GOODWILL IN COMMUNICATION

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Abstract:
An expert advises a decision maker over time. With both the quality of advice and the extent to which it is followed remaining private, the players have limited information with which to discipline each other. Even so, communication in and of itself facilitates cooperation, the relationship evolving based on the expert's advice. We show a formal equivalence between our setting and one of cheap talk with capped money burning. This enables an exact characterization (at fixed discounting) of the expert's attainable payoffs. While an ongoing relationship often helps, our characterization implies that relational incentives alone can never restore commitment power.

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In many economic relationships, those with authority over a decision differ from those with the relevant expertise to make that decision, and naturally their interests may differ. A sensible means to informed decision-making is for the parties to communicate, as in the model of Crawford and Sobel (1982) (hereafter CS). However, conflicting interests hinder communication: when information transmission is strategic and unverifiable (i.e., "cheap talk") the expert cannot commit to convey her information truthfully and the decision maker cannot commit to how he will use the advice. For instance, when a policy analyst with domain-specific expertise advises a policymaker, the latter has little means to assess the quality of the advice before acting; and when a financial analyst advises a client on investment decisions, the client retains authority over how to actually invest the funds.

A hallmark feature of advisory relationships is that they are often dynamic, concerning many different decisions that are made over time. Accordingly, future rewards can be promised in order to discipline behavior today. For example, it may be natural for a policymaker to promise an analyst greater discretionary power in the future if her advice is more effective today; and the analyst may be more forthcoming with her future expertise if she sees that today's advice is faithfully followed. However, such strategies rely on *feedback*. To punish advice not given in good faith, the policymaker requires some ex-post feedback about the information on which the analyst based her advice; and similarly, to know whether her advice was followed, the analyst needs to observe how her advice was used.

The premise that motivates this study is that the above feedback may not always be readily available. Feedback about contemporaneous information and play could be too noisy, delayed, or complex to be meaningfully relied upon for sustaining cooperation. Stepping further outside the model, the exact nature of what an expert knows or what options a decision maker faces may be prohibitively difficult for others to assess. Nevertheless, an ongoing advice-based relationship is still an inherently dynamic relationship, because *the advice itself* serves as a common history between the players.

We observe in this paper that communication in and of itself facilitates cooperation. The key observation is that some advice (when expected to be followed) is inherently more tempting for some types of experts to give. Accordingly, by varying the terms of the relationship based on what the expert suggests, different forms of advice can be *priced*. We formalize this intuition and characterize the limits of this channel.

Formally, we study an infinite-horizon discounted repeated game between an expert and a decision maker. Each period, an independent payoff state is drawn and privately observed by the expert. The expert sends a message to the decision maker who, upon hearing the message, privately chooses an action. As the decision maker never observes the (current or past) state, and the expert never observes the decision maker's (current or past) action, neither is used to vary the future terms of the relationship. Even so, we show that conditioning future play on today's communication can aid cooperation. To trace the limits of such cooperation, we ask which expert payoffs can arise in equilibrium.

In order to characterize equilibrium outcomes, we consider two auxiliary static games. First, we consider our stage game (with identical action space for the decision maker, state distribution, and payoffs for both players), further endowing the expert with the ability to observably *burn money* along with any message, up to an exogenously specified cap $M \geq 0$. The expert's highest equilibrium payoff in the auxiliary game is weakly higher than in our true stage game and, as Austen-Smith and Banks (2000) demonstrated for the leading example of CS, can be strictly higher. Dually, we consider our stage game with the expert further allowed to observably *collect bonuses* along with her sent message, up to a cap.[1]

Our main result is that the set of expert equilibrium payoffs in our repeated game exactly coincides with those attainable in these auxiliary static games (with the cap being the largest one compatible with a dynamic enforcement constraint). This theorem, which is nearly an immediate consequence of the standard recursive toolbox (e.g. Abreu et al., 1990, hereafter APS),[2] still provides new insights for long-run advisory relationships. First, conceptually, we formalize a sense in which the future relationship can be used to price an expert's various recommendations. Next, we make progress toward the question of which types of advisory relationships are served by relational incentives; in particular, the theorem readily implies that repetition can never help an expert whose preferences are independent of the state. Further, our main result implies that a very patient expert's best equilibrium payoff is her best payoff from static cheap talk with (uncapped) money burning; repetition can therefore never restore her "Bayesian persuasion" value. Finally, we apply our characterization to a repeated game of project funding, solving for the expert's equilibrium payoff set at every discount factor by analyzing a textbook, static mechanism problem.

[1]Formally, we consider attainable payoffs from cheap talk with capped bonuses, as we range over all positive caps $\tilde{M} \leq M$.

[2]The only technical hurdles to the analysis concern properties of the auxiliary static communication game. Once these properties are proven, the equivalence result follows immediately from APS's arguments. We refer the reader to the discussion in section 2.2 for more details.

Related literature

Since CS and Green and Stokey (2007), sender-receiver games featuring "cheap talk" communication have been a canonical framework for studying information transmission between a informed expert and an uninformed decision maker. More broadly, a large literature studies communication games with other protocols, including mediated communication (e.g. Forges, 1986; Salamanca, 2019), back-and-forth communication (e.g. Forges, 1990; Krishna and Morgan, 2004; Aumann and Hart, 2003), communication with evidence (e.g. Glazer and Rubinstein, 2006; Hart et al., 2017; Rappoport, 2017), flexible communication with commitment (e.g. Aumann and Maschler, 1966; Kamenica and Gentzkow, 2011), and more. Our work, of course, belongs to this broader literature.

More specifically, we join a very active literature on strategic communication in long-run relationships, asking to what extent dynamics enable effective communication.[3] The literature has studied the possibilities for effective advisory relationships when the advice of the expert can be assessed after the fact (Best and Quigley, 2017; Mathevet et al., 2019); when the decision maker's behavior can be observed and disciplined (Alonso and Matouschek, 2008; Renault et al., 2013; Margaria and Smolin, 2018; Kolotilin and Li, 2019), and when decisions are interspersed with advice about a persistent state (Golosov et al., 2014). We study a model in which the relationship is ongoing but, even with patient players, the core tension of a cheap talk interaction remains: The expert faces no dynamic consequences from lying, and the decision maker faces no dynamic consequences from acting to his own myopic benefit.

Our central result is that a repeated cheap talk game is, in terms of expert equilibrium payoffs, formally equivalent to a conceptually simpler class of games: static cheap talk games with money burning or bonuses. Static cheap talk games with the sender burning money have received some attention in the context of the one-dimensional CS model, starting with the important observation (Austen-Smith and Banks, 2000) that the possibility of burning money can strictly expand the scope for equilibrium communication.[4] Capped money burning makes an appearance in this literature as well, with Kartik (2007) showing that equilibrium communication with severely capped money burning is very close to equilibrium communication with cheap

[3]Less directly related is work that studies how communication can help sustain cooperation in long-run relationships facing no asymmetric information about payoff-relevant parameters (e.g. Compte, 1998; Kandori and Matsushima, 1998).

[4]Relatedly, Krishna and Morgan (2008) discuss how transfers should optimally be used to elicit information in the same setting.

talk alone. More recently, Karamychev and Visser (2017) study the sender-optimal equilibrium of the leading example of CS with money burning; their work is (given our results) an important input to the computation of the expert's equilibrium payoff set in the repeated version of this canonical example.

A key ingredient of our analysis is the standard recursive toolbox for repeated games, à la APS.[5] As we recursively study the payoffs of one player when our other player cannot be provided dynamic incentives, a central pair of references is Fudenberg et al. (1990) and Fudenberg and Levine (1994), which study repeated games with a mix of long- and short-run players. While their chief focus is on the limit as long-run players become patient, our analysis is still indebted to their crucial observation that the long-run players' payoffs are amenable to recursive analysis.

Our main theorem is reminiscent of results in the literature on relational contracts with transfers, (e.g. Levin, 2003). In that literature, transferable utility typically makes it tractable to quantify the extent to which the future value of the relationship enables cooperation—through a so-called dynamic enforcement constraint (a.k.a. self-enforcement constraint). Kolotilin and Li (2019) use the same to shed light on relational communication with transfers, when the decision maker's play can be perfectly monitored. In a similar vein, in tightly linking our expert's payoffs in our repeated game to her payoffs from auxiliary games with monetary signals, we quantify (at fixed discounting) how much latitude the relationship's future lends today's communication.

1. Model

We consider an infinite-horizon game played between an expert (the sender, S, she), and a decision maker (the receiver, R, he). Time is discrete and indexed by $t \in \{0, 1, 2, \ldots\}$. Players S and R play the same stage game in every period, and each player $i \in \{\mathrm{S}, \mathrm{R}\}$ discounts the future at the rate $\delta_i \in [0, 1)$; let $\delta := \delta_S$.

Each period t, players first observe a sunspot (i.e. a public randomizing device) with uniformly distributed outcome $\omega_t \in [0, 1]$. Then, a state $\theta_t \in \Theta$ is realized, following full-support prior $\mu_0 \in \Delta\Theta$—and is observed privately by S. Following this, S sends a public message $z_t \in Z$ to R. Having received the message, R privately chooses an action $a_t \in A$, and each player $i \in \{\mathrm{S}, \mathrm{R}\}$ accrues flow payoff $u_i(a_t, \theta_t)$.

[5] Our work is therefore also related to the vast literature in repeated games that applies said recursive toolbox, much of which is surveyed in Mailath and Samuelson (2006). Many such studies also draw an analogy between monetary incentives and variation in continuation payoffs, Fudenberg et al. (1994) being a prominent example.

Crucially, at the end of the period, the only public information available is the message that was sent (together with the public sunspot).[6] The family $(\omega_t, \theta_t)_{t=0}^{\infty}$ of random variables are all independently distributed. Each player $i \in \{\mathrm{S}, \mathrm{R}\}$ seeks to maximize $\mathbb{E} \sum_t (1-\delta_i)\delta_i^t u_i(a_t, \theta_t)$, which we spell out more formally below.

Finally, we make some technical assumptions. The spaces Θ, A, and Z are assumed compact metrizable, and the objectives $u_S, u_R : A \times \Theta \to \mathbb{R}$ continuous.[7] Moreover, to rule out exogenous (i.e., non-incentive-based) frictions to communication, we assume Z is uncountable.[8]

1.1. Histories, strategies, and equilibrium

For any $t \in \mathbb{Z}_+$, a time-t history is an element of $\mathcal{H}_t := ([0,1] \times \Theta \times Z \times A)^t \times [0,1]$. Thus, a history records each past period's sunspot, state, message, and action, in addition to the current period's sunspot. For each history $h \in \mathcal{H}_t \subseteq \mathcal{H}$, the induced private histories for S and R are given by its projections onto $\mathcal{H}_t^{\mathrm{S}} := ([0,1] \times \Theta \times Z)^t \times [0,1]$ and $\mathcal{H}_t^{\mathrm{R}} := ([0,1] \times Z \times A)^t \times [0,1]$, respectively. Letting $\mathcal{H} := \bigcup_{t=0}^{\infty} \mathcal{H}_t$, and similarly defining $\mathcal{H}^{\mathrm{S}}$ and $\mathcal{H}^{\mathrm{R}}$, we are now equipped to define the ingredients of an equilibrium. A strategy for S is a measurable map $\sigma : \mathcal{H}^{\mathrm{S}} \times \Theta \to \Delta Z$; a strategy for R is a measurable map $\rho : \mathcal{H}^{\mathrm{R}} \times Z \to \Delta A$; and a belief map for R is a measurable map $\beta : \mathcal{H}^{\mathrm{R}} \times Z \to \Delta\Theta$. The interpretation is that (following history h): S [resp. R] will use contemporaneous message [resp. action] distribution $\sigma(\cdot|h^{\mathrm{S}}, \theta)$ [resp. $\rho(\cdot|h^{\mathrm{R}}, z)$] if the current state [resp. message] is θ [resp. z]; and R will have belief $\beta(\cdot|h^{\mathrm{R}}, z)$ if the current message is z.[9]

For any time $t \in \mathbb{Z}_+$, current history $h \in \mathcal{H}_t$, and current state $\theta = \theta_t \in \Theta$, a strategy profile (σ, ρ) defines a distribution over $(\omega_\tau, \theta_\tau, z_\tau, a_\tau)_{\tau=t}^{\infty} \in ([0,1] \times \Theta \times Z \times A)^{\infty}$.[10] Letting $\mathbb{E}^{h,\theta,\sigma,\rho}$ denote expectation's with respect to this law, player $i \in \{\mathrm{S}, \mathrm{R}\}$ has

[6]In particular, we make the extreme assumption that players do not observe their payoffs in real time.

[7]In this paper, we endow every compact metrizable space Y with the Borel algebra, and endow the space $\Delta Y = \Delta(Y)$ of Borel probability measures on Y with the weak*-topology.

[8]In the case that Θ is finite, the S equilibrium payoff set is unchanged under the weaker assumption that $|Z| \geq |\Theta|$.

[9]For a given history $h \in \mathcal{H}$ and player $i \in \{\mathrm{S}, \mathrm{R}\}$, let h^i denote the projection of h onto $\mathcal{H}^i$. In a mild abuse of notation, any of σ, ρ, β can take an argument from $\mathcal{H}$ rather than $\mathcal{H}^{\mathrm{S}}$ or $\mathcal{H}^{\mathrm{R}}$, with the measurability restriction that it be measurable with respect to the projection.

[10]Formally, one can recursively define the law for times $t \leq \tau \leq T$ for each T, and then apply Kolmogorov's extension theorem.

continuation payoff given by

$$\Pi_i(\sigma, \rho | h^i, \theta) = (1-\delta_i) \sum_{\tau=t}^{\infty} \delta_i^{\tau-t} \mathbb{E}^{h,\theta,\sigma,\rho} \left[u_i(a_\tau, \theta_\tau) \middle| h^i, \theta \right].$$

Definition 1. *A* ***(perfect Bayesian) equilibrium*** *is a triple* $\langle \sigma, \beta, \rho \rangle$ *such that,* $\forall h \in \mathcal{H}$*:*

1. *S rationality: Every* $\theta \in \Theta$ *has* $\sigma \in \operatorname{argmax}_{\tilde{\sigma}} \Pi_S(\tilde{\sigma}, \rho | h^S, \theta)$*;*
2. *R rationality: Every* $z \in Z$ *has* $\rho \in \operatorname{argmax}_{\tilde{\rho}} \int_\Theta \Pi_R(\sigma, \tilde{\rho} | h^R, \cdot) \ d\beta(\cdot | h^R, z)$*;*
3. *Bayes: Every Borel* $\hat{\Theta} \subseteq \Theta, \hat{Z} \subseteq Z$ *have*

$$\int_{\hat{\Theta}} \sigma(\hat{Z} | h, \theta) \ d\mu_0(\theta) = \int_\Theta \int_{\hat{Z}} \beta(\hat{\Theta} | h, z) \ d\sigma(z | h, \theta) \ d\mu_0(\theta).$$

In such an equilibrium, the induced ***S payoff*** *is* $v = \int_0^1 \int_\Theta \Pi_S(\sigma, \rho | \omega, \cdot) \ d\mu_0 \ d\omega$*.*

For the remainder of the paper, our primary object of interest will be the set V_δ of equilibrium S payoffs (as will become apparent later, V_δ depends on δ but not on δ_R, hence the notational choice). We will give an interpretable characterization of V_δ, and then go on to show that this characterization yields new insights for the theory of advisory relationships.

2. Pricing Advice

Our main theorem is an equivalence result between our repeated game and an interpretable class of one-shot games related to our stage game. In this section, we define the latter class of games more formally, and then state and provide intuition for the equivalence result.

2.1. Money burning and bonuses

The key ingredients of our characterization are one-shot games of cheap talk with money burning and bonuses. The parameters of these static games are those of our original stage game, together with a cap $M \geq 0$. S learns the state $\theta \in \Theta$ drawn according to μ_0, S sends a message $z \in Z$ and chooses an amount of money $y \in \mathbb{R}$ subject to a restriction, and R (having seen y and z) chooses action $a \in A$; the resulting payoffs to S and R are $u_S(a, \theta) - y$ and $u_R(a, \theta)$. Here, y must lie in $[0, M]$ in the case of M-capped money burning and in $[-M, 0]$ in the case of M-capped bonuses.

We should emphasize that S has no technology to burn money or collect bonuses in our model. Rather, these auxiliary games serve as a solution method for our discounted repeated game. We use money burning to investigate whether S can achieve a higher payoff in equilibrium than what she could in the stage game. Analogously, we can use bonuses to look for equilibria in which S suffers worse equilibrium outcomes than he could in the one-shot game alone.[11]

Definition 2. *Given closed $Y \subseteq \mathbb{R}$, say $v \in \mathbb{R}$ is* ***attainable with Y-monetary signals*** *if there exist measurable maps $\sigma : \Theta \to \Delta(Y \times Z)$, $\rho : Y \times Z \to \Delta A$, and $\beta : Y \times Z \to \Delta\Theta$ such that:*

- *S rationality: $\forall \theta \in \Theta$,*

$$\sigma\left(\text{argmax}_{(y,z)\in Y\times Z}\left[\int_A u_S(\cdot,\theta)\ d\rho(\cdot|y,z) - y\right]\,\middle|\,\theta\right) = 1;$$

- *R rationality: $\forall z \in Z$,*

$$\rho\Big(\arg\max_{a\in A}\int_\Theta u_R(a,\cdot)\ d\beta(\cdot|y,z)\Big|y,z\Big) = 1;$$

- *Bayes: $\forall$ Borel $\hat{\Theta} \subseteq \Theta$, $\hat{Z} \subseteq Z$, $\hat{Y} \subseteq Y$,*

$$\int_{\hat{\Theta}} \sigma(\hat{Y}\times\hat{Z}|\cdot)\ d\mu_0 = \int_\Theta \int_{\hat{Y}\times\hat{Z}} \beta(\hat{\Theta}|\cdot)d\sigma(\cdot|\theta)\ d\mu_0(\theta);$$

- *Value v:*

$$\int_\Theta \int_{Y\times Z}\left[\int_A u_S(\cdot,\theta)\ d\rho(\cdot|y,z) - y\right]\ d\sigma(y,z|\cdot)\ d\mu_0 = v.$$

In particular, given $M \geq 0$, say v is ***attainable with M-capped money burning*** *[resp.* ***attainable with M-capped bonuses****] if it is attainable with $[0,M]$-monetary [resp. with $[-M,0]$-monetary] signals. We say v is* ***attainable with (uncapped) money burning*** *if it is attainable with $\mathbb{R}_+$-monetary signals.*

Finally, say an interval $[v_0, v_1] \subset \mathbb{R}$ is ***attainable with cap M*** *if some $v \geq v_1$ is attainable with M_1-capped money burning for some $M_1 \in [0,M]$, and some $v \leq v_0$ is attainable with M_0-capped bonuses for some $M_0 \in [0,M]$.*

Three observations are immediate concerning the last part of the above definition. First, raising the cap will obviously preserve attainability of a given interval. Second,

[11] See Appendix 5.3 for an example in which equilibrium of a game with capped bonuses can be worse for S than any equilibrium of our stage game. Thus, given our equivalence theorem, repetition can also expand the scope for low S payoffs in our class of games.

there is a sufficiently large cap $\bar{M}$ such that the exact same payoff intervals are attainable for all caps above $\bar{M}$. Indeed, this follows because the payoffs in our game (gross of money burnt or bonuses collected) are bounded, which readily delivers (by S incentives) a bound on the amount of money burned or bonuses forgone in an equilibrium.[12] Third, it is always without loss to take $M_1 = M$. Indeed, from any equilibrium with M_1-capped money burning, an outcome-equivalent equilibrium can be constructed in which any amount above M_1 that S burns is ignored.[13]

2.2. Main characterization

Our main result details how analyzing the one-shot game with capped money burning and bonuses enables a characterization of the S payoff set in our repeated game. One looks for the largest interval which is attainable with cap M, letting the cap be the largest one compatible with a *dynamic enforcement* constraint.

Theorem 1 (Equivalence theorem)**.** *The equilibrium payoff set V_δ is the largest interval $[\underline{v}_\delta, \bar{v}_\delta]$ such that $[\underline{v}_\delta, \bar{v}_\delta]$ is attainable with cap $\frac{\delta}{1-\delta}(\bar{v}_\delta - \underline{v}_\delta)$.*

The reasoning behind the theorem, formally proven in the appendix, is simple. First, because R acts privately, the repeated interaction cannot be used to provide him with dynamic incentives.[14] S's equilibrium payoff set is therefore identical to what it would be if R were myopic. One can then recursively characterize the set of S equilibrium payoffs, with no need to track the value delivered to R.[15] Next, given public randomization, we need only characterize the best and worst equilibrium payoffs for S. Consider a best equilibrium payoff for S. Each message she sends on path will result in some continuation value that is, by fiat, weakly less than her total equilibrium value. Relabeling this payoff loss as an amount of money that S burns while sending said message (renormalized to account for discounting), all S incentive constraints in the repeated game are identical to those in the stage game augmented with money burning, and S attains the exact same payoff. Finally, the boundedness of the payoff set from below puts a cap on how much money can be burned under

[12]For instance, $\bar{M} := \max_{a,a' \in A,\ \theta\in\Theta}[u_S(a,\theta) - u_S(a',\theta)]$ would have this feature.

[13]In contrast, it is not without loss to take $M_0 = M$. For example, in the range where $M > \bar{M}$, a strictly worse sender payoff can arise in equilibrium of the game with $\bar{M}$-capped bonuses than with M-capped bonuses.

[14]This feature is in stark contrast with Renault et al. (2013). There, dynamic incentives are delivered to S through R's *publicly observed* action. In our environment, any dynamic incentives to S must also incentivize R myopically, thereby limiting the scope of such incentives (even asymptotically).

[15]This observation is identical to that in Fudenberg et al. (1990).

this relabeling. Analogous reasoning ties S's lowest equilibrium payoff to one from a one-shot game with bonuses, and the theorem follows.

As mentioned above, the proof of our main result is, conceptually, a direct descendent of classic results of APS. We should note, however, that some new arguments are required along two dimensions. First, one must show that the appropriate set operator—which maps a set of attainable continuation values for an expert from tomorrow onward to a resulting set of attainable continuation values from today onward—takes compact sets to compact sets (which is immediate in the finite-state, finite-action case). Having established said closure property, a recursive characterization à la APS is obtained with no conceptual novelty whatsoever. The upshot is an equivalence between the repeated game and a one-shot game with communication *and contracting*, in which each message entails an amount money that will be automatically burned once said message is sent.

The second new argument one requires, therefore, is that such commitment power does not expand the scope for profitable communication, i.e. that communication with *discretionary* money burning (or bonuses) is payoff-equivalent to communication with contractually burned money.

The key machinery that enables us to complete these two steps is a novel characterization of equilibrium outcomes in static communication games (see Appendix 5.1), somewhat analogous to the equivalence between direct mechanisms and delegated sets in the literature on optimal delegation (e.g. Holmström, 1982). In short, we directly characterize which sets of interim outcomes (i.e. triples of burned money, decision maker belief, and mixed action) arise as the set of inducible-on-path interim outcomes for some equilibrium, and further show how the expert's equilibrium payoff can be directly computed from such a set.[16] This characterization, which we believe to be new, may be of broader interest for the theory of strategic information transmission.

Adapting the APS argument in the obvious way, Theorem 1 also yields an "algorithmic" characterization of V_δ. More importantly, though, this simple result yields new qualitative insights on the nature of advisory relationships, and provides a conceptual simplification that allows us to study concrete examples. These will be our concern for the remainder of the paper.

[16]While our characterization, when specialized to the case of finitely many states and actions, is not identically the one-shot analysis in Aumann and Hart (2003), the resulting characterization of sender payoff vectors is readily derived from theirs in this simpler special case of the model.

3. Consequences for Advisory Relationships

In the previous section, we developed a mathematical link between our discounted repeated advisory game and static games. The chief purpose of that exercise was to formalize how an expert's future goodwill can be used to price today's advice. As an additional benefit, we show how this formal link delivers new, general lessons about the nature of repeated communication games.

For each of the formal results in this section—all easy corollaries of our main theorem—we provide only a sketch of the straightforward proof.

3.1. Patient experts

Our focus has been on how much cooperation can be sustained on the back of S's evolving goodwill at fixed discounting, and on how this varies with the discount factor. However, it is worth noting a simple consequence of the result: an interpretable description of the limit as players become patient (or interact frequently).

Corollary 1 (No cap for patient experts)**.** *There exists $\bar{\delta} \in [0, 1)$ such that, whenever $\delta \geq \bar{\delta}$, the highest equilibrium S payoff $\bar{v}_\delta$ is equal to the highest S payoff attainable with uncapped money burning.*

It is immediate from our theorem that the highest S payoff $\bar{v}_1$ from uncapped money burning is an upper bound on $\bar{v}_\delta$ for every $\delta \in (0, 1)$, so we need only argue that $\bar{v}_1$ is an equilibrium value for sufficiently high discount factors. There is nothing to show if $\bar{v}_1 = \bar{v}_0$, since repeating an equilibrium from the stage game is always an equilibrium of the repeated game; so assume now that $\bar{v}_1 > \bar{v}_0$. Consider an S-preferred equilibrium with money burning (which our analysis in the appendix shows to exist), and recall that S incentives imply the same is in fact an equilibrium with $\bar{M}$-capped money burning for some finite $\bar{M}$. The corollary follows from noting that $\frac{\delta}{1-\delta}(\bar{v}_1 - \bar{v}_0) \geq \bar{M}$ when δ is sufficiently close to 1.

We note here an important consequence for the applied literature on strategic communication. Models of static cheap talk have been used to study organizational decision making (e.g. Dessein, 2002; Che et al., 2013), legislative bargaining (e.g. Gilligan and Krehbiel, 1989), electoral competition (e.g. Kartik and Van Weelden, 2018), and more. In parallel, the theoretical literature has studied the ways in which the ability to burn money expands the scope for credible communication. Given the above corollary, to the extent that we think relationships between employees, legislators, or politicians are typically ongoing with frequent interactions, the model of cheap talk with money burning might be a more appropriate static model to employ—with money burning serving as a reduced form for degradation of the future relationship. Further, given our conservative model of goodwill evolving solely based on what advice is communicated, this claim should stand no matter what feedback one thinks actors will receive ex-post about past interactions in such relationships.[17]

3.2. Who benefits from repetition?

Because money burning and bonuses can expand the set of possible equilibrium payoffs for S, repetition can do the same. However, this is not so for every sort of expert. One strand of the literature (e.g. Chakraborty and Harbaugh, 2010; Lipnowski and Ravid, 2020) on cheap talk has focused on the case in which experts have transparent motives—modeled by $u_S(a, \theta)$ being constant in its second argument. Pairing results from that literature with our theorem yields the following immediate consequence.

Corollary 2 (Irrelevance under transparency)**.** *Suppose S's objective u_S is state-independent. Then $V_\delta = V_0$.*

The key lies in the Securability Theorem of Lipnowski and Ravid (2020) for settings of one-shot cheap talk with state-independent S preferences. That theorem can be reinterpreted as saying: if v is attainable with (capped or uncapped) money burning, and is higher than S could attain in a babbling equilibrium, then v is an equilibrium S payoff. The proof is constructive: by degrading the quality of any excessively self-serving recommendation, S can restore her own indifference between different recommendations without burning any money. Applying our first corollary then tells us that $\bar{v}_\delta \in V_0$. An analogous version of the Securability Theorem for bad payoffs implies that $\underline{v}_\delta \in V_0$ as well, delivering the result.

3.3. Repetition as commitment

An easy corollary of our theorem is a form of anti-folk theorem. Indeed, define the commitment (a.k.a. Bayesian persuasion) value,

$$v^{\mathrm{BP}} := \max_{p \in \Delta\Delta\Theta:\ \int \mu \, \mathrm{d}p(\mu) = \mu_0} \int_{\Delta\Theta} \qquad \max_{a^*(\mu) \in A} \int u_S\left(a^*(\mu), \cdot\right) \qquad \mathrm{d}\mu \, \mathrm{d}p(\mu)$$

[17] Even if, in some applied setting of repeated communication, a decision maker and expert receive some (perhaps noisy or delayed) feedback beyond that in our model, the equilibria we construct will remain equilibria, so long as one maintains our assumption of i.i.d. repeated play. For such environments, then, the model of cheap talk with money burning is arguably a more realistic abstraction than that without money burning.

$$\text{s.t. } a^*(\mu) \in \operatorname{argmax}_{a\in A} \int u_R(a,\cdot)\ \mathrm{d}\mu$$

Since Kamenica and Gentzkow (2011), a large active literature has studied optimal information structures by an expert who can commit in order to persuade a decision maker; such an expert's optimal value is given by v^{BP}. [18] A natural question is whether relational incentives suffice to generate commitment power.

Given that the receiver myopically best responds in any equilibrium, it is immediate that the sender payoff is bounded above by v^{BP} in our model. But can this value be obtained? In a model with short-run receivers (which is strategically equivalent to our assumption of R being unmonitored) but perfect ex-post feedback about S's information, Best and Quigley (2017) fully settle this question when S has transparent motives (and the state space is finite): repetition restores the Bayesian persuasion value to S if and only if v^{BP} can be attained with partitional information, that is, with S partitioning the set of states and reporting to which partition element the true state belongs.

The next corollary gives a general, definitive answer for our setting, with no economic assumptions on players' objectives. Specifically, it says that varying S's goodwill based solely on what advice she gives can never fully bridge a commitment gap. More formally, if all equilibria from the one-shot game with static cheap talk are strictly worse for S than the Bayesian persuasion value, then all all equilibria from the repeated cheap talk game are strictly worse for S than the Bayesian persuasion value as well.

Corollary 3 (Anti-folk theorem)**.** *If $\bar{v}_0 < v^{BP}$, then $\sup_{\delta\in[0,1)} \bar{v}_\delta < v^{BP}$ too.*

This result is immediate from the first corollary. Indeed, consider again an S-preferred equilibrium of the game of cheap talk with money burning. There are two cases. First, if no money is burned on path, then the theorem implies that repetition does not raise S's highest equilibrium value relative to one-shot cheap talk. If, conversely, money is burned on path, then the expected amount of money burned is a lower bound on the residual commitment gap. Indeed, if S could commit to a communication rule, she could always provide exactly the same information as in the money-burning game, without incurring the cost of burned money.

[18] Prior work in the theory of undiscounted repeated zero-sum games (Aumann and Maschler, 1995, 1966) has shown that such commitment power can naturally arise in long-run relationships—although that work proceeds with a perfectly persistent state.

We should emphasize that the above corollary relies (as do all of our results) on our specific monitoring assumptions. Rather than demonstrating that relational incentives can never sustain commitment power in communication, then, Corollary 3 serves as a useful theoretical benchmark. The result says that relational incentives can only hope to replicate complete commitment power if augmented with appropriate feedback as play progresses.

4. Application: Project Implementation

In this section, we apply our theorem to study a repeated project implementation game. Here, a CEO (R) decides every period at what scale $a_t \in [0, 1]$ the firm will implement a project in the division of a manager (S). Each project produces a marginal expected revenue of θ_t to the firm, but also entails a constant marginal cost c of implementation. The firm's flow profit is therefore $a_t(\theta_t - c)$. Project values θ are atomlessly distributed with support $[0, 1]$, and the cost parameter satisfies $\mathbb{E}[\theta] < c < 1$. The manager is driven by empire-building motives, and so internalizes only the benefits $a_t\theta_t$. So, while the CEO must rely on the manager's expertise, a conflict of interest precludes perfect communication.[19] Importantly, we assume that the project's realized return is extremely noisy and/or delayed, so that providing incentives to the manager based on ex-post outcomes is impractical.[20] Applying our tools, we quantify the gains of repeated interaction for a given discount factor; we proceed informally for brevity.

As a starting observation, notice that babbling is the unique equilibrium of the stage game, giving both players a payoff of 0 (the min-max payoff). Indeed, no two on-path messages could lead to different expected implementation scales, for the lower one could not be incentive-compatible for any non-zero S type. But then, R rationally chooses $a = 0$ almost surely, because $\mathbb{E}\theta < c$. This tells us that the equilibrium S payoff set is always of the form $[0, \bar{v}_\delta]$ and, in particular, bonuses cannot hurt S in this example.

To apply the theorem, then, let us turn our attention to the game of one-shot cheap talk with M-capped money burning game, for some cap $M \in \mathbb{R}_+$. Toward finding S's best equilibrium payoff for this auxiliary game, we first invest in some notation.

[19]A very related model is studied by Lipnowski and Ramos (2020). That model has a binary state space and, more importantly, perfectly observable project implementation choices.

[20]Recall, the assumptions of our game require that players not observe their own payoffs. Rather than interpreting such an assumption literally, we take the view that a firm's choices and their exact profitability might, sometimes, be prohibitively difficult to assess on a time horizon short enough to provide meaningful dynamic incentives.

First, observe that there is a unique $\theta_* \in (0, c)$ such that $\mathbb{E}[\theta \mid \theta \geq \theta_*] = c$.[21] In what follows, let $\bar{v} := \mathbb{E}[(\theta - \theta_*)_+] > 0$ and $\bar{\delta} := \frac{\theta_*}{\mathbb{E}(\theta \vee \theta_*)} = \frac{\theta_*}{\theta_* + \bar{v}} \in (0, 1)$.

In contrast to the case without money burning, it is apparent that information can be communicated effectively by using burned money to price different recommendations. For example, it would be natural to look for a *cutoff equilibrium* where all types below an interior cutoff burn no money and all types above the same burn a fixed amount $m \in (0, M]$ of money, and where no further information is communicated. The CEO, being even more pessimistic than at the prior belief, would respond to no burned money by choosing action zero. Clearly, for the CEO to willingly choose a different action following m, it must be that the cutoff is at least θ_*. Let us focus on the case that the cutoff is exactly θ_*, so that any action $\hat{a} \in [0, 1]$ is optimal for the CEO when the manager burns m. Next, given single crossing of the manager's preferences, she will find this play optimal if and only if the cutoff type is indifferent. That is, this cutoff play is an equilibrium if and only if $\hat{a}\theta_* = m$, i.e. recommendation $\hat{a}$ is priced (at m) exactly fairly from type θ_*'s perspective.

Now, what is the best equilibrium within this cutoff class? Well, the informed manager chooses optimally between burning nothing and paying a price of m, so that her expected payoff is $\mathbb{E} \max\{0, \hat{a}\theta - m\} = \hat{a}\bar{v}$. Therefore, she benefits from having $\hat{a} \in [0, 1]$ as large as possible subject to the constraint that $\hat{a}\theta_* = m \leq M$. The best such equilibrium has $\hat{a} = 1 \wedge \frac{M}{\theta_*}$, and so generates a payoff of $\bar{v} \wedge \frac{M\bar{v}}{\theta_*}$.

Next, we argue that above-named cutoff equilibrium is in fact a best equilibrium for the manager. To this end, we take a mechanism design approach. Consider an arbitrary equilibrium, and for each $\theta \in [0, 1]$, let $\alpha(\theta)$, $\tau(\theta)$, and $u(\theta)$ denote that type's interim expected implementation scale, burned money, and equilibrium utility, respectively. So $u(\theta) = \theta\alpha(\theta) - \tau(\theta)$; and, if type θ were to play some type $\tilde{\theta}$'s equilibrium strategy, she would get a lower payoff of $\theta\alpha(\tilde{\theta}) - \tau(\tilde{\theta})$. As manager incentives imply that no type strictly prefers to use another type's mixture over $[0, M] \times Z$, we can employ the standard toolbox of one-dimensional mechanism design (e.g. Myerson, 1981). In particular, we learn that α is nondecreasing and that $u(\theta) - u(0) = \int_0^\theta \alpha$ for every type θ. If α is globally zero, then the cutoff equilibrium with $\hat{a} = 0$ is clearly payoff-equivalent; so let us focus on the complementary case.

Combining the players' incentives, let us argue that projects of type strictly below θ_* are never implemented at positive scale. Indeed, let $\hat{\theta} \in [0, 1]$ be the infimum

[21] From the analysis of the salesperson example in Kamenica and Gentzkow (2011), it is straightforward to show that revealing whether or not the state is above θ_* would be uniquely manager-optimal under commitment, leaving the CEO with his babbling payoff.

type at which $\alpha > 0$. By strict single crossing of the manager's preferences, every type $\theta > \hat{\theta}$ is certain to choose a signal in Ω_1, the set of all $(y, z) \in [0, M] \times Z$ that leads to a strictly positive expected implementation scale; and every type $\theta < \hat{\theta}$ is certain to choose a signal outside of Ω_1. Linearity of payoffs in the implementation scale implies that the CEO would find it optimal to implement the project at full scale whenever a signal in Ω_1 is sent, and at zero scale otherwise. That this payoff $\mathbb{E}[(\theta - c)\mathbf{1}_{\theta > \hat{\theta}}] = \mathbb{E}[(\theta - c)\mathbf{1}_{\theta \geq \hat{\theta}}]$ is nonnegative tells us that $\hat{\theta} \geq \theta_*$, as desired.

We can now construct a modified equilibrium of the cutoff form which raises the manager's payoff. Her indirect utility under the original and new equilibria are depicted in Figure 1.

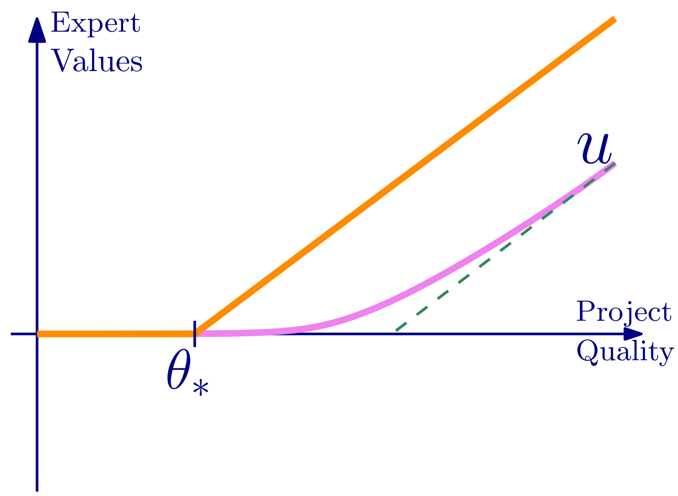

FIGURE 1. A cutoff equilibrium dominates another equilibrium

Because $\alpha(\theta) = 0$ for $\theta \leq \theta_*$, and from monotonicity of α, the expected implementation scale of a project of type θ is bounded above by $\tilde{\alpha}(\theta) := \alpha(1)\mathbf{1}_{\theta \geq \theta_*}$. The manager's interim equilibrium payoff, when the project is type θ, is then

$$u(\theta) = u(0) + \int_0^\theta \alpha = -\tau(0) + \int_0^\theta \alpha \leq 0 + \int_0^\theta \tilde{\alpha} = \alpha(1)(\theta - \theta_*)_+.$$

Therefore, the manager is better off with a cutoff equilibrium whose high implementation scale $\hat{a} = \alpha(1)$. All that remains is to observe that the implied burned money m for high types in such an equilibrium does not exceed the cap. And, indeed,

$$m = \alpha(1)\theta_* = \alpha(1) - \int_{\theta_*}^1 \alpha(1) \leq \alpha(1) - \int_{\theta_*}^1 \alpha = \alpha(1) - u(1) + u(\theta_*) = \tau(1) + 0 \leq M.$$

So the modified cutoff equilibrium is feasible. Finally, given the previous analysis, an alternative cutoff equilibrium with implementation scale $\hat{a} = 1 \wedge \frac{M}{\theta_*}$ is better still.

The above work shows that a best equilibrium for the manager with money burning capped at M takes a very simple form, and generates an ex-ante payoff of $\bar{v} \wedge \frac{M\bar{v}}{\theta_*}$ to the manager. Having characterized the manager's attainable payoffs with capped money burning, we are poised to apply the theorem to our project implementation example. Given the theorem, $\bar{v}_\delta$ is simply the largest number $v \geq 0$ such that v is less than or equal to the payoff $\bar{v} \wedge \frac{M\bar{v}}{\theta_*}$, where $M = \frac{\delta}{1-\delta}v$. Rephrasing, $\bar{v}_\delta$ is the largest $v \in [0, \bar{v}]$ such that $v \leq \frac{\delta\bar{v}}{(1-\delta)\theta_*}v$. The latter inequality simply requires that v be nonnegative if $\frac{\delta\bar{v}}{(1-\delta)\theta_*} > 1$ and nonpositive if $\frac{\delta\bar{v}}{(1-\delta)\theta_*} < 1$. Finally, observe that the expression $\frac{\delta\bar{v}}{(1-\delta)\theta_*}$ is strictly increasing in δ, and equal to 1 when δ is equal to $\bar{\delta}$. An exact characterization of the equilibrium payoff set follows directly.

Proposition 1. *V_δ is equal to $\{0\}$ if $\delta < \bar{\delta}$, and $[0, \bar{v}]$ if $\delta \geq \bar{\delta}$.*

Let us now construct an equilibrium that attains $\bar{v}$ when $\delta \geq \bar{\delta}$: it follows directly from the proposition that it is a best equilibrium for the manager.[22] Let $\varepsilon := \frac{\delta-\bar{\delta}}{\delta(1-\bar{\delta})} \in [0, 1)$, and fix two distinct messages $z_H, z_L \in Z$. The manager has a history-independent reporting strategy in which she says z_H whenever the current state is at least θ_*, and says z_L otherwise. The CEO has a history-contingent strategy in which he implements a project at scale ε^{k-1} the k^{th} time the manager says z_H (for any $k \in \mathbb{N}$), and implements no project (i.e. $a = 0$) whenever anything else is reported. Direct computation shows that, paired with an appropriate belief map, this pure strategy profile yields an equilibrium that gives the manager a payoff of $\bar{v}$. This equilibrium demonstrates how the manager's future goodwill is used to price today's recommendations. As the relationship progresses and her goodwill is gradually exhausted, the same advice gives a smaller benefit, but the cost—fraction $1 - \varepsilon$ of her residual goodwill—shrinks as well.

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[22]The construction here, which exploits some linearity in the application, does not specialize the general-purpose construction in the proof of our main theorem. Whereas here we see the manager's goodwill being gradually depleted as she asks for projects, the general construction would instead see it stochastically disappearing.

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5. Appendix

This appendix comprises three subsections. First, we provide a useful alternative formalism for reasoning about S payoffs in communication games. Second, we prove formally our main theorem—which is entirely standard given the background work in the first subsection. Third, we demonstrate by example that bonuses are, in general, a necessary ingredient of our equilibrium characterization result.

5.1. Equilibrium payoffs of static communication games

In this subsection, we develop a useful language to reason about equilibria of our auxiliary one-shot games. In short, we will identify an equilibrium with the collection of money-action-belief triples that can be induced on-path, analogous to the equivalence between direct mechanisms and delegated sets in the literature on optimal delegation (e.g. Holmström, 1982).

In what follows, we let $\bar{M} \in \mathbb{R}_+$ be high enough that any payoff attainable with M-capped bonuses or money burning for some $M \geq 0$ is so attainable with some $M \leq \bar{M}$—for instance as defined in Footnote 12. We next let $X := [-\overline{M}, \overline{M}] \times \Delta A \times \Delta\Theta$, and let $\mathbb{K}X$ be the set of closed nonempty subsets of X, endowed with the Hausdorff metric. Both are compact metrizable spaces because A and Θ are.

Loosely, we will identify an equilibrium with a subset of X. In slightly more detail: each signal (i.e. money-message pair) sent in equilibrium will induce a monetary consequence (y), a mixed action (α), and a belief (μ)—and so induces an element of X. But then, the equilibrium distribution of messages yields a distribution over X. We will observe that the support of such a distribution is enough to compute an S payoff, and that it is possible to directly characterize the set of all subsets of X can arise as such a support.

A few notations will prove useful for our analysis.

Notation 1. *For any $K \subseteq X$, define the projections*

$$K_1 := \{y : (y, \alpha, \mu) \in K\},\ K_3 := \{\mu : (y, \alpha, \mu) \in K\},\ K_{32} := \{(\mu, \alpha) : (y, \alpha, \mu) \in K\}.$$

Below, we define several more notations that will be useful. Informally, their descriptions are as follows. For each R belief μ, $A^*(\mu)$ gives his set of (mixed) best responses. For each "signal" $x \in X$ and S type θ, the value $f(x, \theta)$ is S's interim value from sending that signal. For each "signal set" $K \subseteq X$, the value $f^*(K, \theta)$ gives S type θ's interim value from facing that signal set and choosing optimally, and so $f^{**}(K)$

is (as we will show) the associated greatest deviation gain of any S type. The set $\mathcal{K}$ is the set of all "signal sets" consistent with R being Bayesian and both players being rational, i.e. with every feature of equilibrium except for the bounds on the monetary signals S uses.[23] The set $\mathcal{Y}$ is a set of sets of monetary levels that includes all relevant restrictions on monetary signals. For any restriction Y on monetary signals, $\Gamma(Y)$ is the associated set of equilibrium "signal sets", $\mathcal{W}(Y)$ is the associated set of equilibrium interim S payoff functions, and $W(Y)$ is the associated set of equilibrium ex-ante S payoffs.

Having interpreted these objects, we define them formally.

Definition 3. *Define the following objects:*

$$\begin{aligned} A^* : \Delta\Theta &\rightrightarrows \Delta A \\ \mu &\mapsto \Delta\left[\operatorname{argmax}_{a\in A} \int_{A\times\Theta} u_R(a,\cdot)\ d\mu\right] \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} f : X \times \Theta &\to \mathbb{R} \\ (y,\alpha,\mu,\theta) &\mapsto u_S(\alpha,\theta) - y \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} f^* : \mathbb{K}X \times \Theta &\to \mathbb{R} \\ (K,\theta) &\mapsto \max_{x\in K} f(x,\theta) \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} f^{**} : \mathbb{K}X &\to \mathbb{R}_+ \\ K &\mapsto \max_{x=(y,\alpha,\mu)\in K} \int_\Theta [f^*(K,\cdot) - f(x,\cdot)]\ d\mu \end{aligned}$$

$$\mathcal{K} := \left\{ K \in \mathbb{K}X :\ \underbrace{\bar{co}(K_3) \ni \mu_0}_{Bayes},\ \underbrace{K_{32} \subseteq gr(A^*)}_{IC_R},\ \underbrace{f^{**}(K) = 0}_{IC_S} \right\}$$

$$\mathcal{Y} := \mathbb{K}[-\bar{M}, \bar{M}]$$

$$\Gamma : \mathcal{Y} \rightrightarrows \mathcal{K}$$

[23] When specialized to the case of finitely many states and actions, one can verify that $W\{0\})$ is exactly the set of sender payoffs derived by Aumann and Hart (2003) in their one-shot analysis, evaluated at μ_0.

$$Y \mapsto \{K \in \mathcal{K} : \ K_1 \subseteq Y\}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{W} : \mathcal{Y} &\rightrightarrows C(\Theta) \\ Y &\mapsto \{f^*(K, \cdot) : \ K \in \Gamma(Y)\} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} W : \mathcal{Y} &\rightrightarrows \mathbb{R} \\ Y &\mapsto \left\{ \int_\Theta w \ d\mu_0 : \ w \in \mathcal{W}(Y) \right\}. \end{aligned}$$

Let us first document some basic topological properties for the above objects.

Lemma 1. *A^* is upper hemicontinuous;*[24] *f, f^*, f^{**} are continuous; $\mathcal{K}$ is closed; and $\Gamma, \mathcal{W}, W$ are nonempty-compact-valued, upper hemicontinuous, and monotone with respect to set inclusion.*

Proof. First, f is obviously continuous. Next, A^* is upper hemicontinuous and f^* is continuous by Berge's theorem (note that the correspondence $\mathbb{K}X \rightrightarrows X$ taking $K \mapsto K$ is a continuous correspondence), implying f^{**} is continuous by the same. As f^{**} is continuous, A^* is upper hemicontinuous, and the $\bar{\text{co}}$ operator and projection operators are continuous on $\mathbb{K}X$, it follows that $\mathcal{K}$ is closed in $\mathbb{K}X$.

Let us observe now that the graph of Γ is a closed subset of $\mathcal{Y} \times \mathcal{K}$ (making it compact-valued and upper hemicontinuous). Consider a sequence $\{Y^n\}_n \subseteq \mathcal{Y}$ converging to Y and $K^n \in \Gamma(\mathcal{Y}_n)$ for each n with $K^n \to K \in \mathbb{K}X$. As $\mathcal{K}$ is closed, we know $K \in \mathcal{K}$; and continuity of projection yields $K_1^n \to K_1$. Finally, that $K_1^n \subseteq Y^n$ for each n implies that their limit is a subset of Y. Therefore, $K \in \Gamma(Y)$, as required.

Now, because f^* is continuous, and so uniformly continuous on its compact domain, it follows that the map $\Phi : \mathbb{K}X \to C(\Theta)$ given by $\Phi(K) := f^*(K, \cdot)$ is continuous. But then $\mathcal{W}$ is a continuous transformation of Γ, and so too is its continuous transformation W. It follows that (since Γ is) both $\mathcal{W}$ and W are compact-valued and upper hemicontinuous.

Finally, it is obvious that $\Gamma, \mathcal{W}, W$ are monotone with respect to set inclusion. That they are nonempty-valued is then easy to show by observing $\{(y, \alpha, \mu_0)\} \in \Gamma(Y)$ for any $y \in Y \in \mathcal{Y}$ and $\alpha \in A^*(\mu_0)$. ∎

[24]In the remaining argument, R only enters the analysis through A^*, and the only features of A^* that we use are nonempty-compact-valuedness and upper hemicontinuity. Accordingly, our main theorem would apply without change if there were multiple receivers.

With these notations and preliminary observations in hand, we are equipped to complete our characterization. The following lemma shows that attainable S interim payoff vectors can be fully described by closed subsets of X they induce (and so are exactly given by $\mathcal{W}$). Moreover, it shows that it is without loss of generality for S payoffs to focus on equilibria in which the monetary signal chosen in equilibrium is a deterministic function of the message sent. This latter feature will prove useful in the proof of our main equivalence theorem because S's continuation value (which will serve as a stand-in for her monetary signal) is a function of her current message rather than a separate choice—a difference that the equivalence between (i) and (ii) renders immaterial.

Lemma 2. *Given convex $Y = [\underline{y}, \overline{y}] \in \mathcal{Y}$ and $w(\cdot) \in \mathbb{R}^\Theta$, the following are equivalent:*

(i) There exists an equilibrium $\langle \sigma, \rho, \beta \rangle$ of the game with cheap talk and $[y^*, \overline{y}]$-monetary signals yielding S interim payoff function w, for some $y^* \in Y$.

(ii) There exists $\langle \sigma, \rho, \beta \rangle$ as in (i) such that $\sigma(\cdot \mid \theta) = \hat{\sigma}(\cdot \mid \theta) \circ (\hat{y}, id_Z)^{-1}$ for all $\theta \in \Theta$ for some measurable $\hat{\sigma} : \Theta \to \Delta Z$ and $\hat{y} : Z \to Y$.

(iii) $w \in \mathcal{W}(Y)$.

Proof. As $(ii) \implies (i)$ obviously, so we prove that $(i) \implies (iii) \implies (ii)$.

- $(i) \implies (iii)$: Letting $\langle \sigma, \rho, \beta \rangle$ be an equilibrium as in (i), we must find $K \in \Gamma(Y)$ such that $w = f^*(K, \cdot)$.

  Let $\mathbb{P} \in \Delta X$ be given by, for all Borel $\hat{Y} \subseteq Y$, $\hat{A} \subseteq \Delta A$, $\hat{B} \subseteq \Delta\Theta$,
  $$\mathbb{P}(\hat{Y} \times \hat{A} \times \hat{B}) := \int_\Theta \sigma\left([\hat{Y} \times Z] \cap \rho^{-1}(\hat{A}) \cap \beta^{-1}(\hat{B}) \middle| \cdot \right) \mathrm{d}\mu_0.$$
  Then let $K := \mathrm{supp}(\mathbb{P})$. By Bayes, $\mu_0 = \int_{\Delta\Theta} \mu \ \mathrm{d}\ \mathrm{marg}_{\Delta\Theta}\mathbb{P}(\mu) \in \overline{\mathrm{co}}(K_3)$. IC_R then implies (β, ρ) is $\mathrm{gr}(A^*)$-valued, so that $\alpha \in A^*(\mu)$ a.s.-$\mathbb{P}(y, \alpha, \mu)$. But then, that A^* is upper hemicontinuous means $\alpha \in A^*(\mu)\ \forall (\mu, \alpha) \in K_{32}$.

  Assume for a contradiction that $f^{**}(K) \neq 0$. Then there exists $x = (y, \alpha, \mu) \in K$ such that $\mu\{f(x, \cdot) < f^*(K, \cdot)\} > 0$. Continuity of f and f^* delivers a nonempty open $\check{X} \subseteq X$ of x such that $\check{\mu}\{f(\check{x}, \cdot) < f^*(K, \cdot)\}$ for each $\check{x} = (\check{y}, \check{\alpha}, \check{\mu}) \in \check{X}$. But, as the supremum value of a given type $\theta \in \Theta$ is at least $f^*(K, \theta)$, IC_S then implies that no $\theta \in \bigcup_{\check{x} \in \check{X}} \{f(\check{x}, \cdot) < f^*(K, \cdot)\}$ sends a signal inducing an element of $\check{X}$ in equilibrium.[25] This contradicts Bayes (given that messages corresponding to $\check{X}$ must be positive probability by definition of K). So $f^{**}(K) = 0$, and therefore $K \in \Gamma(Y)$.

[25] By a signal inducing an element of $\check{X}$, we mean $(\check{y}, \check{z}) \in Y \times Z$ with $(\check{y}, \rho(\check{y}, \check{z}), \beta(\check{y}, \check{z})) \in \check{X}$.

The equilibrium interim payoff vector is then:

$$\sup_{(y,z)\in Y\times Z}[\mu_S(\rho(y,z),\cdot)-y]=f^*(K,\cdot)\in\mathcal{W}(Y).$$

- $(iii)\implies(ii)$: Suppose $K\in\Gamma(Y)$. Fix some $(y^*,\alpha^*,\mu^*)\in\operatorname{argmin}_{(y,\alpha,\mu)\in K}y$, and let $Y^*:=[y^*,\overline{y}]$. For convenience, we assume without loss (appealing to Kuratowski's theorem since Z is an uncountable Polish space) that $Z=\Delta\Theta$. A measurable selection theorem (Aliprantis and Border, 2006, Theorem 18.13) delivers some measurable $(\hat{y},\hat{\alpha}):K_3\to K_{12}$ such that $(\hat{y}(\mu),\hat{\alpha}(\mu),\mu)\in K$ for all $\mu\in K_3$ and $(\hat{y}(\mu^*),\hat{\alpha}(\mu^*))=(y^*,\alpha^*)$. Next, that $\mu_0\in\overline{\text{co}}(K_3)$ tells us (see Phelps, 2001) that there is some $p\in\Delta(K_3)$ such that $\int_{K_3}\mu\ \mathrm{d}p(\mu)=\mu_0$. As is now standard (e.g. Kamenica and Gentzkow, 2011), there exists some measurable $\hat{\sigma}:\Theta\to\Delta(K_3)$ such that $\int_\Theta\hat{\sigma}\ \mathrm{d}\mu_0=p$ and, for all Borel $\hat{\Theta}\subseteq\Theta$, $\hat{B}\subseteq K_3$, we have that

$$\int_{\hat{\Theta}}\hat{\sigma}(\hat{B}\mid\cdot)\ \mathrm{d}\mu_0=\int_{\hat{B}}\mu(\hat{\Theta})d\rho(\mu).$$

Now, define

$$\begin{aligned}\sigma:\Theta&\to\Delta([\underline{y},\overline{y}]\times Z)\\ \theta&\mapsto\hat{\sigma}(\cdot\mid\theta)\circ(\hat{y},\mathrm{id}_Z)^{-1}\end{aligned}$$

and

$$\begin{aligned}(\beta,\rho):[y^*,\overline{y}]\times Z&\to\Delta\Theta\times\Delta A\\ (y,z)&\mapsto\begin{cases}(\mu,\hat{\alpha}(\beta)) & : z\in K_3\text{ and }y=\hat{y}(z)\\ (\mu^*,\alpha^*) & \text{otherwise.}\end{cases}\end{aligned}$$

By construction, this is an equilibrium of the game with cheap talk and $[y^*,\overline{y}]$-monetary signals (of the form in (ii)) generating payoff vector $f^*(K,\cdot)$ to S.

■

5.2. Equilibrium payoffs of repeated communication games

Given the results of the previous section, we can now define, and prove essential properties of, the present analogue of APS's set operator.

Notation 2. *Define:*

$$\overline{g}:\overline{\mathbb{R}}_+\ \to\ \mathbb{R}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
M &\mapsto \max W\left(-[\overline{M} \wedge M,\ 0]\right), \\
\underline{g} : \overline{\mathbb{R}}_+ &\to \mathbb{R} \\
M &\mapsto \min W\left([0,\ \overline{M} \wedge M]\right), \\
G : \overline{\mathbb{R}}_+ &\rightrightarrows \mathbb{R} \\
M &\mapsto [\underline{g}(M),\ \overline{g}(M)].
\end{aligned}$$

Lemma 3. *G is a nonempty-compact-valued, upper hemicontinuous, and increasing with respect to set inclusion.*

Proof. We invoke Lemma 1. First, W is increasing with respect to set inclusion. This implies that $\overline{g}$ is increasing, $\underline{g}$ is decreasing, and $\emptyset \neq W(\{0\}) \subseteq G(M)$ for all $M \in \overline{\mathbb{R}}_+$. Therefore, G is increasing and nonempty-valued; it is compact-valued by definition. Next, W is upper hemicontinuous and compact-valued, which implies that $\overline{g}$ is upper semicontinuous, $\underline{g}$ is lower semicontinuous, and both are bounded. From this, we conclude that G is upper hemicontinuous and compact-valued. ■

Lemma 4. *Given $\langle \sigma, \beta, \rho \rangle$, R rationality holds if and only if R myopically best responds to per-period beliefs.*

The above lemma is immediate from the fact that R's behavior is not (even imperfectly) observed by S.

Now, given that states are independent of past states and actions, and R is not monitored, we observe that public strategies (which enjoy recursive structure) are without loss.

Definition 4. *Given a time-t history h^i for player $i \in S,R$, let h^P denote its projection onto $([0,1] \times Z)^t \times [0,1]$, i.e. the associated public history.*

*Say $\langle \sigma, \beta, \rho \rangle$ is a **public equilibrium** if it is an equilibrium such that, for all $h^S, \tilde{h}^S \in \mathcal{H}^S$ [resp. $h^R, \tilde{h}^R \in \mathcal{H}^R$] such that $h^P = \tilde{h}^P$, we have $\sigma(\cdot|h^S,\cdot) = \sigma(\cdot|\tilde{h}^S,\cdot)$ [resp. $\rho(\cdot|h^R,\cdot) = \rho(\cdot|\tilde{h}^R,\cdot)$ and $\beta(\cdot|h^R,\cdot) = \beta(\cdot|\tilde{h}^R,\cdot)$].*

Lemma 5. *For every $v \in V_\delta$, there is a public equilibrium generating S payoff v.*

We omit the proof of the above lemma, which is a standard adaptation of the usual constructive argument for games with product monitoring structure (e.g. Fudenberg and Levine, 1994, Theorem 5.2); see (Mailath and Samuelson, 2006, Proposition 10.1.1) for further discussion. As players' private histories are independent conditional on the public history, for any conditioning a player might do in some equilibrium on private past information, there is a payoff-equivalent (to both players, even if the other player were to unilaterally deviate) public strategy in which current private contemporaneous randomization replaces this conditional play.

Lemma 6. *Let $\overline{v} := \sup V_\delta$, $\underline{v} := \inf V_\delta$, and $M := \frac{\delta}{1-\delta}(\overline{v} - \underline{v})$. Then, $V_\delta \subseteq G(M)$.*

Proof. The claim is immediate when $\delta = 0$, so focus is on the case of $\delta \in (0, 1)$. Consider any public (which is without loss of payoffs by Lemma 5) equilibrium without initial public randomization; say it generates sender value $v^* \in V_\delta$. Let initial play be given by $\sigma_0 : \Theta \to \Delta Z$, $\rho_0 : Z \to \Delta A$, and let $v'(z) \in V_\delta$ be the sender's continuation value following message z, $\forall z \in Z$. Now $\forall z \in Z$, let

$$y(z) := \tfrac{\delta}{1-\delta}[v^* - v'(z)] \subseteq (\left[\tfrac{\delta}{1-\delta}(v^* - \overline{v}), \tfrac{\delta}{1-\delta}(v^* - \underline{v})\right].$$

Let $\mathbb{P} \in \Delta X$ be given by, for all Borel $\hat{Y} \subseteq [-\overline{M}, \overline{M}]$, $\hat{A} \subseteq \Delta A$, $\hat{B} \subseteq \Delta\Theta$,

$$\mathbb{P}(\hat{Y} \times \hat{A} \times \hat{B}) := \int_\Theta \sigma\left([v']^{-1}\left(\tfrac{1-\delta}{\delta}\hat{Y} + v^*\right) \cap \rho^{-1}(\hat{A}) \cap \beta^{-1}(\hat{B}) \middle| \cdot\right) \,\mathrm{d}\mu_0.$$

Let $K := \operatorname{supp}(\mathbb{P})$. It is straightforward that $\mu_0 \in \overline{\mathrm{co}}(K_3)$ by Bayes, that $K_{32} \subseteq \mathrm{gr}(A^*)$ by IC_R given Lemma 4, and that $f^{**}(K) = 0$ by IC_S (specifically, that S has no profitable one-shot deviation). Therefore, $K \in \mathcal{K}$. It follows that

$$K \in \Gamma\left(\left[\tfrac{\delta}{1-\delta}(v^* - \overline{v}), \tfrac{\delta}{1-\delta}(v^* - \underline{v})\right]\right),$$

and so

$$v^* \in W\left(\left[\tfrac{\delta}{1-\delta}(v^* - \overline{v}), \tfrac{\delta}{1-\delta}(v^* - \underline{v})\right]\right).$$

The above applies to every v^* that is attainable in equilibrium without initial public randomization. But such equilibrium values can clearly approximate each of $\overline{v}$ and $\underline{v}$ arbitrarily well. So, applying upper hemicontinuity of W and taking limits as $v^* \to \overline{v}$ and as $v^* \to \underline{v}$, we get that $\overline{v} \in W([0, M])$ and $\underline{v} \in W([-M, 0])$, i.e. $[\underline{v}, \overline{v}] \subseteq G(M)$. ■

Lemma 7. *Suppose that $\underline{v} \leq \overline{v}$ and $M = \frac{\delta}{1-\delta}(\overline{v} - \underline{v})$ are such that $[\underline{v}, \overline{v}] \subseteq G(M)$. Then $[\underline{v}, \overline{v}]$ is a subset of V_δ.*

Proof. Let $v_0 := \underline{g}(M)$ and $v_1 := \overline{g}(M)$. By hypothesis, $v_0 \leq \underline{v} \leq \overline{v} \leq v_1$. We will show by construction that $\{v_0, v_1\}$ are both S equilibrium values, and the lemma will then follow from public randomization. Focus on the nontrivial case that $v_0 < v_1$.

Let us define a two-state automaton profile with states $\xi \in \{0,1\}$. For $\xi \in \{0,1\}$, Lemma 2 delivers an equilibrium $\langle \sigma_\xi, \rho_\xi, \beta_\xi \rangle$ of the game with cheap talk and Y_ξ-monetary signals, and measurable $\hat{\sigma}_\xi : \Theta \to \Delta Z$, $\hat{y}_\xi : Z \to Y_\xi$, such that

$$\sigma_\xi(\cdot \mid \theta) = \hat{\sigma}_\xi(\cdot \mid \theta) \circ (\hat{y}_\xi, \mathrm{id}_Z)^{-1} \quad \forall \theta \in \Theta,$$

where $Y_1 = [0, M]$ and $Y_0 = [-\tilde{M}, M]$ for some $\tilde{M} \in [0, M]$.

When the automaton is in the state $\xi \in \{0,1\}$:

- Current play is given by $\langle \hat{\sigma}_\xi, \hat{\rho}_\xi, \hat{\beta}_\xi \rangle$, where

  $$\hat{\rho}_\xi := \rho_\xi \circ (\hat{y}_\xi, \mathrm{id}_Z) : Z \to \Delta A \text{ and } \hat{\beta}_\xi := \beta_\xi \circ (\hat{y}_\xi, \mathrm{id}_Z) : Z \to \Delta\Theta.$$

- The automaton switches states if and only if

  $$\underbrace{\omega_t}_{\text{public randomization } \sim \mathcal{U}[0,1]} < \frac{1-\delta}{\delta} \frac{|\hat{y}_\xi(Z_t)|}{v_0 - v_1}.$$

  Note, that $|\hat{y}_\xi| \leq M$ implies the switching cutoff is in $[0,1]$.

Direct computation shows that the automaton yields S payoff of v_ξ when starting in state ξ, and incentive constraints from the auxiliary contracting game imply that no player will have a profitable one-shot deviation.[26] Therefore, $\langle \hat{\sigma}_\xi, \hat{\rho}_\xi, \hat{\beta}_\xi \rangle_{\xi \in \{0,1\}}$ yields an equilibrium as required. ∎

We can now easily prove the main theorem. Just as in APS, having established the appropriate monotonicity and closure properties of the relevant set operator, the remaining argument is nearly immediate.

Proof of Theorem 1. We know $V_\delta \neq \emptyset$ because there exists a repeated babbling equilibrium. Given public randomization, V_δ is convex. Let $\overline{v} := \sup V$, $\underline{v} := \inf V$, and $M := \frac{\delta}{1-\delta}(\overline{v} - \underline{v})$. Lemma 6 implies that $V \subseteq G(M)$. Then, Lemma 3 implies that $\overline{V} \subseteq G(M)$. Lemma 7 then implies that $\overline{V} \subseteq V$ (i.e. V is closed), so $V = [\underline{v}, \overline{v}]$. Therefore, V is a compact interval with $V \subseteq G(\frac{\delta}{1-\delta}(\overline{v} - \underline{v}))$. By Lemma 7, any other such interval with the same property is a subset of V. ∎

5.3. Bonuses can hurt

Our main theorem yields an equivalence between the sender payoffs in the repeated game and the payoffs from a static cheap talk game with money burning and

[26] More specifically, an S type's deviation gain from sending message $\hat{z}$ instead of z for one period in state ξ will be proportional to her deviation gain from sending signal $(\hat{y}_\xi(\hat{z}), \hat{z})$ instead of $(\hat{y}_\xi(z), z)$ in the game with monetary signals.

bonuses. However, bonuses played no role in our one worked application. Moreover, it is straightforward to show (for instance, applying an observation of Kamenica and Gentzkow (2011)) that the leading example of Crawford and Sobel (1982) shares the feature that a repeated babbling equilibrium is worst for S in the repeated game, so that again the one-shot game with bonuses is irrelevant. Here, we provide an example in which capped self-assigned bonuses can lead to S achieving worse payoffs in the static game than he could without bonuses.[27]

Let $\Theta = \{-1, 0, 1\}$, $A = [-1, 1]$, $\mu_0(1) = \mu_0(-1) = \frac{1}{4}$, and the players' utility functions take the form $u_R(a, \theta) = -(a - \theta)^2$ and $u_S(a, \theta) = a - 12(1 - \theta^2)a^2$. We argue, proceeding informally, that this example is as desired.

First, consider cheap talk with no monetary signals. Facing quadratic loss, R always chooses his expectation of the state. As the two non-zero S types simply want to maximize R's action, there is no equilibrium in which these two types send different message distributions: type -1 would have a strict incentive to deviate from the message she is supposedly more likely to send. Therefore, R chooses action 0 almost surely, yielding S payoff of 0.

Now, we describe an equilibrium of the game where S can send bonuses capped at 1. Here, S collects no bonus if her type is 1, collects a bonus of 1 if her type is -1, and mixes uniformly between these two choices if her type is 0; she babbles, so that only her bonus signals her type. Meanwhile, R will have uniform belief over types $\{0, 1\}$ and choose $\frac{1}{2}$ if no bonus is collected, and have uniform belief over types $\{-1, 0\}$ and choose $-\frac{1}{2}$ if a strictly positive bonus is collected. Direct computation shows that the above describes an equilibrium (in particular, all S types are indifferent between collecting no bonus and collecting a maximum bonus), and that S has an ex-ante payoff of $-1 < 0$.

[27]We are grateful to Doron Ravid for providing the first known example to us; this example is essentially the same as Doron's.