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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