Understanding political behavior: Essays in experimental political economy

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Explaining individual political behavior is one of the big challenges in the social sciences. The work contained in this thesis uses the tools of experimental economics, game theory and decision theory to shed light on political choices. Relaxing the neoclassical assumptions of self-interested preferences and full rationality, this work investigates whether group identity and altruism matter for political participation, what the role of reciprocity and normative appeals in the response to political mobilization is, and whether the costs of information influence the way it is incorporated in (political) decision-making. The methodology of experimental economics is crucial to obtain an answer to these questions. The evidence presented in this thesis shows that group identity has a mild effect on one’s decision to participate and that more altruistic people participate more in politics; it underscores the importance of normative appeals for the effectiveness of political mobilization; and it demonstrates that, contrary to the standard assumption, the cost of information influences the way it is incorporated in decisions.

Pedro Robalo (1984) studied Economics at Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal, where he obtained the degrees of B.Sc. (2007) and M.Sc. (2008). In 2008 he started a Ph.D. at the Tinbergen Institute/University of Amsterdam, where he earned an M.Phil. degree in 2010. In the same year he joined the Center for Research on Experimental Economics and Political Decision Making of the University of Amsterdam, where he conducted research in the areas of Experimental Economics and Political Economy. He has taught courses in Microeconomics and Game Theory. Currently, he is a research fellow of the Max Planck Institute for Research on Collective Goods in Bonn, Germany.
UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL BEHAVIOR
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UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL BEHAVIOR
Essays in Experimental Political Economy

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Faculteit Economie en Bedrijfskunde
To the memory of my father
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Contents

1 Introduction 1
  1.1 Methodology: Game Theory, Decision Theory and Laboratory Experiments ........................................ 2
  1.2 Overview ............................................................................................................................................. 4
Appendix 1.A Participation Games ................................................................. 8
Appendix 1.B Quantal Response Equilibrium ................................................. 9

2 Other-regarding Preferences, Group Identity and Political Participation 13
  2.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................................... 13
  2.2 Related Literature .............................................................................................................................. 16
  2.3 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses ........................................................................................... 18
  2.4 Experimental Design ......................................................................................................................... 21
  2.5 Experimental Results ........................................................................................................................ 26
    2.5.1 Subject Classification ................................................................................................................. 26
    2.5.2 Group Identity Induction ........................................................................................................... 29
    2.5.3 Other-regarding Preferences and Participation Behavior ......................................................... 32
    2.5.4 Group Identity and Participation Behavior ............................................................................... 33
    2.5.5 Multivariate Analysis ............................................................................................................... 36
  2.6 Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 39
Appendix 2.A Equilibria of the Participation Game ............................................ 41
    2.A.1 In-group Bias and Aggregate Participation .............................................................................. 43
    2.A.2 Altruism, In-group Bias and Individual Participation ............................................................. 44
Appendix 2.B Value Orientation Test - Ring Test .................................................. 48
Appendix 2.C Auxiliary Tables ....................................................................................... 48
Appendix 2.D Other-regarding Preferences and Group Identity ............................ 51
Appendix 2.E Experiment Instructions ............................................................................. 52

3 Why Does Political Mobilization Work? The Role of Norms and
# Reciprocity

3.1 Introduction ................................................. 57
   3.1.1 Candidate Explanations ................................ 59
3.2 The Model .................................................. 63
   3.2.1 Implemented Parameterization and Equilibrium Predictions .................................................. 65
   3.2.2 Comparative Statics ...................................... 67
3.3 Experimental Design and Hypotheses .............................. 68
   3.3.1 Treatments ............................................... 71
   3.3.2 Hypotheses .............................................. 72
3.4 Results ..................................................... 75
   3.4.1 The Impact of Mobilization ............................... 76
   3.4.2 Participation Appeals and Group Norms ................. 80
   3.4.3 Test of Equilibrium Predictions ......................... 82
   3.4.4 Regression Analysis ..................................... 86
3.5 Conclusion .................................................. 88

Appendix 3.A The Model - Details ................................ 90
   3.A.1 Participation Probabilities for Beta Players ............ 90
   3.A.2 Quantal Response Equilibrium ............................ 92
Appendix 3.B Experiment Instructions .............................. 99
   3.B.1 Comprehension Questions ................................. 102
Appendix 3.C Trust Game Results ................................ 102
Appendix 3.D Subject Ratings ..................................... 104
Appendix 3.E Independence of Observations Across Blocks ....... 106
Appendix 3.F Transcript of Alphas’ Messages ..................... 110

# Paying is Believing: The Effect of Costly Information on Bayesian Updating

4.1 Introduction .................................................. 114
   4.1.1 Sunk Information Costs ................................. 115
4.2 Experimental Design .......................................... 119
   4.2.1 Choice Framework ........................................ 120
   4.2.2 Treatments ............................................... 121
4.3 Experimental Results ........................................ 124
   4.3.1 Treatment effects ........................................ 125
   4.3.2 Interpreting the effect of cost ......................... 129
   4.3.3 Selection effects ......................................... 132
4.4 Pricing Information ........................................... 136
4.5 Conclusion .................................................. 139
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix 4.A</th>
<th>Details on the Choice Framework and Type Classification</th>
<th>141</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.A.1</td>
<td>Choice Framework</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.A.2</td>
<td>Type Classification</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4.B</td>
<td>Experiment Instructions</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4.C</td>
<td>Additional results</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4.D</td>
<td>Biases in Bayesian updating</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Bibliography                          | 153 |
| Summary                               | 165 |
| Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)       | 169 |
| Sumário (Summary in Portuguese)       | 173 |
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Sequence in the experiment</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Experimental treatments</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Typical choice in the ring test</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Other-regarding preference types</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Group identity induction across treatments</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Evolution of participation and other-regarding preferences</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Individual participation rates and other-regarding preferences.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Participation across treatments</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>In-sample model predictions</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>Other-regarding preferences and group identity</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>QRE and NE predictions for Alphas</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Sequence in one of the blocks of the experiment.</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Activation decisions of Alphas through sub-blocks.</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Aggregate participation across treatments</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Participation and individual costs</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Participation by reciprocator type</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Participation and normative appeals</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>QRE equilibrium participation probabilities for different values of $\mu$.</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Amount sent in the trust game.</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Amount returned in the trust game.</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>Ratings distribution.</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>The scoring function</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Outline of the experimental design.</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Average decisions by blocks of 5 periods.</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Distributions of individual decision making.</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Average decision by subject type.</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Implied cost levels</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Decisions and the effect of biases on decision making.</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

2.1 Other-regarding preference types ........................................ 29
2.2 Participation and other-regarding preferences .......................... 34
2.3 Panel regression model ....................................................... 38
2.4 Other-regarding preferences and individual participation .............. 46
2.5 In-group bias and individual participation ............................... 47
2.6 Ring test ................................................................. 48
2.7 Reported motivations in the questionnaire. ............................... 49
2.8 Participation, personal traits and other-regarding preference types .... 49
2.9 Regression of average participation on a linear trend .................... 50
2.10 Conditional distribution of types across treatments, in percentage. ... 50
3.1 Parameter values ............................................................. 65
3.2 Point predictions ............................................................ 66
3.3 Activation decisions .......................................................... 76
3.4 Model predictions and observed results ................................... 84
3.5 Panel regression results ...................................................... 87
3.6 Payoff matrix of Alphas for $\mu_{Beta}=0.4$. ............................... 94
3.7 Panel regression results ...................................................... 105
3.8 Panel regression results ...................................................... 106
3.9 Determinants of participation across sub-blocks .......................... 108
3.10 Determinants of participation across blocks ............................. 109
4.1 Decision block: priors and lottery distributions (urns). .................. 121
4.2 Subject types ............................................................... 123
4.3 Summary statistics .......................................................... 125
4.4 Decision averages by treatment and information condition. ............ 127
4.5 Representativeness bias and treatment effects. ........................... 132
4.6 Type distribution by treatment .............................................. 133
4.7 Regression results by ball draw ............................................ 135
4.8 Parameterizations A and B. ................................................. 141
4.9 Values for parameterizations A and B. .......................... 142
4.10 Information acquisition rates of types across treatments. ......... 143
4.11 p-values for Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests of decision distributions. .... 146
4.12 Representativeness bias and treatment effects .................. 147
4.13 Decision averages by treatment, information and type. ............ 148
4.14 Regression results by information condition (ball draw) ............. 149
4.15 Regression results by information condition (no draw) ............. 150