

The Faculty Search Process - October 21, 2010

[Introductory Remarks and Panelist Introductions]

Good morning everybody. I'm Judy Singer. I'm the senior vice provost for faculty development and diversity. And I want to thank you all for coming to this event to talk about the faculty search process and how research in decision making and in social psychology and in economics can help us understand better how we choose, why we choose, and how we think and sometimes unconsciously don't think about what we're doing when we're doing a faculty search.

First I want to start out by thanking everybody here who's serving on a faculty search committee or is otherwise involved in faculty searches, which is everyone in the room. I would say that the identification of the Harvard faculty of the future is one the most important things that we do.

And it gives us the opportunity to reshape the Harvard faculty, to think about what kinds of exciting new directions we want to strike out in and what kinds of bench strength do we want to reinforce.

The reality is that faculty searches are incredibly time consuming. I think that anybody who's chaired a search, at the end of the process, would probably say it's about the equivalent of teaching a course. It requires an enormous amount of effort. And we thank you for your commitment to that. And it's also why generations of Harvard faculty before you sat on searches that lead to you. So you can think that you're basically paying it backwards or forwards for people who did for you what you're doing for the future.

And it's also why the president and provost review every tenure appointment at the University. They have a lot of things on their plate. And the fact that they take the time to do that speaks to the importance of faculty searches.

I want to say a word about diversity and how we think about it. I think it's fair to say that a diverse faculty is a strong faculty. And it emerges from the broadest consideration of talent. If you think about the students that you're teaching, you will always note that they are more diverse than your faculty colleagues in a faculty meeting. The broader the pool that you work from, the better chance you're going to have to find the faculty members of the future that you're really looking for.

A lot of people think diversity is a sort of newfangled topic that we're just talking about in the last few years. But in fact diversity has been a topic about the Harvard faculty for quite some time. This quote, which I will read, comes from a report that was issued in 1938 called the Committee of Eight. And if anybody wonders what gave rise to the ad hoc tenure review process, it's not from time in memoriam. It was a recommendation of this Committee of Eight that reported to President Conant that we needed new procedures for identifying the faculty of the future.

The entire report talks about faculty search processes in the early part of the century. The appendix, there's a section on diversity. It's not about the diversity that we're used to reading. And I'll read this to you. "It is a common opinion that Jews, regardless of their qualifications, have found it increasingly difficult to obtain academic posts in America. At Harvard, some of the most distinguished members of its faculty, past and present, have been Jews.

The extent to which antisemitic bias has come to operate in the making of junior appointments is difficult to assess. Those who raise the issue seemed in agreement, to use the words of one of them, 'that racial prejudice is so thoroughly ingrained and taken for granted that no one takes much notice of it except in particularly flagrant cases.' The committee is informed that certain members of the faculty object to the appointment of Jews to the tutorial staff in the belief that they are unacceptable to undergraduates."

And the report goes on and basically makes a statement about the value of diversity and says, "conscious or unconscious antisemitism would be a betrayal to the best traditions of the

university." It's rather remarkable in 1938 they were talking about unconscious bias. That was an interesting way of framing it.

I wish this problem went away. But this is from a search committee report last year. This is a direct quote from the report. And there are quotes embedded in it. So this is a quote from somebody in the report. "The following anecdote makes me a bit unsure about my and our judgment. The last African American candidate we had was Y. The consensus was that she did a very poor job of fielding questions, and we wondered about her quality of mind. Her paper has now been published in--" I'm not naming the journal, but it's a top journal in the field. "Clearly she's been a very successful academic since" she went to Yale. "And with hindsight, I wish we'd made her an offer. I wonder whether we're in a similar situation with X," the candidate they're considering now.

"The committee sought to remove the weighting of presentation in its deliberations, but still felt that there was significant uncertainty about X's future trajectory. We therefore do not recommend proceeding with X, but we would strongly urge the school to go back and reconsider Y," who oh by the way we rejected two years ago. And X is at the University of Chicago and doing quite well.

This is a conversation I had with an academic dean last week. "I met with--" this is the academic dean's voice. "I met with the department to discuss the two finalists, X and Y. A distinguished member of the department not on the search committee raised his hand and said, 'I have serious concerns about the process in this search. This short list makes it clear that the search was referring to start. How else could the two finalists be female?'" That's last week. So clearly there are issues about how we search for faculty, how we think about what we're doing, and how we can do better what we're trying to do, which is build an outstanding faculty.

The genesis for today's event came from a topic that Sheena Iyengar, one of our panelists, gave last year at the Kennedy School on her book *The Art of Choosing*. And in fact she is giving a public lecture at the Radcliffe Institute later today if you're interested in learning

more about it.

The talk was wonderful. I encourage you to go to her talk. And at dinner, with a whole bunch of decision scientists, I throw out the question, "How does your work on decision science have a role in how we think about faculty searches?" And it was an incredibly lively conversation. It's what led to the event today.

Decisions about faculty recruitment are fundamentally multivariate-- there are lots of dimensions-- and continuous. It's not a black and white situation. But in the end, we have to make a yes or no decision about a particular candidate. And so it's a very difficult problem space. So the kinds of things that we've asked our panelists to talk about today are what makes for the most effective search committee. Should search committees develop selection criteria in advance, because after all, don't faculty members know good faculty when they see them? There is this sense that you already know how to do this. Do cultural factors really play a role? Aren't smart people able to guard against unconscious bias? And how do we deal with search committee dynamics and the conflicts that inevitably rise? And how do we reach consensus on a decision making process?

I'm going to introduce the three panelists on your right-- OK, my right there. Sheena Iyengar, who is the ST Lee Professor of Business at Columbia Business School. She has a 1997 PhD in social psychology from Stanford. And as I mentioned her recent book, bestselling book, *The Art of Choosing*, examines a whole set of questions about choice-- how we make choices, the relationship between how we choose and who we are, how we are influenced that, why we're often so disappointed in our choices, and how much control do we really have over them.

In the middle is Iris Bohnet, who is a Professor of Public Policy at Harvard and Director of the Harvard Kennedy School's Women and Public Policy Program. A 1997 PhD in economics from the University of Zurich. Iris's research combines insights from economics and psychology.

Historically her work is focused on trust and its determinants, and its relevance for negotiation and decision making. More recently-- and she's going to talk about some of more recent work--she has been focusing on choice architecture and knowledge, how outcomes can be influenced by little small things in processes.

And finally on the far right, Mahzarin Banaji, Richard Clarke Professor of Social Ethics in our Psychology Department, and also Senior Advisor to the FAS dean on faculty development.

Mahzarin has a 1986 PhD from Ohio State in psychology. And she studies the mental systems that operate in implicit or unconscious mode. In particular, she's interested in the unconscious nature of assessments in self and other humans that reflect feelings and knowledge about their social group membership.

In her new role, Mahzarin is working very closely with the dean of faculty of Arts and Sciences, very closely with me and my office, on trying to identify and challenge any barriers that stand in the way of achieving our goal of having the most outstanding faculty. The game plan is that Sheena and Iris will each speak for about 20 minutes. And Mahzarin will make some concluding remarks and will moderate the discussion. So with that, let me turn it over to Sheena Iyengar.

[APPLAUSE]

SHEENA IYENGAR:

Hello everyone. So when I got this email from Judy saying, will you come and speak to the various search committees at Harvard about how to improve the academic hiring decision making process-- I'm looking at this email and extremely intimidated by this email. Do I really know enough to make suggestions about how to improve academic hiring decision making processes?

At the same time, I was a bit intrigued by this, by the daunting exercise. Because as a member of the decision making research community, certainly I'm aware of the various biases and things that affect our decisions, whether we're hiring or whatever decision we're making. And we're not always proud when we see the kinds of things that bear out in the results.

And then at the same time, I've sat on a number of different search committees, and now sit on the P and T and keep wondering to myself, how do we improve this? I mean, how do we debias everybody so that we actually make the best choices?

If you look at the research, I couldn't find a single study that actually looked at academic hiring decision processes that documented the various things that we do during that process, although there is a lot of research that looks at hiring decision making processes in general. And as a quicksort of thumbnail summary of that, we see that we make mistakes every step of the way in terms of how we go about it. When we look at resumes and collect resumes, white people are 50% more likely to get an interview than African Americans. Men are more likely to get hired for certain positions or considered for certain positions than our women. Turns out that the actual sound of your name and letters that make up your name can actually make a difference in terms of whether you're likely to be hired or not or at least interviewed or not.

Then when you look at the actual interview process, there's all kinds of studies that show us things that we're not quite happy when we read about that might affect this like the strength of someone's handshake could make a difference. The first impression you make in the first minute, perhaps plus or minus 30 seconds, the overall 30 minute interview or, you can imagine, job talk can actually affect what you think of this person. And studies have shown, at least in private industry, that in fact we tend to overweight those interviews and think that they're much more diagnostic of our performance in the long run than they really are. And that in general when it comes down to interviews, we tend to like and hire those people that remind us of ourselves, have similar attitudes, are demographically more similar to us, maybe have similar personalities to us.

Now I look at all this research and realize oh my god, there's all these mistakes that we might

bemaking. And then I try to debias myself. And that becomes a rather daunting, intimidating task, particularly given that so many of these biases happen to us at a rather subconscious level. Can I really debias myself and make sure that I'm not going to be affected by, say, the compliment that this person gave me that sounded so genuine? I mean, aren't I human in the end?

A few years ago when my colleagues and I-- and many of my colleagues were social psychologists-- and I got together, and we're trying to put together the decision making module for our core course in the MBA program in organizational behavior, we thought about how were we going to teach our students about decision making policies and how to counteract act. And we showed them all different exercises in which we make them aware of the various biases that they engage in. But then we wanted to give them an exercise that felt more real, that was the kind of exercise they would be doing in their real jobs, and also be able to give them some sort of heuristics or guidelines on how they could improve upon that.

In a nutshell, what I'm going to show you is an exercise which we designed. And in the designing of that exercise, what we sort of took a position as being is we decided that it was unrealistic to take the stand that we're going to make every single individual debiased. We assume that they'll all be biased. But that what we could do was create a decision making process for the group in which we could create an environment and a set of processes that people could employ as a group which would create an environment which would result in more informed decision making. That was really the goal that we set out.

So we weren't trying to make any particular individual less biased. If that happens, great. But what we're really trying to do is create a simple set of decision making processes at the group level which will improve upon the decisions that might happen at the individual level.

So let me describe to you this exercise. And this exercise, while we adapted it at Columbia, it's actually not our possession. It's adapted from an exercise that was originally created actually at Kellogg and was originally from there. But the idea of a professor who is actually at the London

Business School, an experience he had in his own personal life, and that then turned into an exercise which has been running around in different forms in various schools.

So in this exercise, we take the MBA students and we divide them up into two groups. And these two sets-- two different groups types in fact-- these groups have to make a decision about whom to hire. And they have to figure out whom to hire for a senior vice president position in information technology.

And these groups are made up of five individuals. These five individuals represent different positions in an organization-- CFO, head of marketing, different positions-- head of sales-- different positions that you would imagine at the top of the ranks in an organization. And they now have to decide whom they're going to hire that's going to be head of information technology.

Just as you would have in a normal hiring decision making situation, all of these five individuals have some pieces of information that's the same. So they have three candidates, Sarah, Catherine, and Janet. So they all have information that's the same for all three of these candidates. But as a function of their particular positions and the kind of information that gets relayed to them as a function of their position, they also have some information about the various candidates that's not shared.

So one set of groups engage in a decision making process that's like this where they have five individuals, information about those three candidates. Some of that information is shared. Some of that information is not shared. Another set of groups have five individuals, but those five individuals are given all of the information about all three candidates that is available at that moment of decision.

So what happens? Well, what happens-- and we've been running this exercise now for a number of years. And actually what we find is very consistent with the prior research on this, the research on hidden profiles by Stasser and colleagues. And what we find is that the groups that make the decision when they have some information that's shared, some

information that's not shared, you find that 75% of these groups hire a woman by the name of Catherine. When you have the groups that had all the information at their disposal, now you find 85% of them choose Janet.

Now in truth, all three of these candidates are qualified. Now let's just look back at the general information about these three candidates. They're all very qualified candidates, much like sort of academic possibilities that we might hire, academics we might consider hiring.

So you have three individuals. They're all perfectly suited for a senior vice president of information technology. One of them is an external candidate. Two of them are internal candidates.

But why is it that when the information is not shared, when it's distributed across individuals, you see one candidate chosen, and when everybody has all the information, you see another candidate chosen? When you look at the way the information is distributed, what you see is that Catherine has more positive information that happens to be shared across all five group members. When you look at Janet, she has a piece of negative information-- does not recognize the contributions of others. That piece of negative information is shared across all the groups.

In truth, if all the information about every candidate were to have been surfaced, it looks like Janet probably has a little bit of an edge. She has a bit more positive information associated with her than, say, Catherine or Sarah, although you could make a case for any one of them.

Now in the classroom when the students come back and we debrief this exercise, we find out what they did. We find out what happened in those groups that were trying to figure out whom to hire. And what we find is in groups where the information is distributed, much like it would be in a real hiring decision making process, what did they do? Well, everybody has the basic information about those three candidates. They start their meeting. The moderator wants to be efficient. And so the moderator takes a poll. A reasonable thing to do, take a poll. Let's just find out, where's the consensus?

They take a poll and they find out, well you know, people seem to be generally split on Catherine. More people usually want Catherine. Some people want Sarah. Maybe one person on occasion thinks Janet might look good, depending on how much positive information about Janethas been shared with that one individual.

Well now they've made a vote. Now the moderator says, well, let's talk about these three candidates. Let's figure out what are their pros and cons. So they jot down all the pros and cons associated with these three candidates.

Well, they jot down all the pros and cons, and it becomes very clear to them that Catherine is the dominating alternative. Sometimes they pick Sarah, mainly because they have a little bit of a bias in favor of an internal person rather an external person.

But when they come back to that classroom, and now I put up all the information, and I say to them, did you know everything about Janet? And my question isn't, did you pick the right one. Are you confident that you picked the best one? Because any of them could be the best one. My question is simply, did you have all the information about Janet that was available to you? And second, if you had had some of this information which was not available to you at the time of decision, do you think it would have mattered to you while you were making that decision?

And if the answer to both of these questions is no, I didn't have all the information, yes it would have mattered, well then my question is, did you give Janet a fair hearing. And as I said before, when people have all the information, they tend to be more likely to choose Janet.

Now we then go on to do other exercises and teach them a decision making process that we think makes that process more fair, or at least gives all of the candidates more of a fair hearing. If you remember, my goal here is not to debias all the individuals of the group. I'm assuming all the individuals are biased. My goal is simply to make sure that every candidate has a fair

hearing.

Why did they not have a fair hearing in the traditional model that they were using? They didn't go out to be biased. But what happens? When you actually look at the process that these groups describe that they used, well, once you have that vote out-- I like Catherine. I like Sarah-- when I'm surfacing the pros and cons, I'm more likely to surface the things that support what I think to be true. I'm more likely to forget whatever little positive things I know about Janet, particularly when a whole bunch of other people said, you know, she doesn't recognize the contributions of her fellow colleagues. Yeah, I know, isn't that really bad? And then you start having the Janet sucks song going on. So that one piece of negative shared information ends up becoming more available, and also gains in weight.

The people that ended up voting initially stick to their opinion. Sort of a commitment and consistency effect goes on. They also start finding information that's more likely to support their opinion, known as confirmation bias. And also in the end you try to get some consensus. There's a sort of Janet sucks thing going on. And that ends up looking like a group think process.

So are there things we can do with the group level decision making processes that we can put in place that would give people more of a fair hearing? So what I'm going to describe to you now is a decision making process that I've adapted for academic hiring that's based on what we use with the MBA students. By the way, it's also something that we're actually employing right now at the Columbia Business School as we search for the candidate for our new decision making academic hire. So ask me in a few months if we were successful.

And what I'd like to emphasize here is what I'm putting out here is a proposal. So you can feel free to-- I'm expecting you to throw some gentle darts at me. Feel free to disagree. It's really I'm trying to give you food for thought.

So here's my proposal. Stage one of an academic hiring process-- you come up with a criteria, some general criteria. And at this stage, I would make that criteria fairly vague and

general. I'm looking for-- the best person right now is the leading scholar in decision making, negotiations, broadly defined. That now gives you the ability to search widely. Gather up resumes from as far and wide as you'd like.

And sometimes people find it helpful to designate some members of the committee to specifically search for diversity candidate. And I'd like to emphasize here that diversity doesn't just apply to ethnic and gender distribution. That's certainly an important diversity component. But it also applies to diversity in terms of intellectual contribution.

So for example in our current decision making hiring process, we've got an anthropologist on the list, and we're considering hiring an anthropologist at the Columbia Business School that studies primates and does brain research and also does research in economics, having to do with trust. So it can be quite diverse even in terms of intellect.

So now you've got all these resumes. And you might actually have quite a few resumes. Now if you had a lot of resumes, we know from research that been conducted by me and a number of other people, it can kind of be overwhelming if you suddenly have to look at, say, a hundred or even 50 odd applications and make some real decisions about who's going to make it into the short list.

So to avoid a sort of information overload or a too much choice overload effect, what I propose doing is that we take those sets of resumes of vitae, divide them up across the committee members so that no one committee member, say, has more than 10 or 15, make it a manageable set of vitae. Each candidate gets seen by two committee members so that you don't have any particular individual that's going to get killed as a function of one particular individual's preferences in one or the other direction.

And the committee members are now given the task not of saying yes or no, do we want to interview that person. That's a little complicated at this stage. Instead they're given the task of simply rating them high, medium, low-- good candidate for an interview, medium, low.

Now you generate these ratings of high, medium, and low. You bring them together in a meeting. You collate the results. And now you have a list. How many made it such that they were all in the high? How many were kind of a mix of highs and mediums, mediums and lows? And now you can make a criteria by which you're going to cut out the applicants that you don't want to interview.

So again, the task here is not picking out, initially, who you are going to interview, whom you're not going to interview. Because that's ultimately a little bit of an easier decision to make.

Once you've come up with a rule by which you're going to throw out the candidates that you don't want to interview, now you've got a list of candidates that you think might be feasible to interview. At this point, you can start having the discussion about what your more specific criteria is and use that for narrowing down that list of potential interview candidates to a more manageable set. And that committee can decide what that manageable set is. Is it going to be five? Is it going to be seven?

I usually don't recommend going past 10 because you're just not going to remember all their interviews. Your fellow colleagues aren't going to remember all their interviews. It leaves you open more to being more likely to vote in favor of those candidates that are somehow more memorable in some way such that would open yourself up to a little more bias. You want to really try to make the evaluation process as manageable as possible.

So now let's say you've decided on your candidates. You've brought them in for their various jobtalks. They've met with your fellow colleagues. You ask your fellow colleagues to give their opinion high, medium, low. Never ask them yea or nay-- high, medium, low.

Now you come to stage two. How are you going to decide whom to get that offer to? How you going to run that really critical meetings, or set of meetings in which you're going to decide whoto give that offer to?

So when you have that first meeting, what's your goal? Your goal is not to pick the best candidate. Your goal is to give each person a fair hearing.

So how are you going to do that? First, you have a specific discussion about the criteria. Put that criteria on the board. And naturally, as fellow academics, we're all going to have strong opinions about what our criteria should and should not be. Some people will weigh more heavily the importance of having an internal person. Some people will weigh more heavily the importance of an external person. Some people will weigh more heavily adding strength to an already existing strength. Some people will feel that it's more important to weigh diversity.

And these are a legitimate things to value. The important thing is to get the criteria out there and get out there what the trade-offs are in terms of which things we value more, which things we value less. And it's OK to have some disagreements up there.

Next thing we put up-- so at this point we haven't yet asked anybody what they think of the candidates. Now what we put up is we ask each person to surface all the information that they have about each of the candidates. We're not asking them to give their opinion. We want to stop them from giving their opinions. Just, let's get out all the information about all the candidates under consideration.

After you've surfaced all the information that you have possibly available to you at this moment in time, about the candidates, now you're in a position to start putting evaluations. And the way we run the evaluations is we ask each of the committee members to, semiprivate-- meaning on a private sheet of paper-- rate the candidates high, medium, low. Don't put your name on it. And hand that to the moderator, head of the search committee. That moderator now collates the results and puts them up on the board.

The reason why I say it's semiprivate, because obviously can I really figure out who might have given a little more preference to one candidate to another after awhile of knowing our colleagues? Of course we all know, to some extent, where our colleagues' preferences lie. But it's still important to not have a name attached to it, put it up on the board, and have a sense of

where does the group stand. Around which candidates do we have more of a consensus?
Around which candidates do we have less of a consensus, much more of a sort of minority support around?

Once you have those numbers up on the board-- and again, they're all rated in terms of high, medium, and low-- we now first address the minority opinion. What does those people that are supporting the candidates that are less preferred, what are their arguments, so that those arguments are heard in case other people still feel like they want to change their minds. That's another reason why you don't put the name associated with the opinions or the votes up there, because it gives people a chance to possibly revise their opinion without loss of face.

So now you have the minority opinion that's surfaced. People can think about it. At that point, we start discussing the majority opinion. And in the process of discussing the majority opinion, we also think it's helpful to do-- what we've been trying to do anyway at the Columbia Business School is also surface the discussion around, well, say we hire this person. What do we expect them to do once they come here? Are they going to be a good fit? Is it possible that the research that they've done that's been so fascinating up until this point, would it continue here? Would it necessarily have to change if they came here?

We're being sensitive to the recent research on star analysts that was done here at Harvard which shows that when star analysts move to another organization, their performance actually can drop by 20%. Now can we say anything meaningful about what someone's future trajectory is going to be? No, we don't really know for sure what will happen. But we think it's useful to at least have that discussion, to at least think about, what are our expectations of this person once they arrive. And perhaps that discussion might bring out other things we hadn't thought about, and might also influence our preferences towards the end.

In the final stage, we make a decision. We try to gauge consensus. We try to gauge everybody's voice, everybody's input. Because in the end of the day, how well that candidate will do at your institution will depend on everybody's buy-in. Only if you cannot get absolute buy-in do you go

with the majority vote. We try to reserve that only for the final moments if you really can't get consensus.

Now one of the things that I think is really important for us to do that we don't do and is probably really scary to even contemplate doing, but if we really want to be able to improve our decision making process over the long run, we need to have a procedure in place for auditing. We need to be able to look back, have a system in place where we look back, have the information that we had at that moment when we made that decision, and be able to audit our decisions. How did we do that time? Did we reject somebody that maybe in retrospect we should not have rejected?

And to have that ability, even if you can't undo that decision, it's important to be able to audit. Because when you audit, you now have more information about what things you can avoid doing going forward.

And I'm not saying that auditing has to be this formal thing that's taken over by the provost's office or by the dean's office. Do it internally, informally, within your own departments just as an internal check for yourself. Because ultimately we all have the goal of making sure we hire the very best people that will contribute the most to our institution. So with that, I'm going to leave it open for discussion. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

IRIS BOHNET

Good morning everyone. It's a great pleasure to contribute to the discussion as well and follow Sheena, who I think has done such a wonderful job in helping us think about a better design for the process.

What I plan to do this morning is give you some input. So less of a structure at how to do this, but some ideas that just came out of research in recent years of what to think about in terms of improving the process. In particular I want to talk about gender equality nudges and a bit

about why diversity matters and how we could even think about the benefits or the diversity premium.

So "Nudge," I think most of you are familiar with Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler's book that has recently come out. A nudge is a gentle persuader that builds on our insides of how our mindwork. And it's quite different from an incentive or regulation or even information, so other types of interventions that you could think about it. In fact better than even trying to describe what a nudge is, I want to show you a short video, which is a nice illustration of a little nudge.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK][MUSIC PLAYING]

[END PLAYBACK]

OK, so this was a video about the people's choices between stairs and escalator. And what the video did is transform the stairs into a piano. So that's what made it more fun for people to walk up the stairs.

So that kind of gives you an idea of the nudge. We're neither paying people to do something nor we're regulating certain behavior nor are we putting up a sign there, it's good for your health to use the stairs. But we're changing the environment ever so slightly to affect people's choices.

And that's the idea behind gender equality nudges that we now want to build on.

And so as Sheena-- what we're arguing is that very rarely do wrong decisions come about because people intentionally try to rig the system or try to choose the candidate that was close to their own interests or any of that sort. But it really has much more to do with how our minds work with bounds and rationality, will power, and bounded awareness.

So I have a little illustration here of that for you so you can all see it. Often we do this. And I though with the faculty, I'm not going to do it this way. But we often do it as a little experiment where we ask half the people to close their eyes and look at this and see what they see. And so what you see, ABC. And then I would ask the other half of the room to

close their eyes and would show the first half, this number sequence here, 12, 13, 14. And of course the middle number here, the B, is identical to the B that you saw here. So that's just an illustration of what you see depends on the context in which you see something.

Let me give you one more illustration. And that is you're comparing squares A and squares B. And the question is, what is the color of square B? And I would assume most of you see B as lighter than A because your minds want to make sense of the pattern that you see here. In addition, being super smart, you also want to take into account that there's a little shadow here, which might make B darker. Turns out that when we cover the surroundings of A and B, the colors are, in fact identical. So again, it really matters how we look at things and what you see.

And so, of course in a picture like this what you see, who you see as a leader, who you see as a follower, who see as senior, junior, as attractive, not attractive, black, white, female, et cetera depends on how you look at this.

So that's really where I want to start. And I want to talk about three studies. And the first one in fact is the least developed, but I want to give you the idea. Because I think particular for faculty hiring, this one is actually an important one, but I don't have any results yet. But here's the idea.

It builds on research in psychology on variety seeking. And here's how one of the early studies worked: students were given choices of candies or snacks. And in one condition, people had to make a choice for, let's assume, every snack for a whole month. So at the beginning of the month, I'm given 10 choices. Here's an apple. Here's a candy bar. Here's this or that. Choose a snack for every day of the month.

And then in another condition, a different group of students was asked every morning of the month to choose what snack to have that day. And as you might imagine, in the heat of the moment that morning, people would go for their favorite snack like the Mars bar. But if you choose at the beginning of the month and make 30 choices at the same time, people would go for variety. You can't choose the same old snack 30 times. But every morning, you're kind of

going to go with the same snack.

And you've all been there. Going back to your favorite restaurant, every time you're like, not today. I'm not going to take the same thing that I have every time. But of course that's what you like best maybe.

So that's known as variety seeking. And we want to apply this to hiring decisions. And I think the intuition is very straightforward that if you hire five people at the same time, if you hire in clusters, what's often known as cluster hiring, diversity will emerge in a very different way than when you hire one person at a time. So our hypothesis is that when you hire sequentially, one person at a time, we will be much more likely to go with our favorite snack, with our favorite candidate, the candidate that we're familiar with, the type of attributes that we've always hired, and are possibly also the least risky. So that's the first idea, that we have to think about how we hire in terms of do we hire one at a time or sequentially.

Now a related study, but in fact building on a different psychological mechanism, is our evaluations. And that's joint work of Max Bazerman, who's sitting right there, and Alexander [INAUDIBLE], who is a doctoral student at the Kennedy School.

And here's what we want to do. We want to look at how we evaluate the candidates. And that is now more about what criteria do we take into account as we're evaluating candidates, and how many candidates do we look at the same time. In fact I think I'm going to go fast forward here and show you the design so you get a sense of what we're doing.

So this is a study that we conducted in the Harvard Decision Science Laboratory. And it has the following scenario. We first had a group of people come in. And they perform a task. They perform either a math task or a verbal task. And these are our agents. We're actually not particularly interested about their behavior, but we need your data to know how they performed in these tasks.

And then you come in. You come in as the principal or the hiring agent, HR officer, or a

person who is responsible for promotion decision. And we give you information of the performance of these candidates in this experiment. And then we're telling you can now choose one, and you will be paid based on that person's performance in a future round. So we're not telling you that the person participated in this experiment several rounds. We're telling you about their past performance, but they've also participated in one more around. You can choose someone for this future round, and you will be paid based on how well that person did.

And what we're interested in is what you based your decision on. Do you base your decision on past performance, which is the right thing to do, statistically speaking-- very highly, highly correlated with future performance. So how well you solved the math problem in the past is very predictive of how well you do that in the future round. Or do you take other criteria about that person into account?

And we give you a host of demographic information on these people, which however is identical for all our candidates but for gender. So you learn that the person is a student. You learn the person's between 18 and 22 years, is from the Boston area, et cetera, in our case was Caucasian. Everything's identical but for the gender. So we're wondering, do gender stereotypical beliefs about performance affect your likelihood of hiring a person. So are you more likely to choose the woman for the verbal task and the man for the math task, possibly independent or disregarding information of their past performance?

OK, so that's what we do. And we have a two by two by two design. So we have both, as I said, male and female candidates. And we have the following two conditions where the performance of the person was either high, was a good performance. And you got information about that. So you knew how that person performed compared to the mean of the group. So either it was a high performer or it was a low performer. So you know the person did worse than the mean.

And your alternative, if you do not hire the person is, you go back to the pool and we pick someone at random for you. So you know the expected value of the pool. You know an

average in the pool. People for example found 10 math problems. This is a person who found 12. This is a person who found 8.

And so this is now the important condition here. And that is, we're looking at what happens when you evaluate one candidate at a time. So what if you get performance information on the male candidate here, and you know he's male. You know he's male, yep. You know he's male. That was a deep insight. And you know how he performed in the past. As compared to, you get information on two candidates, at least. Could be more, but at least two where you can make comparison information. So they give you information on a man and a woman and how they performed in the past.

And we're arguing that comparison information is going to make your judgments, loosely speak, more rational. And what I mean with that is, you will be focusing more on the objective criteria which in fact are predictive of future behavior.

OK, so here's what we find. I'm going to first show you the separate condition. Now note, these are equally qualified candidates. So you know how well they performed in the past. They performed at the same level. The likelihood of choosing a man is 66%, and the likelihood of choosing a female is 44%. Everything absolutely identical.

You get a similar, not quite as extreme, pattern for the low performance. You also note the performance didn't seem to matter quite as much here. But it really was driven by the gender stereotype.

Now let's compare that with the joint evaluation where you compare two candidates. The gender bias completely disappears. You also know that certainly as a low performing candidate, you don't want to be evaluated jointly. Because that now becomes very salient. Your performance becomes very salient. And people do not hire the low performing candidates.

And this is now putting it all together. Now just quickly so you get the sense, this is not just

formath. We actually get the reverse for verbal. This was the verbal task. It was a word find task, different types of tasks. Here you have to find nations. And for example you have Singapore down here. And you have to mark the words that you could find. So we find reversal in the gender bias.

Now for verbal tasks, people prefer the woman to the man when they evaluate the person one at a time. As soon as we evaluate jointly, the gender bias goes away again.

So of course that has implications for hiring and promotion decisions. So one question you may want to ask yourself is, the positions you hire for, are their gender stereotypically male or female? Do they fall into the math or do they fall into the verbal camp? So for many organizations, leadership positions are typically associated with being in the male domain. So generally you would worry based on these results that promotions to leadership positions fall into the math camp. And so we see those kind of gender stereotypes emerge.

And of course then as an organization, you want to maximize performance. You would probably prefer this joint evaluation to a separate evaluation, although there are many, many reasons here-- and I put them down-- many, many interest groups would actually prefer the separate evaluation because it serves them better, in particular the low performers. The less qualified people, for them, it really hurts to be compared with the high performer.

OK, so this is an example of a gender nudge. You can slightly change the process by which you evaluate candidates, and we would argue therefore affect the likelihood that you base your decision on stereotypes or on past performance or more objective criteria.

I want to end with one more study here, which looks a bit more about effects of diversity or the balance in a team. And just a side comment, if you're interested in the benefits of diversity, a really nice paper is coming out this month in Science on the benefits of diversity in teams, which I think does one of the best jobs so far looking across 10 different tasks, in all kinds of diversity dimensions kind of looking at what are the effects of diversity. And generally there is the diversity premium. But diversity, as you all know, is hard work.

So the question is, is it more of a public goods problem where individually we don't want to actually labor that hard? Because diversity is hard. It's hard to work across boundaries. But organizationally, it would actually be a good thing if we did.

So we want to look at why does that matter. And what I'm proposing, in fact a very, very simple model. It's a theoretical model based in information theory in economics, but we also test in the laboratory. And here's just the idea of what we want to look at. We're saying that in many, many situations, including in academia, we are in an environment that you might want to call up or out, where it's a tournament style environment where either you get the big price, which is tenure, or you go someplace else. You make get tenure there. But it's up or out. So that's the kind of environment we want to study.

And in this environment, a very simple way to look at the environment is that the likelihood of getting tenure, the output has something to do with the effort that we put in. But there's this random component that we're not particularly interested in. And hopefully a big fraction of the output is due to effort, but there's also some randomness involved in the process.

And the main argument that we're making is that information that you have about this random component has something to do with how many like you are around. So think of the following situation. You're trying to get information on the tenure process. You're a junior faculty member. And as it just happened to me recently, as Judy knows, you get an email. I'm chairing a committee right now. You get an email from the candidate. What information is available? Could we get access to other statements from the past, research statements, et cetera, et cetera.

Now it turns out that that information is kind of implicitly available, but you have to ask for it. Now often the asking happens along gender lines or racial lines, or even nationality lines, also disciplinary lines. And the person more naturally to ask for help often is someone who is like me. And there's a lot of research on networks and mentoring, et cetera, which suggests that that's true. But also in this case it in fact was true.

And then there's another piece of evidence that is based on the Hannah Riley Bowles' research, who is at the Kennedy School. It's harder for women to ask. You may also know the book by Linda Babcock, *Women Don't Ask*, because there's social consequences if you do ask.

So I think this is a bit of a side comment. But as I'm thinking about our hiring and promotion procedures and tenure evaluations, that is something that I urge us to think hard about. What information is explicitly available, and what is implicitly available? What do people have to ask for? And what if there are differences in your ability to ask because of who you are or because of the network that you are in because there are fewer people like you around?

And Judy, in fact she had an interesting story, if I may share that, gave a presentation with a male faculty member. And they totally shared the presentation. She said, and then interestingly enough, afterwards there was a line of people who wanted to talk to the authors of the study, and totally gender segregated. The women would talk to Judy and the men would talk to him, although the study had nothing to do with gender.

So I think I wanted to trigger your thinking a little bit of, so how does it matter who else is in the room or who else in the team? So for us in our model, we're arguing this is an informational argument. I'm sure there's many others-- just an informational arguments. So I'm better informed about this random component here, the things that are maybe not quite as transparent, the more people like me are around because I can ask them for advice. I can get information on what to do, what is available and not available.

And I don't want to walk you through the whole study here. But that's exactly what we find. So we create groups, majority groups which are better informed on that luck component, that random component. And we create groups which are worse informed on that random component. And we find that this affects their performance.

In fact I'm going to go fast forward here if I can and just show you the final results here. So

what you have here is the large group, the majority group which is better informed, and this is an indicator of their performance. Turns out that we always find this gap, this informational gap is just due to informational differences about this more random component in this process.

So with that, let me conclude. Gentle changes in procedures can really have quite dramatic impact we would submit to you. So we know the choice of comparison sets affect the likelihood of being hired. So just to think about how you look at candidates. You look at them one at a time. Do you compare them? Do we have comparison information as part of our process? What does that look like? Do we leave it up to the letter writers to choose their own comparison group, or do we give the comparison group? Really think hard about comparisons and how you're using them. And then secondly just an illustration of how the gender balance, or diversity more generally in teams, might affect people's performance due to these informational differences between the two groups. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

MAZARIN BANAJI

My mother taught me to speak loudly, so I don't need a microphone.

Let me just begin by saying that we really have to recognize that we are in a very, very different place now than groups of people who sat in this very room 10 and 20 and 30 years ago might have been. And we have to begin with that difference because without that kind of optimism, that we're different from them, it will be hard to make the kind of progress that I believe that we need to make.

We're different from them in two ways. We're different because our conscious minds have changed dramatically. If I showed a list of what people like ourselves believed in the 1950s about groups of people, you would be shocked. In fact, I'm glad Judy started this by pointing out what antisemitism in places like Yale and Harvard was like. I'll point out a book by Dan Oren, written many years ago now called *Joining the Club-- A History of Jews at Yale*. And as I read it, I just especially remember this one page where he literally just xeroxed a copy of

an application form and the reason for rejection in it. And some professor at Yale had scrawled in the box that said reason for rejection, has a Mediterranean nose. That was, at Yale-- and I'm going to argue, I think, here too-- a sufficient basis for rejecting a candidate.

We are not those people. We no longer not only say things like that, we don't believe them. We would frown upon people who say things like that. But I'm going to argue that even antisemitism hasn't gotten. All you had to do is listen carefully to liberal NPR during the Bernie Madoff weeks. And here it's surfacing again to the top as if it had not gone away.

So I'm here to say these things, that our minds have two very different modes in which they function. There is a conscious mode. Think about Abraham Lincoln, the emancipator, and know that we have the emancipator in each of us. But we also have in each of our minds Abraham Lincoln who believed that black and white could never be equal, that one was superior to the other, that they could never work together, let alone ever marry.

We carry that in each of our minds, and we had better know that. And this is one of the ways in which we are different from our predecessors, that we're not going to be happy just saying that because I don't say Mediterranean nose, I no longer have these biases. We do. We have tons of them. What's

So what's second way in which we're different? We're different because even 10 years ago, there was not a science of this stuff. What Sheena and what Iris and what others have now demonstrated for us is that just as we can be great physicists and great people who understand strategy and finance and medicine, because we are schooled in those methods, that likewise we have to be schooled, every one of us to some extent, in the processes of decision making. Because there is a science. It can tell us about the right and wrong ways to make decisions. And we have to hold ourselves to a higher standard because this knowledge was simply not available even a few years ago, let alone a few decades ago. So our responsibility is greater.

If I had to leave you with like a few ideas that we might use to have a discussion-- and my job really is to just help moderate a discussion between our two amazing speakers and you

as you begin to think about searches-- could I just say that I think the first thing to keep in mind is that you as chairs of departments and as members of search committees automatically become conservative when you're put in that role. Social psychology will tell you over and over again that we believe that the font or the source of behavior information or action lies in individual people, but we don't recognize the extent to which power and source of influence lies in the situation.

By putting you on a bicycle and having you race around Cambridge, we can make you hate car drivers. As soon as we put you in a car, we can make you hate people like me who race around crazily on a bicycle. I mean, these are simple roles that we play that have very powerful effects on what we like, who we think is good, and so on.

And one of the things I'm very concerned about-- because I have seen it happen to me-- that I am unwilling to even use the word risk or risky when I'm on a search committee. But being outside the search committee, I'm perfectly happy to say, let's try this new thing. So I just want you to be aware that when you are in that role, you will never want to make a false alarm. You'd rather have a miss because letting somebody good go away to Stanford you will say is not as big a problem as having some dud here stuck with us for the next 50 years.

And so you will-- you will be pushing very hard. And I'm just going to ask that you consult very broadly to know that while you should be careful-- and I do believe with you that for us, the criterion should be one where a miss is better than a false alarm. So I'm not asking us to change that.

But how we think something is a false alarm or when we think something's a false alarm is really dependent on the type of person we're looking for. And that's something we're going to have to do. So believe in this, the power of situations, and analyze the situation for what it's doing to you as you make these decisions.

The second point that I want to make is that we all carry a model of what success means. And that model is hugely powerful in guiding all sorts of search processes. You know, I was at

Vanderbilt University speaking to their medical school last week. And I remember thinking as I was being asked questions in deeply Southern accents, I thought to myself, maybe at Harvard we've gotten over a lot of different kinds of biases. But I bet that this person asking me a perfectly good question could never get a job here because to us, a Southern accent is correlated with many other things that we truly believe is not smart, has different values, and so on.

And so I'm just bringing this up because I want you to think about diversity in a much broader way than we have. I have a colleague who looks to you very mainstream-- white, male, Protestant, six feet, six inches tall. And yet he walks around Harvard feeling like he doesn't belong. And he feels that because he's a farm boy from Illinois, and he grew up on a small farm. And he says, you know, I never fit in. In rooms like this, I feel I'm going to drop something or I'm going to say something that isn't like how people-- he's been here for 20 years and for the previous 20 at Yale. But he still believes that he's this bumbling farm boy who is going to say something stupid.

What I want to take away is that this person is very valuable to the university because one of things he does is he never toes the line in any way. He's the first one to say to us, you guys just don't think this way, because he carries around in his mind this view that he's different from the rest of us. And so he's very valuable to us because he will not take any decision at face value and will probe a little bit more. And I'm going to ask us that we-- diversity needs to be thought about in a whole variety of ways.

And finally I want to say, don't trust people like me. Don't trust people who look like they're women, people of color, and that we will do what's right for our groups. We won't. We too have in our minds embodied the very same things that you regard to be important. And we will make the same mistakes with you unless we are all being educated to be different.

So I have developed a set of tests that will teach us something about what's in our minds. I encourage you to take those tests, because you may discover that as somebody white, you actually don't have a pro-white bias. As somebody black, you may actually have a pro-white

bias. And you need to know what's in your individual minds as you go forward in making these decisions. So with that, let me just say that keeping in mind that there are situational influences that we embody in us models of things that are good that are actually very much the standard is something that we have to worry about.

And finally I will say that familiarity is a hugely powerful motivator of behavior. There's a lovely New Yorker cartoon that has two snails talking to each other, looking at a large tape dispenser. And one snail says to the other snail, "I don't care that she's a tape dispenser. I just love her." And I think that this is what happens to us. When we see tape dispensers that look like ourselves, our heart just rushes out to them.

It could be anything that makes the familiarity. Their eyes could be the same color as our mother's eyes. Their father may have gone to the same school that you went to. You may both love classical music. These are the kinds of things that make interviews be deadly. And we base so much on the interview. And there are good data to suggest that unless each of us is schooled in performing structured interviews, that the interview plus resume leads to worse decisions than resume alone. And we'd better know that before we spend the kind of time that we do on talks focusing on things like physical form, accent, where somebody's come from, and so on.

So I'm just putting these out for you because the job we're now telling you have is far bigger and far harder than you might have thought. You can ask yourself, what am I supposed to do, like think about every one of these things? How am I ever going to make a decision? Well, we'll do it, and we'll do it better than people before us did because we have knowledge that they didn't.

[Question and Answer Period]

So with that, I'm going to stop. And I'll tell you that we'll open this up for at least a few minutes of questions to our two panelists. And I will help moderate. So just raise your hand. And also ask questions of the kinds of things you would want the administration to do.

Today you heard about things like multiple searches at one time may be better than one after the other. Well maybe our deans need to know this. And maybe they need to figure out ways with us, but how to construct searches so we can maximize the possibility of these. So feel free to raise anything you want, and I'm sure Sheena and Iris will answer them all.

Yes. Just stand up and ask question so we know who you are.

A few times the phrase objective criteria came up. And I was wondering if you could say a bit more about what that means in the context faculty searches, both in the initial stage one of filtering out applications, and also later when one is trying to draw the line between perhaps legitimate questions of collegiality and whether someone will be a good citizen in the department and interact with others and inappropriate criteria that we don't want to be using that becomes very close when you start thinking about fit.

Let me try and take a first try at this. So certainly in our experiments that was very easy to delineate. I completely here you that in search processes, in evaluation procedures, that's much harder to do.

So I think the first step might be along Sheena's lines, really to think about what are the criteria that we want our decisions to be based on, to think hard about what are those criteria. And I think we all can have some sense of publications, et cetera, citations and other things that we might care about. And to have the discussion of what are we worrying about, and then get a sense of how much weight should be put in all of these.

Just one additional comment, I think there are situations where it's very obvious and then there's others where it's not. But I'm thinking of Claudia Goldin's work on blind auditions of orchestras where it was pretty clear that the decision should not be based on the gender of the race or anything else but how good a violinist that person is. And of course the blindness-- if anything we haven't mentioned that because it's not very practical-- but that blindness is really the only way that I believe, at this point, we could really overcome our biases. I mean,

everything else we're proposing I think are improvements. But at the end of the day, we're all part of this society, and therefore we'll fall into these trap.

So my view on this is that the point at which you can be, quote, unquote, objective-- and objective is also sort of a subjective term-- is in that process where you're looking at those initial vitae and you're evaluating who's going to make it into the short list to interview, I think at that point for that, you can come up with more measurable criteria. You can create quantitative measures of, say, publication record, impact on the field. Whether you believe in citation hits, I mean that's obviously always been a controversy depending on field. Like always the operations people are anti-citation hits and the psychologists are pro-citation hits. And so then you never quite know how to get your head around that one.

But to the extent that the particular group has a set of measurable criteria that you can use to do that high, medium, low on the vitae, I think at that stage it's helpful. I think once you get to that short list of people that you're into reviewing, it's probably fair to say that you're interviewing people that are probably all great. I presume you won't be interviewing them if they haven't met the bar.

And at that point what is, quote, objective, which is even more subjective, is what I was talking about before in stage two, is coming up with as much as possible your specific criteria as to what you're looking for, acknowledging the disagreements. But at least once you have that specific criteria, you're now focusing everybody's attention towards those criteria.

And now while surfacing the information related to the different candidates, you're forcing the people doing the evaluating to think about those candidates in terms of that criteria that they just talked about. So that's why I said first board have the criteria, second board have the information about the various candidates surfacing, and then do the semiprivate vote. I mean, that's about as objective I can make a subjective evaluation process to be.

Yeah, and next you.

The question I have is recommendation letters play a huge role in a lot of this, reference letters from faculty. And I'm worried a lot about bias in that process. So partly we know certain faculty. We trust them. And sure, there are biases in how we form those relationships.

But also, the letters must inherently reflect biases of the letter writers. So I'm wondering whether learning about this stuff, we should be downgrading those letters relative to their current role, which is really quite dominant, at least in economics for sure.

Yeah, go ahead Sheena.

This is always very hard. And that's why I had said earlier that I gave up on this goal of trying to completely debias individuals or even debias the individuals making up the group. So I would say in your process, you're gathering up different bits of information. You're gathering up those reference letters.

I wouldn't remove them, because that's still information. I mean you really don't want to have somebody that's thought of as not capable of doing research on their own or producing a paper on their own.

So that's still valuable information, but that shouldn't be the only information that you're using. So you're gathering up the various bits of information, and when you set up your criteria as to what you're looking for, at that stage you can specify which bits of information are more or less important, and then surface the information related to each candidate. So at least whatever information you do have there, it's all getting considered in that process.

But I agree with you that the letter writer will be biased. Each individual on the committee will be biased towards their favorite letter writers. And I think that's just a given. And what you hope is that by creating the decision making process which is including everybody's opinion-- which is all the committee members-- as well as all the bits of information about each candidate, that that combination will enable you to make a more informed decision that gives each candidate a fair hearing.

Mahzarin, could I just add one more thing to that. And I don't also have a silver bullet at all. And I think a lot of biases there. I don't think you want to give up on them, because the other bias we're worried about is of course in group bias. So you need to have some outsiders who are not part of the institution to give you some feedback.

And I also think one way to at least them hopefully improve the quality of the letters that you get a little bit is diversity on the evaluation committee where we know, as I said, we tend to know people from our own genders, from our own disciplines, maybe even more importantly, but also from our own nationalities and educational backgrounds. So therefore I think the broader you can reach out to different sets of evaluators, the more likely you'll get a good outcome.

Let me just add something to what you just said. And I don't have any research to back this up. I'm just going to tell you about our experience.

One experiment we are trying at the Columbia Business School is we do have a very, very diverse committee. So we're hiring this decision making person. We have one finance person, one economist, one operations researcher, one marketing person. And then we have management and faculty on this. So it's a really intellectually diverse group of people. And so of course every committee member has their own favorite candidate. That's a given. And of course every single committee member has their own biases about how they want to interpret good and bad quality research, et cetera.

And I would say that diversity has been good so far in that it's been surfacing a lot of interesting candidates that we previously might not have thought about. But I think in order for it to work, you have to have a moderator that makes it a point to not being in favor of any particular candidate and who sticks to process. Because if at any point the moderator loses control of that process, I do think that having a diverse group is a great recipe for greater conflict.

And can I add to that by saying that these biases that we have exist for a reason. They're not absolutely nutty. They're there because in some old world, they helped us. They helped us pay attention to those people who looked like us who were going to be less likely to kill us. It's just that now we don't live in the world where people who look just like us are any less likely to kill us than--

And so I'm going to argue that these things that used to really pay off no longer do because we have to look at somebody very different from us. And a business person has to say, can I outsource to them and make a lot of money off of them. You have to make decisions that are of that kind. And that is why we're saying, let's examine them.

So one way around this problem is that we will not be able to get rid of these sorts of biases. We can do the most blatant ones. But another way around it, if we're smart, is to multiply biases, that is to say multiply them across people so that different biases are present in the room, so that I will say this is the best person for us and somebody else will say absolutely not, there's somebody else who's even better. Yeah, one, and then you.

Peter Manuelian. I think you said a general reaction in situations where a search committee tends to find [INAUDIBLE]. And I've heard arguments on both sides. One may say, well this looks real bad on the search committee. They're punting the decision. They're punting upstairs. [INAUDIBLE]. Or I've heard the opposite that this is really a good thing to do and at least we'll guarantee ourselves a finalist and a choice rather than the second, have one person who runs [INAUDIBLE] that person be rejected. [INAUDIBLE].

I actually like the idea a great deal. I like the idea. And I go back to what Sheena said. By the time we're bringing people out, they're all very, very good. They're very strong on paper. We know the work.

But, this is where the conservatism of being on a committee kicks in. One of them does become favored. And the difference between them gets magnified in our minds in ways that are absolutely irrational. And this is where I do believe that forcing a committee, by forcing at

as much as you can force a herd of squirrels, which is what faculty are, you can sort of say look, this is to your advantage. You want to educate the president and the dean about a whole field. It's really important for you to give them multiple candidates because who knows, you may actually be able to hire more than one, or if not this year in the future or whatever. And I do believe that keeping that open and not basically locking into a single person is going to pay off for us in many, many ways.

And I'm watching our administration do this. When they look at a short list and when they look at the letters that have come in, even if there's a favored candidate, I hear the dean asking, but what about this person who's not number one. Why? What makes this person, he or she, be number three? And is it really number three, or is it only number three with the frame you're currently using and with a slightly different frame, that person may get bumped up to number one. And what are we're going to do now that we've heard, after the letters were written, that she won a MacArthur Award or something like that. All of those sorts of things I think administrators can help us do. So yes, you had a question.

I had a question, two part question. I've been asked to chair the [INAUDIBLE] for all ranks [INAUDIBLE]. So we, in principle, could hire a professor [INAUDIBLE] for tenure. We could also hire a PhD. And could that then add one more complexity in comparing candidates? I wonder if you had any advice on that. And the second is, we have a student advisory committee [INAUDIBLE]. And if you had any advice on how we could construct it to have them contribute to the process.

So actually we did recently struggle with the first of your two questions. There were a few candidates-- back to this decision making, hiring decision making process. We had a bunch of candidates. They were all great. And they ranged anywhere from just out of PhD to maybe might be ready for early tenure to very, very, very senior. And in everybody, it looked like it would come down to people having different sort of preferences, et cetera. And it looked like it was probably going to become a very contentious discussion.

And what I-- and again, I don't have any research to back this up-- what I proposed, and which

ended up happening to simplify the decision-- because I feel when possible, try to come up with decision rules because people are more likely to agree on decision rules. And so the decision rule I proposed was that we not lump people of all different ranks, that it would just make the discussion too unwieldy. Let's just start with the senior people. They're more comparable. You have an easier evaluation process. If we don't succeed on the senior level, then we'll go to the next level. So at least in my sort of biased opinion, I wouldn't try to compare all three sets. It's just too complicated.

I wanted to add something in particular, and responding also to the previous question about the two candidates. So part of our research suggests that comparison information is a good thing. And I think generally that's what the research suggests.

However, of course, you can craft comparison sets strategically. So I just wanted us to be aware of that, that you can also make your preferred candidate shine more if you choose the appropriate comparison strategically. So comparisons are not just always good. But if you'd be very honest about the comparison set, the research suggests that it will actually improve the outcome.

Can we take one more question, and then Judy will say few words in closing. Yes, why don't you come up here and ask your question and close.

Picking up on what Iris said about access to information, one question that comes to mind is, should we share with potential candidates-- especially in junior searches-- what the criteria are? In other words, should we try to make it more standardized, the experience that people have coming here, or are we better off withholding that because that's an internal discussion about what's going on in the school?

When you say criteria, do you mean criteria for-- [INTERPOSING VOICES]--tenure?

The criteria.

The tenure criteria?

Not the tenure criteria, the objective criteria that you're developing in your search. Ah, I see.

I do have something to say. Can I do that? I think that the nature of our work is such that we cannot have a clear set of criteria that we can lay out there. There is a bit there that is fuzzy. And that's both good intellectually, but it is what's going to make us be more biased in certain ways.

So I have a lovely study for you that was done at Yale University. It was done by Geoff Cohen and Eric Uhlmann in which they took a very masculine profession like police work, and they gave people two candidates. And one was male, one was female. And in some cases, the male was book smart and the female was street smart. And in the other case, it was the reverse.

And what they discovered that was just really striking is that if the male was book smart, people said this job needs a book smart person. If the male was street smart, people said this job needs a street smart person. And what they argued is that what we're doing in our minds, because we're so smart about turning things around to get the outcome that we think is the right one, that we're literally fitting the criterion to the person and not the person to the criterion.

And I'm going to argue that this is something where we will be helped, at least by putting-- so they actually showed a lovely reversal. You lose the bias if you make people say up front, what are your most important criteria. Then the candidates are presented, and then you make a decision.

And so I kind of take this point, even though I think that for us it's going to be awfully hard to lay out what those criteria are. But at least to ourselves, it might be useful to know that we said A is important. And now we're actually preferring B because it might be the candidate that's making us go in that direction.

I guess I would add to what Mahzarin just said and also say that I would not give the criteria to the candidates because once you've stated the criteria up front, you're giving less wiggle room later on. I would have that discussion internally about your criteria so that you all know, but I don't think I would reveal that to the candidates.

Well, I see we've run out of time. I want to keep this on schedule. So I want to thank everyone for coming, everyone who's chairing a search committee or is working on a search process, and especially our panelists, who I think have given us wonderful food for thought.

We're going to be putting this video up on the web. I encourage you to get your colleagues to watch this. We'll also be making available the slides and other resource material that really talk about how research can inform how we do our processes. So I want to thank everybody, and especially our panelists for coming.

[APPLAUSE]