

Public Trust, the Law, and Financial Investment*

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Abstract

How does trust evolve in markets? What is the optimal level of government regulation and how does this intervention affect trust and economic growth? How do professional fees affect trust formation? In a two-stage theoretical model, we analyze the trust that evolves in markets, given the value of social capital, the level of government regulation, and the potential for economic growth. We show that when the value of social capital is high, government regulation and trustfulness are substitutes. In this case, government intervention may actually cause lower aggregate investment and decreased economic growth. In contrast, when the value of social capital is low, regulation and trustfulness may be complements. We analyze the optimal level of regulation in the market, given the conditions in the economy, and show that the absence of government intervention (a Coasian plan) is suboptimal in a culture in which social capital is not highly valued and when the potential for economic growth is low. We finally evaluate the effects of fees on the trust that forms in various cultures (high vs. low value to social capital) and compare our results with the implications of classic agency theory. Overall, our theoretical analysis in this paper is consistent with the empirical literature on the subject and we highlight novel predictions that are generated by our model.

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1 Introduction

It is well documented that public trust is positively correlated with economic growth (Putnam 1993; LaPorta, Lopez-de-Silanes, Shleifer, and Vishny 1997; Knack and Keefer 1997; Zak and Knack 2001) and with participation in the stock market (Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales 2007). These empirical findings raise several fundamental questions that we explore in this paper: How does trust form in markets? How does law and regulation affect the level of trust in the market? Are the law and trust always complements, or can they sometimes be substitutes? How can governments optimally affect the trust level that evolves in markets in order to maximize economic growth? How do professional fees affect the trust that forms in the market?¹

Existing empirical evidence offers contrasting answers to these questions. For example, La Porta et al. (1998, 2006) document substantial cross-sectional variation in the legal protection that investors receive in different countries, and posit that there exists a positive correlation between government regulation and market growth. Likewise, Glaeser, Johnson, and Shleifer (2001) also argue for this positive relationship and use the differences between markets in Poland and the Czech Republic as a motivating example. In contrast, Allen, Qian, and Qian (2005) study the emerging Chinese market and show that substantial growth of the private sector has occurred, despite the absence of a strict legal system. They assert that business culture and social norms play a large role in the productivity in China. Further, Allen, Chakrabarti, De, Qian, and Qian (2006) find that despite having a legal system with low investor protection in India, remarkably high growth has occurred due to a reliance on “informal and extra-legal mechanisms”. Based on all of these observations, the natural questions that arise are under what conditions is government intervention optimal (in the form of laws) and when is a Coasian approach more effective?²

In order to address these questions, we develop a two-period theoretical model in which investors entrust their wealth to a continuum of heterogeneous agents and rely on the agents to honor their fiduciary duty. Within a rational expectations framework, we analyze how public trust, aggregate investment, and economic growth change based on the legal environment and the social networks that are present in the market.

Before describing our model and results, three unique aspects of our notion of trust are worth

¹In portfolio management, fees are paid as commissions, whereas in a corporate setting, fees refer to the compensation that managers collect for their services. In the paper, the model we present is general and applies to both settings.

²A Coasian plan refers to a regime in which government regulation is absent and unnecessary because market participants organize (or contract) to achieve efficient outcomes. See “Coase Versus The Coasians” for a good summary of this debate (Glaeser, Johnson, and Shleifer 2001).

highlighting. First, the ability of clients to trust others in our model is calculative and arises from two sources: the law (deterrence) and culture (public trust).³ Calculative trust, as defined by Williamson (1993), means that investors rationally compute their trust level based on their subjective beliefs about the gambles they face.⁴ In making this calculation, they take into account two primary sources of trust. Trust that arises from deterrence evolves because investors can rely on the government to make sure that agents honor their fiduciary duty to clients. Trust that arises from culture evolves because investors can rely on a certain amount of professionalism or the social networks that have been established in the population. That is, in the latter type of trust, agents honor the fiduciary duty due to a social norm, not a formal law. In some circumstances, these two sources of trust may be complements, but in others they may be substitutes (Williamson 1993, Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994).

Second, our concept of *public trust* differs from the previous notions of *private trust* and relationship building. The latter develop because participants interact repeatedly, often in a dynamic setting with an infinite horizon (e.g. Abreu 1988; Abdulkadiroglu and Bagwell 2005). The Folk Theorem is usually invoked, and because participants are allowed to punish each other for deviations from cooperation, this stabilizes the relationships that develop, but at the same time renders trust less important. Indeed, trust is more valuable when participants do not have a built-in governance mechanism (such as a punishment scheme) to protect their interests (Fukuyama 1995 and Zak and Knack 2001). This may be the case when participants interact infrequently and/or the horizon is temporary (finite). In this case, public trust becomes crucial for growth to occur, which is what we wish to model. Therefore, in our model, clients and agents interact over a finite horizon (two periods) and trust evolves as a public good due to both incentives and social norms, without the need for repeated interaction between the agents and clients.⁵

Third, trust is only important when the contract between the parties is incomplete. That is, if state contingent contracts can be written and upheld by law, which protect the clients in all states of the world, then trust is a superfluous consideration. As Williamson (1993) points out, the ability to write such contracts renders trust unimportant to the relationship. As such, even though

³This approach is consistent with Williamson (1993), Yamagishi and Yamagishi (1994), and Fukuyama (1995). Yamagishi and Yamagishi (1994) refer to these two types of trust as deterrent and benevolent trust.

⁴As such, the model that we pose is fully rational as all of the clients have consistent beliefs about the markets they face. Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales (2007) also adopt a calculative form of trust. In their model, investors rationally calculate their willingness to participate in the stock market.

⁵As we will discuss in the paper, the model could be generalized to include more periods. But what is critical is that the interaction should occur during a finite number of periods, so that trust plays a role in the relationship between the clients and agents.

state-contingent bonuses are common to many transactions, we restrict the contract space within the model to be necessarily incomplete, to then evaluate the role that trust has in the market.⁶

At the beginning of the game, heterogeneous agents decide whether to pay a private cost to become trustworthy (*good types*) and act in their client's best interest. Those who do not (*opportunistic types*) act in their own best interest and ignore their client's well-being. We consider this cost to be linked to both the value that an agent derives from their social capital and the social pressures that result from the networks in which they participate. For example, if an agent has access to a well-developed social network that they can rely on, then they have a low cost of providing full service to the potential clients that they face. Additionally, this type of agent will also experience stronger social pressures to honor their obligations and will experience more "social disutility" when they fail to do so. In contrast, agents with poorly developed networks will not be able to honor their duty to their client with such ease and do not suffer a high utility penalty when they ignore their responsibilities to others.

The distribution of these costs (distribution of agents) characterizes the business culture of any population and defines the agents' tendency to become trustworthy, given the incentives that they are given and the regulations they face. In equilibrium, the fraction of agents who become good-types represents the amount of public trust that exists in the market. Since clients are rational and have consistent beliefs, they properly calculate the level of public trust available in the market, even though they do not observe each agent's individual choice. In each period, clients decide how much to invest with particular agents given the overall level of public trust and the protection offered by the government. Outcomes from the first period investment are publicly observable and therefore, the amount invested in the second period also depends on an agent's outcome from the first period. In both periods, agents who are trustworthy maximize the outcome of the stochastic investment opportunity they face, whereas opportunistic agents do only what is required by law.

Based on the social culture that exists (i.e. the value of social capital), two different types of equilibria arise. In cultures where social capital is important (Type I; e.g. concave distribution functions), the public trust that develops is increasing in the potential productivity of the economy, and is decreasing in the amount of governmental regulation that is imposed. That is, less public trust will form in these societies when laws governing the market are more strict. The intuition for this finding is that tough laws make it less rewarding for the marginal agent to reveal that they are

⁶As will become obvious, the model that we pose could be generalized to include contracts which have incentives. As long as they remain incomplete and the agents have some discretion, the results that we generate would not change qualitatively.

trustworthy (through a public outcome). In fact, we show that strict laws may even displace public trust from the market altogether and in some cases more government intervention may actually lead to less aggregate investment and lower economic growth.

In contrast, in societies where social capital is less valuable, an additional low-trust equilibrium may arise (Type II). In this case, government involvement increases public trust and aggregate investment in the market. That is, a more stringent legal system and the formation of public trust are complements. Interestingly, in these types of cultures, a higher potential productivity may lead to less aggregate investment in the market and lower economic growth. The intuition for this is that a higher productivity leads to more opportunism and therefore, clients are less willing to invest. Opportunities for growth may be lost because of higher incentives for opportunism.

Of course, the role of the government should be optimally determined based on the social culture that exists and the tendency for public trust to develop. From the results already mentioned, we show that government regulation is less likely and may even be value-destroying when social capital is important in a society. In contrast, with a Type II equilibrium, regulation can be responsible for catalyzing both public trust in the market and economic growth. Most interestingly, we show that a Coasian plan is never optimal when the potential for productivity in the economy is low. That is, while the optimal level of government involvement may vary based on culture, it is never zero when potential for growth is low. There is always a role for some investor protection. This is an important finding as it sheds light on the previously mentioned debate over what type of law is optimal.

Finally, we consider the effect that professional fees have on the trust that forms in markets. We show that in a Type I equilibrium, trust is increasing in fees (incentives) as long as fees are relatively low. Once fees rise sufficiently high, however, trust begins to decrease as fees rise further. The reason that effort provision (i.e. becoming trustworthy) decreases after a threshold is that once agents receive fees that are too high, it becomes harder for the marginal agent to distinguish themselves when they are working harder for their client. In contrast, we show that for trust to evolve in a Type II equilibrium, there needs to be a sufficient level of fees paid to the agents. However, once that threshold is reached, raising fees further leads to lower trust formation. Therefore, while trust formation depends on a sufficient level of incentives, trust formation does not necessarily rise as incentives increase. Throughout the analysis we compare our results with the predictions of standard agency theory.

One caveat that we must address is that for most of this paper, the social structure and the

value to social capital is viewed as a primitive. Based on the distribution of costs of becoming trustworthy (the value to social capital), we analyze how much public trust evolves and the effect of government regulation on its formation. Thus, we accept Fukuyama’s view that social structure and culture have substantial inertia and that “durable social institutions cannot be legislated into existence the way a government can create a central bank or an army.” Indeed, previous work has focused on the formation of social capital, primarily through the development of social norms and social networks⁷; however, it is not our intention in this paper to model how business cultures primarily form, but to generate an analysis of how public trust evolves in relation to the laws that are set and how this affects economic growth. Further, our goal is to describe how the public (clients) benefits from the social networks that exist, even though they are not a part of these “private” relationships. In light of this, though, we do discuss the effect that the government has on social culture in Section 4 of the paper.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we set up our benchmark model and introduce our notions of public trust, the law, and social culture. Section 3 derives and characterizes the various equilibria of the game. Section 4 studies the role of the government in the market. Section 5 studies the effects of fees on trust formation. Section 6 concludes. The appendix contains all the proofs.

2 Market For Trust

Consider a two-stage model (Figure 1) in which a continuum of risk-neutral agents sell an investment opportunity to another continuum of risk-neutral clients in each period. This investment could be a share in a mutual fund, a private equity investment, or common stock in a publicly traded company. The agent in each case has a different role depending on the specific investment type, but in all cases, they have a fiduciary duty to act in their client’s best interest. That is, the agent has a responsibility to use the capital in the best possible way to maximize the chances that the investment is successful. For $t \in \{1, 2\}$, define p_t as the price that the client pays for the investment and ϕ as the fraction of p_t that the agent keeps as a fee.⁸ In the market, p_t is determined competitively, and we assume that the measure of clients is larger than that of the agents, so that when a transaction takes place, the client purchases the investment for its full expected value.

⁷See, for example, Kandori (1992); Greif (1994); Glaeser, Laibson, and Sacerdote (2002); Bloch, Genicot, and Ray (2005); Mobius and Szeidl (2006); Robinson and Stuart (2006)

⁸We treat the fee ϕ as exogenous. In Section 5, however, we analyze the effect that changes in ϕ have on the trust that forms in the market.

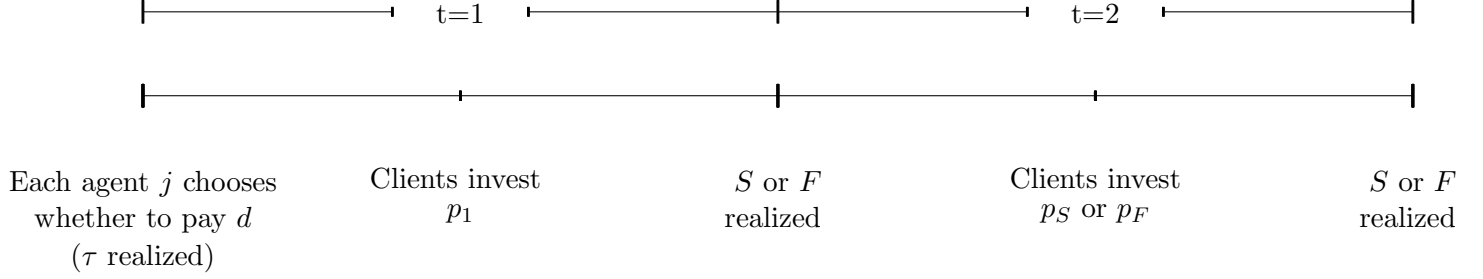


Figure 1: At $t = 1$, all agents choose whether to pay d_j to become good types. The fraction who become trustworthy is given by τ . Clients invest p_1 and receive zero if the investment fails or receive one if the investment succeeds. Good types exert effort to maximize the potential for success, whereas opportunistic types only provide the minimum effort required by law. At the end of $t = 1$, success (S) or failure (F) is publicly observed for each agent. At $t = 2$, investors invest p_S if an agent succeeded last period or p_F if the agent failed. Opportunistic types again only do what is required by law, whereas good types maximize the potential of the investment. Finally, S or F is realized and the game ends.

At the beginning of period one ($t = 1$), each agent j chooses whether to pay a cost d_j to become trustworthy and act in the best interest of their client (i.e. become a “good” (G) type). By becoming trustworthy, good types honor their client’s fiduciary duty and maximize the chances that the client receives a high payoff from the investment. If an agent chooses not to pay d_j , they only do what is required by law for their clients. The cost d_j represents a durable investment (sunk cost) by some of the agents to protect their client’s interests. We restrict the actions of non-trustworthy agents by not allowing them to make such an investment at the beginning of $t = 2$. This, however, is without loss of generality in the two-period game, since it would never be rational for these agents to pay d_j at $t = 2$.⁹

Agents in the market are heterogeneous with respect to the cost d_j . Some agents have access to better social networks and are more efficient in providing full service to their clients. Given their relationships, they find it easier to rely on other market participants and offer better opportunities to outsiders. Additionally, agents who have more developed networks feel greater pressures to honor their responsibilities, which results in a higher social (or moral) disutility if they disregard their duties to others.¹⁰ Therefore, agents who are more “socially entrenched” (with a low d_j) are more likely to become trustworthy, given the incentives they face. The opposite is true for an agent with a high cost d_j . In this case, they do not have access to the same channels and do not experience

⁹This will become clear when we analyze the optimal actions of the players in Section 3. If we would generalize the model to be $n < \infty$ periods in duration, it would never be optimal for agents to newly invest in this technology at the beginning of period n .

¹⁰This disutility for shirking has been modeled previously by Noe and Robello (1994).

the same degree of disutility when they disregard their duties to others. Therefore, they are less likely to become trustworthy.¹¹

Consider, for example, that each agent represents an investment broker who may either prepare to invest money on behalf of their client or not. Preparation requires effort and time as research is often involved. Access to social networks or connections allows some brokers to obtain information about potential investments in an easier fashion. Additionally, since the performance of each broker is publicly observable to members of their network, some brokers have greater incentives (pressure) to maintain a reputation in good standing.

There are other potential interpretations of the costs d_j , especially when each agent represents an entire organization, such as an entrepreneur or a CEO. Then, d_j might also represent the cost of solving agency issues within the firm. As in Carlin and Gervais (2007), if employees are drawn from a highly ethical population, then the firm maximizes value by offering fixed wage employment contracts and avoiding the costs of risk-sharing.¹² If employees are prone to shirking or stealing because social norms are lax, then maximizing value requires costly incentives, which would then be parameterized by a high cost d_j .

Let $F(d)$ be the distribution of costs in a population such that $d \in [0, 1]$ and $F(\cdot)$ is twice continuously differentiable over the entire support. As such, each distribution $F(\cdot)$ characterizes the culture of a particular society and the tendency of people to honor their responsibility and be trustworthy. In the context of our model, $F(\cdot)$ measures the ease with which agents in a particular population can invest to help and/or protect their clients. For example, if

$$F_1(d) \geq F_2(d)$$

for all $d \in [0, 1]$, then we can call population 1 more trustworthy than population 2.

The shape (curvature) of $F(\cdot)$ is also important in characterizing a population and will play a key role in the types of equilibria that arise in the model. For example, if $F(\cdot)$ is concave, then the majority of agents in the population have relatively low costs of being socially responsible. Alternatively, if $F(\cdot)$ is convex, then there exists a significant mass of agents who have higher costs of becoming trustworthy¹³. We will see in Section 3 that the specific characteristics of $F(\cdot)$ drive

¹¹In an alternative specification of the model, the cost d_j could be calculated as $d_j = c_j - s_j$, where c_j is the cost of implementing systems to protect the interests of clients and s_j is the disutility incurred if the agent shirks. For tractability, we prefer to characterize our agents with d_j , while keeping in mind both sources of each agent's costs.

¹²See also Sliwka (2007).

¹³In the analysis that follows, we also consider intermediate cases, in which the distributions have convex and concave regions.

the type of behavior that is observed in equilibrium. Further, we will see in Section 4 that the characteristics of $F(\cdot)$ also dictate the optimal amount of regulation that a government should impose in the market.

Let τ denote the proportion of agents that pay the cost d . While τ is not observable by investors, it is correctly inferred in the rational expectations equilibrium that we derive. In this sense, the clients know exactly the fraction of agents who will take their fiduciary responsibility seriously, but for an individual agent, τ measures how much the client can trust them with their capital. As we will see, when there is more trust in the market (higher τ), the productivity of the economy is higher, which is reflected by a larger p_t .

The outcome from the investment may be high (*success*, S) or low (*failure*, F). The client derives more utility u_S from a successful investment, and for clarity we fix $u_S = 1$ and $u_F = 0$. The probability that a success or failure takes place is based on the type of agent that the client employs. Good types in the market (fraction τ) succeed with probability $q \in (0, 1)$ and opportunistic types succeed with probability ϵq where $\epsilon \in [0, 1]$. As such, we consider q to be linked to the potential growth in the economy. Also, we interpret ϵ as the degree to which the legal system governs the agent (enforcement). An investment with a low level of ϵ is one in which the government requires less disclosure or enforces compliance less vigorously. With low ϵ , the agent has more discretion to violate their fiduciary duty to their client. With a high level of ϵ , the client is better protected by the law. In Section 4 we consider that the optimal choice of ϵ for the government, given that implementation of the law is costly (that is, they face a cost $c(\epsilon)$, which we will specify later). Also, throughout what follows, we will evaluate the effects of q and ϵ on the trust τ that evolves and the effects that they have on economic growth.

The clients make their investment up-front in each period $t \in \{1, 2\}$. Since clients cannot observe the agent's type (G or O) ex ante, the parameter τ measures the prior belief of each client about the agent with whom they have a relationship. As already mentioned, in equilibrium this belief equals the actual realized value of public trust. Once the first investment (p_1) is made with an agent, however, a success or failure is observed publicly. Agents who succeed in the first period are labeled with an S and agents who fail are labeled with an F . Given the prior belief of the clients and the outcome from period one, the clients update their beliefs using Bayes' law and form the posterior beliefs $\Pr(G|S)$ and $\Pr(G|F)$. They then use these beliefs to calculate the values for p_S and p_F that they are willing to invest with agents of each type at the beginning of period two. Once the agents are given $p_2 \in \{p_S, p_F\}$, opportunistic agents again ignore their duty to their

client, while good types invest optimally. Once a final success or failure is realized, the clients are paid (if they recognize a payoff), and the game ends. The timing of the game is summarized in Figure 1.

It is important to note that we have assumed that each agent’s decision to pay d_j is not publicly observable and cannot be credibly signaled to potential clients. This captures an important aspect of trust since clients in our model are considered “outsiders” to the production of successful investments. That is, when clients interact with an agent, they can neither observe the commitment that the agent has made to their well-being, nor the agent’s access to resources like social networks. If the client were an “insider” and could observe these attributes, then complete information would indeed make trust a superfluous phenomenon. Trust, however, becomes important when the client is an outsider and relies on the agent to protect their interests.

It is equally important to point out that we have restricted the contract space in this game in order to highlight the importance of trust in the market. Specifically, the bargaining power of the clients is low and they pay agents a fee that is independent of the future state of the world. Therefore, clients are not able to offer state-contingent bonuses to induce an effort provision by the agent. With such contracts, the client would be better able to protect themselves and would not have to rely as much on trust. The ability to write contracts that are protective to an investor makes trust less important to the relationship (Williamson (1993)). Trust becomes more valuable when contracts are incomplete and agents have discretion, which is what we wish to capture in this model. Therefore, while the model could be generalized to include contracts which have incentives (but would remain incomplete), the results would not change qualitatively as long as agents have some discretion and the clients were forced to calculate how much that they could trust them.

3 Endogenous Public Trust

We solve the game by backward induction and start by analyzing the optimal actions of the clients in period two.

3.1 Second Period Behavior

At the beginning of the second period, the clients calculate their expected return given the conditional probabilities $\Pr(G|S)$ and $\Pr(G|F)$ and invest based on the outcomes in period one. Using

Bayes' rule, the conditional probabilities are

$$\begin{aligned}\Pr(G|S) &= \frac{q\tau}{q\tau + \epsilon q(1 - \tau)} \\ &= \frac{\tau}{\tau + \epsilon(1 - \tau)} \\ &= \frac{1}{1 + \epsilon \frac{1-\tau}{\tau}}\end{aligned}$$

and

$$\begin{aligned}\Pr(G|F) &= \frac{(1 - q)\tau}{(1 - q)\tau + (1 - \epsilon q)(1 - \tau)} \\ &= \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1-\epsilon q}{1-q} \frac{1-\tau}{\tau}}.\end{aligned}$$

The investments are then calculated as

$$\begin{aligned}p_S &= q \Pr(G|S) + \epsilon q \Pr(O|S) \\ &= q \Pr(G|S) + \epsilon q [1 - \Pr(G|S)] \\ &= (1 - \epsilon)q \Pr(G|S) + \epsilon q\end{aligned}$$

and

$$\begin{aligned}p_F &= q \Pr(G|F) + \epsilon q \Pr(O|F) \\ &= q \Pr(G|F) + \epsilon q [1 - \Pr(G|F)] \\ &= (1 - \epsilon)q \Pr(G|F) + \epsilon q\end{aligned}$$

In what follows, we denote

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta p &\equiv p_S - p_F \\ &= (1 - \epsilon)q \left[\frac{1}{1 + \epsilon \frac{1-\tau}{\tau}} - \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1-\epsilon q}{1-q} \frac{1-\tau}{\tau}} \right]\end{aligned}\tag{1}$$

as the investment difference between agents who experienced the two different outcomes. Notice that because $\epsilon < \frac{1-\epsilon q}{1-q}$, the investment difference is always positive, and it equals zero if $\epsilon = 1$. Since agents receive a fraction ϕ of the monies invested, Δp measures how much the clients reward (penalize) agents who had a success (failure) in period one. As we will see, the measure Δp plays

a major role in the agents' incentives to become a good type at the beginning of the game. The following proposition describes how Δp is affected by changing q , ϵ , and τ , and will turn out to be useful later when we calculate the amount of trust that forms endogenously in the market.

Proposition 1. (*Comparative Statics on Δp*)

(i) *The investment difference Δp increases in q and decreases in ϵ .*

(ii) *There exists $\bar{\tau}$ such that*

$$\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau} = \begin{cases} > 0 & \text{if } \tau < \bar{\tau} \\ < 0 & \text{if } \tau > \bar{\tau}, \end{cases}$$

$$\text{where } \bar{\tau} \equiv \left[1 + \sqrt{\frac{1-q}{\epsilon(1-\epsilon q)}} \right]^{-1}.$$

The intuition of Proposition 1 can be appreciated by inspecting Figure 2. As the potential for productivity in the market increases (q increases), the difference in relative investments widens. This occurs because clients gain more when an agent honors their responsibility to maximize their investment. A higher q also means that the opportunity cost of shirking is higher, so clients increase the investment difference to provide incentives for agents to do the right thing. In contrast, as the level of ϵ increases, the investment difference decreases. This occurs because as the amount of discretion that agents have decreases, the amount of relative investment incentives that are required also decreases.

The relationship between trust (τ) and the investment differential (Δp) is a bit trickier. When there is no trust ($\tau = 0$), the outcome in period one does not reveal any new information about the agents. Therefore, $\Delta p = 0$ when $\tau = 0$. For the same reason, when all agents are trustworthy ($\tau = 1$), Δp is also zero. For trust levels $\tau \in (0, \bar{\tau})$, Δp rises as trust increases. This occurs because as τ rises, the outcomes from the first period are more informative about the agents' type. However, once the threshold $\bar{\tau}$ is reached, as τ increases further, the outcomes in the first period become less informative and the optimal amount of Δp decreases. As such, in both panels of Figure 2, the investment differential Δp is a hump-shaped function of the trust τ . Note that $\bar{\tau} \in [0, 1]$ and is completely determined by q and ϵ . It is monotonically increasing in q and quadratic in ϵ .

This non-monotonic relationship between τ and Δp has important implications for the way in which agents choose to become trustworthy. When $\tau < \bar{\tau}$, the benefit to being trustworthy in the market is increasing in the aggregate amount of public trust. That is, there are increasing returns to trust in this region. In contrast, when $\tau > \bar{\tau}$, there are decreasing returns to investing in trust.

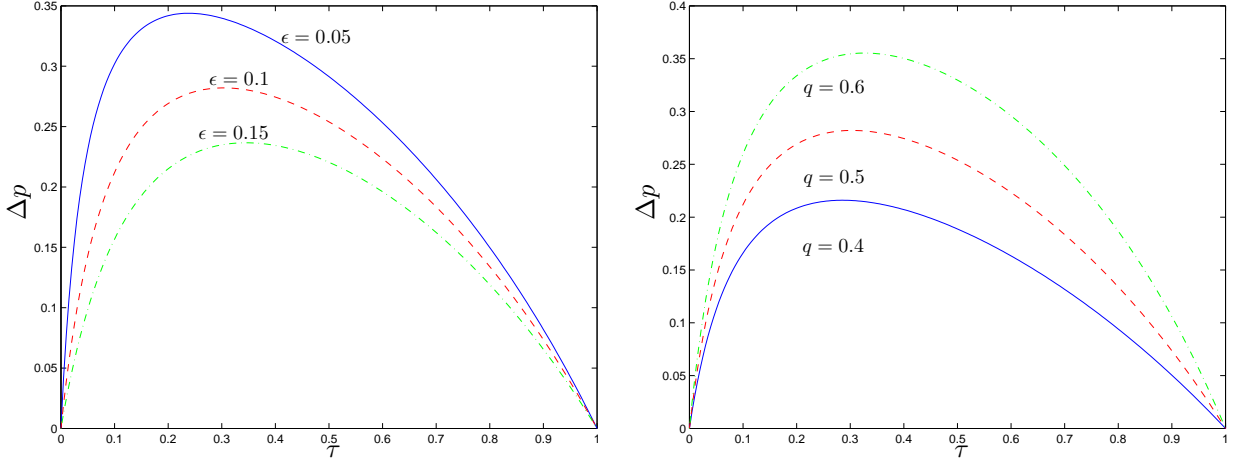


Figure 2: The investment differential Δp plotted as a function of trust τ . In the first panel, the probability of success is $q = 0.5$ and ϵ varies between $\epsilon = 0.05$ (solid line), $\epsilon = 0.10$ (dashed line), and $\epsilon = 0.15$ (dashed-dotted line). In the second panel, $\epsilon = 0.10$ and the probability q varies between $q = 0.4$ (solid line), $q = 0.5$ (dashed line), and $q = 0.6$ (dashed-dotted line).

As we will see, the existence of increasing returns to trust is important when the value of social capital is low because it gives rise to a complementarity between public trust and the law.

3.2 First Period Behavior

Once the agents have made their choices about paying d_j and the level of public trust τ is realized, clients rationally make their first period investments, which may be calculated as

$$p_1 = \tau q + (1 - \tau)\epsilon q. \quad (2)$$

Interestingly, it is easy to show that the aggregate investment in each period is the same, that is,

$$p_1 = \tau p_S + (1 - \tau)p_F. \quad (3)$$

More importantly, p_1 is a measure of the growth of the economy. That is, since p_1 measures the full expected value of the investment, the larger p_1 is, the higher the expected growth that the economy will experience as a result of the opportunity. Analyzing (2), $p_1 \in [\epsilon q, q]$ and p_1 increases with τ . That is, as more public trust forms (τ rises), the investment becomes more valuable, indicating higher economic growth. The link between trust formation and economic growth is

entirely consistent with the findings of both Knack and Keefer (1997) and Zak and Knack (2001). As we will see shortly, however, the effects of q and ϵ on economic growth are ambiguous because they affect p_t directly and also through τ . Depending on the importance of social mores and the culture that exists (specifically on $F(\cdot)$), q and ϵ may either increase or decrease economic growth.

We now determine the level of public trust that forms in the market, based on the agents' decisions at the beginning of the game. We derive two types of equilibria that will depend on the distribution function $F(\cdot)$ that is considered. The first type (Type I) arises when social capital is relatively valuable in the population. We refer to this as a “high-trust” equilibrium. When social capital becomes less valuable in the population, we show that another equilibrium (Type II) may emerge, which is a “low trust” equilibrium. As we will see, q and ϵ will affect trust formation and economic growth differently in these populations, and the degree of optimal government intervention will vary as well.

Consider the initial decision faced by agents, namely whether to become trustworthy. The expected utility from the two choices are

$$\begin{aligned} E[u_G] &= \phi[p_1 + qp_S + (1 - q)p_F] - d \\ E[u_O] &= \phi[p_1 + \epsilon qp_S + (1 - \epsilon q)p_F] \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

where u_G is the utility of the good type and u_O is the corresponding utility for an opportunistic type. A particular agent chooses to pay d if

$$\begin{aligned} E[u_G] &\geq E[u_O] \\ \phi[p_1 + qp_S + (1 - q)p_F] - d &\geq \phi[p_1 + \epsilon qp_S + (1 - \epsilon q)p_F] \\ d &\leq \phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p. \end{aligned}$$

As such, in any equilibrium of this game, the fraction of trustworthy agents, denoted τ^* , is implicitly defined by

$$\tau^* = F(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p(\tau^*)). \tag{5}$$

Propositions 2 and 3 characterize the equilibria that arise in the game and the effect that market conditions ($F(\cdot)$, ϵ , and q) have on the trust that forms in the market.

Proposition 2. *(Type I Equilibria: High Value Social Capital) The equilibrium fraction of trust-*

worthy agents is implicitly defined by (5). Suppose that the following assumptions hold

$$F(0) = 0 \quad (6)$$

$$F''(y) \leq 0 \quad \forall y. \quad (7)$$

Then, there exists an $\bar{\epsilon}$ such that if $\epsilon \geq \bar{\epsilon}$ the unique equilibrium involves $\tau^* = 0$, while if $\epsilon < \bar{\epsilon}$, then there exists one, and only one, other equilibrium, in which $\tau^* > 0$.

For any positive equilibrium public trust level, τ^* decreases in ϵ and increases in q . The maximum level of government intervention $\bar{\epsilon}$ increases in both q and $F'(0)$. Finally, the aggregate amount invested in each period increases in q , but decreases in ϵ as long as

$$\frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} < -\frac{1 - \tau^*}{1 - \epsilon}.$$

An example of a Type I equilibrium is given in Figure 3. According to Proposition 2, increasing the potential for economic productivity q leads to more public trust in the market. Additionally, as q increases, the ability for the market to sustain trust increases. For example, the amount of possible government intervention $\bar{\epsilon}$ that does not extinguish public trust rises as q increases. Importantly, as the potential for productivity increases, the level of aggregate investment also increases. By Proposition 2, public trust increases with q ($\frac{\partial \tau}{\partial q} > 0$). According to (2), this implies that $\frac{\partial p_1}{\partial q} > 0$. Therefore, when social capital has value in a culture, as long as $\epsilon < 1$, a higher potential for productivity will actually lead to higher realized growth.

Proposition 2 also implies that public trust and government enforcement systems are substitutes in economies where social capital is valuable. As the government limits the potential loss from opportunism (higher ϵ), the value of becoming trustworthy decreases, which results in a lower overall trust level. When $\epsilon \geq \bar{\epsilon}$, there is no public trust at all in equilibrium. As mentioned before, the cutoff point $\bar{\epsilon}$ in turn depends on the potential for productivity in the economy q and on the distribution $F(\cdot)$. As q rises, the benefit from becoming trustworthy increases, and it takes higher levels of government intervention to eliminate trust. Similarly, since $F''(\cdot) \leq 0$, as $F'(0)$ increases, more mass is shifted to lower costs of becoming “good”, and hence there is an increase in equilibrium public trust, *ceteris paribus*.

It remains ambiguous how economic growth is affected by ϵ in this setting. Certainly, given q , setting $\epsilon = 1$ maximizes growth, since all agents are forced by law to provide the maximum

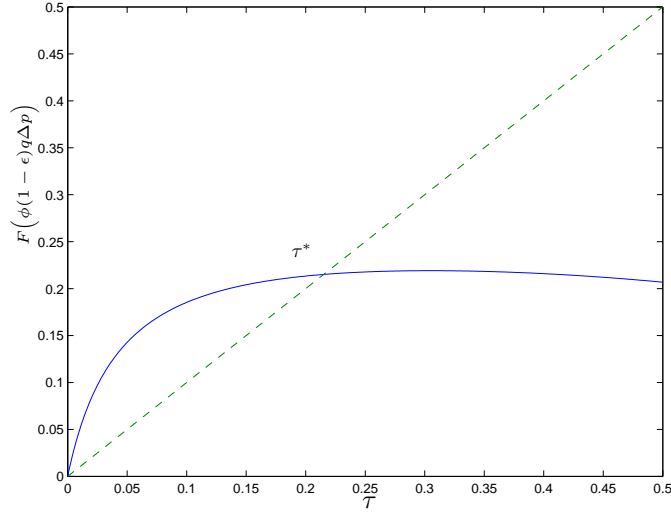


Figure 3: Type I Equilibrium. The function $F(\phi(1-\epsilon)q\Delta p(\tau))$ is plotted as a function of τ . A fixed point occurs at τ^* . The other parameters are $q = 0.75$, $\epsilon = 0.05$, $\phi = 0.1$ and F is $Beta(1, 6)$.

service to their clients. However, when implementing a maximally stringent legal system ($\epsilon = 1$) is prohibitively costly, it is valuable to consider the effect of ϵ on growth when $\epsilon < 1$. Indeed, there may exist values of $\epsilon < 1$ for which increasing ϵ actually decreases growth. Consider the marginal effect of increasing government intervention

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{dp_1}{d\epsilon} &= q \frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} - \epsilon q \frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} + (1 - \tau)q \\ &= (1 - \epsilon)q \frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} + (1 - \tau)q \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

Since τ^* decreases with ϵ , growth will decrease in ϵ when

$$\frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} < -\frac{1 - \tau^*}{1 - \epsilon} \quad (9)$$

This implies that if the elasticity of $1 - \tau^*$ with respect to $1 - \epsilon$ is sufficiently high (less than -1), government intervention leads to lower aggregate investment by clients and lower economic growth. Intuitively, increasing ϵ then has two effects: it reduces the loss caused by opportunistic types, and it reduces the equilibrium level of public trust. More agents shirk, but the maximum loss from shirking is lower. Which effect dominates determines the overall effect on growth. As such, ϵ will have a negative effect on the economy when the equilibrium level of public trust is very responsive to changes in ϵ .

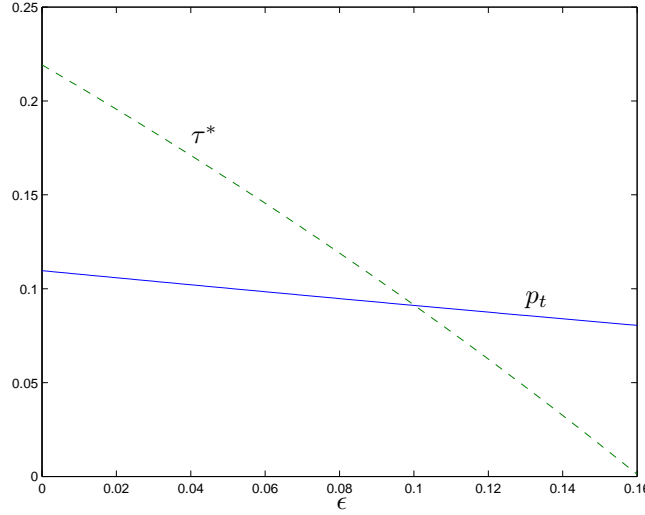


Figure 4: High Trust Equilibrium. Public trust τ^* and economic growth p_1 are plotted as a function of ϵ . The distribution $F(\cdot)$ is uniform over $U[0, 1]$ and $q = 0.5$. Both public trust and growth decrease monotonically as ϵ rises. Public trust is extinguished once ϵ reaches $\bar{\epsilon} = 0.16$.

To gain intuition for this result, consider the example in Figure 4, in which public trust τ^* (dotted-line) and growth p_1 (solid-line) are plotted as a function of ϵ . The distribution $F(\cdot)$ is uniform over $[0, 1]$ and $q = 0.5$. As is evident, both public trust and growth decrease monotonically as ϵ rises. Public trust is completely extinguished once ϵ reaches $\bar{\epsilon} = 0.16$.

Now, we consider economies in which the value of social capital is low. The following proposition proves existence and characterizes the equilibria that arise in this case. In addition to a Type I equilibrium, a second type of equilibrium (Type II) evolves in which there is less public trust. Further, as we will show, these “low trust” equilibria are affected differently by changes in government intervention and the potential for growth.

Proposition 3. (*Type II Equilibria: Low Value Social Capital*) *The equilibrium fraction of trustworthy agents is again implicitly defined by (5). Suppose the following assumptions hold*

$$F(0) = 0 \quad (10)$$

$$F'(0) = 0. \quad (11)$$

Then, there exists a $\bar{q} < 1$ such that for $q > \bar{q}$ and ϵ sufficiently low ($\epsilon < \bar{\epsilon}(q)$), at least two positive trust equilibria exist for sufficiently high ϕ . In addition to the Type I equilibrium τ_1^ , there exists a low-trust Type II equilibrium τ_2^* such that $\tau_1^* > \tau_2^*$. In the low-trust equilibrium, the aggregate*

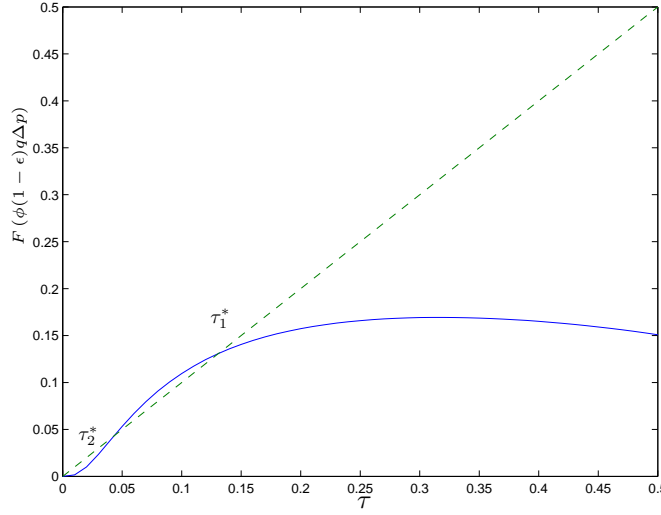


Figure 5: Low-Trust Equilibrium. The function $F(\phi(1-\epsilon)q\Delta p(\tau))$ is plotted as a function of τ . Two fixed points occur at τ_1^* and τ_2^* . The other parameters are $q = 0.82$, $\epsilon = 0.04$, $\phi = 0.2$ and F is $Beta(4, 18)$.

investment p_t is increasing in ϵ , but decreasing in q if

$$\frac{\partial \tau_2^*}{\partial q} < -\left[\frac{\tau_2^*}{q} + \frac{\epsilon}{(1-\epsilon)q}\right]. \quad (12)$$

Furthermore, $\tau_2^* < \bar{\tau}$, i.e. the level of trust that arises in the Type II equilibrium always lies on the increasing portion of the $\Delta p(\tau)$ curve.

Figure 5 depicts the equilibria that arise when the value to social capital is low. According to Proposition 3, a Type II equilibrium arises only as long as there are increasing returns to trust. Since $\tau_2^* < \bar{\tau}$, then $\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau}\bigg|_{\tau=\tau_2^*} > 0$, which implies that there is a positive externality between the agents that encourages public trust to form. Note that this externality is not necessary for a high trust, Type I equilibrium to arise.

As in Proposition 2, too much government intervention ($\epsilon > \bar{\epsilon}$) can eliminate the formation of public trust altogether. However, in contrast, when social capital is low, a minimum level of potential productivity ($q > \bar{q}$) is required for public trust to form. Intuitively, this means that clients either require social capital to be present or for there to be a reasonable return from proper investment. For example, Figure 6 depicts the sets of values of ϵ and q that generate positive-trust equilibria (Type I and Type II) in Proposition 3 for several members of the Beta family of

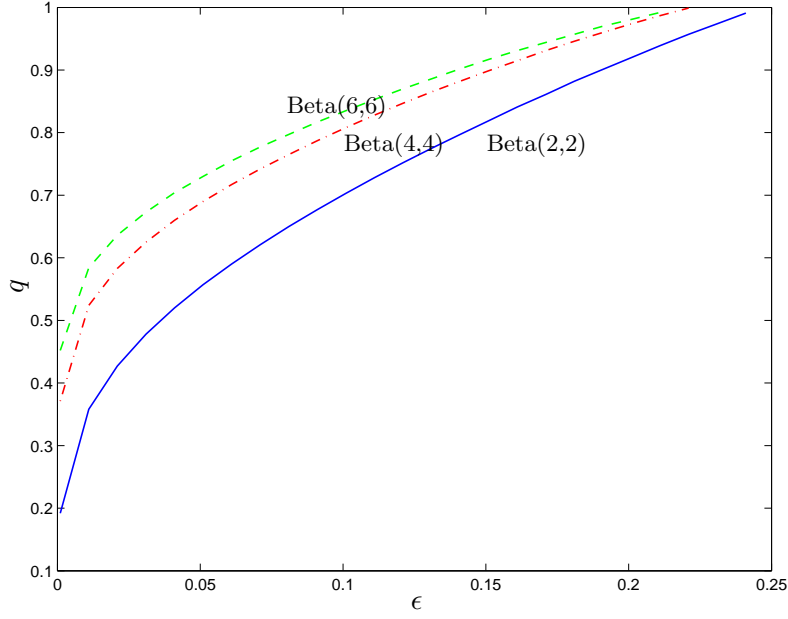


Figure 6: Values of ϵ and q above the curve support at least two positive equilibria.

distributions and a particular value of ϕ . For the ϵ - q pairs above each curve, public trust is feasible, whereas below each curve public trust is impossible. Further, for any given value of ϵ , there exists a minimum productivity potential \bar{q} such that trust will only exist as long as $q \geq \bar{q}$. By inspection, the threshold \bar{q} is an increasing function of ϵ , which means that as government intervention increases, a higher level of q is required for public trust to be possible. We will consider the effect of ϕ on trust formation in Section 5.

Inspecting Figure 5, there are clearly three equilibria when the value to social capital is low. As in Proposition 2, $\tau^* = 0$ is an equilibrium. Likewise, the fixed point $\tau_1^* > 0$ has the same properties as the equilibria in Proposition 2. The third equilibrium τ_2^* has different characteristics. Since $F'(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p(\tau_1^*)) > 1$ at τ_2^* , this implies that public trust is decreasing in q and increasing in ϵ , which has several important implications. A comparison between Type I and Type II equilibria is summarized in Table 1.

The fact that public trust decreases as the economy has a higher potential productivity (higher q) is intriguing. Indeed, in some markets as the opportunity for growth increases, the tendency for agents to ignore their fiduciary responsibility also increases. This type of behavior has been documented in several emerging markets (Zak and Knack 2001). The importance of this finding is that this may lead to lower aggregate investment and lower realized growth. If the condition in

	Type I	Type II
Social Capital	High/Low	Low
Effect of q on trust	+	−
Effect of ϵ on trust	−	+
Effect of q on growth	+	−/+
Effect of ϵ on growth	−/+	+

Table 1: Comparison between Type I and Type II equilibria.

(12) holds, that is, if public trust decreases quickly as productivity increases, then the opportunity to produce may actually lead to lower economic growth.

Proposition 3 also implies that public trust and government enforcement systems can be complements in markets where social capital has lower value. As the government limits the potential loss from opportunism (higher ϵ), the value of becoming trustworthy in a Type II equilibrium increases, which results in a higher overall level of public trust. Further, increasing ϵ has a positive effect on economic growth. Under the conditions in Proposition 3, $\frac{\partial p_t}{\partial \epsilon} > 0$. This means that as the government requires more disclosure and limits the discretion of agents, clients are more apt to trust the market and make growth possible.

Together Propositions 2 and 3 allow us to characterize all possible outcomes for unimodal distributions. Any unimodal distribution with a continuous pdf (no mass points) has a cdf that is concave, convex, or initially convex and then concave. The first case yields a Type I equilibrium as the only positive trust equilibrium. The second and third cases potentially yield both types of positive-trust equilibria, which we have characterized. If F is indeed multi-modal, then more than two positive trust equilibria may emerge, and will alternate between the Type I and Type II variants that we characterize above.

The existence and characterization of these two types of equilibria motivate an analysis of the optimal government intervention in the market, which is the topic of the next section.

4 Coase Versus the Coasians Revisited

Until now, we have assumed that the level of government intervention ϵ is given exogenously. In this section, we analyze the government's optimal choice of ϵ , given the social culture $F(\cdot)$ that exists in the population and the potential for growth q in the economy. We primarily focus on two aspects of this decision. First, we determine when a government should intervene through

regulation versus when they should allow markets to function without interference (a Coasian plan). Second, we derive comparative statics to compare the level of regulation that should arise in various economic settings. Throughout the following discussion, we relate our findings to previous empirical observations that have been documented in the literature.

We assume that regulation is costly for any government to implement. Specifically, we define $c(\cdot)$ as the cost that the government incurs when they enforce a level of regulation ϵ . For convenience, we restrict $c(\cdot)$ to be twice continuously differentiable, with $c(0) = 0$, $c'(\epsilon) > 0$ for $\epsilon > 0$, and $c'(0) = 0$. The government's problem is to choose an optimal ϵ to minimize the deadweight loss due to opportunism in the market plus the cost of implementing regulation. As we will show below, limiting the loss to opportunism is equivalent to maximizing economic growth in the market. The loss \mathcal{L} due to opportunism, given the setup in Section 2 may be expressed as

$$\mathcal{L} = (1 - \epsilon)(1 - \tau^*)q.$$

Therefore, the government solves

$$\min_{\epsilon} \mathcal{L} + c(\epsilon) \tag{13}$$

subject to

$$\tau^* = F(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p(\tau^*)). \tag{14}$$

The following proposition outlines when it is optimal for the government to intervene versus implementing a Coasian plan.

Proposition 4. (*Coasian Economics Versus Government Intervention*)

- (i) *In any Type II equilibrium, $\epsilon^* > 0$, that is, some degree of government intervention is always optimal.*
- (ii) *For any Type I equilibrium, there exists $\bar{q} > 0$ such that if $q < \bar{q}$, $\epsilon^* > 0$.*

According to Proposition 4, if the value to social capital is low in a culture, and the market is in a Type II equilibrium, the optimal level of government regulation is strictly positive. Further, if the value to social capital is high, but the potential for growth in the economy is relatively low, the level of government regulation should be strictly positive. This finding implies that Coasian plans are likely to be suboptimal when the potential for growth is low and/or the social culture is such that social capital is not highly valued. This is consistent with the comparison Glaeser, Johnson,

and Shleifer (2001) make empirically between Poland and the Czech Republic. These two markets are assumedly fairly similar with low potential for growth, and indeed government intervention has been shown to be value-enhancing.

It should be pointed out, however, that Proposition 4 does not assert that a Coasian plan is never optimal. In contrast, it implies that a Coasian plan to let markets solve their own inefficiencies can only be optimal when the culture of the population values social capital and the potential growth in the economy is high. This makes intuitive sense as these conditions naturally make a market ripe to develop without social planning. If people value their social stock within a business culture and there is a large potential for growth, these are the characteristics that would predict that a market would settle its own problems. This finding is consistent with recent empirical observations in China by Allen, Qian, and Qian (2005) and in India by Allen, Chakrabarti, De, Qian, and Qian (2006).

It is interesting to note that minimizing the deadweight loss to opportunism \mathcal{L} is isomorphic to maximizing the level of aggregate investment and economic growth in the market. The loss to opportunism can be calculated as $\mathcal{L} = q - p_t$, so that minimizing \mathcal{L} by choosing ϵ is equivalent to maximizing p_t . Therefore, the objective function in (13) could be re-written as

$$\max_{\epsilon} p_t - c(\epsilon) \tag{15}$$

subject to

$$\tau^* = F(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p(\tau^*)). \tag{16}$$

In economic terms, since the level of aggregate investment p_t is a measure of both economic growth and the calculative trust in the market, minimizing the loss to opportunism is equivalent to maximizing overall trust that arises from both cultural and deterrent sources.

Of course, Proposition 4 only defines when a government must optimally intervene. The following proposition characterizes the relative amounts of government regulation that should exist, given the equilibria that arise.

Proposition 5. *(Comparative Statics on Optimal Regulation)*

- (i) *Consider two economies that exhibit the same equilibrium level of public trust, but such that economy 1 is in a Type I equilibrium and economy 2 is in a Type II equilibrium. Then, the optimal level of government intervention in economy 1 is lower than that in economy 2.*

(ii) *Consider an economy in which both a Type I equilibrium and a Type II equilibrium arise, as in Proposition 3. Then the optimal level of government intervention is higher in the Type II (low-trust) equilibrium than it is in the Type I (high-trust) equilibrium.*

The results in Proposition 5 imply that when comparing two populations with the same amount of public trust τ^* , when one values social capital highly and the other values it less, we should expect more government regulation in the latter market. Likewise, within a population, if we were to compare a high trust equilibrium versus a low trust equilibrium (say, $\tau_1^* > \tau_2^*$), then we would expect more regulation to be present in the low- τ^* market.

Proposition 5 is, therefore, consistent with the findings of both Glaeser, Johnson, and Shleifer (2001) and with Allen, Qian, and Qian (2005). That is, while Eastern European countries benefit from more government intervention, less regulation is required in China since the value to social capital is higher. Therefore, it is not surprising given our model that these empirical findings coexist. In fact, with the insights we have drawn from our analysis, these two empirical observations are entirely consistent with each other.

It is important to point out that we do not entertain the possibility that the government can affect $F(\cdot)$ directly. As pointed out by Fukuyama (1995), cultural “habits” have significant inertia, and may persist for long periods of time even after economic conditions have drastically changed. Clearly, however, the government is sometimes successful in improving social culture $F(\cdot)$, especially in the long-term. Consider the campaign by Bogotá mayor Antanas Mockus to build citizenship through teaching people to use symbols to reward and punish each other’s behavior. In one campaign people were given a plastic card with a “thumbs-up” on one side and a “thumbs-down” on the other. The cardholder would carry the card and use it to give other citizens feedback about their behavior. While the campaign was not an overwhelming success, it did cause people in Bogotá to improve their behavior towards each other, and did cause people in the city to view Bogotá more positively.

Another example is the famous inaugural words of President John F. Kennedy: “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” This request to the people of the United States has become famous because it was instrumental in motivating a country to become productive. In our model, these words would have the effect of changing the tendency for people to honor their responsibilities to each other and would change the distribution $F(\cdot)$. While we acknowledge the ability of leadership to alter $F(\cdot)$, we leave modeling the effect of the government on an underlying culture for future research.

5 Fees and Trust

So far in the paper, we have considered that the fees that clients pay to the agents are exogenously fixed. In this section, we analyze the effects that fees have on the trust that evolves in the market. The results that we derive differ depending on what type of equilibrium (Type I or Type II) exists in the market. When the value to social capital is high, we show that trust is increasing in fees at low fee premiums, but is decreasing at high fee premiums. The opposite relationship holds for markets in which the value to social capital is low. Throughout what follows, we relate our findings to the literature on agency theory and show where our findings depart from classic theory.

Consider that the potential for productivity in the market q depends on how much of the investment p_t is employed in the opportunity (fraction $1 - \phi$). If ϕ is higher, more money is paid to the agents who manage the investment, and less capital is employed for the good of the client. Therefore, the function $q(\phi)$ that we consider is twice continuously differentiable, strictly decreasing in ϕ , and convex. The fact that $q''(\phi) > 0$ implies that there are economies of scale in the investment, but is only sufficient, not necessary, to derive the results which follow. To maintain tractability of the model, $\phi \in [\underline{\phi}, \bar{\phi}]$ where $\underline{\phi} > 0$ and $\bar{\phi} < 1$. The rest of the model defined in Section 2 remains unchanged and we assume that the level of government control ϵ is given exogenously.

We begin by analyzing the case in which a Type I equilibrium exists. The following proposition characterizes the effects of ϕ on the level of trust τ that exists when $F(\cdot)$ is concave.

Proposition 6. *Suppose that the conditions in Proposition 2 hold and a Type I equilibrium exists where the equilibrium trust is implicitly defined by (5). Then, there exists a threshold ϕ_1^* such that*

$$\frac{\partial \tau^*}{\partial \phi} = \begin{cases} > 0 & \text{if } \phi < \phi_1^* \\ < 0 & \text{if } \phi > \phi_1^*. \end{cases}$$

Proposition 6 implies that when fees are low ($\phi < \phi_1^*$), increasing the fraction of the investment that agents receive leads to increased trust in the market. However, once fees become relatively high, then public trust is strictly decreasing in ϕ . To explain this relationship, we highlight three effects that fees have on the investment that is made by clients and the actions of the agents in the market. First, increasing ϕ has a direct negative effect on both q and the investment difference Δp . As mentioned, increased fees lower the potential productivity of the investment q , which lowers the size of the pie there is to split. Further, since by Proposition 1, $\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial q} > 0$, increasing

fees causes a decrease in Δp . Second, increasing ϕ generates higher incentives for the agents to become trustworthy. Because each agent keeps ϕp_2 (where $p_2 \in \{p_S, p_F\}$), as ϕ increases, agents have incentives to maximize the probability that they realize a success in the first period for their clients.

The third effect is due to the feedback effect that trust has on incentives, which highlights a novel feature of our model. Recall from Proposition 1 (and from Figure 2), that the relationship between Δp and τ is hump-shaped. When trust is low, increasing trust leads to a higher investment difference. However, this relationship reaches a peak (at $\bar{\tau}$), and for higher trust levels $\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau} < 0$. When all agents are trustworthy ($\tau = 1$), Δp is indeed zero. Therefore, as ϕ initially increases, the benefit to becoming trustworthy comes from two sources: a higher investment in period 1 (because of higher trust) and a higher relative payoff when the investment succeeds. However, once τ becomes sufficiently high, the benefit from the second portion of this return diminishes. That is, when τ is sufficiently high, the relative reward for having a successful investment decreases (lower Δp), which drives down the incentives to become trustworthy.

Therefore, the predictions that this model generates differ from the effects that incentives have in standard agency models. Like a standard agency framework, higher powered incentives lead to a loss in total surplus. In the standard framework, this is a result of a risk transfer, whereas in this model we assume that it results from a decrease in potential productivity. The most notable difference, however, is that high-powered incentives (high ϕ) may lead to a lower effort provision (trust) in the aggregate. The source of this difference is that the clients' inference about any particular agent's type depends on the actions of all of the other agents. This externality may cause the reward to becoming trustworthy to decrease even though the direct incentives represented by the fee are higher. Therefore, higher incentives (high ϕ) may lead to a lower effort provision (decreased tendency to honor the fiduciary duty to clients), a decreased wage difference (through Δp), and a lower ability to rely on the agents for the provision of effort (lower trust τ).

Now, we consider the relationships between fees and trust formation in a Type II equilibrium. The following proposition characterizes the effects of ϕ on the level of trust τ that exists when $F(\cdot)$ is unimodal.

Proposition 7. *Suppose that the conditions in Proposition 3 hold and both a Type I and a Type II equilibria exist. Let τ_1^* denote the Type I equilibrium and τ_2^* denote the Type II equilibrium. As before, equilibrium trust is implicitly defined by (5). Then:*

(i) There exists a threshold ϕ_2^* such that

$$\frac{\partial \tau_2^*}{\partial \phi} = \begin{cases} > 0 & \text{if } \phi > \phi_2^* \\ < 0 & \text{if } \phi < \phi_2^*. \end{cases}$$

The Type I equilibrium has the same properties stated in Proposition 6, and let ϕ_1^* denote the threshold defined there.

(ii) Comparing the thresholds ϕ_1^* and ϕ_2^* , it must be that

$$\phi_2^* > \phi_1^*.$$

According to Proposition 7, in a Type II equilibrium, when fees are low ($\phi < \phi_2^*$), increasing the fraction of the investment that agents receive leads to decreased trust in the market. However, once fees become relatively high, then public trust increases in ϕ . It remains ambiguous, however, whether high fees are ever optimal. Recall from Proposition 3 that a positive trust equilibrium is only possible as long as $q > \bar{q}$, that is, if the potential for success exceeds a threshold level. Since q is a function of ϕ , if ϕ is too high, it is possible for trust to disappear.

6 Conclusions

As pointed out by Fukuyama (1995), culture and social customs are important drivers of economic growth or the underperformance of markets. Despite the presence of many empirical studies to support this assertion, there is a paucity of economic theory on the subject.¹⁴ This paper attempts to fill this void by studying the origins of trust formation in the market and the relationship between trust, the law, and economic growth. We take the underlying culture of a society as a primitive in our model and analyze how public trust evolves in society and how it affects growth. We derive empirical predictions that appear to be consistent with existing empirical work, as well as provide predictions which may lead to new empirical investigation. Testing these new findings is the subject of future research.

In the paper, we derive conditions under which two types of trust equilibria may arise. Type I, or high-trust, equilibria arise when the majority of agents have low costs of becoming trustworthy.

¹⁴Two notable exceptions are Zak and Knack (2001) and Glaeser, Laibson, and Sacerdote (2002).

In this case, government regulation is a strict substitute for public trust and may inhibit economic growth. Also, in this case, the potential for productivity in the economy is a catalyst for public trust formation. The Type II, or low-trust, equilibria arise when agents have higher costs of becoming trustworthy. In this type of equilibrium, government intervention adds value because regulation complements public trust. In this case, however, the potential for productivity may decrease economic growth because the propensity for opportunism increases as growth is made possible.

We then analyze when it is optimal for a government to intervene in the market to protect investors. We show that when the value to social capital is low and/or the growth potential in the economy is low, it is never optimal to institute a Coasian plan (absence of government regulation). We also show that *ceteris paribus* there should be more government intervention in a Type II equilibrium than in a Type I equilibrium. We conclude our analysis by considering the effect that professional fees have on the trust that forms in the market.

We believe that this paper represents a plausible way to think about the effects of trust and the law on economic growth, and represents an important step to understanding the effect of culture on economic productivity.

Appendix A

Proof of Proposition 1

(i) Consider that

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{\partial}{\partial q} \left(\frac{1 - \epsilon q}{1 - q} \right) &= \frac{-\epsilon(1 - q) + (1 - \epsilon q)}{(1 - q)^2} \\ &= \frac{1 - \epsilon}{(1 - q)^2} \\ &> 0\end{aligned}$$

It then follows that:

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial q} &= \frac{\Delta p}{q} + (1 - \epsilon)q \left[\frac{\partial}{\partial q} \left(\frac{1 - \epsilon q}{1 - q} \right) \frac{1 - \tau}{\tau} \frac{1}{\left[1 + \frac{1 - \epsilon q}{1 - q} \frac{1 - \tau}{\tau} \right]^2} \right] \\ &> 0\end{aligned}$$

With respect to ϵ , straight differentiation yields:

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \epsilon} &= -\frac{\Delta p}{(1 - \epsilon)} + (1 - \epsilon)q \left[-\frac{1 - \tau}{\tau} \frac{1}{\left[1 + \epsilon \frac{1 - \tau}{\tau} \right]^2} - \frac{1 - \tau}{\tau} \frac{q}{1 - q} \frac{1}{\left[1 + \frac{1 - \epsilon q}{1 - q} \frac{1 - \tau}{\tau} \right]^2} \right] \\ &< 0\end{aligned} \tag{17}$$

(ii) For this part, tractability can be improved by defining the following:

$$x \equiv \frac{1 - \tau}{\tau} \tag{18}$$

$$a \equiv \frac{1 - \epsilon q}{1 - q} \tag{19}$$

We can then rewrite equation (1) as:

$$\Delta p = (1 - \epsilon)q \left[\frac{1}{1 + \epsilon x} - \frac{1}{1 + ax} \right] \tag{20}$$

Now:

$$\begin{aligned}
\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial x} &= (1 - \epsilon)q \left[-\frac{\epsilon}{(1 + \epsilon x)^2} + \frac{a}{(1 + ax)^2} \right] \\
&= (1 - \epsilon)q \frac{a(1 + \epsilon x)^2 - \epsilon(1 + ax)^2}{(1 + \epsilon x)^2(1 + ax)^2} \\
&= \frac{(1 - \epsilon)q}{(1 + \epsilon x)^2(1 + ax)^2} (a + 2a\epsilon x + a\epsilon^2 x^2 - \epsilon - 2a\epsilon x - \epsilon a^2 x^2) \\
&= \frac{(1 - \epsilon)q}{(1 + \epsilon x)^2(1 + ax)^2} [a - \epsilon - (a - \epsilon)a\epsilon x^2] \\
&= \frac{(1 - \epsilon)(a - \epsilon)q}{(1 + \epsilon x)^2(1 + ax)^2} (1 - a\epsilon x^2)
\end{aligned}$$

Since from the definition of a it can easily be seen that $a > \epsilon$, the sign of the derivative will be the same as the sign of the last term. Hence:

$$\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial x} \begin{cases} > 0 \text{ if } x < \frac{1}{\sqrt{a\epsilon}} \\ < 0 \text{ if } x > \frac{1}{\sqrt{a\epsilon}} \end{cases} \quad (21)$$

By the chain rule

$$\begin{aligned}
\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau} &= \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial x} \frac{\partial x}{\partial \tau} \\
&= \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial x} \left(-\frac{1}{\tau^2} \right) \\
&= \frac{(1 - \epsilon)(a - \epsilon)q}{(1 + \epsilon x)^2(1 + ax)^2} \left[1 - \frac{\epsilon(1 - \epsilon q)}{1 - q} \left(\frac{1 - \tau}{\tau} \right)^2 \right] \left(-\frac{1}{\tau^2} \right)
\end{aligned} \quad (22)$$

which after some straightforward algebra reduces to:

$$\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau} \begin{cases} > 0 \text{ if } \tau < \bar{\tau} \equiv \left[1 + \sqrt{\frac{1 - q}{\epsilon(1 - \epsilon q)}} \right]^{-1} \\ < 0 \text{ if } \tau > \bar{\tau} \end{cases} \quad (23)$$

■

Proof of Proposition 2

First, notice that if F does not have a mass point at 0, then $\tau^* = 0$ is always a solution to equation (5). We will find the conditions under which another solution exists. The plan is as follows:

- (i) Show that $F(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p)$ is concave in τ for values of $\tau < \bar{\tau}$.
- (ii) Show that the slope of $F(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p)$, as a function of τ , is greater than 1 at 0, if $\epsilon < \bar{\epsilon}$.
- (iii) Since $F(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p)$ is increasing and concave in τ for $\tau < \bar{\tau}$, this establishes the existence and uniqueness of the non-zero fixed point of $F(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p)$.

For part (i), we need to sign the second derivative of F :

$$\frac{\partial^2 F(\cdot)}{\partial \tau^2} = f'(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p) \left(\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau} \right)^2 (1 - \epsilon)^2 \phi^2 q^2 + f(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p) \frac{\partial^2 \Delta p}{\partial \tau^2} (1 - \epsilon) \phi q$$

Under the assumption in equation (7), the first term is negative or zero, so if we show that $\frac{\partial^2 \Delta p}{\partial \tau^2} < 0$, we have established concavity. Consider the following application of the chain rule:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial^2 \Delta p}{\partial \tau^2} &= \frac{\partial}{\partial \tau} \left(\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau} \right) \\ &= \frac{\partial}{\partial \tau} \left(\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial x} \frac{\partial x}{\partial \tau} \right) \\ &= \frac{\partial^2 \Delta p}{\partial x \partial \tau} \frac{\partial x}{\partial \tau} + \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial x} \frac{\partial^2 x}{\partial \tau^2} \\ &= \frac{\partial^2 \Delta p}{\partial x^2} \left(\frac{\partial x}{\partial \tau} \right)^2 + \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial x} \frac{\partial^2 x}{\partial \tau^2} \\ &= \frac{\partial^2 \Delta p}{\partial x^2} \frac{1}{\tau^4} + \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial x} \frac{2}{\tau^3} \end{aligned}$$

We know that for $\tau < \bar{\tau}$, the second term is negative. We also know that

$$\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial x} = \frac{(1 - \epsilon)(a - \epsilon)q}{(1 + \epsilon x)^2(1 + ax)^2} (1 - a\epsilon x^2)$$

which is clearly decreasing in x , making the first term negative as well. We have thus proved part (i).

Now on to part (ii): showing that F starts off at a slope greater than 1. We need to show that $\lim_{\tau \rightarrow 0} \partial F / \partial \tau > 1$. Define:

$$s(\epsilon) \equiv \lim_{\tau \rightarrow 0} \partial F / \partial \tau \tag{24}$$

$$s(\epsilon) = \lim_{\tau \rightarrow 0} f(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p) (1 - \epsilon) \phi q \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau}$$

We know that $f(0) > 0$ and that $\Delta p = 0$ at $\tau = 0$, so we can write the limit as

$$\begin{aligned} s(\epsilon) &= f(0)\phi(1-\epsilon)q \lim_{\tau \rightarrow 0} \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau} \\ &= f(0)\phi(1-\epsilon)q \lim_{\tau \rightarrow 0} \left\{ \frac{(1-\epsilon)(a-\epsilon)q}{(1+\epsilon x)^2(1+ax)^2} \left[1 - \frac{\epsilon(1-\epsilon q)}{1-q} \left(\frac{1-\tau}{\tau} \right)^2 \right] \left(-\frac{1}{\tau^2} \right) \right\} \end{aligned}$$

Since $x = \frac{1}{\tau} - 1$, both the numerator and the denominator in the argument of the limit are $O(\frac{1}{\tau^4})$, so the limit equals the ratio of the coefficients multiplying those terms:

$$\begin{aligned} s(\epsilon) &= f(0)\phi(1-\epsilon)q \frac{(1-\epsilon)(a-\epsilon)q \frac{\epsilon(1-\epsilon q)}{1-q}}{a^2 \epsilon^2} \\ &= f(0)\phi(1-\epsilon)q \frac{(1-\epsilon)(\frac{1-\epsilon q}{1-q} - \epsilon)q \frac{\epsilon(1-\epsilon q)}{1-q}}{\left(\frac{1-\epsilon q}{1-q} \right)^2 \epsilon^2} \\ &= f(0)\phi(1-\epsilon)q \frac{(1-\epsilon)^2 q}{\epsilon(1-\epsilon q)} \\ &= f(0)\phi \frac{q^2(1-\epsilon)^3}{\epsilon(1-\epsilon q)} \end{aligned}$$

Remember we want to show that $s(\epsilon) > 1$. Clearly, this is true for values of ϵ close to 0, since $\lim_{\epsilon \rightarrow 0} s(\epsilon) = \infty$. Also clearly, this is not true for value of ϵ close to 1, since $s(1) = 0$. Consider however how $s(\epsilon)$ changes with ϵ :

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{ds(\epsilon)}{d\epsilon} &= \frac{f(0)\phi q^2(1-\epsilon)^2}{\epsilon^2(1-\epsilon q)^2} (-1 - 2\epsilon + \epsilon^2 q + 2\epsilon q) \\ &= \frac{f(0)\phi q^2(1-\epsilon)^2}{\epsilon^2(1-\epsilon q)^2} [-1 + \epsilon^2 q - 2\epsilon(1-q)] \\ &< 0 \quad \text{since } \epsilon^2 q < 1 \end{aligned}$$

This means that $s(\epsilon)$ is above 1 for low values of ϵ , below 1 for high values of ϵ , and decreasing - therefore there exists a value $\bar{\epsilon}$, defined by $s(\bar{\epsilon}) = 1$, above which the slope of $F(\cdot)$ is always less than 1, and hence $F(\cdot)$ does not intersect the 45-degree line at any point at which $\tau > 0$. For values of $\epsilon < \bar{\epsilon}$, the slope of $F(\cdot)$ is initially higher than 1, so F must at some point intersect the 45-degree line, and since it is concave for the entire increasing portion, that intersection point is unique. We have thus established existence.

Applying the Implicit Function Theorem to equation (5), which defines τ^* , we get:

$$\frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} = \frac{\phi q f(\phi(1-\epsilon)q\Delta p) \left[(1-\epsilon) \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \epsilon} - \Delta p \right]}{1 - f(\phi(1-\epsilon)q\Delta p) \phi(1-\epsilon) q \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau}} \quad (25)$$

Recall that we showed that τ^* is the unique non-zero fixed point of $F(\phi(1-\epsilon)q\Delta p)$, using the concavity of F and the fact that its slope at 0 exceeds 1. This implies that at the fixed point, the slope of F is less than 1, which implies that the denominator in RHS of the above equation is positive. From lemma 1, we know that $\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \epsilon} < 0$, which makes the numerator negative and proves the desired result that $\frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} < 0$.

The result that $\frac{d\tau^*}{dq} > 0$ follows immediately from equation (5) by, again, the Implicit Function Theorem:

$$\frac{d\tau^*}{dq} = \frac{f(\phi(1-\epsilon)q\Delta p)(1-\epsilon)\phi \left[\Delta p + q \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial q} \right]}{1 - f(\phi(1-\epsilon)q\Delta p) \phi(1-\epsilon) q \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau}} \quad (26)$$

From Lemma 1, we know that the numerator is positive, and as already argued the denominator is positive. Hence, the fraction is also positive.

For the comparative statics on $\bar{\epsilon}$, recall that $\bar{\epsilon}$ solves $s(\epsilon) = 1$, i.e.:

$$f(0)\phi \frac{q^2(1-\epsilon)^3}{\epsilon(1-\epsilon q)} = 1 \quad (27)$$

Straightforward application of the Implicit Function Theorem yields the two results:

$$\frac{\partial \bar{\epsilon}}{\partial q} > 0 \quad (28)$$

$$\frac{\partial \bar{\epsilon}}{\partial f(0)} > 0 \quad (29)$$

Next, we can calculate

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{dp_1}{dq} &= \tau^* + q \frac{d\tau^*}{dq} + (1-\tau^*)\epsilon - \epsilon q \frac{d\tau^*}{dq} \\ &= \tau^* + (1-\tau^*)\epsilon + (1-\epsilon)q \frac{d\tau^*}{dq} \\ &> 0 \end{aligned}$$

since $d\tau^*/dq > 0$.

For the final result, consider the marginal effect of increasing government intervention:

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{dp_1}{d\epsilon} &= q \frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} - \epsilon q \frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} + (1 - \tau)q \\ &= (1 - \epsilon)q \frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} + (1 - \tau)q\end{aligned}\tag{30}$$

Since τ^* decreases with ϵ , economic growth will decrease in ϵ for those values of it where

$$\frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} < -\frac{1 - \tau^*}{1 - \epsilon}\tag{31}$$

■

Proof of Proposition 3

The proof will proceed in two parts: in Part 1, we establish the existence claim; in Part 2, we derive the properties claimed in the Proposition.

Part 1 We begin by defining the function

$$F(\phi, \epsilon, q, \tau) \equiv F(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p(\tau)).$$

Using Proposition 1 we know that $\frac{\partial F(\phi, \epsilon, q, \tau)}{\partial q} > 0$, $\frac{\partial F(\phi, \epsilon, q, \tau)}{\partial \epsilon} < 0$, and $\frac{\partial F(\phi, \epsilon, q, \tau)}{\partial \phi} > 0$.

For clarity, we proceed with the proof of existence in several steps.

- i. Pick any $\tau \in (0, 1)$. Since $\lim_{q \rightarrow 1} F(1, 0, q, \tau) = 1 \quad \forall \tau \in (0, 1)$, then there exists a $q^* < 1$ such that $F(1, 0, q^*, \tau) > \tau$. For any given q^* , since $F(0) = 0$, $F'(0) = 0$, and $\lim_{\tau \rightarrow 0} F(1, 0, q^*, \tau) = 0$, there exists a $\tau' < \tau$ such that $F(1, 0, q^*, \tau') < \tau'$. Further, since $\lim_{\tau \rightarrow 1} F(1, 0, q^*, \tau) = 0$, there exists a $\tau'' > \tau$ such that $F(1, 0, q^*, \tau'') < \tau'$. Therefore, for $\phi = 1$, $\epsilon = 0$, and $q = q^*$, there exist both a Type I and a Type II equilibrium.
- ii. Since $F(\phi, \epsilon, q, \tau)$ is continuously increasing in q , it follows that for all $q > q^*$ that there exist both types of equilibria. Define Q to be the set of all q 's such that there exists both types of equilibria. For all τ , $\lim_{q \rightarrow 0} F(1, 0, q, \tau) = 0$, which implies that there exists a $q^{**} < q^*$ such that $F(1, 0, q^{**}, \tau) < \tau \quad \forall \tau$. Since $q^{**} \notin Q$, Q has a lower bound. By the completeness axiom, Q has a greatest lower bound, which we denote by \bar{q} .
- iii. Pick any $q \in Q$. Knowing that $\frac{\partial F(\phi, \epsilon, q, \tau)}{\partial \epsilon} < 0$, we can reason analogously as in *i.* and *ii.* to show that there exists a set E such that $\forall \epsilon \in E$, given that q , there exist both types of equilibria. As in *ii.*, the set E will have a least upper bound, which we denote by $\bar{\epsilon}(q)$.

- iv. Now, we may pick a $q \in Q$, some $\epsilon < \bar{\epsilon}(q)$, and again reason analogously to show that there exists a $\bar{\phi}(\epsilon, q)$ such that equilibria exist for all $\phi > \bar{\phi}$.
- v. Therefore, we have shown that $\exists \bar{q} < 1$ such that $\forall q > \bar{q}$, $\exists \bar{\epsilon} > 0$ such that $\forall \epsilon < \bar{\epsilon}(q)$, $\exists \bar{\phi} < 1$ such that $\forall \phi > \bar{\phi}(\epsilon, q)$, $\exists \tau$ such that $F(\phi, \epsilon, q, \tau) > \tau$. Therefore, there exists at least one Type I and one Type II equilibrium.

Part 2

We now turn to the properties of this type of equilibrium. Applying the Implicit Function Theorem to equation (5), which defines τ^* , we get:

$$\frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} = \frac{\phi q f(\phi(1-\epsilon)q\Delta p) \left[(1-\epsilon) \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \epsilon} - \Delta p \right]}{1 - f(\phi(1-\epsilon)q\Delta p) \phi(1-\epsilon) q \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau}} \quad (32)$$

At the fixed point τ^* , the slope of F is greater than 1, which implies that the denominator in RHS of the above equation is negative. From lemma 1, we know that $\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \epsilon} < 0$, which makes the numerator negative and proves the desired result that $\frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} > 0$.

The result that $\frac{d\tau^*}{dq} < 0$ follows immediately from equation (5) by, again, the Implicit Function Theorem:

$$\frac{d\tau^*}{dq} = \frac{f(\phi(1-\epsilon)q\Delta p)(1-\epsilon)\phi \left[\Delta p + q \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial q} \right]}{1 - f(\phi(1-\epsilon)q\Delta p) \phi(1-\epsilon) q \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau}} \quad (33)$$

From Lemma 1, we know that the numerator is positive, and as already argued the denominator is negative. Hence, the fraction is also negative.

Consider now the marginal effect of increasing government intervention on economic growth:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{dp_1}{d\epsilon} &= q \frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} - \epsilon q \frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} + (1-\tau)q \\ &= (1-\epsilon)q \frac{d\tau^*}{d\epsilon} + (1-\tau)q \end{aligned} \quad (34)$$

Since τ^* increases with ϵ , economic growth (and aggregate investment) will increase in ϵ , that is

$$\frac{dp_1}{d\epsilon} > 0. \quad (35)$$

Next, consider the marginal effect of increasing productivity q on economic growth:

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{dp_1}{dq} &= \tau^* + q \frac{d\tau^*}{dq} + (1 - \tau^*)\epsilon - \epsilon q \frac{d\tau^*}{dq} \\ &= \tau^* + (1 - \tau^*)\epsilon + (1 - \epsilon)q \frac{d\tau^*}{dq}\end{aligned}$$

Since τ^* decreases with q , economic growth will decrease in q when

$$\frac{\partial \tau^*}{\partial q} < -\left[\frac{\tau^*}{q} + \frac{\epsilon}{(1 - \epsilon)q}\right].$$

Finally, we prove that the Type II equilibrium must lie on the increasing portion of $\Delta p(\tau)$. From Part I of this proof it can be seen that the definition of the Type II equilibrium implies that $F(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p) < \tau$ for $\tau < \tau_2^*$. Suppose $\Delta p(\tau)$ were strictly decreasing at τ_2^* . Then for some $\tau' < \tau_2^*$, $\Delta p(\tau') > \Delta p(\tau_2^*)$. Since $F(\cdot)$ is increasing, it follows that $F(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p(\tau')) > F(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p(\tau_2^*)) = \tau_2^* > \tau'$. This contradicts the fact that $F(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p(\tau')) < \tau'$ for $\tau' < \tau_2^*$. ■

Proof of Proposition 4

As shown in the discussion of Proposition 4, government's loss-minimization problem is equivalent to the problem of maximizing economic growth net of costs required to implement regulation. The latter problem is

$$\begin{aligned}\max_{\epsilon} \quad & p_t - c(\epsilon) \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & \tau^* = F(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p(\tau^*)) \\ & p_t = \tau^*q + (1 - \tau^*)\epsilon q\end{aligned}\tag{36}$$

- (i) In a Type II equilibrium, as shown in Proposition 3, economic growth increases strictly in the level of government intervention. As a result, at $\epsilon = 0$, the government's FOC cannot hold (recall $c'(0) = 0$).
- (ii) In a Type I equilibrium, we know from Proposition 2 that growth can decrease with ϵ . If that holds, then the government's problem yields a (local) maximum at $\epsilon^* = 0$. If, however, growth increases with ϵ , then some intervention is optimal. Recall the condition under which $\frac{\partial p_1}{\partial \epsilon} > 0$:

$$\frac{\partial \tau^*}{\partial \epsilon} > -\frac{1 - \tau^*}{1 - \epsilon}\tag{37}$$

which, evaluated as $\epsilon = 0$, is:

$$\frac{\phi q f(\phi q \Delta p) (\frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \epsilon} - \Delta p)}{1 - f(\phi q \Delta p) \phi q \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau}} > -(1 - \tau^*) \quad (38)$$

Consider now the behavior of the inequality as $q \rightarrow 0$. From equation (1) it is clear that at $q = 0$, $\Delta p = 0$. From equation (17), it is also clear that the partial derivative of Δp with respect to ϵ is zero at $q = 0$. From equation (22), $\lim_{q \rightarrow 0} \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau} = 0$. It then follows that the LHS of inequality (37) approaches 0 as q approaches 0. We also know that at $q = 0$, the only equilibrium is $\tau^* = 0$, so that the RHS equals -1. Therefore the inequality holds as $q \rightarrow 0$. Since both the LHS and the RHS of the inequality are continuous in q , there exists a neighborhood of 0 in which the inequality also holds, which proves the existence of a value $\bar{q} > 0$ for values below which $\epsilon = 0$ cannot be optimal.

■

Proof of Proposition 5

For ease of reference, recall the government's problem as discussed above

$$\begin{aligned}
\max_{\epsilon} \quad & p_t - c(\epsilon) \\
\text{s.t.} \quad & \tau^* = F(\phi(1 - \epsilon)q\Delta p(\tau^*)) \\
& p_t = \tau^*q + (1 - \tau^*)\epsilon q
\end{aligned} \tag{39}$$

(i) Consider the first-order condition of the government's problem:

$$(1 - \tau^*)q + (1 - \epsilon)q \frac{\partial \tau^*}{\partial \epsilon} = c'(\epsilon) \tag{40}$$

Let ϵ^* be the interior solution to the problem in the Type I economy. Recall from Proposition 2 that in such an equilibrium $\frac{\partial \tau^*}{\partial \epsilon} < 0$. It is then immediately obvious that the LHS of equation (40) (marginal benefit of increasing ϵ) is greater in the Type II economy, since in that case $\frac{\partial \tau^*}{\partial \epsilon} > 0$, while the RHS (marginal cost) is the same. As a result, a Type II economy generates a higher optimal ϵ .

(ii) Consider now the two positive trust equilibria that can arise under the conditions defined in Proposition 3. Let τ_1^* be the Type I equilibrium (high-trust) and τ_2^* be the Type II (low-trust) equilibrium. Let ϵ_1^* solve the FOC of the government's problem in the Type I case:

$$(1 - \tau_1^*)q + (1 - \epsilon_1^*)q \frac{\partial \tau_1^*}{\partial \epsilon} = c'(\epsilon_1^*) \tag{41}$$

Since $\tau_2^* < \tau_1^*$, it follows that:

$$1 - \tau_2^* > 1 - \tau_1^*$$

Since $\frac{\partial \tau_1^*}{\partial \epsilon} < 0 < \frac{\partial \tau_2^*}{\partial \epsilon}$, we have:

$$(1 - \epsilon_1^*)q \frac{\partial \tau_2^*}{\partial \epsilon} > (1 - \epsilon_1^*)q \frac{\partial \tau_1^*}{\partial \epsilon}$$

As a result, the LHS of the FOC in the Type I equilibrium, evaluated in the Type II equilibrium, is always higher than in the Type I equilibrium. The RHS is the same, because it does not depend on τ^* . In other words, at the level of government intervention that is optimal in the Type I equilibrium, the marginal benefit of increasing ϵ in the Type II equilibrium

exceeds the marginal cost. Assuming the second-order condition holds:

$$\epsilon_2^* > \epsilon_1^* \quad (42)$$

■

Proof of Proposition 6

Applying the Implicit Function Theorem to (5) we obtain

$$\frac{d\tau^*}{d\phi} = \frac{f(\phi(1-\epsilon)q\Delta p) \left[(1-\epsilon)q\Delta p + \phi(1-\epsilon) \left(\Delta p \frac{dq}{d\phi} + q \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial q} \frac{dq}{d\phi} \right) \right]}{1 - f(\phi(1-\epsilon)q\Delta p)\phi(1-\epsilon)q \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial \tau}} \quad (43)$$

For a Type I equilibrium, the sign of the denominator is positive. Therefore, the sign of the term in brackets in the numerator will determine the effect of fees on trust. After factoring out $1 - \epsilon$, that term becomes

$$H \equiv q\Delta p + \frac{dq}{d\phi} \left(\phi\Delta p + \phi q \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial q} \right) \quad (44)$$

Consider the conditions under which H is positive, that is,

$$\begin{aligned} H &> 0 \\ q\Delta p + \frac{dq}{d\phi} \left(\phi\Delta p + \phi q \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial q} \right) &> 0 \\ q + \frac{dq}{d\phi} \left(\phi + \phi \frac{q}{\Delta p} \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial q} \right) &> 0 \\ \frac{q}{\phi} + \frac{dq}{d\phi} \left(1 + \frac{q}{\Delta p} \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial q} \right) &> 0 \end{aligned} \quad (45)$$

Notice at this point that the first term is positive, while the second is negative, allowing in principle for the LHS expression to have either sign. Denote the second quantity in parentheses by K

$$K \equiv \frac{q}{\Delta p} \frac{\partial \Delta p}{\partial q}$$

so that H becomes

$$H = \frac{q}{\phi} + \frac{dq}{d\phi} (1 + K).$$

Using analysis from the proof of Proposition 1, we obtain

$$\begin{aligned}
K &= \frac{q}{\Delta p} \left\{ \frac{\Delta p}{q} + (1 - \epsilon)q \left[\frac{\partial}{\partial q} \left(\frac{1 - \epsilon q}{1 - q} \right) x \frac{1}{\left(1 + \frac{1 - \epsilon q}{1 - q} x \right)^2} \right] \right\} \\
&= 1 + \frac{q}{\Delta p} (1 - \epsilon)q \left[\frac{1 - \epsilon}{(1 - q)^2} x \frac{(1 - q)^2}{[1 - q + (1 - \epsilon q)x]^2} \right] \\
&= 1 + \frac{q}{\Delta p} \frac{qx(1 - \epsilon)^2}{[1 - q + (1 - \epsilon q)x]^2} \\
&= 1 + \frac{q^2 x (1 - \epsilon)^2}{(1 - \epsilon)q \frac{(a - \epsilon)x}{(1 + \epsilon x)(1 + ax)} [1 - q + (1 - \epsilon q)x]^2} \\
&= 1 + \frac{q(1 - \epsilon)(1 + \epsilon x) \left(1 + \frac{1 - \epsilon q}{1 - q} x \right)}{\frac{1 - \epsilon}{1 - q} [1 - q + (1 - \epsilon q)x]^2} \\
&= 1 + \frac{q(1 - q)(1 - \epsilon)(1 + \epsilon x) \frac{1}{1 - q} [1 - q + (1 - \epsilon q)x]}{(1 - \epsilon)[1 - q + (1 - \epsilon q)x]^2} \\
&= 1 + \frac{q(1 + \epsilon x)}{[1 - q + (1 - \epsilon q)x]}
\end{aligned}$$

We then have that $H > 0$ iff

$$\frac{q}{\phi} + \frac{dq}{d\phi} \left[2 + \frac{q(1 + \epsilon x)}{[1 - q + (1 - \epsilon q)x]} \right] > 0. \quad (46)$$

Since $q''(\phi) > 0$ and $\frac{\partial K}{\partial q} > 0$, $\frac{\partial H}{\partial q} > 0$. Furthermore, as $q \rightarrow 0$, $LHS \rightarrow -2 < 0$, while as $q \rightarrow 1$, $LHS \rightarrow \infty > 0$, which shows that there exists a threshold \bar{q} , such that for values below \bar{q} , H is negative, while it is positive for higher values of q . Therefore, there exists a threshold ϕ_1^* such that

$$\frac{\partial \Delta \tau}{\partial \phi} = \begin{cases} > 0 & \text{if } \phi < \phi_1^* \\ < 0 & \text{if } \phi > \phi_1^*. \end{cases}$$

■

Proof of Proposition 7

- (i) The first part of the Proposition follows from the same analysis as in the proof of Proposition 6, except that the denominator in (43) is negative for a Type II equilibrium.
- (ii) Inspecting (46), for tractability we can define

$$M \equiv \frac{q(1 + \epsilon x)}{[1 - q + (1 - \epsilon q)x]}.$$

By straightforward differentiation, it can be shown that $\frac{\partial M}{\partial x} < 0$. Furthermore, recalling that

$$H = \frac{q}{\phi} + \frac{dq}{d\phi}(2 + M)$$

and that $\frac{\partial q}{\partial \phi} < 0$, it follows that $\frac{\partial H}{\partial x} > 0$. Recalling further that $x = \frac{1-\tau}{\tau}$, this implies that $\frac{\partial H}{\partial \tau} < 0$. Thus, if $H(\phi_2^*|\tau_2^*) = 0$, then $H(\phi_2^*|\tau_1^*) < 0$. Hence, since $\frac{\partial H}{\partial \tau} < 0$ and $\frac{\partial H}{\partial \phi} < 0$, this implies that $\phi_1^* < \phi_2^*$.

■

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