

Decision-Making at the Executive Level:

How Boards of Trustees and Search Firms Hire Art Museum Executive Directors

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Abstract

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The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the decision-making process of art museums when hiring executive directors. To understand this phenomenon, semi-structured interviews were conducted with board of trustee members and search firm consultants who had been part of an executive director search at an art museum with at least a five million budget during the past six years. The interviews were informed by literature from the field of museology focused on museums governance and behavioral economics. Analysis of the data revealed five findings: art museum mission statements drove the decision-making process, fundraising was the most important skill desired in candidates, museums did not have minimum education level requirements for executive directors to have a PhD, participants believed their decision-making was unbiased, and decisions that were made were made collaboratively as a group. These five findings suggest agreement in what art museums value in an executive director and practices they similarly follow. These results have the ability to assist in future art museum executive

director searches and can inform the museum community of the values held by decision makers.

The primary limitation of this study was the small sample size due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Executive directors are the highest-ranking executive in an organization and they have the definitive responsibility for making managerial decisions.¹ In art museums, executive directors are accountable for realizing the museum's mission² and daily tasks such as fundraising, managing collections, and exhibition programming.³ The responsibility for selecting art museum's next executive directors falls to a select group of board of trustee members who make up the executive search committee. Executive search committees have the option to enlist search firms to assist them in their hiring process. The executive search committee recommends a candidate to the full board of trustees for a vote.⁴ The board of trustee's final decision is important as it determines the future of the institution.⁵

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the decision-making process of art museums when hiring executive directors. Selecting the right executive director is imperative to the success of the institution.⁶ While there is literature of the process of selecting an executive director, there seems a gap in the literature for the decision-making process art museums undertake when hiring executive directors. This study aimed to close the gap of decision-making research in art museums executive director hiring. This study intended to help improve decision-making in the museum field and to develop a deeper understanding on how decisions are made. This study will hopefully be significant in that it will add to the museology

¹ "Executive Director," Oxford Dictionary, accessed May 26, 2020, https://www.lexico.com/definition/executive_director.

² Sherene Suchy. "Grooming New Millennium Museum Directors." *Museum International* 52, no. 2 (2000): 59.

³ Sherene Suchy. *An International Study on the Director's Role in Art Museum Leadership*, 1998, PQDT - Global.

⁴ "Finding the Right ED: Creating and Managing an Effective Search Committee," The Bridgespan Group, accessed May 26, 2020, <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/hiring/creating-managing-search-committee>.

⁵ James Abruzzo, "Selecting the Ideal Museum Director," *DHR International*, December 2013, 4, https://www.dhrinternational.com/files/3213/9120/3631/Museum_Director_Whitepaper.pdf.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

literature on behavioral economics and decision-making. Additionally, this study might assist in the understanding of values held by decision-makers in art museums.

In terms of methodology, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three members of a board of trustees and two members of an executive search firm. Interviews followed the format of asking participants about the nature of their experience, creating a job description, search values, reviewing resumes, interviews and reference checks, selected candidates, and the hiring process in its entirety.

This study utilized research from the museum field as well as the field of behavioral economics. Museology literature was used in identifying the roles of executive directors and members of boards of trustees, as well as museum trends in hiring. Behavioral economics literature was used to explain how people make decisions. This study also included references to studies that researched gender, racial, and appearance biases in hiring.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the decision-making process of art museums when hiring executive directors. The following literature review explored research on the museum hiring process in three major sections. The first section explains the role of art museum executive directors and museum boards of trustees, as well as search firms hired by museums to locate potential hires. The second section investigated how people make decisions through behavioral economics, as well as biases that may affect decision-making. The third section looked at literature as to how executive directors are hired, including desirable traits, the demographics of current museum executive directors, and how art museums have trended and future hiring projections.

Section 1

Executive Directors

The primary role of an art museum executive director is to advance the mission statement of the institution. Dr. Sherene Suchy, author of “An International Study on the Director’s Role in Art Museum Leadership”, stated, “the director’s responsibility is that of acting as the source of the mission or story, redefining it as needed in order to position the museum for long-term survival financially, socially, and culturally.”⁷ Robert D. Herman, co-author of *The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management*, echoed Dr. Suchy’s statement requesting executive directors to ask themselves “How well are we collectively meeting our responsibilities—to define and refine the organization’s mission, to secure the resources necessary to achieve our mission, and to select and implement strategies appropriate to and

⁷ Sherene Suchy. "Grooming New Millennium Museum Directors." *Museum International* 52, no. 2 (2000): 59.

effective in mission accomplishment and resource acquisition?”⁸ Art museum executive director’s roles are dependent on the organization; however, they should always be in line with the museums mission statement.

Historically the executive director’s responsibility was solely to the board of trustees.⁹ Art museum executive directors were responsible for taking the museums mission and directing a pathway for the museum to follow.¹⁰ The executive director’s role had been to lead and serve the organization and they had been expected to wear many hats splitting their time as a fundraiser, managing membership, developing operations, and expanding the museum.¹¹ Other responsibilities included hiring and firing staff, maintaining knowledge of the collection, and exhibition programming.¹² The role of an art museum executive director evolved as art museums progressed over time.

A shift began in the 1990’s when museums turned from being more than a warehouse space for objects, to complex organizations that placed a higher value on public engagement.¹³ Modern museums must strike a balance between corporate and community interests and needs.¹⁴ Nancy Kolb, former executive director of the Please Touch Museum in Philadelphia, spoke of the new breed of “hybrid directors” that had four main functions: “representing the museum,

⁸ David O. Renz and Robert D. Herman, *The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management*, Fourth ed. Essential Texts for Nonprofit and Public Leadership and Management (Hoboken, New Jersey: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Brand, 2016), 184.

⁹ Mark Walhimer. *Museums 101*. (Lanham; Boulder; New York; London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 23.

¹⁰ “Museum Staff Positions - Management, Development Careers, Administration.” JobMonkey. Accessed January 26, 2020. <https://www.jobmonkey.com/museumjobs/museum-management-administration/>.

¹¹ Sherene Suchy. *An International Study on the Director's Role in Art Museum Leadership*, 1998, PQDT - Global.

¹² Susan Kendzulak, “Art Museum Director Job Description: Salary, Skills, & More,” *The Balance Careers*, June 3, 2019, <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/job-profile-of-art-museum-director-1295357>.

¹³ Sherene Suchy. “An International Study on the Director's Role in Art Museum Leadership,” (PhD diss., University of Western Sydney, 1998), 16.

¹⁴ Ruth Rentschler and Gus Geursen, “Unlocking Art Museum Management: Myths and Realities for Contemporary Times.” *International Journal of Arts Management* 2, no. 1 (1999): 9.

acting as an advocate or cheerleader and team-builder, taking an entrepreneurial approach to fundraising, and managing the board of trustees.¹⁵

As the role of the executive director shifted, some things will never change. Executive directors should always be first loyal to the museum's mission. Museum staff report to the executive director and the executive director then reports everything to the board of trustees.¹⁶ Lastly, the success of the museum has depended on the ability and dedication of the executive director to inspire others and lead the organization with good judgement.¹⁷

Board of Trustees

A museum's board of trustees can be made up of any number of community members who meet regularly to vote on matters of the museum. Being on a board is a voluntary position and does not come with compensation.¹⁸ Board of trustee members have usually been chosen by museums because they either had a valued skill set, passion for the mission, or could provide large monetary donations. Board of trustee members should be reflective of the community they serve both culturally and ethnically.¹⁹ Board seats are not status symbols that require little to no work and there should be adequate turnover for fresh ideas.²⁰

¹⁵ Sherene Suchy. "Grooming New Millennium Museum Directors." *Museum International* 52, no. 2 (2000): 59.

¹⁶ "Museum Staff Positions - Management, Development Careers, Administration," JobMonkey, Accessed January 26, 2020, <https://www.jobmonkey.com/museumjobs/museum-management-administration/>.

¹⁷ Laurent Lapierre, "Leadership and Arts Management." *International Journal of Arts Management* 3, no. 3 (2001): 4.

¹⁸ Hugh H. Genoways, Lynne M. Ireland, and Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, *Museum Administration 2.0*. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 164-170.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 167.

²⁰ B. Joseph White, *Boards That Excel: Candid Insights and Practical Advice for Directors*. First ed. (BK Business Book. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2014).

As identified by the Management Consultants for the Arts, the most effective boards base their culture on two values: dedication to mission and commitment to collective leadership.²¹ Boards work collectively and value the contributions of everyone as the power of the board is as a group rather than individuals, since majority vote prevails.²² Challenging ideas and debate are essential for boards, whereas big egos and factions are detrimental.²³

Boards of trustees can be divided into committees such as fundraising, collections, building/grounds, governance/nominating, and finance.²⁴ Their main concern is their fiduciary duties.²⁵ Financial responsibilities include assuring the museum has an adequate internal accounting system, approving annual budgets, maintaining assets, and fundraising.²⁶ The board is also responsible for hiring and monitoring the executive director, risk management, evaluation of performance, and policy oversight.²⁷ Museum boards of trustees are mandated, not optional for museums, as they take legal responsibility for receiving grants, budgeting, and all major projects.²⁸ Board members are directed to act in good faith and in line with the organizations mission.²⁹

²¹ "The Board," Management Consultants for the Arts, accessed January 29, 2020.

<https://mcaonline.com/publications-the-board>.

²² Paula Cozzi Goedert, "Guide for Board Members," American Alliance of Museums, November 2, 2014,

<https://www.aam-us.org/2014/11/02/guide-for-board-members/>.

²³ B. Joseph White, *Boards That Excel: Candid Insights and Practical Advice for Directors*. First ed. (BK Business Book. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2014).

²⁴ "Museum Board Leadership 2017: A National Report," American Alliance of Museums, (2017): 14,

<https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/eyizzp-download-the-report.pdf>.

²⁵ Paula Cozzi Goedert, "Guide for Board Members," American Alliance of Museums, November 2, 2014,

<https://www.aam-us.org/2014/11/02/guide-for-board-members/>.

²⁶ "Museum Board Leadership 2017: A National Report," American Alliance of Museums, (2017): 1-36,

<https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/eyizzp-download-the-report.pdf>

²⁷ "The Board," Management Consultants for the Arts, accessed January 29, 2020.

<https://mcaonline.com/publications-the-board>.

²⁸ Laurent Lapierre, "Leadership and Arts Management." *International Journal of Arts Management* 3, no. 3 (2001): 10.

²⁹ Paula Cozzi Goedert, "Guide for Board Members," American Alliance of Museums, November 2, 2014,

<https://www.aam-us.org/2014/11/02/guide-for-board-members/>.

Board members' interaction with staff varies from museum to museum. At some institutions, only the executive director meets with the board. Sometimes they interact with high-level staff such as curators, development departments, and educators.³⁰ It is rare for trustees to know every member of staff and they seldom know every moving part of the museum. It is up to the individual museum to set a clear definition of roles and responsibilities for board members.³¹

Search Firms

Search firms can help museums small and large, across the country and internationally to find their new executive director.³² Firms find and recommended potential candidates who they feel are well suited for the position. There are countless firms who vie for museums to hire them to place their next executive director. Firms work on the behalf of their museum clients by vetting executive director aspirants. Firms review candidates by checking references, through research, and by conducting on-site visits.³³

Museum executive search committees have the option to choose the search firm they feel best fits their needs.³⁴ Some firms specialize in executive searches, other focus exclusively on

³⁰ Tara Young, "Tips for Trustees: So You Want to Work in a Museum?" Museum Trustee Association, November 29, 2019, <https://www.museumtrustee.org/tips-for-trustees>.

³¹ Lindsey Steward, "How to Work with Museum Boards: A Relationship Between Staff and the Board," Medium, November 9, 2017, <https://medium.com/@steward.lindsey/how-to-work-with-museum-boards-a-relationship-between-the-staff-and-the-board-5c1bf2779819>.

³² "Museum Search & Reference," Museum Search & Reference, accessed January 30, 2020, <https://museum-search.com/>.

³³ "Executive Search," Museum Management Consultants, accessed January 30, 2020, http://www.museum-management.com/executive_search/.

³⁴ "Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation Board of Trustees Announces Search Firm to Identify New Museum Director," *PR Newswire*, October 30, 2007, https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=wash_main&id=GALE|A170433296&v=2.1&it=r&sid=zotero&asid=3ccfbbe9.

museums and cultural centers.³⁵ The general search firm company follows the four basic steps: 1. understanding the client organizations wants, needs, mission and creating a position description; 2. search through their databases, networks, and research prospective hires; 3. interview candidates and provide sufficient information to the client organization; and 4. select persons to refer to the client and provide negotiation services.³⁶ Certain firms see themselves as matchmakers, recruiting leadership to find the right fit for the mission and culture of the organization.³⁷

Firms vary in how they go about their business. Some have a fixed fee for their service whereas others use a percentage of salary system.³⁸ Many firms offer guarantees and warranties for their services. For example, at Arts Consulting Group, if the selected candidate did not stay with the organization for a year, they would relaunch the search with no additional fees.³⁹ It is the objective of the search firm to please their museum board clients by successfully finding great leaders to meet the goals of the museum.⁴⁰

³⁵ "Executive Search," Museum Management Consultants, accessed January 30, 2020, http://www.museum-management.com/executive_search/.

³⁶ "Our Philosophy," Phillips Oppenheim, accessed January 30, 2020, <https://www.phillipsoppenheim.com/who-we-are/>.

³⁷ "Executive Search," Management Consultants for the Arts, accessed January 30, 2020, <https://mcaonline.com/executive-search>.

³⁸ "Museum Search & Reference," Museum Search & Reference, accessed January 30, 2020, <https://museum-search.com/>.

³⁹ "Executive Search," Arts Consulting Group, accessed January 30, 2020, <https://artsconsulting.com/services/executive-search/>.

⁴⁰ "About Us: Mission & History," m/Oppenheim Executive Search, accessed January 30, 2020, <https://www.moppenheim.com/about-us/>.

Section 2

Behavioral Economics

To explain how individuals make decisions, the present study utilized the field of behavioral economics. Behavioral economics, also known as judgement and decision-making, is defined by Dan Ariely as a field of study that draws on aspects of both psychology and economics.⁴¹ He separated behavioral economics from the field of economics because economics theory relies on humans making rational decisions; however, Ariely explained that behavioral economics is about humans distance from perfection.⁴² Daniel Kahneman broke down people's decision-making into two systems of thinking. System 1 is comprised of decisions that are automatic; the mind makes them with little effort and no sense of voluntary control.⁴³ System 2 decisions take mental effort, complex calculations, and are often associated with the experience of choice.⁴⁴

Kahneman set out to “improve the ability to identify and understand errors of judgement and choice.”⁴⁵ He wanted to give people a “language” to discuss these errors of judgement in themselves and others; as well as the capacity to intervene and limit the poor choices that individuals make. In his two-system approach, Kahneman found that people tend to believe they are System 2 thinkers.⁴⁶ He stated that, we want to think we are conscious, reasoning people that make clear choices about what we think and do. Further Kahneman described that System 2

⁴¹ Dan Ariely, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2009), xviii.

⁴² *Ibid.*, xix.

⁴³ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 20.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

makes choices often endorsing or rationalizing ideas generated by System 1.⁴⁷ System 1 is where a majority of decisions come from.⁴⁸ System 1 can automatically generate surprisingly complex patterns of ideas in a rapid pace.⁴⁹

These ideas from Ariely and Kahneman will guide this section of the literature review. Both Ariely and Kahneman's books were found in a literature review, "Looking a Gift Horse in the Mouth: Decision-Making About Acquisitions at Community Historical Organizations," by Brendan McCauley and used to begin research on behavioral economics.⁵⁰ Ariely and Kahneman are reputable experts in the field and their books respectively, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces that Shape Our Decisions* and *Thinking Fast and Slow*, were vital to the understanding of the field of behavioral economics. These books were chosen not only because they are highly respected in the field of behavioral economics, but also because they are written for a mass audience and do not require a scientific background for comprehension.

Importantly, while much of behavioral economics frames human decision-making as irrational, Kahneman disagreed with the assertion that humans are irrational for their imperfect systems of decision-making.⁵¹ He agreed that people are not always rational but felt the word irrational implied impulsivity and stubborn resistance to rational thought. Rather, Kahneman viewed humans as not ascribing to the rational-agent economic model altogether. Ariely went past the behavioral economics observation that people are irrational and argued people are

⁴⁷ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 415.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 416.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵⁰ Brendan McCauley, "Looking a Gift Horse in the Mouth: Decision-Making About Acquisitions at Community Historical Organizations" (Masters diss., University of Washington, 2016) <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1844057898/>.

⁵¹ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 411.

predictably irrational.⁵² He claimed that human irrationality happened repetitively and therefore can be predicted. Ariely argued that although we are irrational and do not follow conventional economic theory, it is not a bad thing. Rather psychology should be challenged by the relatively new field of behavioral economics and adopt the understanding of irrationality.⁵³

When it comes to decision-making, Kahneman has found that complexity makes people inconsistent in assessing information to assist them in making a decision.⁵⁴ There are a lot of factors that go into a decision, many of which are invisible to people.⁵⁵ Ariely described the same phenomena as “we are pawns in a game whose forces we largely fail to comprehend.”⁵⁶ He further explained that people feel they are in control of decisions, but that is a perception of reality that we want to experience. Our minds tend to underestimate or ignore influences of emotion, relativity, and social norms on our behavior.⁵⁷

According to Ariely, our brains are fooled by visual illusions.⁵⁸ He explained that we fall for “decision illusions” that our brain shows us. Our eyes filter information to the brain and by the time we comprehend, it is not a true reflection of reality. Rather, it is our created representation of reality and this is what people base decisions on. Ariely concluded, “we are limited to the tools nature has given us, and the natural way in which we make decisions is limited by the quality and accuracy of these tools.”⁵⁹

⁵² Dan Ariely, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2009), xx.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, xx.

⁵⁴ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 224.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁶ Dan Ariely, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2009), 321.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 321.

In Kahneman's two systems when information is limited, which is a common occurrence, we tend to jump to conclusions through System 1 thinking.⁶⁰ Further, System 2 decisions often get reverted to System 1 as the brain is constrained and being efficient.⁶¹ Humans want to use intuition and make easy decisions that cause the brain less stress. We experience conflict when we resist our intuition; therefore, we rely more on instinct than deliberate thought.⁶²

Heuristics are a major concept within the field of behavioral economics. Heuristics are defined by Kahneman as "a simple procedure that helps find adequate, though often imperfect, answers to difficult questions."⁶³ They are simplified rules of thumb that help in decision-making⁶⁴ which allows people to generate intuitive opinions on complex matters.⁶⁵ Heuristics are useful to simplify decision-making but are flawed and could lead to mistakes when overapplied. An example of simplifying a question with heuristics is when a person is asked, "How much would you contribute to save an endangered species," but they really answer the question "How much emotion do I feel when I think of a dying dolphin?"⁶⁶ The human mind does not realize that we are utilizing heuristics to simplify the process by substituting an easier question.⁶⁷

Kahneman discussed an example of a heuristic thought process where a person is optimistic about a project because something about the project's leader reminded the person of their sister whom they greatly admire.⁶⁸ Another person may dislike someone because they looked remotely like their pain inducing dentist. When asked for an explanation these two people

⁶⁰ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 85.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 66.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 415.

will search their memory and come up with plausible stories for their optimism for the project or dislike of the person. Their stories will even convince the people telling them; however, they do not get to the deep reason as to how the decision was made. Kahneman explained that there is no simple way for people to distinguish between a skilled answer and a natural heuristic response.⁶⁹

Ariely reinsured that irrational behavior is not senseless and that systematic behavior helps us in our everyday lives.⁷⁰ From activities such as catching a ball from distance where one must instantly calculate its speed and trajectory while simultaneously moving our body and hands to make the catch. We also use behavioral economics to decide what to eat from a large menu in seconds. Kahneman further determined that “judgement heuristics are quite useful.”⁷¹

After understanding behavioral economics, Ariely hoped people can use the lessons of irrationality to avoid erroneous decisions.⁷² Erroneous decisions in low-stakes contexts are unfortunate but not detrimental; however, in high-stakes situations, such as hiring, these decisions can be very impactful. He believed people could be more vigilant about making decisions and force themselves to think differently. Similarly, Kahneman hoped his behavior economic and heuristic studies helped people accurately diagnosis and plan intervention strategies to limit the harm improper judgement can cause.⁷³ Kahneman stated the way to avoid System 1 errors is to recognize the “cognitive minefield,” slow down, and recruit reinforcements from System 2.⁷⁴ Both Ariely and Kahneman’s solutions sound simple, but it is very difficult to

⁶⁹ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 417.

⁷⁰ Dan Ariely, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2009), xviii.

⁷¹ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 10.

⁷² Dan Ariely, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2009), 322.

⁷³ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 417.

identify when you are in a cognitive dilemma, it is much easier for outsiders to observe the “minefield”.

Behavior decision researchers Dolly Chugh and Max Bazerman specifically examined how group decision-making is affected by behavioral economics. They agreed with Ariely and Kahneman that there are systematic ways in which people depart from rationality.⁷⁵ Chugh and Bazerman also found that people often failed to perceive and process stimuli that was available to them. Further, they wrote that people over focused on certain details and ignored other easily available information. The advantage that groups have is they can collectively possess more data than one person.⁷⁶ However, where groups fail is, they tend to focus on shared information they all have, rather than highlighting the unique information they individually gather. Groups tend to reinforce and strengthen their beliefs in this shared information, regardless if it is precise. This inherently reduces the advantage of the group in decision-making. The paradox emerges of groups being created to share exclusive information, yet they devote their attention to commonly held information.⁷⁷

Biases

According to Kahneman, the reliance of heuristics causes predictable biases.⁷⁸ Systematic errors are known as biases because in particular circumstances they reoccur predictably.⁷⁹ An example given by Kahneman describes a man named Steve who is “very shy and withdrawn,

⁷⁵ Dolly Chugh and Max Bazerman, “Bounded Awareness: What You Fail to See Can Hurt You,” *Mind and Society* 6, no. 1 (2007): 2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁸ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 7.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

invariably helpful but with little interest in people or in the world of reality.”⁸⁰ He asked people whether they thought Steve was more likely to be a librarian or a farmer. Most people said librarian although in the United States there are 20 male farmers for every male librarian. Kahneman found people used stereotypes and gave a biased answer rather than relying on statistical data. Kahneman attributed much of biases to implicit thought.⁸¹ He also acknowledged that the dependence and prevalence of biases were not restricted to the average person, experienced researchers are similarly prone to the same biases.

Marianne Brand, Dolly Chugh, and Sendhil Mullainathan acknowledged three types of discrimination. The first two “taste-based” and “statistical” discrimination are done consciously; whereas the third, implicit discrimination (outside of conscious awareness) is unintentionally.⁸² The discovery of implicit discrimination has been made possibly through the Implicit Association Test. Through the online test, researchers can measure implicit mental processes that cannot be obtained in other data collection methods, where people can be dishonest or convince themselves of untrue responses.⁸³

Taken together, this reliance on fast decision-making through System 1 and implicit discrimination has the potential to guide erroneous or flawed decision making in high-stakes contexts such as hiring. Scholars Juan M. Madera and Michelle R. Hebl reported that employment decisions can be affected by a candidate’s perfume/cologne, dress, race, gender,

⁸⁰ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 7.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 430.

⁸² Marianne Bertrand, Dolly Chugh, and Sendhil Mullainathan, “Implicit Discrimination,” *American Economic Review* 95, no. 2 (2005): 94.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 95.

socioeconomics, religion, physical imperfections, or disability.⁸⁴ The next section of the literature review will focus on gender, race, and appearance biases in the context of hiring.

Gender

Madeline E. Heilman wrote that women are at a disadvantage when hiring decisions are made and when starting salaries are set.⁸⁵ Professors Lani Guinier and Martha Minow have found that gender biases often mirror the overall culture, organizational structures, and power dynamics of institutions.⁸⁶ They wrote that bias among decision makers around hiring and promoting individuals often surrounds peer pressure, dominant rituals, and unspoken habits of thought. They established that gender bias was often unconscious and unintentional, but followed the established patterns engrained in society and institution.⁸⁷ Guinier and Minow also wrote that legal norms designed to limit gender biases in hiring reinforced gender prejudice. By dividing applicant pools into two groups, it further separated them in people's minds.

In a study by Caroline E. Eichinger, she noted the trend that women have been historically discriminated upon in leadership positions due to present biases that women would be more dedicated to having and raising families.⁸⁸ Heilman has found that traditional stereotypes depict women as lacking in achievement-oriented traits.⁸⁹ She also reported that competence, independence, vigor, competitiveness, and ambition are associated with men and

⁸⁴ Juan M. Madera and Michelle R. Hebl, "Discrimination Against Facially Stigmatized Applicants in Interviews: An Eye-Tracking and Face Investigation," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 97, no. 2 (2012): 317.

⁸⁵ Madeline E. Heilman, "The impact of situational factors on personnel decisions concerning women: Varying the sex composition of the applicant pool," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 26, no. 3 (1980): 386.

⁸⁶ Lani Guinier and Martha Minow, "Dynamism, Not Just Diversity," *Harvard journal of Law & Gender* 30 (2007): 270.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁸⁸ Caroline E. Eichinger, "Racial, Ethnic and Gender Diversity of the U.S. Museum Workforce: Trends, Implications and Solutions" (Masters diss. University of Colorado Boulder, 2007), 16.

⁸⁹ Madeline E. Heilman, "The impact of situational factors on personnel decisions concerning women: Varying the sex composition of the applicant pool," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 26, no. 3 (1980): 386.

not women. Even when women have identical qualifications and backgrounds, they are viewed as less desirable for some jobs than their male counterparts. Heilman has found the divide between genders was more exaggerated when a job is embedded with masculine qualities such as a managerial or leadership position.⁹⁰

In an influential study, Heilman tested her theories on people's perception of females applying for managerial positions.⁹¹ The study had 100 MBA students (half male and half female) evaluate a female candidate for a managerial job position. Evaluators were given eight near identical resumes and asked to evaluate the same female candidate. Some participants were given only the one female resume and seven male, others had two, three, four, or all eight resumes with female names. Heilman found that the number of female applicants did influence participants decision-making. When fewer than two, or 25% of applicants, were female, the selected female fared much worse than when at least three, or over 37.5% of applicants, were female. Heilman concluded that gender discrimination occurred in hiring and can be influenced by situational factors, such as the diversity of the candidate pool.

Race

Eichinger shared that there is a striking discrepancy between employment and the kinds of jobs held based on gender and race.⁹² She stated that ethnic and racial biases exist for all minority groups.⁹³ Researchers Sonia K. Kang, Katherine A. DeCelles, András Tilcsik, and Sora Jun noted that “employment discrimination is a critical process through which organizations can

⁹⁰ Madeline E. Heilman, “The impact of situational factors on personnel decisions concerning women: Varying the sex composition of the applicant pool,” *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 26, no. 3 (1980): 387.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 388.

⁹² Caroline E. Eichinger, “Racial, Ethnic and Gender Diversity of the U.S. Museum Workforce: Trends, Implications and Solutions” (Masters diss. University of Colorado Boulder, 2007), iv.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 24.

shape the extent and nature of economic inequality in society.”⁹⁴ They said even among calls for equal opportunity and diversity initiatives, discrimination on the basis of race continued to be prevalent in North American employment markets.

To test their theory of implicit discrimination on race, Bertrand, Chugh, and Mullainathan assigned hiring managers to choose 15 top candidates from 50 resumes.⁹⁵ The researchers manipulated candidates’ names on the resumes to be either white-sounding or African American sounding. The managers were also asked to take the Implicit Association Test to determine if they have negative stereotypes about African Americans intelligence relative to White Americans. The preliminary results of the study showed “a negative correlation between the number of African American resumes selected by a given subject and that subject's implicit attitude about intelligence in blacks and whites (where negative scores indicate an association between African American and unintelligent).”

Similar to the study of Bertrand, Chugh, and Mullainathan; Kang, DeCelles, Tilcsik, and Jun examined the extent to which candidates perceived organizations hold implicit biases and aimed to prevent these biases from affecting candidates outcomes.⁹⁶ They examined the practice of “resume whitening”, which is a phenomenon where job seekers of color conceal or dial back racial cues on their resumes.⁹⁷ These attempts to avoid anticipated discrimination on the job market were studied using mixed methodologies, including interviews, a laboratory experiment, and a resume audit. In their studies they coded whitening techniques as being either one or a

⁹⁴ Sonia K. Kang, Katherine A. DeCelles, András Tilcsik, and Sora Jun, “Whitened Résumés: Race and Self-Presentation in the Labor Market,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2016): 469.

⁹⁵ Marianne Bertrand, Dolly Chugh, and Sendhil Mullainathan, “Implicit Discrimination,” *American Economic Review* 95, no. 2 (2005): 95.

⁹⁶ Sonia K. Kang, Katherine A. DeCelles, András Tilcsik, and Sora Jun, “Whitened Résumés: Race and Self-Presentation in the Labor Market,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2016): 469.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 470.

combination of altering one's name, omitting race-salient experiences, changing the description of experiences, or adding "white" experiences.⁹⁸ In the interviews 36% of interviewees (40% of Asian respondents and 31% of African American respondents) reported engaging in resume whitening.⁹⁹ There may be good reason for these efforts as in the resume audit, they discovered that Asians and African Americans saw 30-50% fewer callbacks from employers when their resumes contained minority racial cues.¹⁰⁰ These statistically significant results proved the presence of racial bias in employer's decision-making.

Appearance

Many studies have been conducted to test the effect of physical appearance on hiring. Madera and Hebl have focused their study on facial stigmas. They defined stigmas as an "attribute or characteristic that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular context of society."¹⁰¹ Madera and Hebl conducted two studies to determine the effect of applicants having a scar or port-wine stain on their face. The first study measured the visual attention of employers during a computer interview with an applicant with or without a facial stigma. Using eye tracker technology and interviews with employers, the researchers found participants who viewed a facially stigmatized candidate rated the applicant lower and recalled less interview information.¹⁰² The second study was an in-person interview with an applicant with a facial

⁹⁸ Sonia K. Kang, Katherine A. DeCelles, András Tilcsik, and Sora Jun, "Whitened Résumés: Race and Self-Presentation in the Labor Market," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2016): 475.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 474.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 491.

¹⁰¹ Juan M. Madera and Michelle R. Hebl, "Discrimination Against Facially Stigmatized Applicants in Interviews: An Eye-Tracking and Face Investigation," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 97, no. 2 (2012): 318.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 321.

stigma. The results validated the first study showing that applicants with a facial stigma were rated lower¹⁰³ and interviewers recalled less from the interview.¹⁰⁴

Madeline E. Heilman and Lois R. Saruwatari conducted a study to explore the effects of appearance on applicants applying for managerial positions. They cited the increasing amount of data demonstrating the importance of physical attractiveness in a wide assortment of situations.¹⁰⁵ Heilman and Saruwatari set out to test the relevance of bias in favor of attractiveness in hiring decisions and employee potential. Their study involved participants evaluating several interested candidates in a managerial or nonmanagerial job positions.¹⁰⁶ Heilman and Saruwatari found that attractiveness consistently proved to be an advantage for males but was only advantageous for females when applying to nonmanagerial jobs and disadvantageous when seeking managerial positions.¹⁰⁷ These results were found when rating a candidates qualification, suggested starting salary, and hiring preferences.¹⁰⁸

Lastly, Jens Agerström studied the effect of height on hiring decision-making. He named research that showed the existence of height premium in the workplace with tallness in individuals being perceived as intelligent, dominant, and “leader-like.”¹⁰⁹ He explained the bias came from the animal kingdom where physical size has aided as a proxy for power, status, and respect. In his experiment, Agerström digitally altered photographs of applicants to make them

¹⁰³ Juan M. Madera and Michelle R. Hebl, “Discrimination Against Facially Stigmatized Applicants in Interviews: An Eye-Tracking and Face Investigation,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 97, no. 2 (2012): 325.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 326.

¹⁰⁵ Madeline E. Heilman and Lois R. Saruwatari, “When Beauty Is Beastly: The Effects of Appearance and Sex on Evaluations of Job Applicants for Managerial and Nonmanagerial Jobs,” *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 23, no. 3 (1979): 360.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 362.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 360.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 369.

¹⁰⁹ Jens Agerström, “Why Does Height Matter in Hiring?” *Journal of Behavioral Experimental Economics* 52 (2014): 35.

taller or shorter and sent the photos with applications to professional recruiters. His study established that when hiring a project leader, recruiters saw tallness in applicants as increased general competence, employability, and physical health. He framed the noteworthiness of an eight centimeter difference in applicants height as sufficient to create a significant effect on professional recruiters' decisions.¹¹⁰ Agerström ended his study leaving readers pondering the important question “if we cannot get rid of discrimination that stems from something as trivial as height, how could we ever hope to combat race or gender discrimination?”

Michael I. Norton, Joseph A. Vandello, and John M. Darley have found in their research that people attempted to avoid the appearance of bias when making decisions.¹¹¹ Humans will mask their decision by espousing attributes that support a preferred decision through reordering the importance of qualities. In studies they have found when asked what qualities managers are looking for in a promotion candidate, managers have a certain hierarchy of desired qualities. After deciding on the candidate to promote, the list may change based on the qualities the chosen candidate possesses.

Norton, Vandello, and Darley also discovered that in decisions that make people choose across social categories, people strive to be objective and unbiased, but people are still motivated to arrive at a desired outcome.¹¹² This led people to either favor in-group members or the opposite where they prioritized underrepresented groups. In their study people were given a choice of watching a movie with either a handicapped person or a nonhandicapped individual.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Jens Agerström, “Why Does Height Matter in Hiring?” *Journal of Behavioral Experimental Economics* 52 (2014): 38.

¹¹¹ Michael I. Norton, Joseph A. Vandello, and John M. Darley, “Casuistry and Social Category Bias,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 87, no. 6 (2004): 817.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 818.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 819.

When the two people were watching different movies, participants felt comfortable choosing the nonhandicapped individual, claiming they were doing so because the movie seemed more appealing, thereby covering their bias. However, when the movies were the same, most people chose to sit with the handicapped individual, as this situation did not provide cover for their bias and so they engaged in the socially-approved behavior. Norton, Vandello, and Darley determined that people look for reasons to appear unbiased.¹¹⁴

Biases are not always negative in hiring decisions. Agerström cites the Stereotype Content Model, proposed originally by Amy J. C. Cuddy and Susan T. Fiske,¹¹⁵ that suggests stereotypes are not uniformly positive or negative.¹¹⁶ He gave the example of studied stereotype that Asians and Jews are seen positively as competent but seen negatively in terms of warmth. Although these stereotypes are “positive”, John Oliver Siy and Sapne Cheryan caution against positive stereotypes as they are still prejudiced and dehumanize individuals.¹¹⁷

Finally, Guinier and Minow reinforced that no individual alone is the problem or can solve the problem of biased decision-making.¹¹⁸ Individuals should work to take steps addressing their own biases and recognizing when they make biased decisions. Kahneman echoed that

¹¹⁴ Michael I. Norton, Joseph A. Vandello, and John M. Darley, “Casuistry and Social Category Bias,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 87, no. 6 (2004): 819.

¹¹⁵ Amy J.C. Cuddy and Susan T. Fiske, “Stereotype content model across cultures: Towards universal similarities and some differences,” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 48, no. 1 (2011).

¹¹⁶ Jens Agerström, “Why Does Height Matter in Hiring?” *Journal of Behavioral Experimental Economics* 52 (2014): 35.

¹¹⁷ John Oliver Siy and Sapne Cheryan, “Prejudice Masquerading as Praise: The Negative Echo of Positive Stereotypes,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 42, no. 7 (2016): 942.

¹¹⁸ Lani Guinier and Martha Minow, “Dynamism, Not Just Diversity,” *Harvard journal of Law & Gender* 30 (2007): 277.

biases are systematic errors that all humans routinely make.¹¹⁹ He suggested individuals actively attempt to slow down their decision-making to limit the harm of flawed judgements.¹²⁰

Section 3

Desired Traits

According to the literature, there are several factors that drive the search for an art museum executive director. Executive searches depend on the size of the museum, collection focus, institutional support, exiting executive director, museum's needs, and countless other factors.¹²¹ When asked what museums are looking for in a leader, the answer is often revealed in the position description and espoused by the museum's values and mission statement. Some reoccurring traits and skills that appear in research were passion, charisma, knowledge of art, and business acumen such as management and fundraising.

Many hiring executive search committees looked for passion as a top quality in their next executive director.¹²² In an international study conducted by Dr. Suchy, she found the foremost critical trait to museum leadership was passion. Suchy defined passion from art museum executive directors as a deep feeling in one's heart for their work. Passion propels an executive director daily and drives the vision of the organization. Dr. Suchy suggested that passion goes hand in hand with high energy and emotional intelligence.¹²³ Susan Kendzulak echoed Dr. Suchy

¹¹⁹ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 3.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²¹ Anne Marie Gan, Zannie Giraud Voss, Lisa Phillips, Christine Anagnos, and Alison D. Wade, "The Gender Gap in Art Museum Directorships," *Association of Art Museum Directors*, 2014, 8, https://aamd.org/sites/default/files/document/The%20Gender%20Gap%20in%20Art%20Museum%20Directorships_0.pdf.

¹²² Sherene Suchy, "Emotional Intelligence, Passion and Museum Leadership," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 18, no. 1 (1999): 57.

¹²³ Sherene Suchy, "Grooming New Millennium Museum Directors," *Museum International* 52, no. 2 (2000): 59.

by writing that passion for the job was extremely vital for an executive director.¹²⁴ She explained that passion is helpful in all facets of museum work from interacting with patrons to staff.

Dr. Suchy also identified charisma as making an impactful difference for museum executive directors. Research by Melissa Nisbett and Ben Walmsley found charisma was important in engaging staff, driving vision, exciting donors, and boosting admission.¹²⁵ Kristen Bruch found that charisma was a skill that is important for executive directors to strike a delicate balance in their daily museum management.¹²⁶ Charisma itself is a delicate trait that needs to be utilized correctly, and when used correctly is a great asset to art museum executive directors.¹²⁷

According to Dr. Suchy, art museum executive directors have traditionally come from a background of art history.¹²⁸ She wrote “museum directors have traditionally been described through the trait theory approach, born as curators and selected as directors based on best scholarly qualification.” Many experts still see this path as the best for aspiring executive directors. Bruch found trustees still believe “it makes more sense to train art historians to be managers than to train administrators – who are not naturally inclined toward the visual arts – to understand and be sympathetic to art or to comprehend the role of the museum.”¹²⁹

Business skills such as fundraising and management, are a large part of the executive director position.¹³⁰ Art museums themselves are businesses. Museums have begun to expand

¹²⁴ Susan Kendzulak, “Art Museum Director Job Description: Salary, Skills, & More,” *The Balance Careers*, June 3, 2019, <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/job-profile-of-art-museum-director-1295357>.

¹²⁵ Melissa Nisbett and Ben Walmsley, “The Romanization of Charismatic Leadership in the Arts,” *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 46, no. 1 (2016): 3.

¹²⁶ Kristin Bruch, “An Analysis of Art Museum Directors, 1990-2010” (Masters diss., American University, 2011), 6.

¹²⁷ Melissa Nisbett and Ben Walmsley, “The Romanization of Charismatic Leadership in the Arts,” *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 46, no. 1 (2016): 2.

¹²⁸ Sherene Suchy, “Grooming New Millennium Museum Directors,” *Museum International* 52, no. 2 (2000): 59.

¹²⁹ Kristin Bruch, “An Analysis of Art Museum Directors, 1990-2010” (Masters diss., American University, 2011), 1.

¹³⁰ Susan Kendzulak, “Art Museum Director Job Description: Salary, Skills, & More,” *The Balance Careers*, June 3, 2019, <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/job-profile-of-art-museum-director-1295357>.

hiring individuals from business and other nonprofit organizations.¹³¹ Dr. Suchy has seen that since the 1990s, an increasing reference has been made for the need of business management skills to effectively lead an art museum.¹³² Boards want candidates who have experience with leadership, entrepreneurship, fundraising, and marketing.

Research has shown that executive directors who excel are good communicators, have¹³³ extreme loyalty, are confident, creative, patient.¹³⁴ Association of Academic Museums and Galleries (AAMG) advises boards to look for candidates that combine academic and curatorial knowledge with business acumen.¹³⁵ James Abruzzo, managing director of DHR International executive search firm, suggested that museums need to evaluate all their stakeholders before they begin their search.¹³⁶ That could mean the involvement of museum funders or community members in the search. American Alliance of Museums (AAM) reminds museums that their hiring practices are reflective of the museum's values.¹³⁷ AAM suggests that museums examine their practices and take the bias out of hiring. AAMG reinforces Abruzzo and AAM's sentiments by encouraging executive search committees to reflect the museum's core stakeholders.¹³⁸

¹³¹ Kristin Bruch, "An Analysis of Art Museum Directors, 1990-2010" (Masters diss., American University, 2011), 6.

¹³² Sherene Suchy, "Grooming New Millennium Museum Directors," *Museum International* 52, no. 2 (2000): 59.

¹³³ Kristin Bruch, "An Analysis of Art Museum Directors, 1990-2010" (Masters diss., American University, 2011), 6.

¹³⁴ Anne Marie Gan, Zannie Giraud Voss, Lisa Phillips, Christine Anagnos, and Alison D. Wade, "The Gender Gap in Art Museum Directorships," *Association of Art Museum Directors*, 2014, 8, https://aamd.org/sites/default/files/document/The%20Gender%20Gap%20in%20Art%20Museum%20Directorships_0.pdf.

¹³⁵ Jill Hartz and David Alan Robertson, "AAMG Recommendation for Hiring an Academic Museum Director," *Association of Academic Museums and Galleries*, November 15, 2014, 1, <https://aamg-us.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/AAMG-Hiring-Advice.pdf>.

¹³⁶ James Abruzzo, "Selecting the Ideal Museum Director," *DHR International*, December 2013, 4, https://www.dhrinternational.com/files/3213/9120/3631/Museum_Director_Whitepaper.pdf.

¹³⁷ "Equitable Hiring Practices," American Alliance of Museums, accessed May 18, 2020, <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/resource-library/equitable-hiring/>.

¹³⁸ Jill Hartz and David Alan Robertson, "AAMG Recommendation for Hiring an Academic Museum Director," *Association of Academic Museums and Galleries*, November 15, 2014, 2, <https://aamg-us.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/AAMG-Hiring-Advice.pdf>.

Abruzzo noted that an executive director does not have to be an expert in everything as the museum has other staff members who have different skills they can contribute.¹³⁹ For example, the executive director does not need to be prolific in medieval art if there is skilled European curator at their disposal. Further, he addressed that there is no one formula that will guarantee success of an executive director.¹⁴⁰ Every search will be different, and it is the responsibility of the board of trustees to select the ideal executive director for the future success of the museum.

Today's Executive Directors

In 2010, Bruch presented statistical information on the current art museum executive directors across the United States that included data on age, gender, degree level, and field of degree. The average age of executive directors was 57.01 years old with over 77% in the 50-69 age range.¹⁴¹ Of executive directors, 38.29% were female and 61.71% were male.¹⁴² The highest education levels ranged with 41.76% having a doctorate and 46.29% had a master's degree.¹⁴³ Art history was the largest field executive directors had their degree, making up 64.81%.¹⁴⁴ The next most common degrees were 7.41% fine art, 4.94% history, 3.70% museum studies, 3.70%, American studies, 3.09% dual art and business, and 2.47% business.

In 2017, the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) published a report on the gender gap facing art museum executive directors. Their study showed women held 42.6% of art

¹³⁹ James Abruzzo, "Selecting the Ideal Museum Director," *DHR International*, December 2013, 3, https://www.dhrinternational.com/files/3213/9120/3631/Museum_Director_Whitepaper.pdf.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴¹ Kristin Bruch, "An Analysis of Art Museum Directors, 1990-2010" (Masters diss., American University, 2011), 21.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

museum executive directorships.¹⁴⁵ They also found that female executive directors earned 79 cents for every dollar their male counterparts earned. In her study, Eichinger, saw the museum field lagging behind other industries in gender and racial equality.¹⁴⁶ She noted that the heads of art museums were overwhelmingly white males. Eichinger continued to acknowledge that museums represented cultural diversity in their collections and exhibits yet fail to do so in their internal hierarchies.¹⁴⁷

Museum Trends

The position of an art museum executive director has changed drastically over time. Bruch presented six distinct types of executive directors throughout history.¹⁴⁸ They are the universalist-impresario, the nation builder, the disciplinary specialist, the social lion, the blockbuster energizer, and the corporate art mixologist. See Table 1 below for descriptions and examples.

¹⁴⁵ Anne Marie Gan, Zannie Giraud Voss, Lisa Phillips, Christine Anagnos, and Alison D. Wade, "The Gender Gap in Art Museum Directorships," *Association of Art Museum Directors*, 2014, 4, https://aamd.org/sites/default/files/document/The%20Gender%20Gap%20in%20Art%20Museum%20Directorships_0.pdf.

¹⁴⁶ Caroline E. Eichinger, "Racial, Ethnic and Gender Diversity of the U.S. Museum Workforce: Trends, Implications and Solutions" (Masters diss. University of Colorado Boulder, 2007), iii.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁴⁸ Kristin Bruch, "An Analysis of Art Museum Directors, 1990-2010" (Masters diss., American University, 2011), 8.

Table 1. Director Types

Director type	Defining characteristics	Examples	Time period
The Universalist- Impresario	Exhibits broad personal collections, including art and natural history objects Opened to the public Creative enthusiasm for collection, works to increase public interest through entertainment and public financial support	Charles Wilson Peale P.T.Barnum	Early-Mid 19th Century
The Nation Builder	Interested in establishing eternal legacy and bettering society through art appreciation and education	Henry Clay Frick (Collection Opened 1935) Andrew Mellon (1937 Bequest)	Mid 19th- Mid 20th Century
The Disciplinary Specialist	Rigorous art history education Committed to academic, educational exhibitions to improve and advance art knowledge	Alfred Barr (MoMA, 1929–1943)	Early 20th Century
The Social Lion	Strong fundraiser, collection builder, politician wooer	Fiske Kimball (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1925–1950)	Early-Mid 20th Century
The Blockbuster Energizer	Larger than life, publicity-driven personality Produces large, costly, and potentially controversial exhibitions to attract mass audiences	Thomas Hoving (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1967–1977)	Mid-Late 20th Century
The Corporate Art Mixologist	Focuses on efficiencies and attracting audience members Approaches the museum with a corporate mindset	Thomas Krens (Guggenheim, 1988–2008)	Late 20th Century

Bruch illustrated how art museums have transitioned from enthusiast collectors wanting to share their collections, to art encyclopedias, to organizations run equally as a business and cultural center. As Dr. Suchy wrote, contemporary executives need to “support business development while developing a climate for the business of creativity.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Sherene Suchy, "Grooming New Millennium Museum Directors," *Museum International* 52, no. 2 (2000): 59.

Julia Halperin reported on the effects of the recession of 2008 and how it helped shape the future of the museum world.¹⁵⁰ Before the financial collapse, museums were expanding and there was a building boom. In financial crisis, trustees looked for executives who could run museums like corporations and “keep the lights on.” Halperin quoted Olga Viso, executive director of the Walker Arts Center, “I think we are evolving from a period of expansion to a period of sustainability. Being conscious of your community is a rapidly growing concern. Twenty years ago, an executive director did not have to balance as many constituencies as we do today.”¹⁵¹

In her article, Halperin addressed the aging of United States art museum executive directors and the vacancies soon to be left for a new generation. Her data from 2015 predicted that 60 out of 150 art museum executive directors will have retired by 2019.¹⁵² She expected to see more first-time executive directors and an increased push for focus on community. Dr. Suchy wrote about the “new breed” of art museum executive directors, who can adapt to change and seize opportunities.¹⁵³ She predicted the way to prepare the new generation of museum leaders is through mentoring.¹⁵⁴ Dr. Suchy hoped to see current museum leaders, especially females, mentoring the next group of leaders to guide art museums.

¹⁵⁰ Julia Halperin, “As a generation of directors reaches retirement, fresh faces prepare to take over US museums,” *Russell Reynolds Associate*, June 2, 2015, <https://www.russellreynolds.com/newsroom/as-a-generation-of-directors-reaches-retirement-fresh-faces-prepare-to-take-over-us-museums>.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Sherene Suchy, “Grooming New Millennium Museum Directors,” *Museum International* 52, no. 2 (2000): 59.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

While there are current gaps in art museum executive director representation, there are reasons to be optimistic. According to AAM, 80% of museum studies students are female.¹⁵⁵ AAMD reported in their interviews they have seen rapid changes surrounding gender bias in the past ten years.¹⁵⁶ AAMD expressed optimism that art museums will make large advances towards equality.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Hannah J. Pfaltzgraff, "Closing the Gap: Identifying Leadership Strategies used by Women in the Museum Field" (Masters diss., University of Washington, 2019), 15.

¹⁵⁶ Anne Marie Gan, Zannie Giraud Voss, Lisa Phillips, Christine Anagnos, and Alison D. Wade, "The Gender Gap in Art Museum Directorships," *Association of Art Museum Directors*, 2014, 2, https://aamd.org/sites/default/files/document/The%20Gender%20Gap%20in%20Art%20Museum%20Directorships_0.pdf.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the decision-making process of art museums when hiring executive directors. For the purpose of this study, phenomenology is defined as qualitative research where the researcher describes the lived encounter of individuals who all experience a similar phenomenon.¹⁵⁸ In this case, all participants experienced the phenomenon of searching for an art museum executive director. The data collection process began with crafting a research instrument, locating interview participants, conducting interviews, and coding interview data for analysis.

Research Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the method of research, as they provided in-depth insight about the experience of those tasked with searching for an art museum executive director. The semi-structured nature allowed for a more comfortable conversation and the ability to ask follow-up questions. The format of the instrument began with background information on the participant and then followed the basic steps of the hiring process. The final draft of the instrument questions can be found in the appendix (See Appendix A for Instrument Protocol).

After creating the instrument, it was submitted for University of Washington Internal Review Board (IRB) for exemption. Once IRB was successfully completed, recruitment of participants began.

¹⁵⁸ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014), 14.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

This study focused on art museums with at least a \$5 million annual budget. Another parameter was an executive search took place in the last six years. Recruitment emails with identical information were sent to museums executive directors and search firms requesting to interview a board of trustee or search firm consultant who was involved in an executive search fitting the parameters. Institution names will be used in this study; however, individual names will not be identified.

Art museums that fit the requirements were found online by conducting a web search for art museums that recently hired a new executive director. Those museums were then cross-referenced on GuideStar¹⁵⁹ or through accessible annual reports on museum websites to confirm their annual budget surpassed \$5 million. Executive directors were emailed directly, if their emails were available online, or general museum information emails were used to request participation. To locate search firms, a basic search was completed to find firms that worked specifically with non-profits or museums. Recruitment emails were sent to general emails found on the firm's websites asking for the involvement of consultants who had recently worked with an art museum with at least a \$5 million annual budget.

Recruitment emails included the research purpose, parameters, and an appeal for participation (See Appendix B for Recruitment Emails). Also included was an attached Consent Form and Instrument Protocol (See Appendix C for Consent Form). Providing the questions upfront made sure no one was blindsided by any question and that they had time to think about

¹⁵⁹ GuideStar, accessed April 20,2020, <https://www.guidestar.org/>

more difficult questions. If the recruitment was met positively and consent was agreed to, a time was established to conduct the interview over the phone.

Data Collection

The initial goal was to complete twelve 30 to 40 minute semi-structured interviews. Due to the 2020 outbreak of Covid-19, only five interviews were conducted. The five participants were three board of trustees' members and two search firm consultants. Interviews took place from March 2 to April 8, 2020. The interviews ranged from 34 to 55 minutes in length. Interviews were conducted over the phone and recorded using a small handheld recording device.

Transcription and Coding Data

Completed interviews were uploaded in Trint. Trint's software transcribed the interviews and they were edited for accuracy. Interview transcripts were analyzed by inputting questions and answers in a coding matrix table format (See Appendix D for Coding Matrix). Traditional emergent coding practices were not useful due to the small sample size of the study. Additionally, for each interview, key quotes were highlighted in Trint for their use in Chapter 4: Results and Analysis.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the decision-making process of art museums when hiring executive directors. The original goal of the study was to interview six participants who served on an art museum executive search committee and six participants from executive search firms who had experience consulting during a search for an art museum executive director. Due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, interviews were limited to three participants who served on an art museum executive search committee and two participants from executive search firms. Study participant names will be kept confidential (See Appendix C for Consent Form). For the purpose of this study, they will be identified as Board of Trustee 1, Board of Trustee 2, Board of Trustee 3, Search Firm Consultant 1, and Search Firm Consultant 2. In no particular order, board members interviewed were on executive director search committees at Tampa Museum of Art, Tacoma Art Museum, and Speed Art Museum. Executive search firm consultants represented the firms Museum Search & Reference and Kittleman & Associates, LLC.

The interview protocol consisted of seven sections detailing the steps of the hiring process of an executive director (See Appendix A for Instrument Protocol). As the interviews were semi-structured, they did not progress identically, and some questions were not asked in every interview. Reasons for not asking certain questions included timing and flow of the interview. This Results and Analysis chapter will be guided by the interview instrument beginning with the nature of experience of the five participants.

Section 1: Nature of Experience

1. My first few questions are about the nature of your experience.
 - a. How long have you been in your position as a board of trustee/search firm consultant?
 - b. Why do you think you were selected or appointed to be a part of the search?
 - c. How many museum executive searches have you been a part of?
 - d. (If a board member) Did you use a search committee, search firm, or a combination of the two?

The interview data revealed that the range of experience for participants ranged from six to sixteen years at the time of interview. Participants had been on their first to eighth art museum executive director search. Years of experience at time of search, varied from interview to interview and were discussed when participants explained why they believe they were requested to be a part of the search. Both search firm consultants listed their reputation in the field and their experience as reasons they were selected. Two trustees explained that as presidents of their respective boards, their place on the executive search committee was required. The other trustee gave their experience as a manager evaluating potential hires as the reason they were asked to be on the executive search committee.

Yeah, actually, it was quite new. It couldn't have been more than six or nine months on the board. I was relatively new to the board and at the time. I wasn't an officer or anything... I think probably I had a fairly significant amount of experience in my previous work life. I had two thousand people or so reported to me at one point. I had a fair amount of experience in hiring people and evaluating potential hires. That's probably one reason. I think the second reason was that they were probably beginning to groom me for larger responsibilities. Today, I happen to be chairman of the board. (Board of Trustee 1)

Board of trustees' participants were also asked what the nature of their experience was working with a search firm. Two of the three trustees used a search firm; the third forwent a search firm, as they desired to look first at local candidates.

It was at the discretion of the search committee, though, in this succession planning document, it is recommended to follow the Association of Art Museum Directors, AAMD, best practices. And so AAMD has, I don't know the exact number right now, but they were there's probably seven or eight firms that they indicated. So, our search committee met to discuss that and we talked to others and we quickly reached consensus that it was appropriate to engage a search firm because of all of the work and just to make sure that you're going as broad and deep as possible, because everybody in the search committee is a volunteer and you pay somebody to help you. You're just going to get broader and deeper results. (Board of Trustee 3)

As Board of Trustee 3 explained their executive search committees' choice to hire a search firm, they also expanded on the make-up of their executive search committee. The committee had ten members, six board members, and four members of the community. They explained that their institution values their museums relationship to the community and community members provided diverse opinions to the executive search committee. Their approach followed Abruzzo's recommendation to involve stakeholders, such as community members, in the search.¹⁶⁰

The nature of experience among the participants ranged widely and was likely responsible for their diverse answers throughout the survey. There were rarely questions with unanimous answers.

Section 2: Creating the Job Description

2. My next set of questions are about creating the executive job description (or search notice).
 - a. How was the job description/search notice developed?
 - b. How did you decide what preferred skills and qualifications to include in the job description/search notice?
 - c. How did the mission and vision of the museum affect your search?

¹⁶⁰ James Abruzzo, "Selecting the Ideal Museum Director," *DHR International*, December 2013, 4, https://www.dhrinternational.com/files/3213/9120/3631/Museum_Director_Whitepaper.pdf.

The first major decision when hiring an executive director was defining what the museum's needs were and what it wanted in an executive director. Of the four interviews where search firms were involved, all four participants commented on the collaborative efforts between the firm and the executive search committee. Four of the five utilized old search descriptions and edited them to their current needs. Both search firm consultants talked about how important a site visit was to create their job profile.

They [museum executive search committee] often have the job description for the previous director, and sometimes they've updated it, and sometimes it's a job description per se, not a job announcement... And so, we travel to the museum for a full day for what we call "scoping interviews." We meet with the search committee and maybe other board members and donors and with staff – all those that they feel are important stakeholders. And then from that, we get an idea of the culture of the institution and what they're looking for in a director. And then we draft an actual job profile, to use to announce the position. (Search Firm Consultant 1)

When asked how they decided what preferred skills to include in the job description, participants gave a wide variety of answers with varying amounts of overlap. Three of the five specifically mentioned fundraising or finance experience. Two of the five mentioned how the decision was made by a group, balancing out needs.

The predecessor to [name of executive director] didn't really have a whole lot of skills in fundraising and or running a large organization financially. I'm sure we beefed up the financial management aspects of it. I'm sure we beefed up development skills because those are essential in any modern art museum. (Board of Trustee 1)

Looking at the previous question, it appeared that business and leadership skills were more important for executive directors than art knowledge. Fundraising, as acknowledged by Kendzulak, is extremely important to art museum executive directors.¹⁶¹ Art knowledge did get noted by participants in other interview questions, but not as often as financial attributes. This

¹⁶¹ Susan Kendzulak, "Art Museum Director Job Description: Salary, Skills, & More," The Balance Careers, June 3, 2019, <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/job-profile-of-art-museum-director-1295357>.

could be due to a trend of executive directors having a corporate mindset as identified by Bruch, although more interviews need to be gathered to increase the sample size.¹⁶²

Two interview participants specifically mentioned leadership as a preferred skill. Teamwork, vision, art knowledge, people skills, diversity, and the museum's mission were mentioned once in separate interviews as important for an executive director. One search firm consultant talked about combining the needs of staff and the board, the other similarly mentioned culture fit.

They [executive search committees] are pretty clear eyed about being able to say what their culture is like and who is going to be able to work within that donor culture, board culture, staff culture, volunteer culture and understand the dynamics of that community. (Search Firm Consultant 2)

Every participant said the museum's mission was discussed in the hiring process. Two of the trustees talked about how their mission needed updating and the new executive director would have a large part in refining their mission statements. One interview participant stressed how the mission was integral as it reflected the culture of the museum. Another spoke about how a museum's mission statement drove its goals and the executive director needed to have a strong passion for the mission.

So, your mission drives your goal and your values drive your standard. (Search Firm Consultant 2)

One hundred per cent of participants agreed on this question, that museums see the importance of a museum's mission in hiring their next leader. This was in line with Dr. Suchy

¹⁶² Kristin Bruch, "An Analysis of Art Museum Directors, 1990-2010" (Masters diss., American University, 2011), 8.

and Herman's research on leadership. Dr. Suchy proposed that it was the executive director's responsibility to move the mission of the museum forward.¹⁶³

The process of developing the executive director job description was similar across interviews; however, the skills participants decided to include in their description had some variation. This suggested that every art museum had their own priorities and needs for an executive director. The interview participants suggested business and leadership skills were more important for executive directors than art knowledge. Furthermore, fundraising appeared to be on the minds of executive search committees and search firm consultants when looking for an executive director.

Section 3: Search Values

3. This next section is about what you look for in the search of executive candidates.
 - a. What do you place the highest value on when hiring a new executive director?
 - b. What leadership traits do you look for in an executive director candidate?
 - c. How do you identify leadership potential?
 - d. What intangibles are important to the search?

When asked specifically what participants placed the highest value on when searching all of them answered with fundraising or development. Two responded that leadership was highly valued and that was where the overlap ended. Administration, passion, directorship experience, diversity, connectivity to the community, public speaking, and art acumen were all mentioned by at least one participant.

¹⁶³ Sherene Suchy, "Grooming New Millennium Museum Directors," *Museum International* 52, no. 2 (2000): 59.

First of all, leadership, which is a variety of skills. A director should have vision. And secondly, fundraising, either skills or the ability to learn and do it. Fundraising today is tremendously important... Today, especially at large institutions, people are looking less for particular content expertise in art, as opposed to, administration and management experience, and fundraising. (Search Consultant 1)

Leadership is the most important key in order to model the highest levels of professionalism, to create a positive working environment and to establish solid working relationships with the board, the staff, volunteers, donors, and community. (Board of Trustee 2)

Dr. Suchy gave passion as the foremost critical trait in museum leadership.¹⁶⁴ Yet, only one of the five participants vocalized passion as one of the things they placed the highest value on when hiring an executive director. This could be because passion is currently valued less or might be attributed to the low sample size. Similarly, none of the participants listed charisma as a value and one participant specifically said “not charisma”. This suggested that charisma might be an outdated value and not desired due to possible negative connotations.

The values the participants expressed are in line with the modern museum Ruth Rentschler and Gus Geursen described.¹⁶⁵ Rentschler and Geursen stated the importance of balancing the needs of corporate and community interests. All participants articulated the need to connect with the community at some point during their interviews.

When asked specifically what leadership traits participants look for, the responses were all unique. Answers included stable leadership, eloquence, experience leading, vision, creativity and the ability to inspire.

¹⁶⁴ Sherene Suchy, “Emotional Intelligence, Passion and Museum Leadership,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 18, no. 1 (1999): 57.

¹⁶⁵ Ruth Rentschler and Gus Geursen, “Unlocking Art Museum Management: Myths and Realities for Contemporary Times.” *International Journal of Arts Management* 2, no. 1 (1999): 9.

For leadership potential, among the traits they're looking for in a director are whether they have the vision and the ability to inspire others, and creativity. (Search Firm Consultant 1)

A follow up question asked how leadership potential was identified. Three of the four participants responded that it was based upon candidates' past performances. Other answers given were through open-ended interview questions and by watching YouTube videos of the candidate.

We ask a lot of open-ended behavioral questions. For example, tell me about a time when you needed to bring the staff or donors and stakeholders into alignment about the strategic direction of the organization. What worked? What would you do differently next time?... The great thing about behavioral interview questions is you can't say yes or no... You can't fake the answers because we're going to keep saying what happened next. What would you do differently? What was the result of that? (Search Firm Consultant 2)

Other intangible but desired traits identified by participants were people skills, ability to manage up and down, creativity, well-rounded, get along with different constituents, diversity, and someone who is a disruptor.

How are they going to fit and acclimate into the existing culture and or do we want somebody that is going to be a disruptor? And all of those questions are thought about in this process. (Board of Trustee 3)

The findings from this section revealed the importance of fundraising to the five participants. Also emphasized were leadership, people skills, and connection to community. The variety of important skills would suggest that museums are searching for an executive director with well-rounded, holistic abilities.

Section 4: Reviewing Resumes

4. This section is about the reviewing candidates' resumes.
 - a. What is your process when looking through several resumes?
 - b. What range of experience would you consider for an executive director?
 - c. How did you compare two different candidates' experiences?
 - d. Apart from what is on a resume, how did you get the information you need to make your decision?
 - e. According to Caroline E. Eichinger in her study "Racial, Ethnic and Gender Diversity of the U.S. Museum Workforce: Trends, Implications and Solutions," there is a lack of racial diversity and gender equity in the museum field among executive directors. How did you address these issues during your executive director search?

Both search firm participants said they had a person look over all the resumes they received, rather than an automated system. Next they sent all the qualified resumes to the executive search committee. The search firm participants both articulated they looked for the best matches in the job description while monitoring for lack of errors, diversity, and length of time at previous positions.

What you're looking for is how a candidate matches the criteria that you listed. Does the candidate have the required years of experience? Or perhaps some expertise in a particular area or field of museums. So, you're looking through the criteria list to see how a candidate matches the qualifications. (Search Firm Consultant 1)

One of the board of trustee participants said their institution followed the practice of each member of the executive search committee looking at the resumes alone then coming together as a group to discuss. Another board of trustee participant explained that as a group they looked for candidates who jumped out based on their maturity and experience. The two board members agreed that narrowing the approximately 20 resumes sent from the executive search committees into to a smaller group of resumes was relatively easy.

We will get packages of resumes and look through them ourselves. Then what we do is sit down as a group together, the seven of us, and go through each person relatively quickly. We didn't agonize over it and we relatively quickly got to the six people we thought were the most qualified. Then we spent significant time getting to know each one of the six a little bit better. (Board of Trustee 1)

All five participants overwhelmingly said, they preferred candidates to have a PhD, but it was not a requirement. Two participants said that candidates must have at least a master's degree. Another two stated a preference for candidates with previous directorship experience. Two of the five participants stated they wanted someone with at least ten years of proven art museum leadership. One interview participant talked about the importance of finding a balanced leader.

I don't think it's necessary that one has to have a PhD, but there has to be a balance between the deep appreciation of art and art history, and understand entrepreneurship, finances and have financial savvy. (Board of Trustee 2)

Participants' preference for PhD's and demand for a master's degrees agree with the statistics of art museum executive directors given by Bruch.¹⁶⁶ She reported 41.76% of executive directors had obtained a doctorate, 46.29% had achieved a master's degree, and only 12.35% had a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education.

Participants all had different answers when asked how they compared candidates with different experiences. One search firm consultant said it was "apples to oranges" and the other said they presented all qualified applicants to the executive search committee. One trustee participant said they looked for innovation from a candidate to set them apart. Another trustee participant explained that their executive search committee created a matrix that compared every candidate to avoid bias.

¹⁶⁶ Kristin Bruch, "An Analysis of Art Museum Directors, 1990-2010" (Masters diss., American University, 2011), 24.

We put together a matrix, for lack of a better term, with the most important attributes for our next executive director. And like we discussed earlier, equity and inclusion, and leadership, connectivity to the community, speaking skills, how they would integrate with the staff. All of those issues were on the matrix and we spent a lot of time on it... Hey, they have a stronger business acumen because of that MBA. But this one had a stronger fundraising acumen. Well, that's important, too... We ultimately did put everyone on a grid and quantified it, and it worked out. (Board of Trustee 3)

Participants used a variety of methods besides resumes to get the information they needed to make their decision. Four of the five participants listed reference checks, three said they talked to others in the relatively small art community, and two said they did phone interviews. Google searches, YouTube searches, and writing samples were each utilized by one participant.

We count heavily on references. I'm a big believer in talking to the references, that is letters, letters are useless, but actually keeping people on the phone for a half hour or even an hour. We're really learning about how that candidate performs, especially if the reference is their supervisor or a direct report... Sometimes we look at writing samples, whether it's content posted online or printed. You might look at something they've written about art recently, or a label. And if they're going to be writing to donors, you might want a sample letter... And you certainly have to do a web search on candidates today. (Search Firm Consultant 1)

I would say we probably also polled other museum directors indirectly about these candidates. I'm sure we did a data search on them from their peers. The world of art museum directors in the U.S. is somewhat limited and they know each other. It wasn't too difficult to get third opinions on people. (Board of Trustee 1)

When asked about diversity and gender equity in the art museum executive director search, four of the five interview participants commented on their acknowledgement of the issue in their search. The one exception participant explained that they had a nontraditional search where they hired their interim executive director but stated the importance of equity and how it would affect their next search. Two participants cited the importance of having a diverse group of people involved in the search process. One participant stated they always advertise positions through Association of African American Museums. One board of trustee participant specifically mentioned that they did not give the search firm they worked with diversity quotas; however, one

search firm participant explained that they were once requested to use the NFL's Rooney Rule to ensure a percentage of diverse candidates to interview.¹⁶⁷

We might advertise at the Association of African American Museums or different places where you would post to encourage diverse applications. And secondly, we have a lot of contacts with Latinx people, Asians, and African Americans, and women and gay people, to cover different kinds of diversity. To address this, you really need to do extra outreach and get nominations from a diverse group of people. (Search Firm Consultant 1)

So, I think part of it is, you know, how do you achieve it [diversity and inclusion]? You've got to surround yourself by it. You've got to walk it and live it before you can talk it. And you talk it. And we tried and that was important. That was included in our job search. And we shared that with all of the candidates. And we heard that from all of the stakeholders who were involved in the process. (Board of Trustee 3)

It is valuable that there is trustee acknowledgement that boards need to have a diverse executive search committee. This is reflective of Genoways, Ireland, and Catlin-Legutko's writings on board representation.¹⁶⁸ According to the progressive views presented by the participants, it would suggest an optimistic sign for diversity in the future of art museums.

Although the participants' responses were positive towards females and racially diverse candidates as executives, it is worth noting that four out of four participants saw a Caucasian male hired in their most recent art museum executive search. This could be situational due to the low sample size or reflect the gender and racial bias presented in Eichinger's study.¹⁶⁹

The relative ease of search firms and museum executive search committees to narrow down resumes of executive director candidates to a select group of top candidates, would suggest

¹⁶⁷ The Rooney Rule is an NFL policy that requires teams to interview ethnic-minority candidates for senior football operation jobs, including head coaches. It is an affirmative action policy of an interview quota without a hiring quota. From Jason Reid, "NFL's Rooney Rule should be strengthened," *Washington Post*, February 19, 2011, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/19/AR2011021903268.html>.

¹⁶⁸ Hugh H. Genoways, Lynne M. Ireland, and Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, *Museum Administration 2.0*. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 167.

¹⁶⁹ Caroline E. Eichinger, "Racial, Ethnic and Gender Diversity of the U.S. Museum Workforce: Trends, Implications and Solutions" (Masters diss. University of Colorado Boulder, 2007), 24.

museums are clear in what they are looking for in resumes. They were unanimous in their desire, but not demand, for an executive director with a PhD. Museums seemed clear in the qualifications for the executive director position: someone with proven leadership, reasonable experience, and a commitment to diversity and equity.

Section 5: Interview and Reference Checks

5. This section is about the interview and reference checking process of the hiring procedure.
 - a. How much value do you place on compatible personalities in the interview?
 - b. The study “When beauty is beastly: The effects of appearance and sex on evaluations of job applicants for managerial and nonmanagerial jobs” conducted by Madeline E. Heilman and Lois R. Saruwatari, found attractiveness proved to be an advantage in hiring. Knowing that physical appearance can affect decision-making, do you think that in your experience such biases could have played a part in the search?
 - c. According to Dan Ariely in his book *Predictably Irrational*, behavioral economics states that people are susceptible to irrelevant influences from their immediate environment and irrelevant emotions. In short, Ariely articulates do not assume people are rational as we do not make rational decisions. Do you feel there was any irrational reason you were drawn to a certain candidate?
 - d. In his book *Thinking Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman defines heuristics as the brain using past patterns as shortcuts to make decisions. Heuristics are rules of thumb that help simplify decisions. Do you think heuristics were used in your decision-making process?
 - e. What happens if members of the search committee have a disagreement?
 - f. Have you had the experience of not finding the right person?
 - g. What are some “red flags” that you have found during the process of checking references?

There was variety in how executive director search interviews were conducted by the board of trustee participants. One participant invited the top two candidates for full weekend visits to interview with several key stakeholders. Another was proud of their method of inviting

the top three or four candidates to dinners at trustees' homes to get to know them on a personal level.

For a good hire you have to know as much about a person as you can. You will only get some of that around a conference table, in a meeting, or in an interview. You will get some different aspects, maybe in the evening, over a meal, or a glass of wine. (Board of Trustee 1)

Three of the participants said the interviews were a good opportunity to get to know candidates, but also an opportunity to observe their chemistry with executive search committee members. One participant explained that interviews confirmed if candidates passed the "fluency test." They emphasized that the interviews could show a candidate's level of communication skills.

A telephone conversation is a great experience with anyone, but since most of the jobs I'm filling are CEO jobs, whether they're in the museum or not, they're going to need to interact with a wide variety of people in conversation. These conversations could be either in moving forward on the mission of the organization, in fundraising, in building stakeholder relationships, or a collaborative relationship. If someone is articulate on the telephone, that is usually one of the communication skills my client is looking for. (Search Consultant 2)

When asked about the factor of attractiveness in hiring, two of four interview participants said there was no effect, one said it was an advantage, and one qualified that they tried to overlook appearance.

And we have this process and we would use that to kind of peel away the veneer, if you will, of whatever your appearance is, in particular when we have the final two. And they were here for a couple of days. There are tactics you can do to peel back that veneer of appearance and really get to know somebody. We were consistent in applying these tactics equally and consistently with our final two candidates. (Board of Trustee 3)

Does appearance matter? Yes. The answer is yes. It's a great advantage for both men and women to be good looking. However, the hiring team can also get over it, and it's not important in the end. We encourage people to dress up and look professional for interviews. (Search Firm Consultant 1)

Search Firm Consultant 1's comment upholds that physical attractiveness is an advantage for men; however, their ideas differ as to the advantage for females. As Heilman and Saruwatari concluded, attractiveness can be a disadvantage for females when applying for leadership positions.¹⁷⁰

Two of four participants did not believe behavioral economics took place during their search. These two participants did not believe that heuristics or bias played any role in the executive director hiring process.

No, part of this is maybe form follows function. Because [name of consultants' search firm] is a firm that focuses on holistic leadership transition and works with the board and the staff... I think the irrational stuff could happen, but those are not necessarily museums or other kinds of clients that are going to end up hiring a search firm like ours. (Search Firm Consultant 2)

Kahneman suggested that people tend to believe they are System 2 thinkers.¹⁷¹ To refresh, System 1 consists of decisions that are automatic and made with no sense of voluntary control.¹⁷² System 2 decisions take complex mental effort and are associated with the experience of choice. It is interesting that two out of four participants did not see any effects of behavioral economics in their searches. This could be a lack of understanding of the concept, great diligence to prevent the occasion of bias in their decision-making processes, or as Kahneman suggests, people want to think that they do not have biases and make reasonable choices.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Madeline E. Heilman and Lois R. Saruwatari, "When Beauty Is Beastly: The Effects of Appearance and Sex on Evaluations of Job Applicants for Managerial and Nonmanagerial Jobs," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 23, no. 3 (1979): 360.

¹⁷¹ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 21.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 21.

The other two of the four participants acknowledged that people are never 100% rational and that bias inevitably happens.

At certain times with certain candidates, I'm sure in hindsight that even some of the search committee members today would confess and say, yeah, you know what? I really thought this candidate, that I was strong on was the right one. But you know what? I wasn't rational when I did that. So, yes, there were some of that recall confession. Some of that confession came out in our deliberations. And so, sure, it happened, but it never, never in a way that disrupted the process. (Board of Trustee 3)

The response from Board of Trustee 3 exemplified an example given by Kahneman in the literature review where a project leader was optimistic about a project, but their reasons were subjective.¹⁷⁴ Trustees on the executive search committee could admit to really liking a candidate and not rationally being able to explain why.

Similarly, two out of four participants stated they did not think heuristics impacted their decision-making process. They cited the rationale of different minds making decisions and that executive searches were not everyday activities as reasons why heuristics were not a factor.

I think the makeup of the seven people on the search committee were very different. Each person has a different take and a different set of values. (Board of Trustee 1)

For the two of the four participants responding that heuristics were not a factor in their searches, Kahneman wrote that there is no simple way for people to distinguish between a skilled answer and a natural heuristic response.¹⁷⁵ Research by Chugh and Bazerman also found that people do not necessarily make better decisions in groups.¹⁷⁶ They argue that groups often focus on shared information they all have as opposed to the information they all uniquely have.

¹⁷⁴ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 415.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 417.

¹⁷⁶ Dolly Chugh and Max Bazerman, "Bounded Awareness: What You Fail to See Can Hurt You," *Mind and Society* 6, no. 1 (2007): 12.

Again, two participants did say heuristics were a factor in their decision-making, but one was hopeful that the decision being made by several people would balance it out. The other stated it was inevitable and the executive search committee needed to stick to the process for the best results.

Inevitably, it happens and that is life. To say it didn't, would be you are not human, right. You're a robot. You know, that's why if it happens. So that's why, again, you go back to the process. We didn't just have board members. We had four community members on this committee. And they're all diverse. So, for me, it all boils down to making sure your policies for succession planning are the right ones for your organization. And you have thought them through, and you stick to it. And you believe in the process. (Board of Trustee 3)

It was reasonable that two participants experienced heuristics in their searches. Ariely reinsures that systematic behaviors help in our everyday lives.¹⁷⁷ Kahneman believes heavily in the usefulness of judgement heuristics.¹⁷⁸

Two of the five participants shared there were no disagreements during their executive director search. Of the three that spoke of disagreements during the decision-making process, two solved differences within a system of hierarchy. The leader of the executive search committee had the ability to make decisions and move the group towards consensus. Two said disagreements were solved with deep meaningful deliberations.

You know, you gotta have a leader, right? And there were times that a leader has some ability to make decisions. Latitude, right. You have some latitude as a leader to say, hey, this is where we're going. And do we have consensus? Yes. OK. We're moving forward and really tested my leadership skills. (Board of Trustee 3)

¹⁷⁷ Dan Ariely, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2009), xviii.

¹⁷⁸ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 10.

The two search firm participants both experienced not finding the right candidate in the first search. For separate reasons the art museum's first choice candidate dropped themselves from contention. In both cases the museum found the eventual candidate in a new search and stated that the eventual executive director was better than their original choice.

Yes, I have had searches where you got right up to the altar with somebody and you made an offer. They turned you down. Then you have to go back and develop a whole new candidate because at that point, the board really isn't interested in moving forward with any of the other candidates... It doesn't happen that often, but I can think of two examples where it did. And in both cases, the person they ultimately hired was probably better qualified than any of the candidates they saw in the first round. (Search Firm Consultant 2)

Of the two participants who were asked about "red flags" when checking references, neither found any discrepancies in their executive director searches.

When studying the entire interview phase for selecting an executive director, it was suggested that the interview stage of the hiring process was of immense importance. This stage was where executive search committees could communicate with candidates and understand how they interact with people. This was important when people skills and connecting with the community were top search priorities. If appearance, behavior economic, or heuristics influenced interviews remains unclear. However, it appeared that most searches do not see biases negatively affecting their search. More research needs to be conducted to learn more about bias in the decision-making process of selecting an art museum executive director.

Section 6: Selected Candidates

6. This section is about the eventual candidate that was selected.
 - a. What about the selected candidate made them a successful hire?
 - b. Do you feel the selected candidate was similar to the director who was leaving the museum?
 - c. How well did the successful candidate meet the criteria from the job description?
 - d. Did the candidates you selected have any special qualities that made them stand out?
 - e. Do you feel you hired/suggested the right candidate?

When discussing the eventual candidate selected to be executive director, two participants listed their speaking skills as a reason they were successful. Art knowledge was also listed by two participants. The five participants gave a wide variety of reasons for hiring a specific art museum executive director including: awareness of challenges, fresh thinking, ability to problem solve, quick learner, engagement with the community, innovation, humility, fundraising, leadership, being respected, and well liked.

[Name of executive director] knows the community really well as a former museum board member and donor. He is also an innovator and an entrepreneur. He also has his own extensive collection of the history of southern photography. He is well respected and well liked. (Board of Trustee 2)

When asked if the new executive director was similar to the previous executive director, three of the four participants responded “no.” The other response from a search firm participant was qualifying because it depended on the museum, as some want to continue in the same direction, whereas others want a new vision.

[when prompted about selecting an executive director different than the former director] I would say, 99 percent of the time, that is my experience with the search process. And that's not because there was anything wrong with the prior director. It is because the reason people leave and the reason you have a transition is because you're entering a new stage of the organization's lifecycle. And the skills and attributes you needed in that last chapter are probably not the skills and attributes that you are going to need in the next chapter. More often than not, it is somebody who's got a different skill that. (Search Firm Consultant 2)

All the participants saw the final candidate as matching the criteria from the job description to a varying degree. One commented that the chosen candidate met their museum's need for someone with fundraiser experience.

Not in terms of diversity... So, no. He didn't check all the boxes, but he checked off more of the boxes than anyone else. He was the right person for right now for the [name of museum]. (Board of Trustee 3)

Responses at the beginning of the interviews, asking about desired traits in executive directors, appeared to match relatively well with the candidates selected. Participants that wanted an executive director with former directorship experience found that and museums that wanted fundraising skills had those needs met. This matching could be cause and effect or it could be an afterthought effect as described by Darley, Norton, and Vandello. Their research stated people could mask biased decision-making by after-the-fact changing their initial goals and reordering the importance to match their eventual decision.¹⁷⁹ Due to interviews taking place after the finished process, there is no conclusive evidence in this study. Another study would have to have two rounds of interviews where participants were questioned about their goal for a new executive director at the beginning and again at the end of the process.

¹⁷⁹ Michael I. Norton, Joseph A. Vandello, and John M. Darley, "Casuistry and Social Category Bias," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 87, no. 6 (2004): 817.

The trustee participants interviewed also gave different responses to what special qualities made the selected candidate stand out. One trustee liked that the candidate knew the museum really well. Another pointed out the candidate was the right fit for what the museum currently needed. The third trustee found the candidates experience and communication skills set them apart.

He had very good experience in an institution that was about our size. And he had very balanced experiences. He wasn't simply into curation and he wasn't an art historian. He had a well-balanced set of skills. He was remarkable to some extent in his articulation and his ability to articulate. Different aspects of what we were looking for in our director. Certainly, his verbal communication skills were very superior. There was one other candidate who was an interesting person also, but we at the end of the day thought [name of executive director] had a better package. (Board of Trustee 1)

Four of five participants agreed they hired the right candidate for the position. One of the search firm participants said they had a great fit around 87% of the time.

100% right. Yeah, that is the other thing. Is [name of executive director] perfect? No, but we're not the MET. There are tradeoffs when you need a person... He's personable. He's can talk to anyone. And he's not afraid to pick out trash off the floor or do anything that he would ask anybody to do. He would do it himself. So, he has that humility that you like to see in somebody. (Board of Trustee 3)

Looking at the selected candidates, it appears art museums are often seeking a fresh perspective different from the previous executive director. The interviews also suggest that those involved in the search felt they found and chose the right executive director for the institution. For the three trustee participants it is especially valuable that they are confident in their executive director selection, as they will continue to work together and move forward as a museum.

Section 7: Hiring Process in Entirety

7. My final section is about the hiring process in its entirety.
 - a. What was the hiring process like?
 - b. If the goal of the executive search is to find someone who is the perfect fit for the organization, how difficult was it to find that person?
 - c. Is there anything you would change about the process of hiring a museum's executive director?
 - d. Do you have any suggestions or tips for future board of trustees/search committees when hiring a museum executive director?
 - e. Is there anything else I have not asked about the process of hiring an executive director that you would like to talk about?

The five participants said their searches lasted from one to eleven months. The discrepancy in time came from the decision to hire an interim executive director without a formal search, to a detailed succession planning policy. Next, the four participants, the ones who did not hire their interim executive director, explained that there was anywhere from two to three months of transition time before the new executive director started. All three trustees said they sought staff input to varying levels, but none had staff members on the executive search committee.

We always tell the client that it's going to take five to six months. And usually it ends up being six months because we need a certain amount of time for recruiting and screening... And then after the person is hired, especially for a director, they are also going to have to give notice of maybe a couple of months after that... Yes, I would say that typically your search committee will be made up of just board members. I have read something that said that you get a better result if you have a staff representative, but that is not always possible, and it is not common. (Search Firm Consultant 1)

The question about difficulty finding the perfect fit for an organization, did not work in the flow of the interview and was often omitted or glazed over. One participant did comment that they were lucky with their search and the right candidate stood out to the entire executive search committee.

Interestingly enough, we made the selection unanimously, and relatively quickly. Maybe we were lucky. Maybe [name of executive director] just stood out that much to all of us. (Board of Trustee 1)

Three of the five participants said they would not make any changes to their search process. One was happy with the search results but wished they spent more time on the first round of interviews. A search participant commented that they wished executive search committees would only have two final candidates and smaller executive search committees for improved results.

No. In hindsight, I think we did a really good job. When you use a search firm you are often offered someone who is from out of town who nobody knows. You are relying heavily on recommendations. One of the newer rules of looking for new leadership is to look in your own backyard, to see if there's somebody in your own community that might be a good fit. (Board of Trustee 2)

Participants had several suggestions for future art museum executive search committees. One search firm participant emphasized the importance for boards to know there is no perfect executive director “who walks on water” and the process of onboarding a new executive director takes time and patience. The other search firm participant also addressed patience as many boards worry about the “empty seat” and need to invest time in the search process. They also advised executive search committees to focus on a skills-based approach to hiring. The advice from one trustee participant was to stick to an original success planning policy. Another stressed the importance of making sure the candidate's interests and enthusiasm fit well with the community. There was some disagreement as two trustees praised the search firms they used and advised other boards to hire a firm for the best pool of candidates from across the United States and abroad. In disagreement, one trustee said they would advise executive search committees to look locally and do their own research without a firm.

The search committee needs to look past the candidate's recommendations and do more research because those recommendations are from people that the candidate has listed. They will be very positive, or they wouldn't be on their resumes. The committee needs to go outside that circle to research their track record and past employment, in order to understand the candidate's management style, leadership abilities, interpersonal skills, ability to work well with staff, and fundraising skills. All are important attributes in museum work. They must also have a deep working knowledge and feel comfortable working with art and curators. These are all really important attributes of a good director. (Board of Trustee 2)

After evaluating the search for an art museum executive director, it appears there was no one strategy for making hiring decisions. Search firm consultants and board of trustees have their own processes that they found worked and did not feel needed changing. They all gave different recommendations for others who will embark on the hiring process. There was no one correct way to select an art museum executive director; every museum must make decisions to best fit their unique interests.

Additionally, responses suggested that hiring decisions by both trustees and firms were made collaboratively. The process did not move forward if they did not have consensus. Job descriptions were not published until there was total agreement. Candidates were selected through unanimous decision by the executive search committees.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the decision-making process of art museums when hiring executive directors. By completing interviews with three board of trustees and two search firm consultants, the following five findings emerged.

First, this study found museum's mission statements drove their decision-making process. All participants stated the importance of using mission statements to create the executive director's job description. This was important as an art museum's mission reflects the culture of the museum. Additionally, it was appropriate that art museums selected an executive director that could advance the mission of the museum, as that is the primary role of the executive director.¹⁸⁰

Second, according to participants, fundraising was the most valuable quality sought in art museum executive directors. Fundraising was followed by directorship experience, leadership qualities, and communication skills as important attributes in candidates. Connection to community also appeared throughout several responses; this seems to indicate the balance of needs between importance of corporate community interests.¹⁸¹ Art museums are businesses and executive directors need business skills to be successful.¹⁸² It is intriguing that the skills listed after fundraising, directorship experience, leadership qualities, and communication skills, all are valuable to success in fundraising.

¹⁸⁰ Sherene Suchy. "Grooming New Millennium Museum Directors." *Museum International* 52, no. 2 (2000): 59.

¹⁸¹ Ruth Rentschler and Gus Geursen, "Unlocking Art Museum Management: Myths and Realities for Contemporary Times." *International Journal of Arts Management* 2, no. 1 (1999): 9.

¹⁸² Sherene Suchy, "Grooming New Millennium Museum Directors," *Museum International* 52, no. 2 (2000): 59.

Third, museums did not have minimum education level requirements for executive directors to have a PhD. Having a PhD was preferred but museums are looking for the candidate with the best holistic package and balanced experience; this appears to agree with divided statistics on current art museum executive directors achieving a PhD versus master's degrees.¹⁸³ It is valuable to know that decision-makers in art museums look at the whole candidate, rather than eliminating candidates based on education level. This could open the door to many art museum executive director hopefuls.

Fourth, interviews revealed most participants saw their search efforts as relatively unbiased. Participants saw their searches taking precautions to avoid making biased decisions; this appears contrary to the literature on behavioral economics and biases. The literature suggests people want to see themselves as unbiased;¹⁸⁴ however, humans inherently make irrational decisions through flawed systems of decision-making.¹⁸⁵

Fifth, decisions were made collaboratively by a group of individuals and thoughtful conversations took place until there was consensus. Executive search committees took pride in their unanimous decision-making to select an executive director. It is important that boards of trustees work together, and all support their next executive director. After an executive director is hired, they must maintain a close working relation with the members of the board of trustees.¹⁸⁶

The data suggested the decision-making process art museums go through to hire executive directors varies, but there are similarities in approach. The five findings show where

¹⁸³ Kristin Bruch, "An Analysis of Art Museum Directors, 1990-2010" (Masters diss., American University, 2011), 24.

¹⁸⁴ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 21.

¹⁸⁵ Dan Ariely, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2009), xx.

¹⁸⁶ Tara Young, "Tips for Trustees: So You Want to Work in a Museum?" Museum Trustee Association, November 29, 2019, <https://www.museumtrustee.org/tips-for-trustees>.

there was agreement in what art museums value in an executive director and practices they similarly follow. Conclusions from these findings are premature, as more research is required to validate the findings on a larger scale. Questions remain surrounding decision-making at the executive level and further research is encouraged.

After completing this study there is still research to be completed on the decision-making process of art museums when hiring executive directors; however, this study provided some surprising results. It was not surprising that art museums were driven by mission nor that decisions were made through group consensus, but it was thought-provoking that art museums valued fundraising over art history knowledge. It was also unexpected that art museums did not specifically seek out candidates with PhD's. Similarly, it was interesting that the participants saw their executive searches as unbiased. Further research specifically detailing decision-making and bias in art museum hiring would be very intriguing to gather an improved understanding.

Limitations

A major limitation to the study was the relatively small number of participants. With only five interviews, the information collected could not be generalized beyond participants to apply to wider field application. A primary reason for the small sample size was attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic. Data collection for this study began in early March of 2020 as the virus began to shut down museums across the United States.

A second limitation was that participants were located across the country; this meant all interviews were done over the phone. Rich interpersonal connection between interviewer and participants might have been sacrificed.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Researchers Statement:

I am asking you to participate in an interview that is part of my Master's Thesis work at the University of Washington. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the decision-making process of art museums when hiring executive directors. Your participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits, and you may discontinue participation at any time. This interview will be audio taped for my note taking only. I may use your title and name of your institution in my final paper. If I directly quote you, I will send the quote to you before publication. If you have any questions now or in the future, you may contact me through the information on this document. Do you have any questions? Do you agree to participate in this interview?

Interview Procedures:

The interview will last approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Questions will be asked to better understand the hiring process for art museum executive directors. There will be seven sets of questions used to learn about your experience and decision-making process.

Interview Instrument

1. My first few questions are about the nature of your experience.
 - a. How long have you been in your position as a board of trustee/search firm consultant?
 - b. Why do you think you were selected or appointed to be a part of the search?
 - c. How many museum executive searches have you been a part of?
 - d. (If a board member) Did you use a search committee, search firm, or a combination of the two?
 - i. (Probe: If so, why?)
2. My next set of questions are about creating the executive job description (or search notice).
 - a. How was the job description/search notice developed?
 - i. (Probe: Was it collaborative? Was an old version used?)
 - b. How did you decide what preferred skills and qualifications to include in the job description/search notice?
 - i. (Probe: Is it difficult to describe in a job description/search notice exactly what you were looking for in an executive director? AND Did you have a perfect candidate in mind when developing the job description/search notice?)
 - c. How did the mission and vision of the museum affect your search?

3. This next section is about what you look for in the search of executive candidates.
 - a. What do you place the highest value on when hiring a new executive director?
 - b. What leadership traits do you look for in an executive director candidate?
 - c. How do you identify leadership potential?
 - i. (Probe: How do you evaluate a candidate's charisma? passion?)
 - d. What intangibles are important to the search?

4. This section is about the reviewing candidates' resumes.
 - a. What is your process when looking through several resumes?
 - i. (Probe: Do you skim? Does an automated system weed out unqualified candidates? What makes a candidate's resume stand out?)
 - b. What range of experience would you consider for an executive director?
 - i. (Probe: Do candidates need a PhD or relevant formal education? How many years of experience?)
 - c. How did you compare two different candidates' experiences?
 - i. (Probe: How do you assess a candidate who has previous experience as a director versus someone taking the step to lead for the first time?)
 - d. Apart from what is on a resume, how did you get the information you need to make your decision?
 - e. According to Caroline E. Eichinger in her study "Racial, Ethnic and Gender Diversity of the U.S. Museum Workforce: Trends, Implications and Solutions," there is a lack of racial diversity and gender equity in the museum field among executive directors. How did you address these issues during your executive director search?

5. This section is about the interview and reference checking process of the hiring procedure.
 - a. How much value do you place on compatible personalities in the interview?
 - b. The study "When beauty is beastly: The effects of appearance and sex on evaluations of job applicants for managerial and nonmanagerial jobs" conducted by Madeline E. Heilman and Lois R. Saruwatari, found attractiveness proved to be an advantage in hiring. Knowing that physical appearance can affect decision-making, do you think that in your experience such biases could have played a part in the search?
 - c. According to Dan Ariely in his book *Predictably Irrational*, behavioral economics states that people are susceptible to irrelevant influences from their immediate environment and irrelevant emotions. In short, Ariely articulates do not assume people are rational as we do not make rational decisions. Do you feel there was any irrational reason you were drawn to a certain candidate?
 - d. In his book *Thinking Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman defines heuristics as the brain using past patterns as shortcuts to make decisions. Heuristics are rules of

- thumb that help simplify decisions. Do you think heuristics were used in your decision-making process?
- i. (Probe: If so, when and why?)
- e. What happens if members of the search committee have a disagreement?
 - i. (Probe: How was the disagreement reconciled?)
 - f. Have you had the experience of not finding the right person?
 - i. (Probe: Why were candidates not a good fit for the museum? AND How long did it take to find the right person?)
 - g. What are some “red flags” that you have found during the process of checking references?
 - i. (Probe: Was that “red flag” enough to cause a reconsideration of the candidate?)
6. This section is about the eventual candidate that was selected.
- a. What about the selected candidate made them a successful hire?
 - i. (Probe: What are the strengths of the hired director? Where do they have room for improvement?)
 - b. Do you feel the selected candidate was similar to the director who was leaving the museum?
 - c. How well did the successful candidate meet the criteria from the job description?
 - d. Did the candidates you selected have any special qualities that made them stand out?
 - e. Do you feel you hired/suggested the right candidate?
7. My final section is about the hiring process in its entirety.
- a. What was the hiring process like?
 - i. (Probe: How long did each step of the process take? AND Did the staff of the museum have any input in the hiring decision? If so, how and when?)
 - b. If the goal of the executive search is to find someone who is the perfect fit for the organization, how difficult was it to find that person?
 - c. Is there anything you would change about the process of hiring a museum’s executive director?
 - d. Do you have any suggestions or tips for future board of trustees/search committees when hiring a museum executive director?
 - e. Is there anything else I have not asked about the process of hiring an executive director that you would like to talk about?

Confidentiality and Research Information:

I want to thank you for taking the time to have this conversation with me. Do you have any questions? If you have any questions, please contact me through the information on this document. Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix B

Recruitment email #1 to identify board members

Dear [name here],

My name is Devin Riley and I am a Museology Master of the Arts Candidate at the University of Washington. Currently, I am conducting a research study for the purpose of understanding the process of selecting an art museum executive director. It is my hope that through this phenomenological study, a further understanding of how art museums' boards of trustees and/or search firm consultants make executive hiring decisions to best benefit the museum.

The parameters of this study include members of boards of trustees and search firm consultants who have been on hiring committees for executive directors of an art museum with at least a \$5 million annual budget. Through my research, **your institution has been identified as a potential candidate for this study.** I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to interview one of the board members who was a part of your search committee.

Attached to this email is an interview guide containing questions for the interview. **If you would be interested in assisting me recruit for this study, please let me know by responding to this email with contact names and emails of potentially interested board members.**

Your support is of immense value and I greatly appreciate your assistance in my study.

Warm regards,
Devin Riley

Recruitment email #2 to recruit board members

Dear [Candidate's name here],

My name is Devin Riley and I am a Museology Master of the Arts Candidate at the University of Washington. Currently, I am conducting a research study for the purpose of understanding the process of selecting an art museum executive director. It is my hope that through this phenomenological study, a further understanding of how art museums' boards of trustees and/or search firm consultants make executive hiring decisions to best benefit the museum.

The parameters of this study include members of boards of trustees and search firm consultants who have been on hiring committees for executive directors of an art museum with at least a \$5 million annual budget. Through my research, **you have been identified as a potential candidate for this study.** I have been referred to you by the executive director of your institution. I would be grateful for the opportunity to interview you about your experiences in the process of hiring your museum's executive director.

Attached to this email is an interview guide containing a consent script and interview questions for in person, through Zoom, or over the phone interview. I expect that this semi-structured interview will take approximately 30-40 minutes. **If you would be interested in participating in this study and agree to the attached consent script, please let me know by responding to this email.**

Your experiences are of great value to me and I hope you will consider participating in my study.

Warm regards,
Devin Riley

Recruitment email #3 to identify search firm consultants

Dear [name here],

My name is Devin Riley and I am a Museology Master of the Arts Candidate at the University of Washington. Currently, I am conducting a research study for the purpose of understanding the process of selecting an art museum executive director. It is my hope that through this phenomenological study, a further understanding of how art museums' boards of trustees and/or search firm consultants make executive hiring decisions to best benefit the museum.

The parameters of this study include members of boards of trustees and search firm consultants who have been on hiring committees for executive directors of an art museum with at least a \$5 million annual budget. Through my research, **I have reason to believe your firm has completed a search that fits the parameters of this study.** I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to interview one of the search committee members who was a part of one of your art museum executive director searches.

Attached to this email is an interview guide containing questions for the interview. **If you would be interested in assisting me recruit for this study, please let me know by responding to this email with contact names and emails of potentially interested search consultants.**

Your support is of immense value and I greatly appreciate your assistance in my study.

Warm regards,
Devin Riley

Recruitment email #4 to recruit search firm consultants

Dear [Candidate's name here],

My name is Devin Riley and I am a Museology Master of the Arts Candidate at the University of Washington. Currently, I am conducting a research study for the purpose of understanding the process of selecting an art museum executive director. It is my hope that through this

phenomenological study, a further understanding of how art museums' boards of trustees and/or search firm consultants make executive hiring decisions to best benefit the museum.

The parameters of this study include members of boards of trustees and search firm consultants who have been on hiring committees for executive directors of an art museum with at least a \$5 million annual budget. Through my research, **you have been identified as a potential candidate for this study**. I have been referred to you by your firm. I would be grateful for the opportunity to interview you about your experiences in the process of hiring an art museum executive director.

Attached to this email is an interview guide containing a consent script and interview questions for in person, through Zoom, or over the phone interview. I expect that this semi-structured interview will take approximately 30-40 minutes. **If you would be interested in participating in this study and agree to the attached consent script, please let me know by responding to this email.**

Your experiences are of great value to me and I hope you will consider participating in my study.

Warm regards,
Devin Riley

Appendix C

Consent Form

Decision-Making at the Executive Level: How Boards of Trustees and Search Firms Hire Art Museum Executive Directors

University of Washington

Researcher's Name: Devin Riley. Phone: (919) 815-8375. Email: driley95@uw.edu.

Thesis Advisor: Wilson O'Donnell, Associate Director of the Museology Graduate Program.

Phone: (206) 543-4642. Email: wilsonod@uw.edu.

I am asking you to participate in an interview that is part of my Master's Thesis work at the University of Washington. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the decision-making process of art museums when hiring executive directors. Your participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits, and you may discontinue participation at any time. This interview will be audio taped for my note taking only. I may use your title and name of your institution in my final paper. If I directly quote you, I will send the quote to you before publication. If you have any questions now or in the future, you may contact me through the information on this document. Do you have any questions? Do you agree to participate in this interview?

Signature: _____

Date: _____

On card or document left with interviewee:

Decision-Making at the Executive Level: How Boards of Trustees and Search Firms Hire Art Museum Executive Directors

University of Washington

Researcher's Name: Devin Riley. Phone: (919) 815-8375. Email: driley95@uw.edu.

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Appendix D

Coding Matrix

Section 1: My first few questions are about the nature of your experience.

<i>a. How long have you been in your position as a board of trustee/ search firm consultant?</i>	16 years	Since 2006	Just over 6 years	6 years, now taking a year off and will rejoin due to limitation	Was on the board 12 years, off right now
<i>b. Why do you think you were selected or appointed to be a part of the search?</i>	Reputation, museum niche, lots of museum contacts	Experience in the area, was requested	On board 6-9 months, previous experience as a manager and evaluating potential hires, board grooming for larger responsibility, chairman today	Ran university art gallery and an art center, was president of board	Policy for succession states the board president and vice-president should co-chair the search committee
<i>c. How many museum executive searches have you been a part of?</i>	8	Several, 1 art museum above \$5 million	This was first	not my first	2
<i>d. (If a board member) Did you use a search committee, search firm, or a combination of the two?</i>			Used firm Koya leadership partners, following previous procedure, 7 trustees on committee	Not traditional search, 8 members on executive committee, talked about search firm but wanted to look at candidates in	Yes, committee came to consensus to follow AAMD's recommendation to engage a firm, broad and deeper search, sent

				their own backyard	<p>notices to 8-9 firms, chose between 6 that responded, wanted a firm that would that was not too big to prioritize search, chose M Oppenheim after they did in person interview, 10 total on committee: president, vice-president, 4 trustees, 4 community members</p>
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Section 2: My next set of questions are about creating the executive job description (or search notice).

<i>a. How was the job description/ search notice developed?</i>	Previous description, visit museum, meet with board and staff, search committee edits	Site visit, interview board, boards reviews and edits, find someone who fits needs	Used from previous search from 2009, committee added to old version, Koya modified	Bypassed search and hired interim director, more set goals for new director, like a job description	Followed succession plan with sample job description, went through several iterations (10-20), highly collaborative, using mission
<i>b. How did you decide what preferred skills and</i>	Combine staff and board needs, competence, vision, art	What fit culture, depends of museums	Build a permeant collection, fill in financial gaps	Set goals as a group, stable and positive leadership, align with	Diversity, fit in community, fit with staff, ability to

<i>qualifications to include in the job description/ search notice?</i>	experience, fundraising, warn boards no perfect candidate	lifecycle, teamwork	lacking from previous director (former curator)	recent strategic plan, work well with people, experience fundraising	fulfill mission, leadership
<i>c. How did the mission and vision of the museum affect your search?</i>	Quote in job profile, must have buy in	Strong part, mission drives goals, looking for passion in mission	Mission was weak, job for new director to create new mission and strategic plan	Old mission was bad, new director created new mission/ mantra, but needed to value mission	Integral, reflects the culture of the museum

Section 3: This next section is about what you look for in the search of executive candidates.

<i>a. What do you place the highest value on when hiring a new executive director?</i>	Leadership, fundraising, grant writing, administration, less art more management	Passion, not charisma, fundraising	Directorship, experience at similar level, development skills, financial management	Fundraising	Diversity, equity, inclusion, leadership, connectivity to community, speaking skills, business and art acumen, fundraising
<i>b. What leadership traits do you look for in an executive director candidate?</i>	Vision, ability to inspire, creativity	Depends on relevance to search	Eloquence, experience leading	Stable leadership	Leadership
<i>c. How do you identify leadership potential?</i>	Resume, video interviews, YouTube	Prior performance, ask open ended interview questions	Past record		Rely on search firm to filter
<i>d. What intangibles are</i>	Charisma but more quiet authority,		Well rounded, get along with		Diversity, inclusion, someone

<i>important to the search?</i>	people skills, ability to manage up and down, creativity		different constituents, diverse areas of region		who is a disruptor
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Section 4: This section is about the reviewing candidates' resumes.

<i>a. What is your process when looking through several resumes?</i>	Three people look over all resumes, then cover letters, look for matching criteria, ABC plies, only 40 not 200, look for no errors, look for diversity	Reach out to 60-100 candidates, 50 qualified and look at resumes, look at match to position guide, length at prior jobs	Koya sent over approx. 20 people, committee looked alone then together at each person, relatively easy to narrow top six based on experience		100 applied, search firm went through first, some people jumped out, weed out based on experience and maturity, getting to 20-25 was not difficult, then cut in half to 12 which was not hard, went through as a group like a jury, committee was fully engaged
<i>b. What range of experience would you consider for an executive director?</i>	Prefer PhD but don't need, need masters, prefer previous director or head large division	Prefer 10 years in art museum, but look at skills based not total years is hard for art museums, most art museums prefer a PhD	Preferred directorship experience, finance experience, most had PhD, academic level was not a priority	Debated PhD or MA, balanced leader is more important	Adjust expectations, close to a decade of proven museum leadership, PhD is a plus but not needed
<i>c. How did you compare two different candidates' experiences?</i>	Apples to oranges	Present all qualified applicant to committee to decide,	Did they innovate?		Used a matrix with important attributes to quantify, try

		present a broad range on people			to avoid bias, no one thing was most important/ confluence of factors
<i>d. Apart from what is on a resume, how did you get the information you need to make your decision?</i>	YouTube, references over phone, writing samples, web search	Phone interviews, open ended questions, 360 reference check	Google, pooled other museum directors, data search from museum peers, Koya checked references	Meetings with community members and major donors	Reference checks, a lot done by search firm, talk to people (art director world is a small place)
<i>e. According to Caroline E. Eichinger, there is a lack of racial diversity and gender equity in the museum field among executive directors. How did you address these issues during your executive director search?</i>	Very important, advertise through Association of African American Museums, contacts form diverse groups. Rooney Rule from NFL, progress for women and gays	Comes up in every conversation with board, firm is mainly female and 1/3 not white, present diverse roster, some museums more equitable than others, museums also must attract diverse candidates i.e. location	Candidates from both sides of gender fence (2/6 were female, 0/6 persons of color), did not make diversity demands, trustees all interested in diversification, eventual hire is gay	Not specifically as not a traditional search, well aware of lack of gender and racial equity, did not apply to what we did, will definitely take place in next search, museum founded by a woman but no female director since	Try to do the best you can, diversity and inclusion is very important to everyone, tried to achieve gender and racial diversity on committee, surround yourself in it, did not want to hire a privileged old white guy but there is a lot more to it, top candidates (5/8 were female, 1/8 was Latinx)

Section 5: This section is about the interview and reference checking process of the hiring procedure.

<p><i>a. How much value do you place on compatible personalities in the interview?</i></p>	<p>Good to know them as a person, culture fit, chemistry</p>	<p>Interview 12-20 people, present 8-12 to committee, committee interview 5-6, 1-3 finalists for second interviews, need to be able to converse with people, show communication skill</p>	<p>Telephone interview with top 6, flew all 6 to town for in-person 1-hour interviews, top 3-4 had dinners at trustees' homes to get to know them from different directions, fluency test, importance of public speaking, show articulate</p>	<p>Only one interview and decided after candidate was a good fit</p>	<p>8 interviews one weekend back-to-back, asked all the same questions, down to final two made it public and did full weekend visits, meet staff and community members and key stakeholders</p>
<p><i>b. A study by Madeline E. Heilman and Lois R. Saruwatari, found attractiveness proved to be an advantage in hiring. Knowing that physical appearance can affect decision-making, do you think that in your experience such biases could have</i></p>	<p>Yes, advantage for men and women, can be overlooked, good grooming is more important</p>	<p>Do not provide pictures, can't judge appearance off of resume, think clients are more evolved</p>	<p>No, our city is socially progressive, beauty is relative, need to present well and be well spoken</p>		<p>Process to peel away veneer of appearances, tried to get to really know people, every applicant went through same process</p>

<i>played a part in the search?</i>					
<i>c. According to Dan Ariely, behavioral economics states that people are susceptible to irrelevant influences from their immediate environment and irrelevant emotions. In short, Ariely articulates do not assume people are rational as we do not make rational decisions. Do you feel there was any irrational reason you were drawn to a certain candidate?</i>	People use objectivity and intuition and subjectivity, some people more objective than others, never 100% rational	No, focus on holistic leadership transition, irrational committees don't hire firms	No, like to think you are not irrational,		Yeah it happens, recall confessions, never in a way that disrupted the process
<i>d. Daniel Kahneman defines heuristics as the brain using past patterns as shortcuts to make decisions. Heuristics are rules of thumb that help simplify decisions. Do</i>	Yes, committee members balance out	No, firm disrupts old patterns, new process for everyone, board has diverse ideas	No, seven very different people on search committee		Inevitably in happens, that is life, we are not robots, why we had community members not just trustees on the committee, have to stick to the process and believe in it

<i>you think heuristics were used in your decision-making process?</i>					
<i>e. What happens if members of the search committee have a disagreement?</i>	Hierarchy, eventually reach consensus	Deep meaningful conversations, consensus, can't be hung with odd number votes, resolve issues when create position guide	Decision was unanimous, either very lucky or eventually candidate stood out that much, committee was like-minded in thinking and worked well together in the past	No, there really wasn't	Leader of committee had the ability to make decisions, tons of disagreements, lots of deliberations communication and respect, consultative services from search firm, consensus ultimately
<i>f. Have you had the experience of not finding the right person?</i>	Top candidate withdrew and start over, eventually find right person	Top choice turned down and back to beginning, happened twice and second round was better than first choice, long term relationship			
<i>g. What are some "red flags" that you have found during the process of checking references?</i>	Find out if person left job or was fired		When looking at development director lied about time in previous position, but no for director		

Section 6: This section is about the eventual candidate that was selected.

<i>a. What about the selected candidate made them a successful hire?</i>	Aware of challenges, speaking ability	Fresh thinking, problem solver	Education and community outreach, quick learner, balanced experience, ability to articulate	Entrepreneur, knows museum really well, innovator, law degree from Yale, History degree from Stanford, collects photography, wonderful person, well-respected, well-liked	Curatorial art experience, personable, humility, fundraising experience, museum leadership, is planning to stay till he retires
<i>b. Do you feel the selected candidate was similar to the director who was leaving the museum?</i>	Depends on museum, some want to stay in same direction others want new vision	No, most of the time museums want someone different	No, valued permeant collection, director experience	No, everyone has their own set of skills, strengths and weaknesses	
<i>c. How well did the successful candidate meet the criteria from the job description?</i>	Pretty close, depends on museum	Matched most of the position guide	Yes, good experience, not a curator or art historian	Very comfortable with fundraising	Not in terms of diversity, checked more boxes than anyone else, make tradeoffs
<i>d. Did the candidates you selected have any special qualities that made them stand out?</i>			Experience, superior verbal communication skills, end of the day had the better package	Knew the museum really well	The right person for right now
<i>e. Do you feel you hired/ suggested the</i>	Great fit 87% of the time, twice health issues	yeah	yes	yes	100% right, he is not perfect but

<i>right candidate?</i>	led to early departures				we are not the MET
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Section 7: My final section is about the hiring process in its entirety.

<i>a. What was the hiring process like?</i>	5-6 months, usually 6 months, then transition time	4-6 months, longer till they take over,	3-4 months, then 3 months till start date, input from interim director but not staff, only trustees on committee	A month of discussion to hire interim director, candidate met staff for questions such as curators and department leaders	Succession planning policy states communication with staff, first get interim director, develop search committee, get board approval, From January to November, maybe about 10-11 months, he announced in February
<i>b. If the goal of the executive search is to find someone who is the perfect fit for the organization, how difficult was it to find that person?</i>			Eventually candidate really stood out		
<i>c. Is there anything you would change about the process of hiring a museum's executive director?</i>	Only two final candidates, smaller search committees, have a god formula need to stick to it	No change	Maybe more time in first interviews (1 hour), overall structure worked well	No, glad no search firm, firms bring in someone the community does not know and you rely on other people's recommendations	I am biased as I was co-chair, happy with how things evolved, no regrets, learned a lot and was very rewarding

<p><i>d. Do you have any suggestions or tips for future board of trustees/ search committees when hiring a museum executive director?</i></p>	<p>No ideal director who walks on water, balance needs, consensus and support behind eventual hire, importance of onboarding</p>	<p>Invest in time and process, focus more on skills than worrying about empty seat</p>	<p>Make sure you know the candidate's interest and enthusiasm and they will fit in community, hire a firm to get best pool from across US</p>	<p>Look in their own backyard first for candidates, look past some recommendations and do your own research</p>	<p>Stick to succession planning policy in place</p>
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