

CORD lecture series presents a brown bag lunch talk by visiting scholar:



Christoffer Florczak

Tuesday April 2, 2019

UCENT 480

Downtown Phoenix Campus

12:00-1:00 pm

What Are the Risks? An Experimental Investigation of the Cognitive Biases of Politicians and High-Level Bureaucrats

Abstract

Two smaller, but growing, literatures in both political science and public management have developed around assessing the cognitive biases of politicians or bureaucrats often in comparison with the average citizens. These studies have often found the politicians and civil servants to be biased, and the elites more so when compared with the public. In this talk I will argue that these results are not that surprising given the task environment and the nature of intuitive choice, and that the core question in need of empirical investigation at this point in time should be how politicians and bureaucrats differ in their decision-making. After all policy is made in the interaction between these two elite groups, and it is harder to theoretically distinguish which group is the more rational decision-maker as they occupy task environments with closer resemblance to each other. Lastly, I present the results of four experiments conducted on municipal politicians and high-level bureaucrats. We find differences in future time discounting preferences between the groups, we find that the bureaucrats are prone to status quo bias whilst the politicians are not, we find no evidence of sunk cost biases in either group, and we find very strong reactions to gains/loss framing for both groups.

Christoffer Florczak is a PhD student at University of Southern Denmark