

When does less information result in better decisions?

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

A Multidisciplinary Symposium on Blinding as a Solution to Institutional Corruption

Symposium: November 1-2, 2013

Proposal Deadline: February 15, 2013

Harvard University

With the support of the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University, Christopher Robertson (James E. Rogers College of Law at the University of Arizona) and Aaron Kesselheim (Harvard Medical School) are organizing a multidisciplinary symposium to examine potential solutions to institutional corruption that use the strategy of concealing biasing information from decision makers. The symposium will take place on November 1 and 2, 2013 at Harvard University.

This event is part of the Institutional Corruption Lab. Larry Lessig (Safra Center Director and Roy L. Furman Professor of Law and Leadership at Harvard Law School) has defined 'institutional corruption' as the consequence of an influence within an economy of influence that illegitimately weakens the effectiveness of an institution especially by weakening the public trust of the institution. The concept provides a more systematic approach to decision-making problems that can arise as a result of financial relationships and other conflicts of interest.

Institutional corruption may arise in many contexts, from medical research to forensic science, from political campaign finance to financial auditing. There are many potential solutions to institutional corruption, but we are particularly interested in practical mechanisms that acknowledge the existence of potential influences, but prevent that biasing information from reaching a decision maker. Such mechanisms may include blinding, masking, placebos, strategic ignorance, information aversion, veil of ignorance rules, blind trusts, walls of separation, or similar concepts. We are interested in reviews of relevant literature, and new laboratory, empirical, historical, and theoretical research that explores the functions, modalities, costs, benefits, and limitations of concealing a source of information to improve decision making. We are interested in established uses of blinding, and potential new applications.

We welcome contributions that have been previously published, as well works in progress. We plan for this symposium to generate collaborative research opportunities, and anticipate publishing many of the presented works in an edited volume from a major academic book press or journal.

To apply, please send a one-page abstract describing your proposed contribution by **February 15, 2013**, as a PDF attachment, to Professors Robertson and Kesselheim (chris.robertson@law.arizona.edu and akesselheim@partners.org). Include a link to or copy of your CV. We encourage applications from newer scholars and practitioners, as well as those more established in their fields. Travel stipends will be available for some speakers. Please indicate whether you request such a stipend, and the likely origin of your travel. Please also indicate whether you would be interested in publishing your contribution in the edited volume, pending further information. The organizers also welcome preliminary inquiries about potential topics and approaches.