,000 simulations and a minimum detectable effect size of $d = .10$. This analysis revealed a 95% confidence interval for observed power between 92.46% and 95.48% (see our OSF repository for code), indicating that our study is highly powered to detect even a relatively small interaction effect. These results are in line with previous research showing that repeated measure designs can increase statistical power and introduce little to no bias, in comparison to between subject designs (Clifford, Sheagley, & Piston, 2020).

Procedure. All participants were randomly assigned to rate their impressions of five job postings (out of a total pool of 80 job postings; see our OSF repository for all materials). After reading each job posting, participants summarized it in their own words in 1-2 sentences and rated their impressions of the job posting. Participants iteratively indicated their impressions of five job postings, and then provided their demographic information which included questions assessing their childhood socioeconomic status.

Each job posting was adapted from actual jobs postings targeting final-year undergraduate students on university job boards.[4] We selected job postings that could reasonably be applied to by students regardless of their background (i.e., that do not require technical expertise), required minimal job experience in the field, and required only a bachelor's degree. Only full-time jobs were included (i.e., we excluded internships and "gap-year" positions like camp counselor, fellowships, and so on). Positions that were clearly for professional development and further education in the field were also excluded (e.g., paralegal positions to pursue further education in law school, medical scribe to pursue further education in medical school). All names and locations were anonymized in each job posting.

Measures

Independent Variable: Expected Passion. To measure the extent to which a job posting called for a passionate applicant, participants were asked the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following statements: "This company values employees who are passionate for their work" and "This job requires someone who is passionate about their work" (r = .676). Responses for the two items were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*). We averaged these two items, such that higher scores reflect that more passion was expected for this position.

Moderator: Childhood SES. Following previous research on childhood SES (Griskevicius, Delton, Robertson, & Tybur, 2011), participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: "My family usually had enough money for things when I was growing up," "I grew up in a relatively wealthy neighborhood," and "I felt relatively wealthy compared to the other kids in my school" (α = .71). Responses for these three items were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*), and were subsequently averaged, with higher scores indicating greater childhood socioeconomic class. (Figure S1 depicts the distribution of reported childhood SES among Study 1 participants.)

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[4] We accessed over 1,000 job postings from the University of Michigan, Brown University, Harvard University, and Columbia University to create a representation set.

Dependent Variable: Fit. Following previous research on socioeconomic status and fit (Dittmann, Stephens, & Townsend, 2020), participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "I am not a good fit for the job." All responses were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*). We reverse coded the item, with higher scores indicating participant's belief that they are a good fit for this position.

Dependent Variable: Have Skills. Participants were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: "I have the necessary skills required for this job." All responses were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*), with higher scores indicating that participants believe they have the skills for this position.

Control Variables. We additionally controlled for factors that have previously been associated with hiring (Rao, 2018; Rivera, 2015), as follows.

Age. We standardized age before conducting the regression.

Female. We recoded respondents who identified as Female as "1" and those who identified as Male as "0."

Non-White. We recoded respondents who identified as White as "0" and those who identified as other races (i.e. Black, Asian, Hispanic or Other) as "1."

STEM college major. We recoded respondents' majors as "1" if the major was considered a STEM major (science, technology, engineering and math [5]) and all other majors as "0."

Elite University. We recoded respondents' colleges as "1" if the college was considered one of the top 50 universities in the United States from the U.S. News and World Report Rankings, and all other colleges as "0."

[5] As defined by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Results

Table S2 depicts the bivariate correlations of our key variables. All variables were standardized prior to regressions.

We used multi-level modeling with random effects for both participants and job posts, with "fit" and "have skills" as the dependent variables, expected passion as the independent variable, and childhood socioeconomic status as the moderator. We present our analyses in the following order: we first show the main effects of expected passion and childhood SES both without (Model 1) and with controls (Model 2); we then show the interaction between expected passion and childhood SES both without (Model 3) and with controls (Model 4).

Interaction Effect of Expected Passion and Childhood SES on Fit. Our analyses revealed a statistically significant interaction effect between expected passion and childhood SES on fit (b = .074, SE = .028, p =.009; see Table 1, Model 3), an effect which held when accounting for our control variables (b = .074, SE = .028, p = .008; see Table 1, Model 4).

Insert Table 1 and 2 about here

To better understand this interaction effect, we conducted a simple slopes analysis at the different levels of childhood SES measured in the study (ranging from 1 to 7), as depicted in Table 2. These analyses reveal that at lower levels of childhood SES, the relationship between expected passion and fit is negative; at higher levels of childhood SES, the relationship between expected passion and fit is positive. That is, students with lower childhood SES felt as though they would fit less the more a job required passion, while the opposite was the case for students with higher childhood SES.

Interaction Effect of Expected Passion and Childhood SES on Have Skills. We similarly found a statistically significant interaction effect between expected passion and childhood SES (b = .072, SE = .028, p = .010; see Table 3, Model 3), an effect which held when accounting for relevant control variables (b = .077, SE = .028, p = .006; see Table 3, Model 4).

To further understand this interaction, we conducted a simple slopes analysis at the different levels of childhood SES measured in the study (ranging from 1 to 7), as depicted in Table 4. These analyses reveal that at lower levels of childhood SES, the relationship between expected passion and have skills is negative; at higher levels of childhood SES, the relationship between expected passion and having skills is positive. That is, students with lower childhood SES felt as though they would have fewer skills the more a job required passion, while the opposite was the case for students with higher childhood SES.

Insert Table 3 and 4 about here

Ruling out an Alternative Explanation. One plausible alternative explanation for our findings is that participants perceived job postings that emphasized the pursuit of passion as offering a lower salary (Kim, Campbell, Shepherd, & Kay, 2020). As a result, students from lower SES backgrounds may be less likely to indicate sufficient fit and skills for these positions because they are particularly sensitive to economic concerns (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Lareau, 2015). To rule out this alternative explanation, we additionally asked participants to respond to the following question for each job posting, "What do you think is the annual salary for this position?", rated on a 6-point scale ("$0-$20,000," "$20,000-$39,999," "$40,000-$59,999," "$60,000-$79,999," "$80,000-$99,999", "More than $100,000").[6] We conducted the same analysis as above, i.e., regressing the interaction between expected passion and childhood SES on our dependent variables, and additionally controlling for expected salary. Our analyses revealed that the interaction effect is similar to before (i.e., for fit: b = .074, SE = .028, p =.008; for have skills: b = .075, SE = .027, p =.007). That is, controlling for expected salary did not

[6] Except for "more than $100,000", which we took as "$120,000," we took the midpoint of each income bucket as the expected salary for the position. Following previous research concluding that the effects of salary are log-linear (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010), we log-transformed the variable before conducting the regressions (though all results are robust to the use of different specifications).

meaningfully change our result that those from lower SES backgrounds were more likely to indicate lower fit and skills for positions that emphasized the pursuit of passion, effectively ruling out this alternative explanation.

Discussion

In Study 1 we aimed to provide correlational evidence from job postings on U.S. college job boards which varied in the extent to which they called for passion, and a sample of U.S. final year undergraduate students who varied in their childhood SES. Consistent with our hypothesis, we find that students from lower SES backgrounds feel that they are less of a fit and do not have the skills for a job that emphasizes the pursuit of passion.

One shortcoming of this design is that it does not allow us to infer causality. In addition, although we selected job postings that could reasonably be applied to students regardless of their background, we are unable to control for other aspects that may have varied across job postings. To more precisely isolate our effect, and provide causal evidence, we next conducted an experimental study.

STUDY 2

Study 2 tests for the causal relationship between a job that emphasizes the pursuit of passion (compared to another job that does not emphasize the pursuit of passion) and perceptions of a lack of fit and skills from students from lower SES backgrounds. Specifically, this study experimentally manipulated the degree to which a job posting called for passion, utilizing two identical job postings that only varied in whether they emphasized the pursuit of passion (vs. did not). As with Study 1, we recruited U.S. final-year undergraduates who indicated that they were looking for a full-time job after they graduate.

Method

We recruited 247 U.S. final-year undergraduate students (M_{age} = 22.37, SD_{age} = 2.11; min_{age} = 20, max_{age} = 29; 54.66% female, 38.46% non-white) from Prolific who indicated they were currently looking for a full-time job. We also excluded any participants who took part in our prior study from taking part in this study. Same as before, participants were only allowed to participate if they passed

screening tests that confirmed their current student status at 4-year U.S. undergraduate institution, and if they did, were paid $1.50 for their participation. Power calculations using G*Power reveal that this sample size allowed us to detect even small effect sizes of $d = .15$ with sufficient statistical power (i.e., above 90%).

Procedure. All participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: *Passion* or *Control*. In both conditions, participants first rated their impressions of one "practice" job posting (taken from Study 1 as having average levels of expected passion).

Next, participants saw a job posting that had the same text except for small differences to manipulate levels of expected passion, as follows. In the *Passion* condition, the job posting contained four phrases describing an ideal job applicant as passionate (e.g., "pursing your passion", "highly passionate for their work"), while in the *Control* condition, the ideal job applicant was described without reference to passion (e.g., "develop your career", "diligent and timely"; see Supplementary Information for full text of job postings). As part of their ratings, participants indicated how passionate applicants were expected to be with the same two-item measure as in Study 1, and we found that participants in the *Passion* condition were significantly more likely to indicate that the job required someone who is passionate *(*$M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.15$) than participants in the *Control* condition *(*$M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.23$), $t(230.04) = 3.02$, $p = .003$, $d = .389$.[7]

As in Study 1, the job postings could reasonably be applied to by students regardless of their background (i.e., they did not require technical expertise), required minimal job experience in the field, and required only a bachelor's degree. After reading each job posting, participants summarized it in their own words for 1-2 sentences and rated if they are good fit for the job and if they have necessary skills required for the job. After rating these job postings, each participant wrote a short cover letter. (We note

[7] The two items are "This company values employees who are passionate for their work" and "This job requires someone who is passionate about their work" ($r = .677$).

that these were later used as stimuli in Studies 3 and 4, as described below.) Participants then answered a short questionnaire where they provided their demographic information.

Measures

Moderator: Childhood SES. As in Study 1, we measured childhood SES using the same 3-item scale (Griskevicius et al., 2011; $\alpha = .71$; see Figure S2 for the distribution of reported childhood SES among Study 2 participants).

Dependent Variable: Fit. As before, participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "I am not a good fit for the job." (Dittmann, Stephens, & Townsend, 2020). All responses were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*). We reverse coded the item, with higher scores indicating the perception that they are a good fit for this position.

Dependent Variable: Have Skills. As before, participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "I have the necessary skills required for this job." All responses were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*), with higher scores indicating that participants believe they have the skills for this position.

Control Variables. We used the same control variables as in Study 1, i.e., age, female, non-white, STEM college major, and elite university status.

Results

Table S3 depicts the bivariate correlations of our key variables. We standardized all variable before conducting our regression to ease comprehension and comparison across studies.

We used linear regression modeling with fit and have skills as the dependent variables, condition as the independent variable, and childhood SES as the moderator. We present our analyses in the following order: we first show the main effects of condition and childhood SES both without (Model 1) and with controls (Model 2); we then show the interaction between condition and childhood SES both without (Model 3) and with controls (Model 4).

Interaction Effect of Condition and Childhood SES on Fit. We first tested the interaction effect between condition and childhood SES on fit, and found a statistically significant interaction effect

(*b* = -.326, *SE* = .128, *p* = .011, *d* = .350; see Table 5, Model 3); an effect which held when accounting for relevant control variables (*b* = -.332, SE = .127, *p* = .009, *d* = .334; see Table 5, Model 4).

Insert Table 5 about here

To better understand this interaction, we conducted a simple slopes analysis (see Figure 1, left panel), which revealed that in the *Passion* condition, childhood SES had a statistically significant and positive relationship with perceived fit (*b* = .215, *SE* = .087, *p* = .014, *d* = .315). In contrast, in the *Control* condition, childhood SES did not have a statistically significant relationship with perceived fit (*b* = -.118, *SE* = .095, *p* = .215, *d* = .158). This suggests that participants from lower SES backgrounds reported lower levels of fit only in response to the job described in the *Passion* condition, but not in response to the job in the *Control* condition.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Interaction Effect of Condition and Childhood SES on Have Skills. Analyses revealed a statistically significant interaction effect between the condition and childhood SES on have skills (*b* = -.340, SE = .128, *p* = .009, *d* = .334; see Table 6, Model 3), an effect which held also after accounting for relevant control variables (*b* = -.340, SE = .127, *p* =.009, *d* = .334; see Table 6, Model 4).

Insert Table 6 about here

To better understand this interaction, we conducted a simple slopes analysis (see Figure 1, right panel), which revealed that in the *Passion* condition, childhood SES had a marginally significant and positive relationship with having skills for the job position (*b* = .168, *SE* = .087, *p* = .054, *d* = .246), whereas in the *Control* condition, childhood SES status had a marginally significant and negative

relationship with having skills (b = -.172, SE = .095, p = .072, d = .230). This suggests that participants from lower SES backgrounds reported lower levels of having skills in response to the job described in the *Passion* condition, and marginally more skills in response to the job in the *Control* condition.

Ruling out an Alternative Explanation. Similar to Study 1, we aimed to rule out the alternative explanation that students from lower SES backgrounds indicated lower fit and skills for positions that emphasized the pursuit of passion because they are particularly sensitive to economic concerns. We again asked participants to indicate the expected salary for the position using the same item as in Study 1, and re-ran the same analysis, i.e., regressing the interaction between the condition and childhood SES on our dependent variables, and additionally controlling for expected salary. Analyses reveals that the interaction effect is similar to before (i.e., for fit: b = -.315, SE = .127, p = .011; for have skills: b = -.344, SE = .127, p =.008). That is, controlling for expected salary did not meaningfully change our result that those from lower SES backgrounds were more likely to indicate lower fit and skills for a position that emphasized the pursuit of passion, effectively ruling out this alternative explanation.

Discussion

In Study 2, we replicate our earlier findings that students from lower SES backgrounds feel that they are less of a fit and do not have the skills for a job which calls for passion. Crucially, this design allows us to account for potential confounding factors by keeping the job postings the same, and only varying whether the job calls for passion or not. In addition, this study design provides causal evidence for the direction of our effect. Taken together, Study 1 and 2 suggest that when considering a position that calls for passion, applicants from lower SES backgrounds feel that they are less of a fit and have less skills. This lower fit and fewer perceived skills indicate that the pursuit of passion may reflect a privilege that is relatively less accessible to those from lower SES backgrounds.

One limitation of these findings is that they do not explore the other side of the coin, i.e., whether those doing the hiring select against applicants from lower SES backgrounds for a position that requires passion. Specifically, employers may discriminate against applicants from lower SES backgrounds when recruiting for a position that requires passion, for example by using overt signals of SES such as

extracurricular activities that are associated with being from a higher status (Rivera, 2012), a possibility we turn to next.

STUDY 3

Study 3 was designed to explore whether recruiters select against applicants from lower SES backgrounds in their consideration of a job that emphasizes the pursuit of passion. More specifically, we test whether recruiters utilize *overt* signals indicating higher SES backgrounds—i.e., extracurricular activities—to evaluate an applicant's fit for a role that calls for passion (Belmi & Laurin, 2016). To do so, we experimentally manipulated two factors: first, whether recruiters hired for a role that called for a passionate candidate or not; and second, whether the applicant had lower or higher childhood SES (as evidenced through their extracurricular activities). In addition, we yoked cover letters generated by participants in Study 2.

Method

We recruited 494 U.S citizens (*M*age = 36.84, *SDage* = 10.08; $\min_{age}$ = 19, $\max_{age}$ = 77; 37.75% female, 38.93% non-white) with previous or current hiring experience from Prolific. Participants were paid $1.50 for their participation.

Similar to Study 1, we used a simulation approach to estimate our observed statistical power for the focal two-way interaction given our within-participant study design using the *simr* package in *R*, with a minimum detectable effect size of $d = .20$. This approach revealed that the 95% confidence interval for observed power is between 91.68 and 94.86% (see our OSF repository) based on 1,000 simulations. That is, our study is highly powered to detect even a relatively small interaction effect.

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions, *Passion* or *Control*. In each condition, they were shown the matched job posting used in Study 2 (i.e., participants in the *Passion* condition saw the job posting extolling an ideal job candidate as passionate, and vice versa). In both conditions, participants were asked to imagine themselves as a recruiting manager for the company and were told that the job posting was catered towards graduating seniors from a four-year US college. After describing the ideal candidate for the position in 1-2 sentences, participants saw and rated ten cover letters

that matched each condition randomly drawn from the total pool of 247 cover letters generated by participants in Study 2 in response to the same prompt (see our OSF repository).[8]

Applicant Childhood SES Manipulation. Below each cover letter, participants saw one combination of a name, two hobbies, and a college major randomly drawn from 10 combinations. We pretested each combination of names, hobbies and college major with a separate sample of 503 participants and found that the hobbies of an individual (compared to their name and college major) was associated with the perceived status of the individual (see Tables S5-S7), similar to previous research (Rivera, 2015; Rivera & Tilcsik, 2016).

For example, individuals who listed lacrosse and sailing as their hobbies were perceived as having higher SES, while individuals who listed basketball and track and field were perceived as having lower SES. To create the 10 combinations, we randomly allocated the names, chose college majors which had similar effect sizes, and chose six combinations of hobbies that were perceived as the most high and low SES. The resulting 10 people had five combinations of hobbies that were considered high SES and five combinations of hobbies that were considered low SES (see Table 7).

Insert Table 7 about here

After reading each cover letter and description of the applicant, each participant rated if the applicant was a good fit for the position, if they had the necessary skills required for the job, and if they would invite the applicant for an interview. Participants then provided their own demographic information. Participants repeated this process for a total of 10 applicants in random order (i.e., each participant rated all 10 applicants).

Measures

[8] Cover letters were cleaned to remove any potential identifiers participants mentioned (e.g., names, colleges, etc.).

Dependent Variable: Fit. Participants (i.e., "raters") were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: "This person is a good fit for this position." All responses were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*).

Dependent Variable: Have Skills. Participants (i.e., "raters") were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: "This person has the necessary skillset for this position." All responses were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*).

Dependent Variable: Interview. Participants (i.e., "raters") were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: "I would invite this person to an interview." All responses were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*).

Control Variables. As in Study 1 and 2, we used attributes of the applicant as control variables that have previously been associated with hiring, i.e., applicant age, gender, race, whether they were a STEM college major, and whether they were from an elite university. In addition, we also controlled for attributes of the rater, as these may also confound our results (Rivera, 2012, 2015): their age, gender, and race, with the same coding as before; education, recoded into estimated years of education completed by each participant (M = 14.50, SD = 1.16); employment status, recoded as "1" if participants were currently unemployed; their current household income, which we logged; and their SES using the MacArthur Ladder (Adler & Ostrove, 1999).

Results

Table S8 depicts the mean, standard deviation and bivariate correlations of our key variables. We standardized all variables before conducting the regression, and used multi-level modeling with random effects for both applicant cover letter and participant (i.e., raters), with fit (Tables S9 and S10), have skills (Tables S11 and S12) and invite for interview (Tables S13 and S14) as the dependent variables, the passion job posting condition as the independent variable, and the applicant's childhood SES condition (via their listing of hobbies) as the moderator.

Interaction of Passion Job Posting and Applicant's Childhood SES Conditions.

Fit. Our analyses revealed that the interaction effect between the passion job posting and applicant's childhood SES conditions, both with and without control variables, was not statistically significant (b = -.034, SE = .046, p = .865, d = .021, see Table S9, Model 3). That is, regardless of whether the job position called for a passionate applicant or not, the experimentally manipulated childhood SES of the applicant did not significantly influence rater's perception of the applicant's fit.

Have Skills. Similarly, our analyses revealed that the interaction effect between the passion job posting and applicant's childhood SES conditions, both with and without control variables, was not statistically significant (b =.011, SE = .046, p = .814, d = .007; see Table S11, Model 3). That is, regardless of whether the job position called for a passionate applicant or not, the applicant's experimentally manipulated childhood SES did not significantly influence rater's perception of the applicant's skills.

Interview. Analyses also revealed that the interaction effect between the passion job posting and applicant's childhood SES conditions, both with and without control variables, was not statistically significant (b = -.033, SE = .046, p = .484, d = .020, see Table S13, Model 3). That is, regardless of whether the job position called for a passionate applicant or not, the applicant's experimentally manipulated childhood SES did not significantly influence rater's willingness to invite the applicant for an interview.

Bayesian Regressions. To quantify the evidence in favor of the null interaction effect of the passion job posting and applicant's childhood SES conditions on raters' perceptions, we employed Bayesian regressions with non-informative priors to construct credibility intervals of the regression coefficients (Wagenmakers, Morey, & Lee, 2016). Results of Bayesian regressions with the *brms* package in R show that the 99% credibility intervals for the coefficient of the interaction of the passion job posting and applicant's childhood SES conditions include zero: for fit (99% CI: [-.123, .056]), have skills (99% CI: [-.096, .116]) and hiring for interview (99% CI: [-.138, .075). Thus, there is a 99% chance that the interaction effects of the passion job posting and applicant's childhood SES conditions on fit, have skills, and invite for interview do not significantly differ from zero. Given the statistical power in the current

study to detect even relatively small interaction effects, these Bayesian analyses provide tentative evidence for a negligible or nonexistent interaction effect on rater's perception of fit, have skills, and willingness to invite for an interview.

Discussion

Study 3 was designed to explore whether raters select against students with lower childhood SES when recruiting for a position that emphasizes the pursuit of passion. Specifically, we tested if recruiting managers relied on *overt* signals of childhood SES to evaluate an applicant's fit and skills for a job that emphasizes passion. We find a lack of evidence to support the claim that hiring managers discriminate against applicants from a lower childhood SES for a job requiring passion. (We note additional robustness checks reported in the Supplementary Information that found similar results.)

One potential criticism with this study is that a null effect may have occurred because raters did not pay sufficient attention to the stimuli. To provide evidence against this concern, we conducted linguistic analyses of the cover letters used (for more details, see Supplementary Information). We then conducted multi-level models to test whether linguistic characteristics of the cover letters—i.e., word count, analytic thinking, clout, authenticity, and emotional tone—influenced raters' judgements of fit, have skills, and invitation to interview (see Table S22; we repeated the same analysis for Study 4 and find similar results, see Table S23). Our analyses revealed that two attributes of cover letters—word count and usage of analytic words—had a statistically significant and positive effect on all dependent variables. That is, applicants who wrote more words and used more words that represent analytic thinking were rated more highly across all dependent evidence. This provides suggestive evidence that raters were paying attention to the stimuli when judging applicants' fit, skills and interview, but—as the earlier analyses revealed—these did not differ by passion condition and childhood SES.

Relatedly, another shortcoming of this design is the manipulation of childhood SES. That is, consider that participants may have responded in a socially desirable way in order to come across as non-discriminating (Fisher, 1993; Randall & Fernandes, 1991). We address this limitation in Study 4 which used a more covert manipulation of childhood SES.

STUDY 4

In Study 4, we explored whether hiring managers select against applicants with lower childhood SES when considering a job that emphasizes the pursuit of passion using a *covert* manipulation of childhood SES. As in Study 3, we recruit hiring managers to assess an applicant for a job posting that either called for passion or did not, using the cover letters produced by participants in Study 2. Unlike Study 3, we provide no additional information on the applicant, such that participants needed to rely on signals in cover letter to assess prospective applicants. Doing so reflects a covert signal of childhood SES, considering that students may signal their suitability for a job that calls for passion differently as a function of their childhood SES (as specified by our findings in Study 1 and 2, as well as our theory; see also: Rao & Tobias Neely, 2019; Tokumitsu, 2014). In addition, and same as in Study 3, we yoked cover letters generated by participants in Study 2.

Method

We recruited 511 U.S citizens (*M*age = 37.57, *SDage* = 10.28; $\min_{age}$ = 20, $\max_{age}$ = 72; 47.38% female, 13.82% non-white) with previous or current hiring experience from Prolific, an online survey provider. Participants were precluded from taken part in the study if they participated in Study 3, and were paid $1.50.

We used a simulation approach to estimate our observed statistical power for the focal two-way interaction given our within-participant study design using the *simr* package in *R*, with a minimum detectable effect size of $d = .10$. This approach revealed that the 95% confidence interval for observed power is between 99.63 and 100% (see our OSF repository) based on 1,000 simulations. That is, our study is highly powered to detect even a relatively small interaction effect.

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions, *Passion* or *Control*. In each condition, they were shown the matched job posting used in Study 2 (i.e., participants in the *Passion* condition saw the job posting extolling an ideal job candidate as passionate). In both conditions, participants were asked to imagine themselves as a recruiting manager for the company and were told that the job posting was catered towards graduating seniors from a four-year US college. After describing the

ideal candidate for the position in 1-2 sentences, participants rated ten cover letters that matched each condition, as in Study 3, randomly drawn from the total pool of 247 cover letters generated by participants in Study 2 in response to the same prompt (see our OSF repository for all materials).

In contrast to Study 3, participants were not provided with any information about the individual who wrote the cover letter. After reading each cover letter, each participant rated if the applicant was a good fit for the position, if they had the necessary skills required for the job and if they would invite the applicant for an interview. Participants then provided their own demographic information. Participants repeated this process for a total of 10 applicants in random order.

Measures

Moderator: Childhood SES of the Applicants (i.e., Study 2 Participants). This information comes from Study 2, where we asked "applicants" to provide their childhood SES on a 3-item scale (α = .76).

Dependent Variable: Fit. Participants (i.e., "raters") were asked to rate whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: "This person is a good fit for this position." All responses were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*).

Dependent Variable: Have Skills. Participants (i.e., "raters") were asked to rate whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: "This person has the necessary skillset for this position." All responses were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*).

Dependent Variable: Interview. Participants (i.e., "raters") were asked to rate whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: "I would invite this person to an interview." All responses were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*).

Control Variables. As in Studies 1-3, we controlled for applicant age, gender, race, whether they were a STEM college major, and whether they were from an elite university. In addition, we also controlled for attributes of the rater, as in Study 3: their age, gender, and race, with the same coding as before; education, recoded into estimated years of education completed by each participant (M = 14.50, SD = 1.16); employment status, recoded as "1" if participants were currently unemployed; their current

household income, which we logged; and their subjective SES using the MacArthur Ladder (Adler & Ostrove, 1999).

Results

Table S15 depicts the mean, standard deviation and bivariate correlations of our key variables. We standardized all variables before conducting the regression, and used multi-level modeling with random effects for both applicant cover letter and participant (i.e., raters), with fit (Table S16), have skills (Table S17) and invite for interview (Table S18) as the dependent variables, condition as the independent variable and (applicant) childhood SES as the moderator.

Interaction Effect of Passion Job Posting Condition and Applicant Childhood SES.

Fit. Our analyses revealed that the interaction effect between the job posting condition and applicant childhood SES, both with and without control variables, was not statistically significant (b = -.012, SE = .073, p = .865, d = .004, see Table S16, Model 3). That is, regardless of whether the job position called for a passionate applicant or not, the applicant's childhood SES did not significantly influence rater's perception of the applicant's fit.

Have Skills. Similarly, our analyses revealed that the interaction effect between the job posting condition and applicant childhood SES, both with and without control variables, was not statistically significant (b = -.020, SE = .071, p = .783, d = .008; see Table S17, Model 3). That is, regardless of whether the job position called for a passionate applicant or not, the applicant's childhood SES did not significantly influence rater's perception of the applicant's skills.

Interview. Analyses also revealed that the interaction effect between the job posting condition and applicant childhood SES, both with and without control variables, was not statistically significant (b = -.015, SE = .074, p = .836, d = .006, see Table S18, Model 3). That is, regardless of whether the job position called for a passionate applicant or not, the applicant's childhood SES did not significantly influence rater's willingness to invite the applicant for an interview.

Bayesian Regressions. To further quantify the evidence in favor of the null interaction effect of the condition and childhood SES on raters' perceptions, we employed Bayesian regressions with non-

informative priors to construct credibility intervals of the regression coefficients (Wagenmakers, Morey, & Lee, 2016), as in Study 3. Results of Bayesian regressions with the *brms* package in *R* show that the 99% credibility intervals for the coefficient of the interaction of passion job posting condition and applicant childhood SES include zero: for fit (99% CI: [-.172, .159]), have skills (99% CI: [-.188, .149]) and hiring for interview (99% CI: [-.186, .166). Thus, there is a 99% chance that the interaction effects of the passion job posting condition and applicant childhood SES on fit, have skills, and invite for interview do not significantly differ from zero. Given the high statistical power in the current study to detect even relatively small interaction effects, these Bayesian analyses provide tentative evidence for a negligible or nonexistent interaction effect of the job posting condition and applicant childhood SES on rater's perception of fit, have skills, and willingness to invite for an interview.

Discussion

Study 4 was designed to measure whether hiring managers select against students with lower childhood SES when recruiting for a position that emphasizes the pursuit of passion using a *covert* signal of childhood SES. Similar to Study 3 which relied on an *overt* signal of childhood SES, we do not find conclusive evidence that hiring managers selects against applicants with lower childhood SES for jobs that call for passion. (We note additional robustness checks reported in the Supplementary Information that found similar findings.) Taken together, these findings suggest that while hiring managers may not select against students with lower childhood SES when selecting for a job that calls for passion (Studies 3 and 4), their applicant pools may constitute of fewer students with lower childhood SES. We discuss these results and their implications in greater detail below.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The advice to pursue your passion has "spread like a contagion" (Schank & Wallace, 2018), permeating countless self-help books, magazines and graduation speeches (Rao & Tobias Neely, 2019; Tokumitsu, 2014). Despite being embraced by most college students (Cech, 2018), the current research argues that pursuing one's passion may reflect a form of "veiled privilege" (Duffy, 2017) that excludes graduating students with lower childhood SES. Given the widespread use of passion as a hiring criterion,

applicants from lower SES backgrounds may therefore be at a disadvantage in a competitive labor market (Rivera, 2015; Stephens et al., 2014). The central question addressed in the current research thus focusses on whether and how the pursuit of passion isolates graduating students with lower childhood SES in their job search.

Across four correlational and experimental studies, we find support for the notion that graduating students with lower childhood SES believe they are not a good fit and do not have the necessary skills for a job that calls for passion. In contrast, we do not find evidence in support of the claim that recruiters select against students with lower childhood SES in jobs that call for passion. That is, while graduating students from lower SES backgrounds may perceive the pursuit of passion as a privilege, this perception may not be similarly enforced by recruiters. Nevertheless, this pattern of results is problematic because it highlights that organizations' widespread practice to emphasize passion in their recruitment materials (Hagel et al., 2013) may produce applicant pools that are less diverse in terms of applicant's childhood SES. Perhaps inadvertently, organizations may thus introduce systematic biases in their hiring for jobs that call for passion, reproducing the "veiled privilege" that excludes students from lower SES backgrounds, and propagating inequality among socioeconomic lines.

Theoretical Contributions

In the current research, we bring together social psychological, sociological, and organizational perspectives of the pursuit of passion. In doing so, we make several theoretical contributions.

First, the current research highlights the importance of disentangling supply-side (i.e., from the applicants' perspective) and demand-side (i.e., from the employer's perspective) sources of hiring inequities. Prior research has often separately explored demand-side (e.g., across race; see Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004) and supply-side discrimination (e.g., across gender; see Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011; Wille & Derous, 2018). By bringing both together (Kang, DeCelles, Tilcsik, & Jun, 2016), we highlight that even a lack of supply-side discrimination can result in hiring patterns that are systematically biased because demand-side discrimination can skew applicant pools that produce outcome inequities. In the case of the pursuit of passion, demand-side discrimination can result in a less socioeconomically

diverse set of applicants to select from, a resulting under-representation of individuals from lower SES backgrounds in those positions, and thus the reproduction of passion as a privilege. This highlights the pernicious ways in which even well-intentioned employers may reinforce a self-reinforcing cycle that is difficult to break.

This set of findings has two implications. At an organizational level, given that diverse teams are more creative, more diligent, and make more informed decisions (e.g. Freeman & Huang, 2014; Loyd, Wang, Phillips, & Lount, 2013), our work suggests that employers who emphasize passion in their job postings may negatively influence the both the justice and performance of their organizations. Indeed, an emphasis on passion may inadvertently create a more homogenous employee workforce, which—if kept unchecked—is more prone to groupthink, overconfidence, and shortsightedness (Baron, 2005; Phillips & Apfelbaum, 2012). At the societal level, given that jobs which afford employees to pursue their passion are often high-status (Rao & Tobias Neely, 2019; Rivera, 2015), individuals from lower SES backgrounds may be precluded from the advancement opportunities and upward mobility that come with it. As a result, an emphasis on passion may serve as one of many factors that propagates socioeconomic inequalities (Hauser, Hilbe, Chatterjee, & Nowak, 2019).[9]

The current research also contributes to the literature on how individuals from lower SES backgrounds believe they (do not) fit into middle-class or upper-class culture. Previous research has predominantly focused on the mismatch between individuals from lower SES backgrounds and their existing or current higher education institution (e.g., Dittmann, Stephens, Townsend, 2020; Stephens et al., 2012). Rather than focusing on *experiencing* a lack of fit, the current research highlights the crucial role that *expected* feelings of fit into gateway institutions play in reproducing socioeconomic inequalities.

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[9] We also tested whether our results were similar for gender, and do not find supporting evidence. Across Studies 1 and 2—when controlling for the interaction of passion and childhood SES—we did not find a statistically significant interaction effect of passion and gender (e.g., for fit: Study 1, $b = .075$, $SE = .055$, $p = .170$, $d = .002$; Study 2, $b = .490$, $SE = .025$, $p = .052$, $d = .008$). Similarly, across Study 3 and 4, when controlling for the interaction between passion and applicant SES, we did not find a statistically significant interaction effect between passion and gender (e.g., for fit: Study 3, $b = .010$, $SE = .130$, $p = .871$, $d = .002$; Study 4, $b = .012$, $SE = .015$, $p = .396$, $d = .024$). These results suggest that our effects are specific to SES.

This view is aligned with related research showing that high-achieving students from lower SES backgrounds are less likely to apply to elite universities (Hoxby & Avery, 2012), which may occur in part because elite universities emphasize passion as an important admission criterion (ACS & IBSCA, 2015; Cole, 2016; Stephens et al., 2012).

Indeed, expecting a worse fit for roles that afford the pursuit of passion may also translate to the college experience, where students from lower SES backgrounds favor majors that have a higher expected income after graduation (rather than choosing a major that reflects their interests; Pinsker, 2015), and are less likely to be involved in extracurricular activities that advance their interests (Terenzini et al., 1994). It is possible that students from lower SES backgrounds—once they are in a position that affords them to pursue their passion—feel they are no less of a fit than graduating students from middle- and upper-class backgrounds. And yet, even if this were case—which it often is not—socioeconomic inequalities may continue to prevail because of expected feelings of fit, which further serve to reinforce such beliefs. This perspective of exploring both *experienced* and *expected* feelings of fit may thus help us better understand how students from lower SES backgrounds navigate their time in higher education, and the time beyond.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current research should be considered in light of several limitations. First, we note that our studies were conducted in hypothetical settings. In Studies 1 and 2, our main dependent variables—whether participants believed they are a good fit and have the necessary skills for a job—have been used widely in prior research (Stephens, Brannon, Markus, & Nelson, 2015). This study design, however, does not allow us to shed insight into whether students who believe they are not a good fit for a job would also be less likely to apply for a job, though other studies (e.g., Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005) find a strong association between these two. Similarly, Studies 3 and 4 only focus on one step in hiring process—the initial screening—and do not include whether discrimination against students from lower SES backgrounds in jobs that call for passion occur at a later time point, such as a potential interview. Future work may assess later stages in the hiring process.

We also encourage future research to further elucidate why graduating students from lower SES backgrounds believe they are a worse fit and lack the skills for jobs that call for passion. More specifically, subsequent research could explore whether this effect is driven by how individuals view themselves, or by how individuals believe others view them (i.e., meta-perceptions; Lees & Cikara, 2020). For example, future research could consider the possibility that graduating students from lower SES backgrounds may expect that recruiters believe applicants from a lower SES background are not a good fit and lack skills for jobs that call for passion, a belief about others which could subsequently drive beliefs about themselves. This notion is aligned with related work showing that female job seekers who believe that male recruiters find females more nervous are less attracted to a job when it requires applicants who are calm (Vorauer, Hunter, Main, & Roy, 2000; Wille & Derous, 2018). Indeed, these effects may be further compounded by the lower levels of self-esteem, positive self-regard, and self-confidence reported by individuals from lower SES backgrounds, especially in high-SES contexts (Kraus & Park, 2014; Twenge & Campbell, 2002), who may be more likely to internalize negative meta-perceptions. Note that meta-perceptions exert a powerful pull on individuals regardless of whether or not they are accurate (Lees & Cikara, 2020), but are more amenable to updating than individual's personal beliefs (Paluck, 2009). Future research could thus explore whether an intervention that seeks to correct potentially harmful meta-perceptions about the endorsement and enforcement of passion as a privilege improves expected fit for graduating students from lower SES backgrounds.

Finally, given both the justice and performance benefits associated with a workforce more diverse along socioeconomic lines, we encourage future research to explore how organizations that call for passion can create more inclusive environments that support the advancement of graduating students from lower SES backgrounds. This begins at the recruitment stage, where organizations may seek to experiment with altering the wording of their job postings in ways to both attract passionate candidates *without* discouraging graduating students from lower SES backgrounds from applying for these positions. One source of inspiration may come from related research which has found that rewording a personality trait (e.g., "You are calm") as a behavior (e.g., "You remain calm in stressful situations") may curb social

identity threat (Born & Taris, 2010; Wille & Derous, 2018), a possibility we encourage future research to explore.[10] Additionally, similar to how including profiles of current low SES students could signal that people "like them" are valued and included in college (Stephens et al., 2015), employers can create hiring materials that include profiles of employees from low SES backgrounds thriving in positions that require passion.

But changing recruitment materials without efforts to support individuals from lower SES backgrounds to thrive are insufficient. Once hired, graduating students from lower SES backgrounds may continue to feel that they are less of a fit for jobs that call for passion, and may even feel alienated by their organization (Mackey & Perrewé, 2014). We thus encourage future research to explore the practices and policies organizations may seek to put in place to support both a passionate *and* diverse workforce. One potential avenue for future research could be to explore whether a collaborative or team-based pursuit of passion, rather than a focus on individual-level passion pursuit, may support individuals from lower SES backgrounds (Dittmann, Stephens, & Townsend, 2020). In addition, organizations could make clear what their expectations regarding their employees' pursuit of passion entails to help individuals from lower SES backgrounds to learn about the "rules of the game" (Stephens et al., 2015). Future research should identify whether and how organizations can implement policies that support both a passionate and inclusive workforce.

Conclusion

Every year, millions of graduating students are called on to "pursue their passion." Many embrace this notion as an aspirational ideal, and academic research highlights its beneficial outcomes. But the pursuit of passion is not value-neutral. As the current research reveals, it signals class and privilege, driving graduating students from lower SES backgrounds away from applying for jobs that call for passion. This can have deleterious consequences, as less socioeconomically diverse applicant pools

[10] For example, rather than asking individuals to "pursue their passion," employers could concretize the specific behaviors they believe this entails.

translate to less socioeconomically diverse hires in jobs that call for passion, precluding graduating students from lower SES backgrounds from the advancement opportunities associated with these positions. In calling on students to pursue their passion, the current research suggests that we need to be mindful of the privilege this message contains, and the possibility that it perpetuates inequalities along socioeconomic lines. Instead, given the importance and benefits of passion, our findings highlight the need to learn how to change collective mindsets and organizational structures to support graduating students from lower SES backgrounds to thrive in their pursuit of passion.

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TABLE 1

Interaction Effect of Expected Passion and Childhood SES on Fit (Study 1)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
(Intercept)	-.000	.146	-.002	.159
	(.042)	(.091)	(.042)	(.091)
Expected Passion	.043	.042	.038	.037
	(.028)	(.027)	(.028)	(.027)
Childhood SES	.052	.074	.046	.067
	(.040)	(.040)	(.040)	(.040)
Expected Passion *x* Childhood SES			.074**	.074**
			(.028)	(.028)
Age		.028		.026
		(.040)		(.041)
Female		-.194*		-.203*
		(.080)		(.081)
Non-White		.202*		.194*
		(.084)		(.084)
STEM Major		-.124		-.139
		(.083)		(.084)
Elite University		-.197		-.187
		(.111)		(.111)
Num. obs.	1315	1315	1315	1315
Num. groups: ID	263	263	263	263
Num. groups: Post	80	80	80	80

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

TABLE 2

Effect of Expected Passion on Fit at Different Levels of Childhood SES (Study 1)

Childhood Socioeconomic Status	*b*	95% CI	*t*	*p*	*d*
1	-.128	-.263, .007	-1.855	.066	.010
2	-.071	-.170, .028	-1.420	.158	.078
3	-.015	-.083, .053	-.435	.664	.024
4	.041	-.013, .095	1.513	.133	.083
5	.098	.031, .165	2.849	.005	.157
6	.155	.057, .253	3.089	.002	.170
7	.211	.076, .346	3.075	.002	.170

TABLE 3

Interaction Effect of Expected Passion and Childhood SES on Have Skills (Study 1)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
(Intercept)	-.001	.126	-.003	.140
	(.044)	(.090)	(.044)	(.090)
Expected Passion	-.114***	-.111***	-.118***	-.116***
	(.028)	(.028)	(.028)	(.028)
Childhood SES	.079*	.069	.072	.060
	(.038)	(.039)	(.038)	(.039)
Expected Passion *x* Childhood SES			.072**	.077**
			(.028)	(.028)
Age		-.003		-.006
		(.040)		(.039)
Female		-.152		-.161*
		(.078)		(.078)
Non-White		-.103		-.111
		(.082)		(.081)
STEM major		-.039		-.055
		(.081)		(.081)
Elite University		.120		.131
		(.108)		(.107)
Num. obs.	1315	1315	1315	1315
Num. groups: ID	263	263	263	263
Num. groups: post	80	80	80	80

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

TABLE 4

Effect of Expected Passion on Have Skills at Different Levels of Childhood SES (Study 1)

Child Socioeconomic Status	*b*	95% CI	*t*	*p*	*d*
1	-.288	-.424, -.152	-4.152	<.001	.229
2	-.229	-.329, -.129	-4.517	<.001	.249
3	-.170	-.239, -.101	-4.859	<.001	.268
4	-.111	-.165, -.057	-4.005	<.001	.221
5	-.053	-.121, .015	-1.507	.135	.083
6	.007	-.092, .106	.129	.898	.007
7	.065	-.070 .200	.948	.345	.052

TABLE 5

Interaction Effect of Passion Condition and Childhood SES on Fit (Study 2)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
(Intercept)	.019	.273	.021	.290
	(.197)	(.222)	(.195)	(.219)
Condition	.043	.065	.038	.063
	(.128)	(.128)	(.127)	(.127)
Childhood SES	.066	.063	.540**	.547**
	(.064)	(.066)	(.196)	(.196)
Passion Condition *x* Childhood SES			-.326*	-.332**
			(.128)	(.127)
Age		.008		.011
		(.066)		(.066)
Female		-.330*		-.319*
		(.129)		(.127)
Non-White		.120		.104
		(.134)		(.132)
STEM Major		-.204		-.227
		(.137)		(.136)
Elite University		-.102		-.116
		(.174)		(.172)
R^2	.005	.044	.031	.070
Num. obs.	247	247	247	247

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

TABLE 6

Interaction Effect of Passion Condition and Childhood SES on Have Skills (Study 2)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
(Intercept)	.119	.392	.121	.409
	(.198)	(.222)	(.196)	(.220)
Condition	-.086	-.055	-.091	-.057
	(.129)	(.128)	(.127)	(.127)
Childhood SES	.030	.014	.525**	.508*
	(.065)	(.066)	(.197)	(.196)
Passion Condition *x* Childhood SES			-.340**	-.340**
			(.128)	(.127)
Age		-.028		-.025
		(.067)		(.066)
Female		-.423**		-.412**
		(.129)		(.128)
Non-White		.028		.011
		(.134)		(.133)
STEM Major		-.138		-.162
		(.137)		(.136)
Elite University		-.036		-.049
		(.174)		(.172)
R^2	.005	.044	.031	.070
Num. obs.	247	247	247	247

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

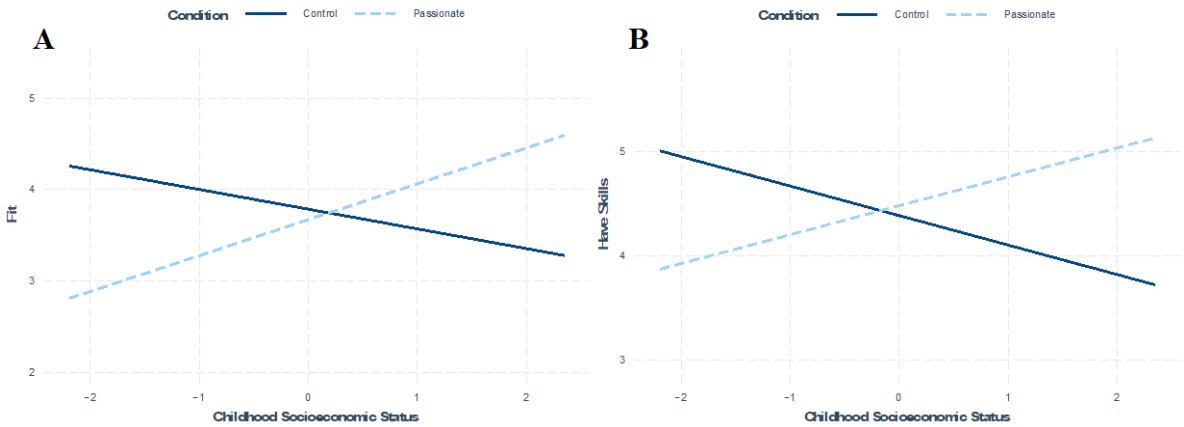
TABLE 7

Randomized Combinations of Names, Major, Hobbies (Study 3)

Low/High SES	Name	Male/Female	Major	Hobbies
High SES 1	Benjamin	M	Biology	Lacrosse, Sailing
High SES 2	Cody	M	Chemistry	Sailing, Squash
High SES 3	Alexander	M	Computer Science	Crew/Rowing, Fencing
High SES 4	Kayla	F	Physics	Lacrosse, Sailing
High SES 5	Amber	F	Economics	Sailing, Squash
Low SES 1	Justin	M	Biology	Volleyball, Soccer
Low SES 2	Samuel	M	Chemistry	Soccer, Basketball
Low SES 3	Brandon	M	Computer Science	Basketball, Track & Field
Low SES 4	Alexandra	F	Physics	Volleyball, Soccer
Low SES 5	Katherine	F	Economics	Soccer, Basketball

FIGURE 1

Simple Slopes of Interactions Between Passion Condition and Childhood SES on Fit (Panel A) and Have Skills (Panel B) (Study 2)



Note. The dependent variable is presented here in raw format for ease of comprehension. The shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals.

Supplementary Information

Job Postings to MBA Students (detailed in the Introduction)

We obtained a dataset containing all job postings listed on the career portal of a major US business school between 2013 and 2020. Out of the 15,897 job postings, we excluded summer internships, part-time jobs, and temporary jobs. Additionally, as the characters in the job postings ranged from 9 to 21,315, we excluded postings with less than 500 characters ($M_{characters}$ = 10,662, $SD_{characters}$ = 15,065.62). The final dataset consisted of 8,227 full-time job postings targeting MBA graduates.

We conducted a face validity text analysis by searching for key characteristics that employers find important in the job descriptions (TargetJobs, 2020). We found that passion was the fourth most used keyword in the job postings, with 1,670 job postings that had the word "passion" at least once in the job descriptions (see Table S1). This suggests that for employers, hiring employees who are passionate is highly sought after.

Table S1

Key Characteristics of Ideal Candidates in Job Postings to MBA Students

Characteristics of ideal candidates	*N*	%
Communication	3,180	38.65
Leadership	3,081	37.44
Organizational Skills	1,820	22.12
Passionate	1,670	20.30
Motivated	1,250	15.19
Problem Solving	604	7.34
Negotiation	578	7.02
Confidence	447	5.43
Acumen	409	4.97
Teamwork	255	3.10
Ability to Work under Pressure	240	2.92

Note. For passionate, we searched for the word "passion." For motivation, we searched for "motivat" to capture words such as motivation, motivated, etc. For the ability to work under pressure, we searched for "pressure." For confidence, we searched for "confiden" to capture the words confidence and confident.

Table S2

Correlation Table of Study 1 Variables

Variables	*M*	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Expected Passion	5.14	1.23	1	7								
2. Childhood SES	3.92	1.31	1	7	.03							
3. Fit	3.44	1.77	1	7	.06*	.05						
4. Have Skills	4.47	1.64	1	7	-.09***	.08**	.44***					
5. Age	22.47	2.22	20	29	.01	-.16***	.03	-.01				
6. Female	.60	.49	0	1	.04	.00	-.08**	-.07*	-.03***			
7. Non-White	.43	.49	0	1	.02	-.14***	.07**	-.06*	-.09***	.12***		
8. STEM Majors	.64	.48	0	1	-.04	.01	-.04	.00	-.10***	-.19***	.05***	
9. Elite University	.15	.36	0	1	-.01	.06***	-.07*	.03	-.14***	.08***	.15***	.04***

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Stimuli for Study 2 (Passionate Job Posting):

If you join us as a Performance Analyst, you will have the opportunity for intellectual growth, professional development, and most importantly, to pursue your passion. In this position, you will work as a part of a dynamic team of premier professionals supporting all aspects of the consulting process.

Mondray is one of the fastest-growing consulting firms in the country, producing financial and performance planning and analysis for other fast-growing businesses around the world. You will provide our world-renowned clients with efficient and effective solutions that are uniquely designed for each of our clients, in a context that enables you to pursue your passion.

The ideal applicant for our Performance Analyst position is a self-motivated, gifted analyst and writer. Most important for us however, is an applicant who is highly passionate for their work.

Responsibilities:
•Conduct research into key thematic areas of *Mondray*, presenting reviews of literature and other evidence in a clear and actionable format.
•Produce polished analyses for executive-level audiences addressing highly specialized topics.
•Manage special projects with an orientation to results-driven work and crisp and proactive communication.
•Demonstrated ability to meet challenging deadlines amidst multiple priorities.

Qualifications
Education
•Bachelor's degree in an appropriately related discipline

Preferred Qualifications
• Interested in Pursuing Your Passion with *Mondray*

Stimuli for Study 2 (Control Job Posting):

If you join us as a Performance Analyst, you will have the opportunity for intellectual growth, professional development, and most importantly, to gain important experiences within the industry. In this position, you will work as a part of a dynamic team of premier professionals supporting all aspects of the consulting process.

Mondray is one of the fastest-growing consulting firms in the country, producing financial and performance planning and analysis for other fast-growing businesses around the world. You will provide our world-renowned clients with efficient and effective solutions that are uniquely designed for each of our clients, in a context that enables you to develop your career.

The ideal applicant for our Performance Analyst position is a self-motivated, gifted analyst and writer. Most important for us however, is an applicant who is diligent and timely.

Responsibilities:
•Conduct research into key thematic areas of Mondray, presenting reviews of literature and other evidence in a clear and actionable format.
•Produce polished analyses for executive-level audiences addressing highly specialized topics.
•Manage special projects with an orientation to results-driven work and crisp and proactive communication.
•Demonstrated ability to meet challenging deadlines amidst multiple priorities.

Qualifications
Education
•Bachelor's degree in an appropriately related discipline

Preferred Qualifications
• Diligent and hardworking in their work to Mondray

Stimuli for Study 2 (Test Job Posting):

Do you want to be part of (big city's) hottest up and coming startup? FinSys is one of the fastest-growing FinTech startups and has been recognized as a global Top 100 InsurTech company. We're changing the way millions of people compare and buy insurance with artificial intelligence, technology, and superior product design.

Our team is highly analytical, fast-moving, and focused on one thing: getting more people to compare insurance quotes using our products.

ROLE DESCRIPTION
Support initiatives by promoting our product's content through email outreach campaigns
Actively track and record responses to these email outreach campaigns
Develop pipelines of contacts and resources for marketing, branding, partnership, and media opportunities
Broaden FinSys brand visibility by supporting content marketing initiatives and expanding social media presence
Successfully land published links for our site Support PR efforts and industry awards submissions

QUALIFICATIONS
Entry-level applicants or a professional with 1-3 years of experience in PR, SEO, content marketing, or business development
Strong communication skills, both written and verbal, with a proven track record of exceeding expectations preferred
Organized, with a strong history of meeting deadlines Experience writing, implementing, and managing email campaigns preferred Well-versed in Microsoft Office Comfort and experience with research; proficiency in Excel or similar data management software a plus
Strong interpersonal skills and ability to work within a team setting; comfort and confidence performing "cold" outreach to media outlets or journalists
A team player with a solid work ethic who is ready to pivot between projects, learn from mistakes, always move forward, and help build the next big thing in insurance.

Table S3

Correlation Table of Study 2 Variables

	M	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Childhood SES	3.89	1.31	1	7							
2. Fit	2.73	1.83	1	7	.06						
3. Have Skills	4.45	1.66	1	7	.03	.56***					
4. Age	22.37	2.11	20	29	-.18***	.03	.00				
5. Female	.55	.50	0	1	-.05	-.16*	-.21**	-.12**			
6. Non-White	.38	.49	0	1	-.10*	.03	-.01	-.11*	.07		
7. STEM Majors	.66	.47	0	1	-.04	-.09	-.06	-.13**	-.03	.12**	
8. Elite University	.17	.38	0	1	.07	-.04	-.02	-.19***	.04	.13**	.12**

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Pretest for Study 3

Method

Participants. We recruited 503 Americans (*M*age = 28.89, *SDage* = 9.80; min_{age} = 17, max_{age} = 68; 51.49% female) on Prolific, an online survey provider.

Procedure. Participants were told to rate their impressions of an undergraduate from the following indicators (name, college major and hobbies). They were randomly allocated one name, one college major and two hobbies, drawn from a pool of 10 names, 10 college majors, 10 hobby pairs (See Table S2). Participants then provided their age.

Table S4

Tables of Randomized Names, College Majors and Hobbies for Study 3 Pretest

Name	College Major	Hobbies
Alexander	Art	Lacrosse, Sailing
Alexandra	Biology	Sailing, Squash
Amber	Chemistry	Squash, Crew/Rowing
Benjamin	Computer Science	Crew/Rowing, Fencing
Brandon	Economics	Fencing, Lacrosse
Cody	Engineering	Track & Field, Hockey
Justin	History	Hockey, Volleyball
Katherine	Physics	Volleyball, Soccer
Kayla	Psychology	Soccer, Basketball
Samuel	Sociology	Basketball, Track & Field

Measures

Dependent Variable: Perceived Class. Participants were asked the following: “Based on the description above, which socioeconomic class (e.g. education, household income, etc.) do you think this person belongs to?” Responses were rated on the following options: “Working class”, “Lower Middle Class”, “Upper Middle Class” and “Upper Class”.

Results

We used multi-level modeling with random effects for participant (i.e., raters), with perceived SES as the dependent variable and names (Table S5), college majors (Table S6) and hobbies (Table S7) as the independent variables.

Names. Our analyses revealed that the main effect of names on perceived SES was not statistically significant for any name (See Table S5). That is, the names of the individual did not influence rater's perception of the individual's SES.

Major. Our analyses revealed that compared to Art, the majors Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Economics, Engineering, Physics and Psychology had statistically significant and positive main effects on perceived SES (See Table S6).

Hobbies. Our analyses revealed that compared to Lacrosse and Sailing, all combinations of hobbies had a statistically significant and negative main effects on perceived SES (See Table S7).

Table S5

Main Effect of Names on Perceived SES (Study 3 Pretest)

	Model
(Intercept)	2.959***
	(.030)
Alexandra	.020
	(.037)
Amber	-.023
	(.037)
Benjamin	.004
	(.037)
Brandon	-.016
	(.037)
Cody	-.027
	(.037)
Justin	-.033
	(.037)
Katherine	.003
	(.037)
Kayla	-.026
	(.037)
Samuel	-.039
	(.037)
Num. obs.	10060
Num. groups: Rater	503

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. Results are compared to the name "Alexander."

Table S6

Main Effect of College Majors on Perceived SES (Study 3 Pretest)

	Model 1
(Intercept)	2.808***
	(.029)
Biology	.140***
	(.036)
Chemistry	.209***
	(.036)
Computer Science	.203***
	(.036)
Economics	.160***
	(.036)
Engineering	.288***
	(.036)
History	.017
	(.036)
Physics	.225***
	(.036)
Psychology	.078*
	(.036)
Sociology	.054
	(.036)
Num. obs.	10060
Num. groups: Rater	503

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. Results are compared to the college major "Art."

Table S7

Main Effect of Hobbies on Perceived SES (Study 3 Pretest)

	Model 1
(Intercept)	3.524***
	(.026)
Sailing, Squash	-.073*
	(.029)
Squash, Crew/Rowing	-.229***
	(.029)
Crew/Rowing, Fencing	-.113***
	(.029)
Fencing, Lacrosse	-.125***
	(.029)
Track & Field, Hockey	-.963***
	(.029)
Hockey, Volleyball	-.992***
	(.029)
Volleyball, Soccer	-1.053***
	(.029)
Soccer, Basketball	-1.097***
	(.029)
Basketball, Track & Field	-1.143***
	(.029)
Num. obs.	10060
Num. groups: Rater	503

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. Results are compared to the hobbies “Lacrosse, Sailing”.

Table S8

Correlation Table with Study 3 Variables

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Childhood SES	3.87	1.31															
2. Fit	4.11	1.63	.01														
3. Have Skills	4.05	1.61	.02	.89***													
4. Invite Interview	4.14	1.85	.00	.91***	.88***												
5. Applicant: Age	22.37	2.11	-.18***	.00	.00	-.01											
6. Applicant: Female	.55	.50	-.05***	.06***	.05***	.06***	-.11***										
7. Applicant: Non-White	.38	.49	-.11***	.01	.02	.01	-.12***	.08***									
8. Applicant: STEM Major	.66	.47	-.05***	.00	-.01	.00	-.14***	-.03	.12***								
9. Applicant: Elite University	.17	.38	.06***	.00	.00	.01	-.19***	.05***	.13***	.12***							
10. Rater: Age	36.83	10.09	.00	-.08***	-.08***	-.08***	.02	-.01	-.02	.01	.01						
11. Rater: Female	.38	.48	.01	-.01	.00	-.01	.02	.01	.00	.01	.01	.07***					
12. Rater: Non-White	.21	.41	-.02	.02	.01	.01	-.01	.00	.00	-.01	.00	-.15***	-.03*				
13. Rater: Education	14.59	1.12	-.01	-.07***	-.06***	-.07***	.02	-.04**	.01	.02	-.01	.07***	-.01	.01			
14. Rater: Unemployed	.03	.17	-.01	-.01	-.02	-.01	.00	.01	.00	.01	-.02	.12***	.02	.03*	-.03		
15. Rater: Income	93,709.64	54680.41	-.01	-.02	-.02	-.02	.00	-.04***	.02	-.01	.02	-.10***	-.08***	.01	.31***	-.08***	
16. Rater: SES	6.14	1.54	-.01	.02	.00	.01	.02	-.03*	.01	.00	.00	.02	-.10***	.00	.30***	-.02	.49***

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. Income is log-transformed.

Table S9

Interaction Effect of Passion and SES Conditions on Fit (Study 3)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
(Intercept)	.052	-.019	.044	-.027
	(.057)	(.092)	(.058)	(.092)
Passion Condition	-.091	-.087	-.074	-.070
	(.077)	(.078)	(.081)	(.081)
SES Condition	-.014	-.014	.002	.002
	(.023)	(.023)	(.032)	(.032)
Passion Condition *x* SES Condition			-.034	-.033
			(.046)	(.046)
Applicant: Childhood SES		.021		.021
		(.033)		(.033)
Applicant: Age		.021		.021
		(.034)		(.034)
Applicant: Female		.109		.109
		(.066)		(.066)
Applicant: Non-White		.032		.032
		(.068)		(.068)
Applicant: STEM Major		.008		.008
		(.070)		(.070)
Applicant: Elite University		-.004		-.004
		(.089)		(.089)
Rater: Age		-.065**		-.065**
		(.025)		(.025)
Rater: Female		-.033		-.033
		(.050)		(.050)
Rater: Non-White		.019		.019
		(.060)		(.060)
Rater: Education		-.061*		-.061*
		(.026)		(.026)
Rater: Unemployed		.054		.054
		(.146)		(.146)
Rater: Income		-.024		-.024
		(.029)		(.029)
Rater: SES		.048		.048
		(.028)		(.028)
Num. obs.	4770	4770	4770	4770
Num. groups: Rater	494	494	494	494
Num. groups: Cover Letter	247	247	247	247

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Table S10

Interaction Effect of Passion and SES Conditions (Individually) on Fit (Study 3)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
(Intercept)	-.058	-.130	-.099	-.172
	(.065)	(.097)	(.073)	(.102)
Passion Condition	-.093	-.089	-.009	-.005
	(.077)	(.078)	(.103)	(.103)
High SES Set 2	.074	.074	.130	.129
	(.051)	(.051)	(.071)	(.071)
High SES Set 3	.173***	.173***	.223**	.224**
	(.050)	(.050)	(.070)	(.070)
High SES Set 4	.103*	.102*	.140*	.138
	(.051)	(.051)	(.071)	(.071)
High SES Set 5	.211***	.211***	.234**	.234**
	(.051)	(.051)	(.071)	(.071)
Low SES Set 1	.044	.043	.048	.047
	(.050)	(.050)	(.070)	(.070)
Low SES Set 2	.047	.048	.127	.128
	(.050)	(.050)	(.069)	(.069)
Low SES Set 3	.110*	.111*	.238***	.239***
	(.051)	(.051)	(.071)	(.071)
Low SES Set 4	.066	.065	.084	.082
	(.050)	(.050)	(.069)	(.069)
Low SES Set 5	.228***	.227***	.242***	.240***
	(.051)	(.051)	(.071)	(.071)
Passion Condition *x* High SES Set 2			-.114	-.112
			(.103)	(.103)
Passion Condition *x* High SES Set 3			-.103	-.105
			(.101)	(.101)
Passion Condition *x* High SES Set 4			-.076	-.076
			(.101)	(.101)
Passion Condition *x* High SES Set 5			-.048	-.049
			(.102)	(.102)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 1			-.009	-.010
			(.101)	(.101)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 2			-.166	-.167
			(.100)	(.100)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 3			-.257*	-.257*
			(.102)	(.102)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 4			-.036	-.035
			(.100)	(.100)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 5			-.034	-.031
			(.102)	(.102)
Applicant: Childhood SES		.021		.021
		(.033)		(.033)
Applicant: Age		.020		.020
		(.034)		(.034)
Applicant: Female		.109		.109
		(.066)		(.066)

Applicant: Non-White		.031		.031
		(.068)		(.068)
Applicant: STEM Major		.008		.009
		(.070)		(.070)
Applicant: Elite University		-.003		-.004
		(.088)		(.088)
Rater: Age		-.065**		-.065**
		(.025)		(.025)
Rater: Female		-.029		-.028
		(.050)		(.050)
Rater: Non-White		.017		.018
		(.060)		(.060)
Rater: Education		-.060*		-.061*
		(.026)		(.026)
Rater: Unemployed		.053		.056
		(.146)		(.146)
Rater: Income		-.026		-.025
		(.029)		(.029)
Rater: SES		.050		.049
		(.028)		(.028)
Num. obs.	4770	4770	4770	4770
Num. groups: Rater	494	494	494	494
Num. groups: Cover Letter	247	247	247	247

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Table S11

Interaction Effect of Passion and SES Conditions on Have Skills (Study 3)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
(Intercept)	.055	-.005	.058	-.002
	(.056)	(.091)	(.057)	(.091)
Passion Condition	-.116	-.110	-.121	-.116
	(.076)	(.077)	(.079)	(.080)
SES Condition	.004	.004	-.002	-.001
	(.023)	(.023)	(.032)	(.032)
Passion Condition *x* SES Condition			.011	.011
			(.046)	(.046)
Applicant: Childhood SES		.029		.029
		(.033)		(.033)
Applicant: Age		.018		.018
		(.034)		(.034)
Applicant: Female		.102		.102
		(.065)		(.065)
Applicant: Non-White		.043		.043
		(.068)		(.068)
Applicant: STEM Major		-.007		-.007
		(.069)		(.069)
Applicant: Elite University		-.026		-.026
		(.088)		(.088)
Rater: Age		-.068**		-.068**
		(.024)		(.024)
Rater: Female		-.014		-.014
		(.049)		(.049)
Rater: Non-White		.000		.000
		(.059)		(.059)
Rater: Education		-.045		-.045
		(.025)		(.025)
Rater: Unemployed		-.020		-.020
		(.143)		(.143)
Rater: Income		-.024		-.024
		(.028)		(.028)
Rater: SES		.026		.026
		(.028)		(.028)
Num. obs.	4770	4770	4770	4770
Num. groups: Rater	494	494	494	494
Num. groups: Cover Letter	247	247	247	247

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Table S12

Interaction Effect of Passion and SES Conditions (Individually) on Have Skills (Study 3)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
(Intercept)	-.051	-.113	-.099	-.161
	(.065)	(.096)	(.073)	(.102)
Passion Condition	-.118	-.112	-.020	-.014
	(.076)	(.077)	(.102)	(.103)
High SES Set 2	.049	.048	.134	.132
	(.052)	(.052)	(.072)	(.072)
High SES Set 3	.169***	.169**	.232**	.233**
	(.051)	(.051)	(.071)	(.071)
High SES Set 4	.102*	.100	.171*	.168*
	(.051)	(.051)	(.072)	(.072)
High SES Set 5	.222***	.222***	.261***	.261***
	(.052)	(.052)	(.073)	(.073)
Low SES Set 1	.048	.047	.043	.042
	(.051)	(.051)	(.071)	(.071)
Low SES Set 2	.051	.052	.106	.108
	(.051)	(.051)	(.070)	(.070)
Low SES Set 3	.155**	.156**	.259***	.260***
	(.052)	(.052)	(.072)	(.072)
Low SES Set 4	.081	.080	.116	.113
	(.051)	(.051)	(.071)	(.071)
Low SES Set 5	.231***	.230***	.266***	.264***
	(.052)	(.052)	(.073)	(.073)
Passion Condition *x* High SES Set 2			-.175	-.173
			(.104)	(.104)
Passion Condition *x* High SES Set 3			-.131	-.133
			(.103)	(.103)
Passion Condition *x* High SES Set 4			-.141	-.139
			(.103)	(.103)
Passion Condition *x* High SES Set 5			-.082	-.081
			(.104)	(.104)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 1			.007	.007
			(.102)	(.102)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 2			-.115	-.115
			(.102)	(.102)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 3			-.209*	-.209*
			(.103)	(.103)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 4			-.072	-.071
			(.102)	(.102)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 5			-.075	-.072
			(.104)	(.104)
Applicant: Childhood SES		.030		.029
		(.033)		(.033)
Applicant: Age		.017		.017
		(.034)		(.034)
Applicant: Female		.103		.103
		(.065)		(.065)

Applicant: Non-White		.042		.042
		(.068)		(.068)
Applicant: STEM Major		-.007		-.007
		(.069)		(.069)
Applicant: Elite University		-.025		-.025
		(.088)		(.088)
Rater: Age		-.069**		-.069**
		(.024)		(.024)
Rater: Female		-.010		-.008
		(.049)		(.049)
Rater: Non-White		-.001		-.001
		(.059)		(.059)
Rater: Education		-.044		-.045
		(.025)		(.025)
Rater: Unemployed		-.022		-.018
		(.143)		(.143)
Rater: Income		-.026		-.025
		(.028)		(.028)
Rater: SES		.027		.027
		(.028)		(.028)
Num. obs.	4770	4770	4770	4770
Num. groups: Rater	494	494	494	494
Num. groups: Cover Letter	247	247	247	247

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Table S13

Interaction Effect of Passion and SES Conditions on Invitation to Interview (Study 3)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
(Intercept)	.053	-.005	.045	-.013
	(.057)	(.092)	(.058)	(.093)
Passion Condition	-.106	-.102	-.090	-.086
	(.077)	(.077)	(.080)	(.081)
SES Condition	-.000	-.000	.016	.016
	(.023)	(.023)	(.032)	(.032)
Passion Condition *x* SES Condition			-.033	-.032
			(.046)	(.046)
Applicant: Childhood SES		.020		.020
		(.034)		(.034)
Applicant: Age		.017		.017
		(.035)		(.035)
Applicant: Female		.109		.109
		(.067)		(.067)
Applicant: Non-White		.027		.027
		(.070)		(.070)
Applicant: STEM Major		-.003		-.003
		(.071)		(.071)
Applicant: Elite University		.013		.013
		(.090)		(.090)
Rater: Age		-.068**		-.068**
		(.023)		(.023)
Rater: Female		-.041		-.041
		(.048)		(.048)
Rater: Non-White		-.000		-.000
		(.057)		(.057)
Rater: Education		-.062*		-.062*
		(.024)		(.024)
Rater: Unemployed		.040		.040
		(.139)		(.139)
Rater: Income		-.023		-.023
		(.027)		(.027)
Rater: SES		.040		.040
		(.027)		(.027)
Num. obs.	4770	4770	4770	4770
Num. groups: Rater	494	494	494	494
Num. groups: Cover Letter	247	247	247	247

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Table S14

Interaction Effect of Passion Condition and SES Conditions (Individually) on Invitation to Interview (Study 3)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
(Intercept)	-.066	-.124	-.121	-.180
	(.065)	(.098)	(.073)	(.103)
Passion Condition	-.108	-.104	.005	.008
	(.077)	(.077)	(.103)	(.103)
High SES Set 2	.107*	.107*	.192**	.191**
	(.052)	(.052)	(.072)	(.072)
High SES Set 3	.193***	.193***	.274***	.274***
	(.051)	(.051)	(.071)	(.071)
High SES Set 4	.105*	.104*	.145*	.143*
	(.052)	(.051)	(.072)	(.072)
High SES Set 5	.200***	.199***	.229**	.229**
	(.052)	(.052)	(.073)	(.073)
Low SES Set 1	.048	.047	.045	.044
	(.051)	(.051)	(.071)	(.071)
Low SES Set 2	.068	.069	.147*	.148*
	(.051)	(.051)	(.070)	(.070)
Low SES Set 3	.153**	.154**	.303***	.304***
	(.052)	(.052)	(.072)	(.072)
Low SES Set 4	.109*	.107*	.133	.131
	(.051)	(.051)	(.071)	(.071)
Low SES Set 5	.228***	.227***	.291***	.288***
	(.052)	(.052)	(.073)	(.073)
Passion Condition *x* High SES Set 2			-.176	-.173
			(.104)	(.104)
Passion Condition *x* High SES Set 3			-.167	-.169
			(.103)	(.103)
Passion Condition *x* High SES Set 4			-.084	-.083
			(.103)	(.103)
Passion Condition *x* High SES Set 5			-.064	-.064
			(.103)	(.103)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 1			.001	.001
			(.102)	(.102)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 2			-.165	-.166
			(.102)	(.102)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 3			-.303**	-.302**
			(.103)	(.103)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 4			-.051	-.050
			(.102)	(.102)
Passion Condition *x* Low SES Set 5			-.132	-.129
			(.104)	(.104)
Applicant: Childhood SES		.021		.020
		(.034)		(.034)
Applicant: Age		.017		.017
		(.035)		(.035)

Applicant: Female		.109		.109
		(.067)		(.067)
Applicant: Non-White		.025		.026
		(.070)		(.070)
Applicant: STEM Major		-.003		-.002
		(.071)		(.071)
Applicant: Elite University		.014		.013
		(.090)		(.090)
Rater: Age		-.068**		-.068**
		(.023)		(.023)
Rater: Female		-.038		-.035
		(.048)		(.048)
Rater: Non-White		-.002		-.002
		(.057)		(.057)
Rater: Education		-.061*		-.062*
		(.024)		(.024)
Rater: Unemployed		.042		.044
		(.139)		(.139)
Rater: Income		-.025		-.024
		(.027)		(.027)
Rater: SES		.042		.041
		(.027)		(.027)
Num. obs.	4770	4770	4770	4770
Num. groups: Rater	494	494	494	494
Num. groups: Cover Letter	247	247	247	247

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Table S15

Correlation Table with Study 4 Variables

	M	***SD***	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Childhood SES	3.87	1.31															
2. Fit	4.11	1.63	.05***														
3. Have Skills	4.05	1.61	.05***	.88***													
4. Invite Interview	4.14	1.85	.05***	.90***	.87***												
5. Applicant: Age	22.37	2.11	-.17***	-.01	.01	-.01											
6. Applicant: Female	.55	.50	-.04**	.05***	.05***	.06***	-.10***										
7. Applicant: Non-White	.38	.49	-.11***	-.01	-.01	.00	-.13***	.09***									
8. Applicant: STEM Major	.66	.47	-.05***	.03	.02	.02	-.15***	-.05***	.13***								
9. Applicant: Elite University	.17	.38	.08***	.02	.01	.01	-.19***	.04**	.13***	.13***							
10. Rater: Age	37.57	10.28	-.01	-.03*	-.03*	-.03	.00	.00	.00	-.01	.01						
11. Rater: Female	.47	.50	-.03*	.00	.00	-.02	.01	-.01	.00	-.01	-.02	-.02					
12. Rater: Non-White	.14	.35	.01	.04**	.04**	.04**	-.01	.00	.02	.01	.00	-.16***	-.06***				
13. Rater: Education	14.50	1.16	-.02	-.02	-.03*	-.04**	.00	-.01	-.01	.00	.01	.03*	.07***	-.03*			
14. Rater: Unemployed	.00	.04	.00	.02	.02	.01	.02	.00	-.01	.01	-.01	-.03*	.05**	-.02	-.02		
15. Rater: Income	85,353.53	56,093.37	.01	.00	-.01	-.02	.01	-.03	-.02	-.01	.00	.10***	-0.16***	.07***	.27***	-.06***	
16. Rater: SES	5.96	1.56	.00	.03	.01	.01	.01	-.01	-.02	.00	.00	.05***	-.07***	-.04*	.30***	-.05***	.55***

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. Income is log-transformed

Table S16

Interaction Effect of Passion Condition and Applicant's Childhood SES on Fit (Study 4)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
(Intercept)	.016	-.130	.016	-.130
	(.058)	(.097)	(.058)	(.097)
Passion Condition	-.030	-.022	-.030	-.022
	(.079)	(.080)	(.079)	(.080)
Applicant: Childhood SES	.054	.062	.061	.069
	(.036)	(.037)	(.053)	(.054)
Passion Condition *x* Applicant Childhood SES			-.012	-.012
			(.073)	(.073)
Applicant: Age		.028		.028
		(.039)		(.039)
Applicant: Female		.149*		.148*
		(.074)		(.074)
Applicant: Non-White		-.019		-.019
		(.077)		(.077)
Applicant: STEM major		.069		.070
		(.078)		(.079)
Applicant: Elite University		.026		.026
		(.099)		(.100)
Rater: Age		-.019		-.019
		(.019)		(.019)
Rater: Female		.001		.001
		(.039)		(.039)
Rater: Non-White		.120*		.120*
		(.056)		(.056)
Rater: Years of Education		-.019		-.019
		(.020)		(.020)
Rater: Unemployment		.344		.344
		(.441)		(.441)
Rater: Income		-.022		-.022
		(.024)		(.024)
Rater: SES		.052*		.052*
		(.023)		(.023)
Num. obs.	4943	4943	4943	4943
Num. groups: Rater	511	511	511	511
Num. groups: Cover Letter	247	247	247	247

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Table S17

Interaction Effect of Passion Condition and Applicant's Childhood SES on Have Skills (Study 4)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
(Intercept)	.014	-.128	.015	-.129
	(.057)	(.095)	(.057)	(.095)
Passion Condition	-.028	-.019	-.028	-.019
	(.077)	(.078)	(.077)	(.078)
Applicant: Childhood SES	.056	.066	.066	.076
	(.036)	(.037)	(.052)	(.053)
Passion Condition *x* Applicant Childhood SES			-.020	-.018
			(.071)	(.072)
Applicant: Age		.048		.048
		(.038)		(.038)
Applicant: Female		.139		.139
		(.072)		(.073)
Applicant: Non-White		-.023		-.022
		(.075)		(.076)
Applicant: STEM major		.058		.059
		(.077)		(.077)
Applicant: Elite University		.038		.038
		(.098)		(.098)
Rater: Age		-.019		-.019
		(.019)		(.019)
Rater: Female		.015		.015
		(.039)		(.039)
Rater: Non-White		.133*		.133*
		(.056)		(.056)
Rater: Years of Education		-.030		-.030
		(.020)		(.020)
Rater: Unemployment		.341		.340
		(.434)		(.434)
Rater: Income		-.023		-.023
		(.023)		(.023)
Rater: SES		.041		.042
		(.023)		(.023)
Num. obs.	4943	4943	4943	4943
Num. groups: Rater	511	511	511	511
Num. groups: Cover Letter	247	247	247	247

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Table S18

Interaction Effect of Passion Condition and Applicant's Childhood SES on Invitation to Interview (Study 4)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
(Intercept)	.019	-.127	.019	-.128
	(.059)	(.099)	(.059)	(.099)
Passion Condition	-.036	-.018	-.036	-.017
	(.080)	(.081)	(.080)	(.081)
Applicant: Childhood SES	.056	.066	.064	.074
	(.037)	(.038)	(.055)	(.055)
Passion Condition *x* Applicant Childhood SES			-.015	-.015
			(.074)	(.075)
Applicant: Age		.032		.031
		(.040)		(.040)
Applicant: Female		.164*		.164*
		(.075)		(.076)
Applicant: Non-White		-.005		-.004
		(.079)		(.079)
Applicant: STEM major		.063		.064
		(.080)		(.081)
Applicant: Elite University		.026		.027
		(.102)		(.102)
Rater: Age		-.014		-.014
		(.019)		(.019)
Rater: Female		-.031		-.031
		(.039)		(.039)
Rater: Non-White		.122*		.122*
		(.055)		(.055)
Rater: Years of Education		-.030		-.030
		(.020)		(.020)
Rater: Unemployment		.160		.160
		(.432)		(.432)
Rater: Income		-.048*		-.048*
		(.023)		(.023)
Rater: SES		.056*		.056*
		(.023)		(.023)
Num. obs.	4943	4943	4943	4943
Num. groups: Rater	511	511	511	511
Num. groups: Cover Letter	247	247	247	247

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Robustness Checks for Study 3 and Study 4:

We conducted a number of robustness checks to explore whether characteristics of the applicant or cover letter further influenced our analyses for Study 3 and 4.

Applicant's Predicted Fit and Skills. As a robustness check, we conducted the same analyses as reported in Table S9, S11 and S13 but additionally controlled for each applicant's judgement of their fit and skills for the position (as reported in Study 2) as a proxy for their level of effort in writing the cover letter. We found no meaningful change in both Study 3 (Table S19) and Study 4 (Table S20) results suggesting that applicants' level of effort did not influence the raters' perception of fit, skills and invitation to interview.

Effect of Condition and Applicant Childhood Socioeconomic Status on Linguistic Characteristics of Cover Letter. We conducted text analyses using LIWC (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count) (Pennebaker, Booth, Boyd, & Francis, 2015) on each applicant's cover letter to identify whether the condition and applicant's childhood socioeconomic status were related to linguistic characteristics of the applicant cover letters. Our analyses revealed that the interaction effect between the passion condition and applicant childhood SES was not statistically significant on all summary linguistic characteristics (i.e., on word count, analytic thinking, clout, authenticity and emotional tone; see Table S21). That is, regardless of whether the job position called for a passionate applicant, the applicant's childhood SES did not meaningfully influence how the applicants wrote their cover letter.

Linguistic Characteristics of Cover Letter on Raters' Judgements of Fit, Skills and Interview. Next, we conducted multi-level models to identify if word count (Model 1), analytic thinking (Model 2), clout (Model 3), authenticity (Model 4), and emotional tone (Model 5) influenced raters' judgements of fit, having skills, and invitation to interview in Study 3 (Table S22) and Study 4 (Table S23). Our analyses revealed that word count and usage of analytic words had a statistically significant and positive effect on all dependent variables. That is, applicants who wrote more words and used more words that represent analytic thinking were rated more highly across all dependent evidence. This provides suggestive evidence that raters were paying attention to linguistic indicators present in the cover letters

when judging applicants' fit, skills and interview, but—as the earlier analyses revealed—these did not differ by passion condition and childhood SES.

Table S19

Including Applicant's Judgements of Fit and Skills on Fit (Model 1), Skills (Model 2) and Invitation to Interview (Model 3) (Study 3)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
(Intercept)	-.039	-.020	-.025
	(.093)	(.092)	(.094)
Passion Condition	-.068	-.113	-.082
	(.081)	(.080)	(.081)
SES Condition	.002	-.001	.016
	(.032)	(.032)	(.032)
Passion Condition *x* SES Condition	-.034	.011	-.033
	(.046)	(.046)	(.046)
Applicant: Fit	.037	.045	.048
	(.039)	(.039)	(.040)
Applicant: Skills	-.001	.012	-.010
	(.040)	(.039)	(.040)
Applicant: Childhood SES	.019	.027	.018
	(.034)	(.033)	(.034)
Applicant: Age	.020	.018	.017
	(.034)	(.034)	(.035)
Applicant: Female	.121	.122	.120
	(.068)	(.067)	(.069)
Applicant: Non-White	.028	.037	.021
	(.069)	(.068)	(.070)
Applicant: STEM Major	.015	.003	.005
	(.070)	(.070)	(.072)
Applicant: Elite University	-.000	-.021	.017
	(.089)	(.088)	(.090)
Rater: Age	-.065**	-.069**	-.068**
	(.025)	(.024)	(.023)
Rater: Female	-.033	-.014	-.041
	(.050)	(.049)	(.048)
Rater: Non-White	.018	.000	-.000
	(.060)	(.059)	(.057)
Rater: Education	-.061*	-.045	-.062*
	(.026)	(.025)	(.024)
Rater: Unemployed	.053	-.020	.039
	(.146)	(.143)	(.139)
Rater: Income	-.024	-.024	-.023
	(.029)	(.028)	(.027)
Rater: SES	.048	.026	.040
	(.028)	(.028)	(.027)
Num. obs.	4770	4770	4770
Num. groups: Rater	494	494	494
Num. groups: Cover Letter	247	247	247

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Table S20

Including Applicant's Judgements of Fit and Skills on Fit (Model 1), Skills (Model 2) and Invitation to Interview (Model 3) (Study 4)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
(Intercept)	-.150	-.154	-.150
	(.098)	(.096)	(.100)
Passion Condition	-.018	-.015	-.014
	(.080)	(.078)	(.081)
Applicant: Childhood SES	.076	.085	.082
	(.055)	(.053)	(.056)
Condition *x* Applicant Childhood SES	-.032	-.043	-.037
	(.074)	(.073)	(.076)
Applicant: Fit	.058	.061	.055
	(.044)	(.043)	(.045)
Applicant: Have Skills	.002	.014	.012
	(.045)	(.044)	(.046)
Applicant: Age	.028	.048	.031
	(.039)	(.038)	(.040)
Applicant: Female	.167*	.164*	.186*
	(.076)	(.074)	(.077)
Applicant: Non-White	-.025	-.029	-.010
	(.077)	(.076)	(.079)
Applicant: STEM major	.083	.075	.078
	(.079)	(.078)	(.081)
Applicant: Elite University	.034	.047	.034
	(.100)	(.098)	(.102)
Rater: Age	-.018	-.019	-.014
	(.019)	(.019)	(.019)
Rater: Female	.001	.015	-.031
	(.039)	(.039)	(.039)
Rater: Non-White	.120*	.133*	.122*
	(.056)	(.056)	(.055)
Rater: Years of Education	-.019	-.030	-.030
	(.020)	(.020)	(.020)
Rater: Unemployment	.343	.339	.158
	(.441)	(.434)	(.432)
Rater: Income	-.022	-.023	-.048*
	(.024)	(.023)	(.023)
Rater: SES	.052*	.042	.056*
	(.023)	(.023)	(.023)
Num. obs.	4943	4943	4943
Num. groups: Rater	511	511	511
Num. groups: Cover Letter	247	247	247

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table S21

No Statistically Significant Interaction Effects of Condition and Applicant's Childhood SES on Cover Letter Text (Study 3 and 4)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**	**Model 5**
(Intercept)	82.368***	68.550***	40.822***	67.083***	87.335***
	(2.857)	(1.810)	(1.929)	(2.280)	(1.749)
Passion Condition	2.268	1.336	-.410	-1.425	.819
	(3.865)	(2.448)	(2.609)	(3.083)	(2.366)
Childhood SES	1.231	.028	.246	1.243	-1.404
	(2.856)	(1.809)	(1.929)	(2.279)	(.1749)
Condition *x* Childhood SES	-3.542	1.351	-3.645	1.149	- 1.990
	(3.871)	(2.452)	(2.614)	(3.088)	(2.370)
R^2	.005	.004	.015	.007	.021
Num. obs.	247	247	247	247	247

Note. Results show that there are no statistically significant interaction effects of condition and applicant's childhood socioeconomic status on word count (Model 1), analytic thinking (Model 2), clout (Model 3), authenticity (Model 4) and emotional tone (Model 5) of the cover letter**.** All variables (except for condition) have been standardized. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table S22

Main Effects of Linguistic Characteristics of Cover Letter Text on Fit (Model 1), Skills (Model 2) and Invitation to Interview (Model 3) (Study 3)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
(Intercept)	-.002	-.003	-.003
	(.031)	(.031)	(.031)
Word Count	.298***	.286***	.293***
	(.024)	(.025)	(.025)
Analytic	.118***	.114***	.137***
	(.025)	(.025)	(.025)
Clout	-.007	-.009	-.007
	(.026)	(.026)	(.026)
Authentic	-.017	-.031	-.018
	(.025)	(.026)	(.026)
Emotional Tone	.031	.020	.034
	(.023)	(.024)	(.024)
Num. obs.	4770	4770	4770
Num. groups: Rater	494	494	494
Num. groups: Cover Letter	247	247	247

***Note*.** All variables have been standardized. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table S23

Main Effects of Linguistic Characteristics of Cover Letter Text on Fit (Model 1), Have Skills (Model 2) and Invitation to Interview (Model 3) (Study 4)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
(Intercept)	.001	.001	.001
	(.032)	(.032)	(.033)
Word Count	.289***	.280***	.299***
	(.030)	(.030)	(.030)
Analytic	.143***	.141***	.146***
	(.030)	(.030)	(.031)
Clout	-.052	-.049	-.043
	(.032)	(.032)	(.033)
Authentic	.003	.001	.019
	(.031)	(.031)	(.032)
Emotional Tone	.042	.022	.034
	(.029)	(.029)	(.030)
Num. obs.	4943	4943	4943
Num. groups: Rater	511	511	511
Num. groups: Cover Letter	247	247	247

***Note*.** All variables have been standardized. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Figure S1

Histogram of Childhood SES of Study 1 Participants

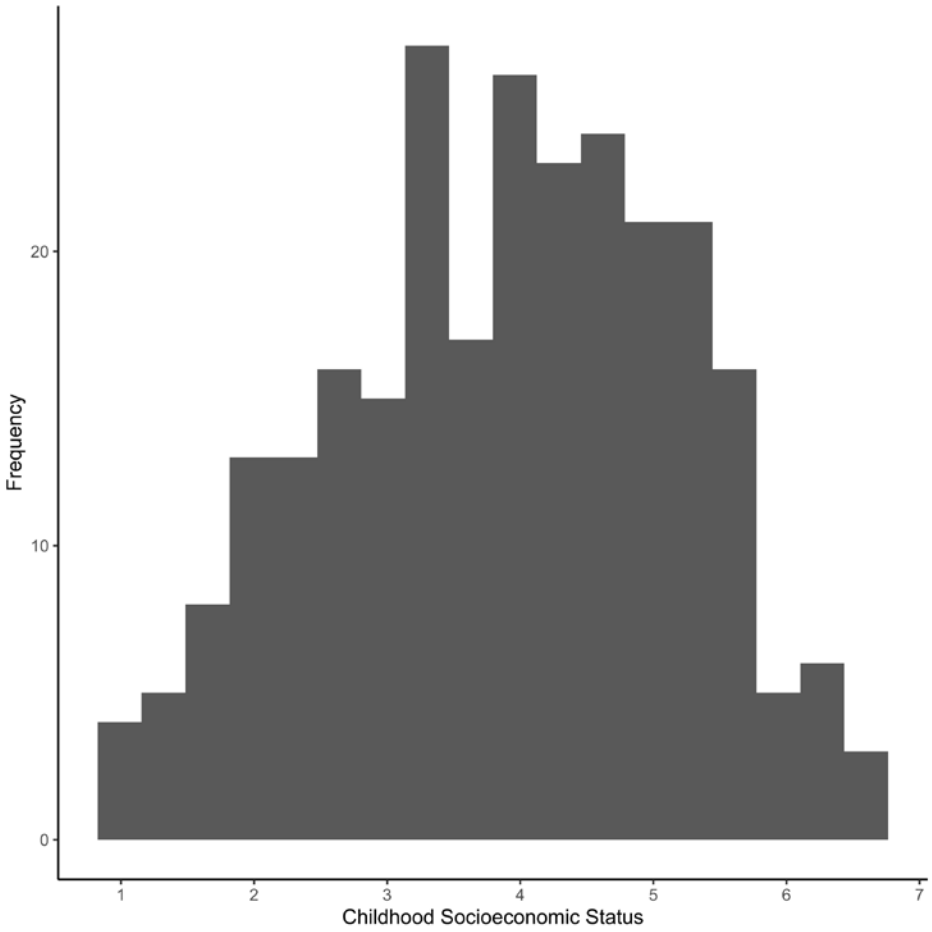


Figure S2

Histogram of Childhood SES of Study 2 Participants