Price Theory, Competition, and the Rule of Reason

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PRICE THEORY, COMPETITION, AND THE RULE OF REASON

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Challenging traditional antitrust jurisprudence, Professor Alan J. Meese argues that the present structure of Rule of Reason analysis, applied pursuant to Standard Oil v. United States, has become outdated. The Rule of Reason as currently applied by the courts rests upon neoclassical price theory, an economic paradigm that assumes that legitimate competition consists of unbridled technological rivalry, unconstrained by nonstandard contracts. Recently, however, the Supreme Court has begun to apply a competing paradigm—Transaction Cost Economics—when determining whether a contract is unreasonable “per se” or instead deserving of Rule of Reason scrutiny. Professor Meese argues that Transaction Cost Economics more accurately reflects market realities with the result that courts should also apply the teachings of this new paradigm when conducting Rule of Reason analysis.

Accordingly, Professor Meese concludes that courts should abandon the current three-part Rule of Reason inquiry in those cases where nonstandard contracts avoid per se treatment because they plausibly produce nontechnological efficiencies by overcoming a market failure. In such cases, proof that a contract results in prices or other terms of trade different from those that preexist a restraint should not suffice to establish a prima facie case. Further, proof that contractual integration combats a market failure should, in any event, rebut a prima facie case, eliminating the need for courts to balance “anticompetitive harms” against procompetitive benefits. Finally, because the less restrictive alternative element of Rule of Reason analysis rests upon an assumption that any benefits of a nonstandard contract coexist with procompetitive effects, courts should abandon this element when analyzing restraints that purportedly combat market failure.

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Everyone knows that antitrust law should protect and further "competition." But what exactly is competition? A grocer might "compete" by falsely claiming that her rival is selling poisoned beef or by falsely claiming that her own beef is more nutritious. She might also price below her own costs or those of her rival, driving him out of business and taking over the market, at least for a time. A firm that makes film might compete against its rivals by inventing a better film or by redesigning a popular camera to use only its brand of film, expanding its own market share as a result.

While each of these practices is competitive in one sense, any rational society should distinguish among them. All would applaud the invention of a new film, but most would agree that slander and false advertising are not competition in any sense that society wishes to embrace. The distinction between these practices could rest on some abstract conception of (legitimate) competition. Most, however, would adopt a more instrumental definition, distinguishing among various practices based upon their perceived social utility. Such an approach would treat as competitive any practice that, under the circumstances, would seem to further society's welfare when compared to the status quo.

If competition, however defined, is our desideratum, then it might seem that its antithesis, "cooperation," is a bad thing. Not so fast. To be sure, Ford and General Motors should not cooperate when setting prices. But what if the same two firms merge, eliminating competition between them while at the same time realizing significant economies of scale that enhance the new firm's ability to compete in the larger marketplace? Similarly, two or more employers should not cooperate when setting the wages of their respective employees. However, what if a college sports league adopts a rule forbidding members to pay their "student-athletes" more than tuition plus room and board, claiming that the policy prevents "college" football from deteriorating into semi-pro football? Finally, grocers should not divide territories among themselves. Nevertheless, what if dozens of small grocers pool their resources to form a joint venture that develops a private label brand and assigns each member a particular territory in which it will have the exclusive right—and thus powerful incentives—to promote and sell the brand?

As each of these examples should show, socially useful competition often requires some cooperation, cooperation that reduces or even eliminates rivalry between the cooperating parties. Indeed, when we speak of "a firm" engaged in "unilateral" activities, we are almost always referring to what economists call a "nexus of contracts" between employees, managers, and suppliers of capital, contracts that snuff out competition between the parties to them. (Partners at large law firms do not bid against each other for the labor of associates.) If society defines as competitive all marketplace activity that enhances its welfare, then many forms of coop-

eration, even those that eliminate competition between cooperating parties, are competitive in the sense that is relevant for antitrust purposes.

A society that seeks to encourage useful competition must construct an institutional framework that channels individual initiative in competitive directions. Thus, society must prevent those unilateral acts, like slander, that reduce welfare. It must also enforce those contracts that implement useful cooperation. Finally, it must forbid those agreements that entail "undue" or "harmful" cooperation and thereby undermine society's welfare.

Section 1 of the Sherman Act, which forbids contracts "in restraint of trade," polices the line between acceptable ("competitive") and unacceptable ("anticompetitive") cooperation. Like "competition," the term "restraint of trade" does not define itself; all contracts, like all cooperation, restrain trade or competition in some sense. For nearly a century, then, courts have expressly held that the Sherman Act forbids only unreasonable restraints, usually purporting to judge "reasonableness" according to economic effect. In modern parlance, courts applying this "Rule of Reason" ask whether a contract "promotes" competition or, instead, "destroys" it, by creating or exercising market power.

Some contracts are so plainly harmful that courts condemn them with little analysis, deeming them "unreasonable per se." Most contracts survive such condemnation, however, and undergo more careful scrutiny, under what courts (redundantly) call "the Rule of Reason." Courts, scholars, and the enforcement agencies have articulated a three-step test to govern analysis under this Rule of Reason. First, a plaintiff must establish a prima facie case by showing that the restraint produces tangible anticompetitive harm, a showing that usually consists of proof of "actual detrimental effects" such as increased price or reduced output. Second, the defendants must prove that their agreement produces "procompetitive" benefits that outweigh the harm implicit in plaintiff's prima facie case. Third, even if the defendants can make such a showing, the plaintiff can still prevail by proving that the defendants can achieve the same benefits


4. See Hayek, supra note 3, at 115 ("We cannot regard 'freedom of contract' as a real answer to our problems if we know that not all contracts ought to be made enforceable and in fact are bound to argue that contracts 'in restraint of trade' ought not be enforced.").


6. See infra note 31 and accompanying text.

7. See infra notes 32-44 and accompanying text.

8. See infra notes 69-75 and accompanying text.

9. See infra notes 76-77 and accompanying text.

10. See infra notes 104-51 and accompanying text.

11. See infra notes 151-66 and accompanying text.
by means of a "less restrictive alternative." 12 This three-part test, it is said, helps courts distinguish those contracts that harm or destroy competition, by creating or exercising market power, from those that promote it.

This article offers a critique of the modern Rule of Reason and the vision of competition on which it depends. As shown below, the present structure of Rule of Reason analysis, as articulated by courts, the enforcement agencies, and most leading scholars, rests on an outmoded model of competition and is thus inherently biased against contractual integration that produces nontechnological efficiencies. More precisely, the modern structure of Rule of Reason analysis rests upon a vision of competition derived from neoclassical price theory, the economic paradigm that dominated industrial organization for much of the twentieth century. According to this paradigm, competition consists of constant technological rivalry between autonomous firms, unconstrained by so-called nonstandard contracts; that is, agreements that constrain the discretion of purchasers and competitors. 13 This rivalry, it is said, results in an equilibrium of competitive prices, output, and other terms of trade, an equilibrium that maximizes social welfare. 14 Within this paradigm, any contractual arrangement that produces output, prices, or other terms of trade that depart from the competitive baseline is prima facie anticompetitive and properly subject to condemnation absent concrete proof of some justification that outweighs the harm. 15

Price theory's definition of competition drives each aspect of the modern Rule of Reason described above. For instance, decisions allowing plaintiffs to establish a prima facie case by proving "actual detrimental effects" rest upon a presumption that any departure from the prices or other terms of trade produced by technological rivalry reflects an anticompetitive exercise of market power. 16 Similarly, the requirement that procompetitive benefits offset or outweigh anticompetitive effects by reducing prices or preventing their increase rests upon price theory's partial equilibrium trade-off model and its assumption that any benefits resulting from a contract or transaction coexist with anticompetitive effects reflected in a prima facie case. 17 Given this assumption, courts naturally conclude that any benefits produced by such a contract coexist with anticompetitive harm, harm that courts must balance against benefits. 18 Indeed, the same assumption, i.e., that benefits necessarily coexist with anticompetitive harm, drives the requirement that, where possible, defendants achieve any procompetitive benefits through means less restrictive of competition. 19

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12. *See infra* notes 167-80 and accompanying text.
13. *See infra* note 242 and accompanying text.
14. *See infra* note 225 and accompanying text.
15. *See infra* note 296 and accompanying text.
16. *See infra* notes 156-66 and accompanying text.
17. *See infra* note 243 and accompanying text.
18. *See infra* notes 157-66 and accompanying text.
19. *See infra* notes 177-80 and accompanying text.
Each of the price-theoretic assumptions animating the current structure of Rule of Reason analysis is inconsistent with recent advances in economic theory, in particular, transaction cost economics (TCE). According to TCE, technological rivalry unconstrained by nonstandard contracts can produce suboptimal results, as firms and consumers struggle to overcome various costs of transacting in an atomistic market.  

As a result, the transaction cost paradigm assumes that nonstandard contracts are presumptively efforts to overcome these costs, thus better serving consumers and society at large. On the other hand, price-theoretic competition—technological rivalry unconstrained by nonstandard contracts—will often result in a market failure, that is, output, price, and other terms of trade different from those desired by consumers and society at large. Properly understood, then, competition can take a contractual form and includes most such restraints, which need not involve or create market power but instead help firms and consumers better approximate the output, price, and other terms of trade that a well-functioning market would produce.

Of course, TCE is not new to antitrust. In recent decades, the Supreme Court has often embraced TCE when determining whether or not a contract is unlawful per se. Applying TCE, the Court has held that certain contracts once deemed unlawful per se may in fact attenuate or overcome market failure with the result that courts should evaluate such agreements under the more forgiving Rule of Reason. Such decisions implicitly recognize that contracts producing price, output, or other terms of trade different from the status quo ante can be beneficial, and there is no reason to confine this reasoning to decisions policing the boundaries of the per se rule.

TCE and its vision of “contractual competition” undermine each of the three main aspects of the Rule of Reason described above. To begin with, application of transaction cost reasoning refutes those decisions and enforcement policies holding that proof of actual detrimental effects suffices to establish a prima facie case. To be precise, where defendants avoid per se condemnation by arguing plausibly that a restraint overcomes market failure, proof that the agreement results in price, output, or other terms of trade that depart from those produced by price-theoretic competition should not give rise to a presumption that the restraint reflects any exercise of market power. Instead, such proof is at least equally consistent with a conclusion that the agreement is a form of contractual competition that overcomes market failure and thus enhances social welfare. Therefore, such proof should not give rise to a prima facie case under the Rule of Reason. By adopting a contrary approach, the Supreme Court, lower

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20. See infra note 316 and accompanying text.
21. See infra note 310 and accompanying text.
22. See infra note 327 and accompanying text.
23. See infra notes 329–32 and accompanying text.
courts, and the enforcement agencies have clung to an outmoded vision of competition inconsistent with the more modern vision they have often embraced in the per se context.

TCE also undermines the standards courts currently employ to evaluate justifications defendants offer for nonstandard contractual integration that is prima facie anticompetitive. Market failure often produces price, output, or quality that departs from the optimal level. Nonstandard contracts can combat market failure and enhance social welfare precisely because they alter the terms of trade produced by an unrestrained market. Thus, proof that a nonstandard contract produces benefits otherwise deemed cognizable under the Rule of Reason suggests that any increase in prices, for instance, reflects the procompetitive elimination of market failure. Such an increase need not reflect an exercise of market power, with the result that there are no harms to balance against benefits. As a result, proof that a contractual restraint produces nontechnological benefits by eliminating a market failure should rebut a prima facie case, regardless of whether this proof tends to show that the agreement reduces prices.

At the same time, courts and enforcement agencies should abandon their consideration of so-called less restrictive alternatives when conducting Rule of Reason analysis of nonstandard contracts that plausibly counteract market failures. Consideration of such alternatives depends upon an assumption that procompetitive benefits necessarily coexist with anticompetitive effects once a plaintiff has established a prima facie case. Because such effects coexist, it is said, antitrust law should encourage defendants to adopt restraints that achieve the same benefits while harming competition less. Once the defendants show that a restraint attenuates a market failure, however, any presumption of anticompetitive effects should collapse, undermining any assertion that harms and benefits coexist and that defendants should achieve benefits through a less anticompetitive method.

Part I of this article examines the normative and jurisprudential foundations of the Rule of Reason, showing that the rule requires courts to employ the best available economic theory to determine whether a challenged contract advances consumer welfare or instead harms consumers by creating or exercising market power. Part II reviews the standards that courts and the enforcement agencies apply when conducting analysis under the Rule of Reason, standards that leading scholars have also embraced. Part III outlines the competing models of competition that price theory and TCE have produced as well as the influence of these respective models on antitrust doctrine. Part IV argues that the current structure of Rule of Reason analysis reflects the outmoded price-theoretic vision of competition. While the current structure of Rule of Reason analysis may make sense as applied to restraints that plausibly create technological effi-

ciencies, such an approach is unduly biased against nonstandard agreements that may overcome market failures.

I. THE RULE OF REASON

A. Normative Foundations—Preventing Monopoly or Its Consequences

The language of the Sherman Act seems straightforward, banning "restraint of trade or commerce among the several states."27 The statute's plain language would seem to call into question any contract with an interstate nexus.28 All contracts, it seems, "restrain trade," that is, alter commerce from the course it would otherwise take. Nonetheless, as Justice Holmes told us, economic progress requires cooperation, and the power to regulate commerce does not include the power to "disintegrate society . . . into individual atoms."29 From the very beginning, then, the Supreme Court engrafted upon the statute a "reasonable construction," thus avoiding assertions that the Act outlaws ordinary and useful contracts, which at the time found shelter in liberty of contract.30 In so doing, the Court made it plain that agreements that actually promote commerce are outside the Act's scope, even if such contracts "indirectly" restrain interstate trade or even (indirectly) increase "the cost of conducting an interstate business."31

28. 7 PHILIP E. AREEDA, ANTITRUST LAW ¶ 1501 (1986); see also NCAA v. Bd. of Regents of the Univ. of Okla., 468 U.S. 85, 98 (1984) (noting that every contract "restrains trade" in some sense).
29. See N. Sec. Co. v. United States, 193 U.S. 197, 411 (1904) (Holmes, J., dissenting) ("I am happy to know that only a minority of my brethren adopt an interpretation of the law which in my opinion would make eternal the bellum omnium contra omnes and disintegrate society so far as it could into individual atoms. If this were [Congress's] intent I should regard calling such a law a regulation of commerce as a mere pretense. It would be an attempt to reconstruct society."); see also Polk Bros., Inc. v. Forest City Enters., Inc., 776 F.2d 185, 188 (7th Cir. 1985) (Easterbrook, J.) ("The war of all against all is not a good model for any economy. Antitrust law is designed to ensure an appropriate blend of cooperation and competition, not to require all economic actors to compete full tilt at every moment.").
30. See Addyston Pipe & Steel Co. v. United States, 175 U.S. 211 (1899) (noting that liberty of contract does not protect the sort of direct restraints of interstate trade forbidden by the Sherman Act); id. at 235-38 (finding restraint in question "direct" because it raised prices above the level "competition" would produce); United States v. Joint-Traffic Ass'n, 171 U.S. 505, 568 (1898) ("[T]he act of Congress must have a reasonable construction, or else there would scarcely be an agreement or contract among business men that could not be said to have, indirectly or remotely, some bearing upon interstate commerce, and possibly to restrain it." (quoting Hopkins v. United States, 171 U.S. 578, 600 (1898))); id. at 567-68 (Sherman Act does not outlaw "ordinary contracts and combinations" protected by liberty of contract); see also MARTIN J. SKLAR, THE CORPORATE RECONSTRUCTION OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM 105-17 (1988) (Congress rejected proposals to ban all contracts limiting "free competition" because of constitutional concerns); Alan J. Meese, Liberty and Antitrust in the Formative Era, 79 B.U. L. REV. 1 (1999) (noting that state and federal formative era decisions construed the Sherman Act to avoid interference with liberty of contract).
31. Joint-Traffic Ass'n, 171 U.S. at 568 ("[T]he statute applies only to those contracts whose direct and immediate effect is a restraint upon interstate commerce . . . to treat the act as condemning all agreements under which, as a result, the cost of conducting an interstate commercial business may be increased, would enlarge the application of the act far beyond the fair meaning of the language used."); Hopkins, 171 U.S. at 592-90 (same); Anderson v. United States, 171 U.S. 604, 615-19 (1898) (finding contract that affects interstate trade incidentally or indirectly not a violation of the Act); see also United States v. Addyston Pipe & Steel Co., 85 F. 271, 282-83 (6th Cir. 1908) (Taft, J.) (stating that the Sherman Act does not
Thus, the Court said, the Act only banned contracts that restrained trade—and thus increased prices—directly, that is, without connection to any main, lawful purpose. Such contracts were, of course, beyond the protection of liberty of contract.

Since 1911, the approach taken in these early cases has found expression in the Rule of Reason announced in *Standard Oil Co. v. United States*. There, the Court confirmed that the Sherman Act, like the common law before it, served to promote the right to contract, not to smash it. To be sure, commercial contracts would limit the freedom of action of the parties to them and thus in some sense restrain competition and

proscribe partial restraints that are ancillary to a legitimate undertaking), **aff'd**, 175 U.S. 211 (1897); United States v. Trans-Missouri Freight Ass'n, 166 U.S. 290, 316-42 (1897).

32. See *Addyston Pipe*, 175 U.S. at 235-38 (finding naked horizontal price fixing a "direct" restraint of trade because it drove prices above a reasonable level); *Joint-Traffic Ass'n*, 171 U.S. at 566-68; *Hopkins*, 171 U.S. at 592-600; *Anderson*, 171 U.S. at 615-19 (holding that agreement was not a restraint of trade within the meaning of the Act where it did not "meddle with prices" and thus "lacked every ingredient of monopoly" but was instead designed to "regulate[e] the transaction of business in which the parties to the business were engaged"); see also *Nat'l Cotton Oil Co. v. Texas*, 197 U.S. 115, 128-30 (1905) (stating that liberty of contract does not prevent states from banning monopolistic combinations).

33. See BARRY CUSHMAN, RETHINKING THE NEW DEAL COURT 142-49 (1998) (explaining that Commerce Clause jurisprudence of the period equated intrastate activities that affected interstate commerce "directly" with businesses "affected with a public interest" and thus subject to price regulation under then-prevailing applications of "substantive due process"); Meese, supra note 30, at 65-67 (concluding that formative era courts defined as "direct" those restraints that exercised market power without countervailing benefits and thus fell outside the protection of liberty of contract). See *generally* Munn v. Illinois, 94 U.S. 113 (1877).

34. 221 U.S. 1 (1911); see also United States v. Am. Tobacco Co., 221 U.S. 106 (1911) (reaffirming and elaborating *Standard Oil's Rule of Reason*). See *Standard Oil*, 221 U.S. at 60 (finding that the Sherman Act "evidenced the intent not to restrain the right to make and enforce contracts, . . . which did not unduly restrain interstate or foreign commerce, but to protect that commerce from being restrained by methods, whether old or new, which would constitute an interference that is an undue restraint"). *Am. Tobacco Co.*, 221 U.S. at 180 (noting that the *Standard Oil Court* exercised "the duty to interpret, which inevitably arose from the general character of the term restraint of trade, [which] required that the words restraint of trade should be given a meaning which would not destroy the individual right to contract and render difficult, if not impossible, any movement of trade in the channels of interstate commerce"). Scholars who have considered the question uniformly agree that the *Standard Oil Court* construed the Sherman Act in light of liberty of contract. See, e.g., RUDOLPH PERITZ, COMPETITION POLICY IN AMERICA 56-58 (1996) ("The *Standard Oil* (1911) opinion's Rule of Reason can be understood as closing Lochner's circle of individual liberty . . . ."); SKLAR, supra note 30, at 146-48; Edward Corwin, The Antitrust Acts and the Constitution, 18 VA. L. REV. 355, 369-70 (1932). It should be noted, however, that some of these same scholars have argued that *Standard Oil* constituted a departure from decisions such as *Joint-Traffic Ass'n* and *Trans-Missouri Freight*. See, e.g., PERITZ, supra, at 52-60; Corwin, supra, at 368-70; see also *Standard Oil*, 221 U.S. at 83-106 (Harlan, J., concurring and dissenting) (arguing strenuously that "Rule of Reason" announced by *Standard Oil* was inconsistent with previous case law); David Millon, The Sherman Act and the Balance of Power, 61 S. CAL. L. REV. 1219, 1288 n.314 (1988) (arguing that *Standard Oil's Rule of Reason* was a departure from earlier, more "literal" case law). I have argued elsewhere that, in fact, the approach taken by *Standard Oil* is entirely consistent with prior case law, which also construed the Sherman Act in light of liberty of contract. See Meese, supra note 30, at 43-67 (concluding that early decisions construed the Sherman Act in light of liberty of contract); see also *Cline v. Frink Dairy Co.*, 274 U.S. 445, 460-61 (1927) (Taft, C.J.) (stating that *Standard Oil* simply reaffirmed principles announced in *Joint-Traffic Ass'n* and *Addyston Pipe*); WILLIAM LEWTIN, LAW AND ECONOMIC POLICY IN AMERICA: THE EVOLUTION OF THE SHERMAN LAW 265 (1965) (semblable); WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT, THE ANTITRUST ACT AND THE SUPREME COURT 89-93 (1914) (same); Robert H. Bork, The Rule of Reason and the Per Se Concepts: Price Fixing and Market Division, 74 YALE L.J. 775, 802-05 (1965) (Part I) (same).
trade. Nonetheless, it was the right to contract, and not regulatory intervention, that would empower firms and individuals to participate in the marketplace, preserving meaningful competition and thwarting monopoly over the long run. As a result, the Court said, the Sherman Act did not disturb "normal," "usual," or "ordinary" contracts that "furthered" or "developed" trade but instead struck only at those "unusual" contracts that restrained competition "unduly." This distinction between "usual" and

36. See Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 63 (arguing that all contracts literally "restrain trade" to some extent); see also Chi. Bd. of Trade v. United States, 246 U.S. 231, 238 (1918) (Brandeis, J.) ("But the legality of an agreement or regulation cannot be determined by so simple a test, as whether it restrains competition. Every agreement concerning trade, every regulation of trade, restrains. To bind, to restrain, is of their very essence. The true test of legality is whether the restraint imposed is such as merely regulates and perhaps thereby promotes competition or whether it is such as may suppress or even destroy competition.")).

37. See Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 63 ("[T]he omission of any direct prohibition against monopoly in the statute . . . indicates a consciousness that the freedom of the individual right to contract when not unduly or improperly exercised was the most efficient means for the prevention of monopoly"); Am. Tobacco Co., 221 U.S. at 180 (stating that failure to construe the Sherman Act in light of liberty of contract would "render difficult if not impossible any movement of trade in the channels of interstate commerce"); id. at 181 ("[G]iving to the statute a reasonable construction, the words 'restraint of trade' did not embrace all those normal and usual contracts essential to individual freedom, and the right to make which was necessary in order that the course of trade might be free."); Joint-Traffic Ass'n, 171 U.S. at 566-68 (stating that the Sherman Act does not ban "ordinary contracts and combinations"); Whitwell v. Cont'l Tobacco Co., 125 F. 454, 460-61 (8th Cir. 1903) (Sanborn, J.) ("There is nothing in the [Sherman Act] which deprived any of these competitors of these rights [of contract]. If there had been, the law itself would have destroyed competition more effectually than any contracts or combinations of persons or of corporations could possibly have stifled it. The exercise of these undoubted rights is essential to the very existence of free competition, and so long as their exercise by any person or corporation in no way deprives competitors of the same rights, or restricts them in the use of these rights, it is difficult to perceive how their exercise can constitute any restriction upon competition or any restraint upon interstate trade."); see also Nat'l Soc'y of Prof'l Eng'rs v. United States, 435 U.S. 679, 688 (1978) ("[I]t is that body of law [i.e., contract law] that establishes the enforceability of commercial agreements and enables competitive markets—indeed a competitive economy—to function effectively."); Nat'l Cotton Oil Co. v. Texas, 197 U.S. 115, 128 (1905) ("[S]ome combination of capital, skill or acts is necessary to any business development, and . . . the result must inevitably be a cessation of competition."); United States v. Ad-dyston Pipe & Steel Co., 85 F. 271, 282 (1898) (noting that, at common law, "restrictions in the articles of partnership upon the business activities of the members . . . were to be encouraged" (emphasis added)), aff'd, 175 U.S. 211 (1899) (Taft, J.).

38. See Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 57 (noting that American common law forbade only those restraints that "unduly diminished competition"); id. at 58 (stating that American common and statutory law forbade only those restraints "unreasonably restrictive of competitive conditions"); id. at 62 (remark-ing that the statute's "purpose was to prevent undue restraints of every kind or nature"); id. at 75-76 (finding that defendants' methods of expansion were not "normal" or "usual" and thus constituted undue restraints of trade); Am. Tobacco Co., 221 U.S. at 179 ("[T]he words 'restraint of trade' at common law and in the law of this country at the time of the adoption of the Anti-trust Act only embraced acts or contracts or agreements or combination, which operated to the prejudice of the public interests by unduly restricting competition, or unduly obstructing the course of trade . . ."); id. (noting that Standard Oil held that the "statute did not forbid or restrain the power to make normal and usual contracts to further trade by resorting to all normal methods, whether by, agreement or otherwise, to accomplish such purpose"); N. Sec. Co. v. United States, 193 U.S. 197, 361 (1904) (Brewer, J., concurring) ("Congress did not intend to reach and destroy those minor contracts in partial restraint of trade which the long course of decisions at common law had affirmed were reasonable and ought to be upheld. . . . [T]he general language of the [A]ct is also limited by the power which each individual has to manage his own property and determine the place and manner of its investment. Freedom of action in these respects is among the inalienable rights of every citizen."); see also Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 66 (stating that the "Rule of Reason" and "direct or indirect" test articulated in Joint-Traffic Ass'n "come to one and the same thing"); Joint-Traffic Ass'n, 171 U.S. at 566-68 (stating that the Sherman Act banned only "direct restraints" and not all con-
and "unusual" contracts, the Court said, was equivalent to that between "direct" and "indirect" restraints it had announced in prior decisions.\textsuperscript{39}

Whether a particular restraint on competition was undue, the Court held, would depend upon an analysis of the character of the agreement or the surrounding circumstance of the case.\textsuperscript{40} Such an analysis did not involve implementation of any abstract, technical conception of competition. Unlike modern economists, who view competition as a technical term of art, functionally linked to the efficient allocation of resources, the Standard Oil Court, like classical economists, equated competition with rivalry, the struggle between several firms to realize economic opportunities.\textsuperscript{41} Defined in this way, and thus drained of any economic content, competition was not an unalloyed good, as it is for modern economists. When tempered by an appropriate amount of cooperation embodied in an ordinary or normal restraint, such rivalry could enhance economic welfare by assuring consumers high quality products at the lowest possible price.\textsuperscript{42}

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\bibitem{39} See \textit{Standard Oil}, 221 U.S. at 66 (concluding that the application of the Rule of Reason produces the same results as the distinction between "direct" and "indirect" restraints); \textit{Am. Tobacco Co.}, 221 U.S. at 178-79 (stating that \textit{Standard Oil} announced the Rule of Reason "without departing from any previous decision of the court"); see also Cline, 274 U.S. at 461 (same); \textit{Taft, supra} note 35, at 89-95 (same).

\bibitem{40} [The Sherman Act struck at] all contracts or acts which were unreasonably restrictive of competitive conditions, either from the nature or character of the contract or act or where the surrounding circumstances were such as to justify the conclusion that they had not been entered into or performed with the legitimate purpose of forwarding personal interest and developing trade, but on the contrary... with the intent to do wrong to the general public and to limit the right of individuals. \textit{Standard Oil}, 221 U.S. at 58.

\bibitem{41} See Frank M. Machovec, \textit{Perfect Competition and the Transformation of Economics} 96-138 (1995) (examining classical conception of competition); Paul McNulty, \textit{Economic Theory and the Meaning of Competition}, 82 Q.J. \textit{Econ.} 639, 647 (1968) (arguing that the classical concept of competition "was a behavioral one, the essence of which was the effort of the individual seller to undersell, or the individual buyer to outbid, his rivals in the marketplace"); George Stigler, \textit{Perfect Competition, Historically Contemplated}, 65 J. \textit{Pol. Econ.} 1, 1-2 (1957) (finding that Adam Smith equated "competition" with "rivalry in a race—a race to get limited supplies or a race to be rid of excess supplies"); see also Herbert Hovenkamp, \textit{Enterprise and American Law} 1836-1937, at 270 (1991).

Although classicalists were concerned to preserve "competition," they did not understand that term as we understand it today. Competition was not a theory about cost-price relationships, as it came to be in Neoclassical economics. Rather, competition was a belief about the role of individual self-determination in directing the allocation of resources, and about the limits of state power to give privileges to one person or class at the expense of others.

Two years before passage of the Sherman Act, a leading political economist defined competition in the following manner: "[C]ompetition is the operation of individual self-interest, among the buyers and sellers of any article in any market. It implies that each man is acting for himself solely, by himself solely, in exchange, to get the most he can from others, and to give the least he must himself." See Francis A. Walker, \textit{Political Economy} 91-92 (3d ed. 1888), \textit{quoted in Hovenkamp, supra}, at 274.

\bibitem{42} See \textit{Standard Oil}, 221 U.S. at 58 (concluding that common law did not void those contracts that had a "legitimate purpose of reasonably forwarding personal interest and developing trade"); \textit{Joint-Traffic Ass'n}, 171 U.S. at 575 ("[I]t is plain that commerce can and does take place on a large scale and in numerous forms without competition."); see also McNulty, \textit{supra} note 41, at 643-45 (stating that classical economists argued that "competition" would result in "natural" price, i.e., the lowest price necessary to induce production of the product in question). Some scholars would take issue with the assertion that
Instead of banning all restraints on competition, then, the Sherman Act required antitrust courts to employ the sort of "reason" that they had long employed when implementing the common law of trade restraints. The application of such reason would enable judges to enforce the "public policy embodied in the statute," by determining whether a challenged restraint limited marketplace rivalry (competition) so much that it produced monopoly or its consequences. There were, according to the Court, three such consequences: the ability to restrict output, raise prices, or reduce quality. Modern economists, of course, would

Congress designed the Sherman Act to maximize consumer welfare, if such welfare is equated with total social wealth and thus involves application of a Kaldor-Hicksian efficiency benchmark. See generally RICHARD A. POSNER, ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF LAW 14–17 (5th ed. 1998) (explaining concept of Kaldor-Hicks efficiency). According to these scholars, classical economists did not understand that the exercise of market power would distort the allocation of resources and thus reduce total social welfare. See Louis Kaplow, Antitrust, Law and Economics, and the Courts, 50 LAW & CONTEMP. PROBS. 181, 207–08 & n.140 (1987). Thus, it is said, Congress must have had purely distributinal goals in mind when it passed the Sherman Act, with the result that any arrangement that involves or facilitates an exercise of market power and thus increases prices, directly or indirectly, offends the Act. See Kaplow, supra, at 207–08; Robert H. Lande, The Rise and (Coming) Fall of Efficiency as the Ruler of Antitrust, 33 ANTITRUST BULL. 429 (1988); Robert H. Lande, Wealth Transfers as the Original and Primary Concern of Antitrust: The Efficiency Interpretation Challenged, 34 HASTINGS L.J. 65, 92–96 (1982). However, at least one classical economist apparently understood that the possession and exercise of market power would distort the allocation of resources and reduce total social welfare, independent of any impact such power might have on price. See ADAM SMITH, AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF THE WEALTH OF NATIONS 682–83 (Modern Library ed. 1994) (arguing that mercantile monopolies "derange more or less the natural distribution of the stock of the society" and that "every derangement of the natural distribution of stock is necessarily hurtful to the society in which it takes place"); see also E.G. West, The Burdens of Monopoly: Classical Versus Neoclassical, 44 S. ECON. J. 829, 836–37 (1978) (arguing that Adam Smith understood allocative inefficiency as one burden of monopoly).

At any rate, the conclusions of this article do not depend upon any equation of "consumer welfare" with efficiency defined in a Kaldor-Hicksian sense. Even if the Sherman Act forbids all contracts that (1) exercise market power and (2) result in higher consumer prices, the present structure of Rule of Reason analysis is overinclusive in the sense that it identifies as "anticompetitive" numerous contracts that do not, in fact, create or exercise market power. See infra Part IV.

43. See Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 60.
44. See id. ("[T]he standard of reason which had been applied at the common law ... was intended to be the measure used for ... determining whether in a given case a particular act had or had not brought about the wrong against which the statute provided."); id. at 62 (stating that the Court should apply Rule of Reason "to enforce the prohibitions of the act and thus the public policy which its restrictions were obviously enacted to subserve"); id. at 58 (stating that the common law refused to enforce "all contracts or acts which were unreasonably restrictive of competitive conditions [and thus designed] to bring about the evils, such as enhancement of prices, which were considered against public policy"); United States v. Addyston Pipe Steel Co., 85 F. 271, 282–83 (6th Cir. 1898) (Taft, J.) (stating that a contract whose "sole object" is to "restrain competition" was unenforceable at common law and thus unlawful under the Sherman Act), aff'd, 175 U.S. 211 (1899).

45. Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 52; id. at 61 (defining "restraint of trade" as "undue restraint of the course of business which brings about monopoly or which produces the same result as monopoly"); id. at 57 (stating that the common-law referred to contracts that "were thought to unduly diminish competition and hence to enhance prices—in other words, to monopolize" as "being in restraint of trade"); id. (stating that the prohibition on restraints of trade was aimed at "the acts of individuals producing or tending to produce the consequences of monopoly"); id. at 52 (listing "evils" of monopoly as: (1) the power to fix prices; (2) the power to limit output and; (3) the danger of deterioration in the quality of the monopolized product); id. (characterizing "power arbitrarily to enhance price" as one "evil" of monopoly); see also SMITH, supra note 42, at 69 ("The monopolists, by keeping the market constantly under-stocked, by never fully supplying the effectual demand, sell their commodities much above the natural price, and raise their emoluments, whether they consist in wages or profit, greatly above their natural rate."); THOMAS
equate these consequences with the exercise of market power and the corresponding reduction in social welfare. This treatment of the Sherman Act as a form of externality regulation was consistent with the then-dominant approach to political economy, an approach that the Court had read into the Due Process Clauses of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments.

This Rule of Reason did not empower courts to validate harmful agreements that judges might nevertheless deem reasonable. Nor did it empower judges to void legitimate or normal contracts that incidentally limited competition and might indirectly raise prices. Instead, the rule required courts to ban all contracts that limited competition in a manner that would produce the consequences of monopoly and thus harm con-

Sowell, Classical Economics Reconsidered 20–21 (1974) (arguing that classical economists equated “monopoly” with any restriction of supply); See, e.g., Kenneth Elzinga & William Breit, The Antitrust Penalties 3 (1976) (arguing that antitrust regulation can be justified as regulation eliminating the externality of deadweight welfare losses caused by monopoly restrictions on output); Herbert Hovenkamp, Federal Antitrust Policy 11–13 (1999) (describing deadweight loss caused by monopolist’s exercise of market power); Smith, supra note 42, at 69 (arguing that “[t]he price of monopoly is upon every occasion the highest which can be got. The natural price, or the price of free competition, on the contrary, is the lowest which can be taken, not upon every occasion indeed, but for any considerable time together. The one is upon every occasion the highest which can be squeezed out of the buyers, or which, it is supposed, they will consent to give. The other is the lowest which the sellers can commonly afford to take, and at the same time continue their business.”); Guido Calabresi, Transaction Costs, Resource Allocation, and Liability Rules: A Comment, 11 J.L. & Econ. 67, 70 (1968) (making same argument as Elzinga & Breit); William Landes & Richard Posner, Market Power in Antitrust Cases, 94 Harv. L. Rev. 937, 937 (1981) (defining market power as ability profitably to price above marginal cost); see also Bork, supra note 35, at 802–65, 831–32 (arguing that Standard Oil’s Rule of Reason was designed to further “the creation of wealth, or, to say the same thing, the maximization of the satisfaction of consumer wants”).

47. See Hovenkamp, supra note 41, at 200–01 (arguing that the Supreme Court only sustained abridgements of contractual liberty that were designed to correct market failure); Peritz, supra note 35, at 50–52 (arguing that Standard Oil reflected concern for liberty of contract recognized in Lochner); Sklar, supra note 30, at 108–17 (arguing that Congress narrowed initial drafts of the Sherman Act to accommodate concerns that the statute might infringe liberty of contract); Meese, supra note 30, at 15–34 (recounting classical economic paradigm and its embrace by courts practicing economic due process); id. at 88–91 (suggesting that formative era jurisprudence could be explained by concern for welfare losses caused by cartel output reductions); see also Nat’l Cotton Oil Co. v. Texas, 197 U.S. 115, 129 (1905) (“It is the power to control prices which makes the inducement of combinations and their profit[s]. It is such power that makes it the concern of the law to prohibit or limit them.”).

48. See Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 65 (stating that the Rule of Reason does not empower courts to exempt agreements that unduly restrict competition from the statute); United States v. Joint-Traffic Ass’n, 171 U.S. 505, 575–77 (1898) (rejecting defendants’ invitation to consider policy arguments in favor of railroad cartel).

49. See Standard Oil Co., 221 U.S. at 66 (“To treat as condemned by the act all agreements under which, as a result, the cost of conducting an interstate commercial business may be increased would envelope the application of the act far beyond the fair meaning of the language used. There must be some direct and immediate effect upon interstate commerce in order to come within the act.”) (quoting Hopkins v. United States, 171 U.S. 578, 592 (1898))); Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 54 (listing “undue enhancement of price” as one evil of monopoly (emphasis added)); United States v. Am. Tobacco Co., 221 U.S. 106, 179 (1911) (stating that the Act does not forbid “the power to make normal and usual contracts to further trade by resorting to all normal methods, whether by agreement or otherwise, to accomplish such purpose”); Joint-Traffic Ass’n, 171 U.S. at 566–68 (same); see also Chi. Bd. of Trade v. United States, 246 U.S. 231, 238 (1918) (stating that the mere fact that a contract restrains price competition does not condemn it under Rule of Reason).
sumers and society.\textsuperscript{50} Absent government imposition of monopoly, then, the Sherman Act, if properly enforced, would ensure the appropriate amount of competition and protect society from arrangements that produced or threatened to produce market power.\textsuperscript{51}

B. Applying Principles—the Role of Evolving Economic Theory

Although initially controversial,\textsuperscript{52} modern courts and commentators agree that \textit{Standard Oil} and its Rule of Reason should be the starting point for any antitrust analysis.\textsuperscript{53} Still, the embrace of this principle begs an important question: how should courts go about distinguishing "ordinary," "normal," or "usual" restrictions, which "further" and "develop" trade from those that "unreasonably restrict competitive conditions" and thus produce the consequences of monopoly?\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Standard Oil}'s invocation of the common law in support of its Rule of Reason suggests one source of wisdom, namely the vast body of precedents governing trade restraints that was in place when Congress passed the Sherman Act.\textsuperscript{55} Congress, after all, anticipated that the courts would draw upon common-law precedents and methodology when formulating antitrust doctrine.\textsuperscript{56} Perhaps

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{50} See Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 52-62; see also Bork, supra note 35, at 802-04 (noting that Standard Oil created "a rule of reason keyed to the avoidance of the consequences of monopoly and had placed upon the courts the duty of performing economic analysis to determine in which acts and agreements the evils of monopoly were present").
\item \textsuperscript{51} See Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 62 (concluding that the Sherman Act assumes that "the operation of the centrifugal and centripetal forces resulting from the right to freely contract was the means by which monopoly would be inevitably prevented if no extraneous or sovereign power imposed it and no right to make unlawful contracts having a monopolistic tendency were permitted. In other words that freedom to contract was the essence of freedom from undue restraint on the right to contract."); Whitwell v. Cont'l Tobacco Co., 125 F. 454, 460-61 (8th Cir. 1903) (stating that protection of right to contract was "essential to the very existence of free competition").
\item \textsuperscript{52} See Letwin, supra note 35, at 265-70 (describing political and legislative reaction to Standard Oil); Albert H. Walker, The "Unreasonable" Obiter Dicta of Chief Justice White in the Standard Oil Case (1911). As noted earlier, some contemporary and modern commentators have argued that Standard Oil's invocation of the Rule of Reason was a wholesale repudiation of prior decisions under the Act. See supra note 35 (collecting authorities to this effect). I have shown elsewhere that this position rests on a misreading of pre-1911 decisions. See Meese, supra note 31, at 43-67 (arguing that, like Standard Oil, early state and federal decisions construed antitrust statutes narrowly, to avoid claims that such statutes offended liberty of contract); id. at 59-67, 75-80 (contending that early case law voided only those contracts that exercised or threatened to create market power); see also Taft, supra note 35, at 89-95 (arguing that Standard Oil did not depart from prior case law).
\item \textsuperscript{54} See Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 58 (distinguishing between these two sorts of contracts).
\item \textsuperscript{55} See id. at 60 (holding that Congress intended the courts to apply "the standard of reason which had been applied at the common law and in this country in dealing with the subjects of the character embraced by the statute"); see also supra note 39 and accompanying text.
\item \textsuperscript{56} See, e.g., State Oil Co. v. Khan, 522 U.S. 3, 20-21 (1997) ("Congress 'expected the courts to give shape to the statute's broad mandate by drawing on common-law tradition.") (quoting Nat'l Soc'y of
courts should ban those restraints that were void at common law, while at the same time validating those that common-law courts would have enforced.\textsuperscript{57}

From the very beginning, however, courts have rejected invitations to engraft the stock of common-law precedents onto the Sherman Act.\textsuperscript{58} As \textit{Standard Oil} itself noted, the universe of trade restraints is in constant flux: human ingenuity produces restraints that the common law did not address.\textsuperscript{59} More fundamentally, the effects of well-known restraints are themselves not static: economic conditions change, and such changes may themselves alter the effects of particular restraints. At the same time, human understanding evolves—or at least changes—over time; restraints that once appeared beneficial or benign to the most learned economists may now seem harmful.\textsuperscript{60}

For these reasons, even the common law was not static, but instead treated identical restraints quite differently in different eras.\textsuperscript{61} At one time, for instance, covenants ancillary to the sale of a business were unlawful per se.\textsuperscript{62} Over time, however, conditions and economic understanding changed, and courts came to believe that such agreements were both more

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Cf.} Klor's, Inc., 359 U.S. at 211 (suggesting that the Sherman Act banned all contracts that were unenforceable at common law and any others that "new times and economic conditions would make unreasonable").

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{See} United States v. Trans-Missouri Freight Ass'n, 166 U.S. 290, 327-28 (1896) (rejecting argument that the term "restraint of trade" is "to be given the same meaning that [it] received at common law"). Moreover, while then-Judge Taft purported to rely upon the common law to justify his opinion in \textit{Addyston Pipe}, the approach he announced in fact departed from the common law's willingness to enforce "reasonable" horizontal price fixing agreements. \textit{See} HOVENKAMP, \textit{ supra} note 41, at 286-87; \textit{see also infra} note 68 (describing Supreme Court's repudiation of common-law decisions enforcing noncoercive price-fixing agreements).

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{See} \textit{Standard Oil}, 221 U.S. at 59-60 (stating that Congress drafted the Sherman Act to address "the many new forms of contracts and combinations which were being evolved from existing economic conditions"); \textit{United States v. Am. Tobacco Co.}, 221 U.S. 106, 180-81 (1911) (showing that the Rule of Reason empowers courts to condemn arrangements that frustrate the policy of the statute even if they were unknown to the common law).

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{See} \textit{Standard Oil}, 221 U.S. at 57-58 (noting that, during the late nineteenth century, American courts and legislatures adjusted common-law restrictions in response to changed understandings of the economic effects of various agreements); \textit{id}. at 55-56 ("[D]evelopment of more accurate economic conceptions and the change[d] conditions of society [caused repeal of overbroad English statutes and adjustment in English common law].")

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{See}, e.g., Gibbs v. Consol. Gas Co., 130 U.S. 396, 409 (1889) (stating that the original rules governing restraints of trade were "made under a condition of things, and a state of society, different from those which now prevail, [with the result that] the rule laid down is not regarded as inflexible, and has been considerably modified"); Skrainka v. Scharringhausen, 8 Mo. App. 522, 525 (Mo. Ct. App. 1880) ("It is not that contracts in restraint of trade are any more legal or enforceable now than they were at any former period, but that courts look differently at the question as to what is a restraint of trade."); Diamond Match Co. v. Roeber, 13 N.E. 419, 421-22 (N.Y. 1887); Kellogg v. Larkin, 3 Pin. 123, 139-41 (Wis. 1851); \textit{see also} \textit{Standard Oil}, 221 U.S. at 51-58 (describing common law's evolving treatment of trade restraints); \textit{United States v. Addyston Pipe & Steel Co.}, 85 F. 271, 280-82 (6th Cir. 1898) (Taft, J.) (same), aff'd, 175 U.S. 211 (1899).

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{See} Y.B. 2 Hen. 5, fol. 5, Pash, pl.26.
beneficial and less harmful than once imagined. As a result, courts refused to enforce only "general" restraints of trade that barred the seller from pursuing his trade in the entire jurisdiction, enforcing those partial restraints that were reasonable.

Antitrust courts have always taken a similar approach, eschewing any reliance upon a static common law and instead embracing economic theory to assist them in distinguishing undue restraints from those that are ordinary or normal. Such an approach follows naturally from Standard Oil's requirement that judges employ reason to determine whether a restraint hinders competitive rivalry between the parties to it in a manner that produces the economic consequences banned by the statute. In so doing, courts have felt free to rely upon economic theories quite different from those extant in 1890, thus updating the Sherman Act to keep pace with changing perceptions about the economic consequence of particular agreements. While the principle animating the Rule of Reason remains

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63. See Addyston Pipe, 85 F. at 280-81 (describing evolving appreciation of benefits of various ancillary restraints); Diamond Match Co., 13 N.E. at 420-23.

64. See Mitchel v. Reynolds, 1 P. Wms. 181, 24 Eng. Rep. 347 (1711); see also, e.g., Union Strawboard Co. v. Bonfield, 61 N.E. 1038, 1040 (Ill. 1901) (invalidating general restraint without regard to reasonableness); Alger v. Thacher, 36 Mass. (19 Pick.) 51, 53-54 (1837) (same).

65. See State Oil Co. v. Khan, 522 U.S. 3, 15-22 (1997) (relying upon changed economic perceptions to overrule per se ban on maximum resale price maintenance); Bus. Elecs. Corp. v. Sharp Elecs. Corp., 485 U.S. 717, 732 (1988) ("The Sherman Act adopted the term 'restraint of trade' along with its dynamic potential. It invokes the common law itself, and not merely the static content that the common law assigned that term in 1890."); Klor's, Inc. v. Broadway-Hale Stores, Inc., 359 U.S. 207, 211 (1959) (Sherman Act empowered courts to ban contracts which "new times and economic conditions would make unreasonable"); Dr. Miles Med. Co. v. John D. Park & Sons Co., 220 U.S. 373, 406 (1911) ("With respect to contracts in restraint of trade, the earlier doctrine of the common law has been substantially modified in adaptation to modern conditions."); United States v. Trans-Missouri Freight Ass'n, 166 U.S. 290, 327-29 (1897); see also HOVENKAMP, supra note 41, at 268 ("One of the great myths about American antitrust policy is that courts began to adopt an 'economic approach' to antitrust problems only in the 1970s. At most, this "revolution" in antitrust policy represented a change in economic models. Antitrust policy has been forged by economic ideology since its inception."); Michael S. Jacobs, An Essay on the Normative Foundations of Antitrust Economics, 74 N.C. L. REV. 219, 226 (1995) ("In almost every era of antitrust history, policymakers have employed economic models to explain or modify the state of the law and the rationale for its enforcement.").

66. It should be stressed that White's test was phrased wholly in economic terms, giving no evidence of concern for possibly competing values. A corollary of this value choice is that the law should develop according to the progress of economic thought. The law is, therefore, neither made inflexible by controlling precedent nor required to change only through abrupt shifts of basic doctrine. Thus a court could alter the law without repudiating the theory underlying prior decisions by explaining that those decisions had misconceived the economic effect of particular agreements or practices. This characteristic is, of course, inherent in Peckham's and Taft's statements of the rule of reason, as it is in any law governed by economic analysis.

Bork, supra note 35, at 805.

67. See Bus. Elecs. Corp., 485 U.S. at 731 ("The term 'restraint of trade' in the statute, like the term of common law, refers not to a particular list of agreements, but to a particular economic consequence, which may be produced by quite different sorts of agreements in varying times and circumstances."); see also Khan, 522 U.S. at 15-22 (relying upon revised economic understanding to repudiate prior doctrine); Cont'l T.V., Inc. v. GTE Sylvania, Inc., 433 U.S. 36, 52-57 (1977) (same); Klor's, Inc., 359 U.S. at 211 (stating that the Sherman Act empowered courts to ban contracts made unreasonable by "new times and economic conditions").
constant, applications change, as courts translate the principle in light of new information.\textsuperscript{68}

II. IMPLEMENTING STANDARD OIL’S RULE OF REASON

A. A Two-Step Inquiry

One could read Standard Oil and its Rule of Reason to require a case-by-case assessment of the reasonableness of each challenged restraint.\textsuperscript{69} Indeed, some early case law seemed to indicate as much.\textsuperscript{70} Yet, the decision itself suggested a contrary approach, stating that courts should determine the reasonableness \textit{vel non} of a restraint by examining the “nature or character” of an agreement or the “surrounding circumstances.”\textsuperscript{71} Subsequent courts ultimately came around to this position, declaring cer-


The evolving judicial treatment of horizontal price-fixing provides a quintessential example of this approach. When Congress passed the Sherman Act, common-law courts generally enforced such agreements, at least those that set a “reasonable” price. See HOVENKAMP, supra note 41, at 288–93. Such an approach reflected the “political economy” of the day, which assumed that markets were invariably populated by numerous sellers and characterized by low barriers to entry. In such a world, horizontal price-fixing could only produce prices above the “natural” level if cartelists took steps to thwart entry by others. See Meese, supra, at 17–18. Indeed, some early decisions under the Sherman Act refused to void cartels that did not seek to limit the output of strangers to the agreement. See United States v. Nelson, 52 F. 646 (C.C.D. Minn. 1892). Nonetheless, the Supreme Court rejected this approach to price-fixing, voiding unreasonable agreements regardless of whether defendants interfered with the actions of others. See Dr. Miles Med. Co., 220 U.S. at 404–09; Addyston Pipe & Steel Co. v. United States, 175 U.S. 211, 238–45 (1899).

69. Standard Oil Co. of N.J. v. United States, 221 U.S. 1, 60 (1911) (stating that statute “intended that the standard of reason which had been applied at the common law and in this country in dealing with the subjects of the character embraced by the statute was intended to be the measure used for the purpose of determining whether in a given case a particular act had or had not brought about the wrong against which the statute provided” (emphasis added)). Indeed, the author of Standard Oil, Chief Justice White, argued as much (in dissent) fifteen years earlier. See \textit{Trans-Missouri Freight Ass'n}, 166 U.S. at 343–74 (White, J., dissenting) (arguing that courts should ban only those price-fixing agreements that set unreasonable prices).

70. See, e.g., Appalachian Coals, Inc. v. United States, 288 U.S. 344, 360–61 (1933); Chi. Bd. of Trade v. United States, 246 U.S. 231, 238 (1918). Moreover, while scholars often cite Judge Taft's and Justice Peckham's \textit{Addyston Pipe} decisions as examples of "per se rules" against unadorned horizontal price-fixing, both decisions in fact ultimately rested upon a determination that the cartel under attack had charged "unreasonable" prices. See \textit{Addyston Pipe}, 175 U.S. at 235–38 (rejecting assertion that cartel merely set reasonable prices); id. at 238 (“The facts thus set forth show conclusively that the effect of the combination was to enhance prices beyond a sum which was reasonable.”); United States v. Addyston Pipe & Steel Co., 85 F. 271, 291–93 (6th Cir. 1898) (Taft, J.) (finding that defendants' cartel had produced unreasonable prices), aff'd, 175 U.S. 211 (1899); see also Meese, supra note 30, at 59–67 (arguing that \textit{Addyston Pipe} rested on finding that cartel prices were above the reasonable level).

71. \textit{Standard Oil}, 221 U.S. at 58; \textit{United States v. Am. Tobacco Co.}, 221 U.S. 106, 179 (1911); see also Bork, supra note 35, at 804 (stating that the \textit{Standard Oil} opinion recognized that some arrangements could be unlawful per se).
taint categories of restraints unreasonable per se, and thus subject to summary condemnation.\textsuperscript{72}

Per se rules are no exception to the approach articulated in Standard Oil. To the contrary, such rules simply implement the overarching Rule of Reason, just as a requirement that motorists "stop and look" before crossing any railroad tracks once implemented the more general requirement that tort victims act reasonably.\textsuperscript{73} A conclusion that a particular class of restraint is unlawful per se rests upon a determination that a thoroughgoing examination of the reasonableness of such restraints will always or almost always result in a conclusion that they exercise or create market power and thus restrain competition (rivalry) unduly.\textsuperscript{74} In this way, per se rules replicate the result that full blown analysis would produce while at the same time avoiding the administrative costs of such an inquiry.\textsuperscript{75}

As applied in the courts, then, Standard Oil's Rule of Reason manifests itself in a two-step analysis. The first step—per se analysis—requires characterization and then classification of a restraint.\textsuperscript{76} Here courts inquire into the nature of the agreement and decide whether it is unlawful per se or instead subject to further scrutiny.\textsuperscript{77} If the restraint survives this step, that is, if it is not unreasonable per se, courts proceed to the second step, namely, a fact-intensive analysis of the actual effects of the restraint.\textsuperscript{78} While courts refer to this second step as a Rule of Reason analysis, both steps of the process attempt to answer the question put by Standard Oil, \textit{viz.}, is a restraint "unreasonably restrictive of competitive conditions."\textsuperscript{79}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[72] See FTC v. Superior Court Trial Lawyers Ass'n, 493 U.S. 411, 433-36 (1990); Arizona v. Maricopa County Med. Soc'y, 457 U.S. 332, 348-54 (1982); N. Pac. Ry. Co. v. United States, 356 U.S. 1, 5 (1958); see also Klor's, Inc., 359 U.S. at 211 (relying on Standard Oil's reference to "nature and character" of certain agreements for proposition that some agreements are unreasonable per se).
\item[74] See State Oil Co. v. Khan, 522 U.S. 3, 10 (1997) ("Per se treatment is appropriate \[o\]nce experience with a particular kind of restraint enables the Court to predict with confidence that the rule of reason will condemn it." (quoting Maricopa County Med. Soc'y, 457 U.S. at 344)); accord Superior Court Trial Lawyers Ass'n, 493 U.S. at 432 n.15; see also N. Pac. Ry Co., 356 U.S. at 5; Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 58 (stating that public policy condemned "all contracts or acts which were unreasonably restrictive of competitive conditions, either from the nature or character of the contract or act, or where the surrounding circumstances were such as to justify the conclusion that they had not been entered into or performed with the legitimate purpose of reasonably forwarding personal interest, and developing, trade" (emphasis added)).
\item[75] See Khan, 522 U.S. at 10; Superior Court Trial Lawyers Ass'n, 493 U.S. at 434-35; Maricopa County Med. Soc'y, 457 U.S. at 344.
\item[76] See supra notes 70-76.
\item[77] Id.
\item[78] Id.
\item[79] See NCAA v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Okla., 468 U.S. 85, 104 (1984) ("Whether the ultimate finding is the product of a presumption [implemented via the per se rule] or actual market analysis, the essential inquiry remains the same—whether or not the challenged restraint enhances competition."); Nat'l Soc'y of Prof'ls Eng'rs v. United States, 435 U.S. 679, 690 (1978) (quoting Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 58); Chi. Bd. of Trade v. United States, 246 U.S. 236, 238 (1918) ("The true test of legality is whether the restraint imposed is such as merely regulates and perhaps thereby promotes competition or whether it is such as may suppress or even destroy competition."); Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 56, 57 (stating that American common and statutory law banned arrangements that "were thought to unduly diminish competition"); see also FTC v. Superior Court Trial Lawyers Ass'n, 493 U.S. 411, 434-35 (1990).
\end{footnotes}
Because both steps involve the same ultimate inquiry, the methodology employed in the first step should help shape the approach taken in the second. After all, the creation of per se rules is as much a process of exclusion as of inclusion. Thus, the standards employed at the first step do more than define the class of restraints subject to immediate condemnation; they also implicitly determine the nature of those restraints that are "left over" and thus subject to more thorough scrutiny under the second step's Rule of Reason. Moreover, for three decades per se rules dominated antitrust doctrine, as courts continually expanded the list of agreements subject to automatic condemnation. Only recently have courts begun to contract the scope of per se rules, and they have done so in a manner that has important implications for the Rule of Reason in general. Any attempt to comprehend and critique modern Rule of Reason analysis must therefore begin with an understanding of the process that leads to Rule of Reason treatment in the first place.

B. The First Step—Per Se Analysis

The current case law, which this article does not question, holds that a particular class of restraints is unreasonable per se if the restraints are "always or almost always anticompetitive" and always or almost always "lack redeeming virtues" that would, if present, "outweigh" or "justify" any anticompetitive effect. Plaintiffs can readily satisfy the first prong of this test, given the manner in which the Court defines anticompetitive when conducting per se analysis. Like Standard Oil, the Court has abjured any technical definition of competition and instead equated the term with "ri­valry" for the purpose of per se analysis, with the result that any coordination of previously independent activity is anticompetitive. This definition

80. See infra notes 240–303 and accompanying text.
81. See infra notes 345–63 and accompanying text.
82. See State Oil Co. v. Khan, 522 U.S. 3, 10 (1997) ("Some types of restraints, however, have such predictable and pernicious anticompetitive effect, and such limited potential for procompetitive benefit, that they are deemed unlawful per se."); Catalano, Inc. v. Target Stores, Inc., 446 U.S. 643, 646, 649–50 (1980) (same); Broad. Music, Inc. v. CBS, Inc., 441 U.S. 1, 7–8, 19–20 (1979) (same); Confl'T.V., Inc. v. GTE Sylvania, Inc., 433 U.S. 36, 49–50 (1977); United States v. Topco Assocs. Inc., 405 U.S. 596, 607 (1972) (same); N. Pac. Ry. Co. v. United States, 356 U.S. 1, 5 (1958) (same); see also North­west Wholesale Stationers, Inc. v. Pac. Stationery & Printing Co., 472 U.S. 284, 290 (1985) (stating that certain group boycotts are per se unlawful because they "are so likely to restrict competition without any offsetting efficiency gains that they should be condemned as per se violations"). It should be noted that the Court has used the term "anticompetitive" in a different sense on occasion to refer to an arrangement's overall effect on economic welfare. See, e.g., NCAA, 468 U.S. at 103–04 ("Per se rules are invoked when surrounding circumstances make the likelihood of anticompetitive conduct so great as to render unjustified further examination of the challenged conduct.") (emphasis added)). Such usage is comparatively rare, however.
83. See Chi. Bd. of Trade, 246 U.S. at 238 (noting that all contracts limit individuals' freedom of action and thus restrain competition in some sense).
84. See NCAA, 468 U.S. at 98–100 (suggesting that agreement on price and output required justification to avoid per se condemnation); Arizona v. Maricopa County Med. Soc'y, 457 U.S. 332, 342–54 (1982) (finding maximum price-fixing arrangement "anticompetitive" and unlawful absent valid competitive justification); Catalano, 446 U.S. at 649–50 (holding an agreement fixing credit terms between com-
of anticompetitive sweeps quite broadly, applying as it does to any number of
garden variety arrangements. The formation of a partnership or a corpo-
ration, for instance, necessarily eliminates actual or potential rivalry be-
tween the parties to the new venture. The same is true of a merger, joint
venture, or covenant ancillary to the sale of a business. If competition is
equated with rivalry, all of these restraints reduce competition when com-
pared to the status quo ante and thus satisfy the first part of the two-part
test for per se illegality.

Of course, the economy would grind to a halt if the Sherman Act
banned all agreements that are anticompetitive in this broad sense. Rec-
ognizing this, Standard Oil held that the Act forbids only undue restric-
tions of competition. Thus, an initial conclusion that a restraint is anti-
competitive is only the beginning of per se analysis. Courts recognize that
many restraints that eliminate or temper competition produce procompeti-
tive efficiencies or redeeming virtues that can outweigh or justify any anti-
competitive limitation on rivalry. In other words, courts recognize that

petitioners unlawful per se given absence of any recognized redeeming virtue); Nat'l Soc'y of Prof'l Eng'rs, 435 U.S. at 692-96 (concluding that a ban on competitive bidding requires competitive justification); GTE Sylvania, Inc., 433 U.S. at 51-59 (treating reduction of intrabrand rivalry as sufficient to require inquiry into restraint's redeeming virtues); White Motor Co. v. United States, 372 U.S. 253, 261-64 (1963) (holding that the possibility that territorial restraint had redeeming virtues obviated application of per se rule).

85. See Maricopa County Med. Soc'y, 457 U.S. at 356-57 (holding that partnership involves price-fixing, but is subject to Rule of Reason because of economic integration that produces efficiencies); Broad. Music, Inc., 441 U.S. at 9 (stating that the existence of a partnership is not per se unlawful because of its redeeming virtues); United States v. Addyston Pipe & Steel Co., 85 F. 271, 280 (6th Cir. 1898) (Taft, J.) (noting that creation of partnership and associated restraints should be analyzed under the Rule of Reason even though the arrangement "might reduce competition"); aff'd, 175 U.S. 211 (1899).

86. See Broad. Music Inc., 441 U.S. at 23-24; Nat'l Soc'y of Prof'l Eng'rs, 435 U.S. at 688-89 (showing that covenants not to compete are analyzed under the Rule of Reason even though they eliminate "potential competition").

87. Polk Bros., Inc. v. Forest City Enters., Inc., 776 F.2d 185, 188 (7th Cir. 1985) (Easterbrook, J.) ("Antitrust law is designed to ensure an appropriate blend of cooperation and competition . . . ."); see also supra note 65 and accompanying text;

88. See NCAA, 468 U.S. at 102 (finding that various horizontal restrictions on rivalry between member schools could help create a distinctive product and thus be "procompetitive"); Maricopa County Med. Soc'y, 457 U.S. at 357 (noting that doctors that formed a clinic "would have the type of partnership in which a price-fixing agreement among the doctors would be perfectly proper"); Broad. Music Inc., 441 U.S. at 9 ("When two partners set the price of their goods or services they are literally 'price fixing,' but they are not in per se violation of the Sherman Act."); id. at 23 ("Not all arrangements that have an impact on price are per se violations of the Sherman Act or even unreasonable restraints. Mergers among competitors eliminate competition, including price competition, but they are not illegal per se, and many of them withstand attack under any existing antitrust standard."); Nat'l Soc'y of Prof'l Eng'rs, 435 U.S. at 688-89 (stating that courts have historically sustained covenants ancillary to the sale of a business as rea-
sonable because "[t]he long-run benefit of enhancing the marketability of the business itself — and thereby providing incentives to develop such an enterprise — outweighed the temporary and limited loss of compe-
tition"); Cont'l T.V., Inc. v. GTE Sylvania, Inc., 433 U.S. 36, 51-57 (1977) (refusing to apply per se rule to restraints that limited intrabrand rivalry because such restrictions could enhance interbrand rivalry); Appalachian Coals, Inc. v. United States, 288 U.S. 344, 360-61 (1933) ("The mere fact that the parties to an agreement eliminate competition between themselves is not enough to condemn it. . . . The familiar illus-
trations of partnerships, and enterprises fairly integrated in the interest of the promotion of commerce, at once occur."); Addyston Pipe, 85 F. at 280 ("[W]hen two men became partners in a business, although their union might reduce competition, this effect was only an incident to the main purpose of a union of their capital, enterprise, and energy to carry on a successful business, and one useful to the community.

Restrictions in the articles of partnership upon the business activity of the members, with a view of secur-
such restraints might be normal or ordinary with the result that a fact-intensive Rule of Reason analysis will not always or almost always condemn them.\(^89\) Indeed, given the breadth with which the Court defines anticompetitive, it is the second portion of this test that saves most restrictions on rivalry from automatic condemnation and thus determines whether a particular type of restraint is unreasonable per se.\(^90\)

One may wonder at this point why any type of contract is ever unreasonable per se. After all, a determination whether a restriction is undue or not would seem to require a case-by-case exercise of judgment. Moreover, one can always attribute some benefit or redeeming virtue to a particular contract, no matter how harmful it might seem. Indeed, much regulation consists of coercive restrictions that mandate prices or output different from what a free market would produce.\(^91\) Nonetheless, the Sherman Act does not recognize the same breadth of justifications for contractual restrictions on trade that the Constitution tolerates where legislative interference is concerned.\(^92\)

More precisely, proponents of a private restraint that restricts competition cannot avoid per se treatment by arguing that the reduction in competition produces noneconomic benefits that somehow outweigh the agreement's economic effects.\(^93\) While states can decide that enforcing a raisin cartel is wise public policy, grape growers cannot justify a cartel by arguing that society is better off if the cartelists receive a supra-competitive return on their investment.\(^94\) Thus, a purported virtue is only redeeming if it serves a legitimate purpose, that is, does not depend on the

\(^{89}\) See Broad. Music, Inc., 441 U.S. at 23–24; cf. State Oil Co. v. Khan, 522 U.S. 3, 10 (1997) (stating that per se condemnation only is appropriate when Rule of Reason analysis will always or almost always condemn a contract).

\(^{90}\) See 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1509, at 414 ("Classifying conduct as falling within a per se category depends on the presence or absence of redeeming virtues.").


\(^{92}\) Cf. Williamson v. Lee Optical, Inc., 348 U.S. 483, 491 (1955) (sustaining Oklahoma statute prohibiting opticians from fitting or duplicating lenses without a prescription from an ophthalmologist).

\(^{93}\) See FTC v. Superior Court Trial Lawyers Ass'n, 493 U.S. 411, 424 (1990); Nat'l Soc'y of Prof'l Eng'rs v. United States, 435 U.S. 679, 692 (1978) (stating that the purpose of analysis under Section 1 of the Sherman Act is "not to decide whether a policy favoring competition is in the public interest, or in the interest of the members of an industry"); id at 689–91 nn.16–17. Indeed, even where Congress has itself exempted a particular industry or activity from the antitrust laws, courts read such “exceptions . . . narrowly, with beady eyes and green eyeshades.” Chi. Prof'l Sports Ltd. P'ship v. NBA, 961 F.2d 667, 672 (7th Cir. 1992); see also Group Life & Health Ins. Co. v. Royal Drug Co., 440 U.S. 205, 231 (1979).

\(^{94}\) United States v. Addyston Pipe & Steel Co., 85 F. 271, 282–83 (6th Cir. 1898) (Taft, J.), aff'd, 175 U.S. 211 (1898). Compare Parker v. Brown, 317 U.S. 341, 352 (1943) (holding that state-created raisin cartel that restrained interstate commerce is beyond the scope of the Sherman Act), with Nat'l Soc'y of Prof'l Eng'rs, 435 U.S. at 689–90 (holding that private parties cannot justify restraints on the ground that competition is itself unreasonable in a particular industry).
exercise of market power.\textsuperscript{95} Put another way, a restraint is procompetitive if it affects productive activity in a manner that enhances the welfare of consumers.\textsuperscript{96} Defendants cannot avoid per se condemnation of an anti-competitive restraint by arguing that rivalry is itself unreasonable.\textsuperscript{97}

Ultimately, then, any determination of whether a restraint falls into the per se category or merits further analysis under the Rule of Reason requires an assessment of any justifications proffered by the proponents of a restraint. That is to say, once a plaintiff has shown that a restraint limits competition, i.e., rivalry between the parties, the tribunal must determine whether any justification proffered by the defendants is cognizable, that is, constitutes the sort of virtue that the Sherman Act recognizes as redeeming or legitimate. Such an analysis does not entail any assessment of the factual basis of the purported justification. Instead, the step consists of a sort of relevance inquiry, that is, a determination whether, if proved, the justification offered by the defendants would tend to enhance the welfare of consumers, thus rebutting any presumption that the restriction on competition is undue.\textsuperscript{98} The body of law distinguishing restraints that are unreasonable per se from those that are not consists in large part of a series of conclusions about whether various proffered justification are cognizable in this sense, determinations that depend in part on economic theory's best

\textsuperscript{95} See Nat'l Soc'y of Prof'l Eng'rs, 435 U.S. at 690-91 nn.16-17 (1978) (concluding that Standard Oil limits courts to consideration of competitive impact of restraints); see also NCAA v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Okla., 468 U.S. 85, 104 (1984) ("Under the Sherman Act the criterion to be used in judging the validity of a restraint on trade is its impact on competition."); United States v. Am. Tobacco Co., 221 U.S. 106, 179 (1911) (stating that the Sherman Act does not "restrain the power to make normal and usual contracts to further trade"); United States v. Joint-Traffic Ass'n, 171 U.S. 505, 568 (1898) (stating that Sherman Act does not reach an agreement "for the purpose of promoting the legitimate business of an individual or corporation"); Posner, supra note 42, at 12-17 (explaining distinction between total social wealth and total social utility); Bork, supra note 35, at 805 ("It should be emphasized that [Standard Oil's Rule of Reason] was phrased wholly in economic terms, giving no evidence of concern for possibly competing values.").

\textsuperscript{96} See supra notes 50-51 and accompanying text (Standard Oil rests on desire to thwart "consequences of monopoly" that harm consumers); see also, e.g., State Oil Co. v. Khan, 522 U.S. 3, 14-16 (1997) (treating as "procompetitive" propensity of contract to result in lower consumer prices); FTC v. Ind. Fed'n of Dentists, 476 U.S. 447, 459 (1986) (treating "the creation of efficiencies in the operation of a market or the provision of goods and services" as a "procompetitive virtue"); NCAA, 468 U.S. at 113-14 (equating "procompetitive efficiencies" with reduction in consumer prices).

\textsuperscript{97} See Nat'l Soc'y of Prof'l Eng'rs, 435 U.S. at 689-90; see also United States v. Socony-Vacuum Oil Co., Inc., 310 U.S. 150, 220-22 (1940); Standard Oil Co. of N.J. v. United States, 221 U.S. 1, 65 (1911) (under the Rule of Reason, restraints of trade cannot "be taken out of that category [of undue restraints] by indulging in general reasoning as to the expediency or non-expediency of having made the contracts, or the wisdom or want of wisdom of the statute which prohibited their being made"); Joint-Traffic Ass'n, 171 U.S. at 575-77; Addyston Pipe, 85 F. at 282-83 (dictum); cf. Socony-Vacuum Oil Co., 310 U.S. at 171-73 (describing state and federal regulation designed to combat evils of destructive competition).

\textsuperscript{98} See Nat'l Soc'y of Prof'l Eng'rs, 435 U.S. at 686 (describing district court's refusal to make findings regarding whether competition unregulated by the restraint would have resulted in inferior engineering services); id. at 693-96 (affirming district court's decision in this regard); United States v. Topco Assocs., Inc., 405 U.S. 596, 705 (1972) (noting that district court found defendants' market position as well as the benefits of the restraint "relevant" to its analysis); id. at 606-11 (reversing the district court's decision to consider evidence that challenged restraint enhanced interbrand competition); Thomas G. Krattenmaker, Per Se Violations in Antitrust Law: Confusing Offenses with Defenses, 77 Geo. L.J. 165, 172-73 (1988).
evaluation of the causes and consequences of such restraints. 99 Absent such a justification, it seems safe to assume that the defendants—who have spent resources negotiating and enforcing an agreement that eliminates rivalry without producing any cognizable benefits—believe they have or will soon have the market power necessary to injure consumers, i.e., to produce monopoly or its consequences. 100 Thus, such restraints are always or almost always undue, with the result that per se condemnation is appropriate. 101 If, however, the defendants can proffer such a justification, the per se rule does not apply, and courts examine the restraint under the Rule of Reason.

C. The Second Step—the Rule of Reason

Under current law at least, defendants are able to proffer cognizable benefits for most restraints. 102 Such proffers obviate application of the per se rule and mandate a full Rule of Reason analysis. While the Supreme Court has declined to specify the precise method of such an analysis, it has provided some general guidance, guidance supplemented by the Court’s pronouncements in the per se context. According to the Court, tribunals conducting a Rule of Reason analysis must weigh all of the relevant facts and circumstances and thereby determine whether, in the Court’s words, the restraint in question destroys competition, and thus works consumer harm or instead merely regulates, promotes, or furthers competition to the benefit of consumers. 103 Such weighing, in turn, requires courts to deter-

99. See Hovenkamp, supra note 46 at 254 ("'[T]he label 'illegal per se' entails that certain justifications or defenses will not be permitted."); Krattenmaker, supra note 98, at 172–75; see also supra notes 65–67 and accompanying text (showing that changes in economic theory have resulted in changed judicial conclusions about whether certain justifications cognizable).

100. See Summit Health, Ltd. v. Pinhas, 500 U.S. 322, 339 (1991) (Scalia, J., dissenting) (reasoning that existence of a naked horizontal price-fixing agreement itself defines contours of the relevant market and suggests that the defendants possess market power); FTC v. Superior Court Trial Lawyers Ass’n, 493 U.S. 411, 435 n.18 (1990) ("Very few firms that lack power to affect market prices will be sufficiently foolish to enter into conspiracies to fix prices. Thus, the fact of agreement defines the market." (quoting Robert H. Bork, The Antitrust Paradox: A Policy at War with Itself 269 (1978))); Joint Traffic Ass’n, 171 U.S. at 569 (contending that price-fixing agreement must "maintain ... rates above what competition might produce. If it did not do that, its existence would ... be rescinded or abandoned"); Addyston Pipe, 85 F. at 282–83 ("Where the sole object of both parties in making the contract as expressed therein is merely to restrain competition, and enhance and maintain prices, it would seem that there was nothing to justify or excuse the restraint, that it would necessarily have a tendency to monopoly, and therefore would be void."); 7 Areeda, supra note 28, ¶ 1506, at 391–92 ("The defendants are in the best position to suggest the benefits that might flow from their activities. If they fail to suggest any, the court is entitled to assume there are none."); Hovenkamp, supra note 46, § 5.6C, at 256 ("[A] naked agreement is rational only on the premise that the participants have market power.").

101. See supra notes 5–6 and accompanying text (explaining that the Sherman Act forbids as "undue restraints" those contracts that produce monopoly or its consequences).

102. See infra notes 154–56 and accompanying text.

mine whether the harmful effects of a restraint, if any, outweigh any redeeming virtues.\footnote{104}

The Court's injunction to weigh "all the circumstances of a case" begs several questions about what form such weighing should take. Someone must produce evidence of what those circumstances are, and courts must evaluate such evidence by assigning burdens of proof. After all, the plaintiff's \textit{assertion} that a contract produces actual harm is just that, an assertion. At the same time, defendants' proffer of cognizable procompetitive benefits, while sufficient to avoid per se condemnation, is not proof. The nature of the adversary system therefore begs three related questions. First, what, if anything, must a plaintiff show to make out a prima facie case? Second, if a plaintiff does establish such a case, what must defendants proffer or even show to rebut it and avoid judgment? Third, if the defendants rebut a prima facie case and thus avoid judgment, how should courts go about weighing the facts and circumstances of a case? As shown below, the Supreme Court has provided a definitive answer to the second question, while strongly suggesting answers to the first and third. Taking their cues from the High Court, lower courts, leading scholars, and the enforcement agencies have answered each of these questions for themselves, and the result has been a common Rule of Reason test with three main elements.

\textbf{I. Prima Facie Case}

As noted above, proof that a contract limits rivalry between the parties to it gives rise to a presumption that the arrangement restricts competition unduly and thus reflects an exercise of market power. Absent a plausible assertion that the restraint produces cognizable benefits, this presumption survives, and courts declare the arrangement unlawful per se.\footnote{105} One could imagine a similar approach under the Rule of Reason, under which proof of the restraint would itself cast upon defendants a burden of

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promotes competition or one that suppresses competition.
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\footnote{104} See NCAA v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Okla., 468 U.S. 85, 113-15 (1984) (examining whether proffered procompetitive efficiencies offset restraint's anticompetitive consequences); \textit{GTE Sylvania}, 433 U.S. at 57 n.27 (rejecting assertion that courts are incapable of "balancing intrabrand and interbrand competitive effects of vertical restrictions"); see also, e.g., Law v. NCAA, 134 F.3d 1010, 1019 (10th Cir. 1998) (ultimately under the Rule of Reason "the harms and benefits must be weighed against each other in order to judge whether the challenged behavior is, on balance, reasonable." (citing 7 AREEDA, \textit{supra} note 28, \S 1502, at 372)); Capital Imaging Assocs., P.C. v. Mohawk Valley Med. Ass'n, Inc., 996 F.2d 537, 543 (2d Cir. 1993) (stating that under the Rule of Reason, "it remains for the factfinder to weigh the harms and benefits of the challenged behavior"); 7 AREEDA, \textit{supra} note 28, \S 1500, at 362-63, \S 1502, at 372, \S 1507 (explaining that Rule of Reason analysis calls for balancing); HOVENKAMP, \textit{supra} note 46, at 257-58 (discussing the application of balancing under Rule of Reason analysis).

\footnote{105} See \textit{supra} notes 103-04 and accompanying text.
producing evidence that their arrangement produces cognizable benefits, the absence of which would establish the existence of harm. 106

While the Supreme Court has not squarely addressed this question, lower courts have uniformly held that plaintiffs must make some threshold showing of what courts call "anticompetitive harm" over and above the mere existence of a contract that is anticompetitive as courts employ that term in per se analysis. 107 Such a showing establishes a prima facie case which, if not rebutted, entitles the plaintiff to judgment. 108 A requirement that plaintiffs make such a threshold showing reflects Standard Oil's normative assumption that, without more, a mere restriction on parties' freedom of action does not constitute a cognizable antitrust harm. 109 A contrary approach, i.e., a requirement that defendants adduce evidence of benefits in each and every Rule of Reason case, would reflect undue hostility toward private contracts, the very activity the Sherman Act is supposed to promote. 110 Economic logic also compels such a requirement. Once the defendants have identified a valid procompetitive objective for the restraint—thus avoiding per se condemnation—mere proof that the arrangement restricts rivalry cannot give rise to a presumption of tangible anticompetitive effect, since such a restriction is at least equally consistent with a conclusion that the arrangement is a normal or usual method of furthering trade. 111 Absent some threshold showing of actual harm, then,
courts properly leave assessment of such arrangements to the marketplace. 112

a. The Market Power Filter

While all lower courts agree that a plaintiff must make some threshold showing that a contract produces tangible economic harm, there is disagreement about just what form such a showing must take. Led by the Seventh Circuit, a diminishing number of courts now hold that a plaintiff must first prove that the proponent of a restraint possesses market power of the sort necessary to harm competition, and thus consumers, in the manner that the plaintiff alleges. 113 Such a showing involves proof of market structure similar to that which plaintiffs must make when challenging mergers and must include proof of the boundaries of a relevant market, the defendants' position therein, and the presence of barriers to entry. 114 In these circuits, failure to establish market power undermines the plaintiff's prima facie case and requires dismissal of the claim. 115

112. Capital Imaging, 996 F.2d at 547 ("[J]ustifications are unnecessary where [plaintiff] has not carried its own initial burden of showing a restraint on competition."); Consultants & Designers, Inc. v. Butler Serv. Group, Inc., 720 F.2d 1553, 1560 (11th Cir. 1983); see also Carrier, supra note 107, at 1308–14 (concluding that the legislative history of the Sherman Act supports requirement of threshold proof of anticompetitive harm); id. at 1558 (stating that this requirement is "beyond debate"). It should be noted that some scholars believe that the mere existence of some restraints should give rise to a burden of justification. See, e.g., John J. Flynn, The "Is" and "Ought" of Vertical Restraints After Monsanto Co. v. Spray-Rite Service Corp., 71 CORNELL L. REV. 1095, 1143–46 (1986). These scholars believe that contractual restraint of individual "freedom" is itself a cognizable antitrust harm, separate and apart from any effect such contracts might have on consumers. Thus, mere proof that a contract restrains a dealer's discretion, for instance, gives rise to a presumption of harm according to these scholars. See Alan J. Meese, Price Theory and Vertical Restraints: A Misunderstood Relation, 45 UCLA L. REV. 143, 176–83 (1997) (discussing so-called Populist approach to vertical restraints). Such an approach is of course inconsistent with Standard Oil.


114. See, e.g., Rothery Storage, 792 F.2d at 217–21 (explaining that plaintiff's failure to establish the existence of any market in which the defendants played a significant role doomed Rule of Reason challenge); id. at 230 (noting that "[m]erger policy has always proceeded by drawing lines about allowable market shares . . . . We can think of no good reason not to apply the same inferences to [defendants'] ancillary restraint[s]"); Ball Mem'l Hosp., Inc., 784 F.2d at 1335–36 (explaining that absence of barriers to entry defeats Rule of Reason claim regardless of defendants' market share); Valley Liquors, 678 F.2d at 745 (noting that plaintiff must establish relevant product and geographic market to prove market power); see also FTC v. Tenet Health Care Corp., 186 F.3d 1045, 1051–54 (8th Cir. 1999) (explaining that failure to establish concentration in properly defined market undermines prima facie case in merger litigation); New York v. Kraft Gen. Foods, Inc., 926 F. Supp. 321, 361–63 (S.D.N.Y. 1995) (same); 1992 DEPT OF JUSTICE & FED. TRADE COMM'N, HORIZONTAL MERGER GUIDELINES §§ 1–3 (1992), available at http://www.ftc.gov/os/docs/horizmer.htm (last visited Sept. 29, 2002) [hereinafter HORIZONTAL MERGER GUIDELINES].

115. See, e.g., Rothery Storage, 792 F.2d at 217–21; Ball Mem'l Hosp., 784 F.2d at 1335 ("Firms without [market] power bear no burden of justification."); Polk Bros., 776 F.2d at 191.
b. The Supreme Court Demurs

Nonetheless, courts that make a showing of market power a necessary condition in proof of a Rule of Reason claim are swimming against the tide. Most notably, the Supreme Court has declined to apply the market power filter in each Rule of Reason case it has entertained while at the same time suggesting an alternate method of establishing anticompetitive harm of the sort necessary to give rise to a *prima facie* case. In reasoning that seems to apply beyond the individual cases in question, the Court has suggested that proof of "actual detrimental effects" should suffice to establish a *prima facie* case, regardless of whether structural indicia suggest that the defendants possess market power.

Consider first *NCAA v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma*. There, the Court evaluated an agreement among the NCAA's member schools limiting the price and output of televised college football games and rejected the claim that the arrangement was unlawful per se merely because it purported to limit rivalry on price and output. As the Court saw things, some limit on competition was necessary to create the relevant product—college football—in the first place. For instance, reliance upon an unbridled market would lead member schools to compete for players by paying them salaries or waiving any requirement that they attend class, thus undermining an essential feature of the product in question—amateurism.

Having declined to apply the per se rule, the Court turned to an application of the Rule of Reason. Relying upon the district court's findings of fact, the Court concluded that the NCAA's arrangement had resulted in output and prices for the Association's product—televised college football games—different from what a free market would have produced. This, the Court said, was exactly the sort of effect that consti-

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116. See *supra* note 107 and accompanying text.
119. See *supra* notes 84-85 and accompanying text (arguing that courts deem such a limitation to be "anticompetitive" for purpose of the per se rule).
120. See *NCAA*, 468 U.S. at 101-03.
121. The Court noted, for instance, that some agreement not to pay players a salary was necessary to create amateur football. See *id.* at 102 ("In order to preserve the character and quality of the 'product,' athletes must not be paid, must be required to attend class, and the like. And the integrity of the 'product' cannot be preserved except by mutual agreement.").
122. See *id.* at 103-04.
123. See *id.* at 105 ("The District Court found that if member institutions were free to sell television rights, many more games would be shown on television, and that the NCAA's output restriction has the effect of raising the price the networks pay for television rights."); *id.* at 106-07 ("The anticompetitive consequences of this arrangement are apparent. . . . Price is higher and output lower than they would otherwise be, and both are unresponsive to consumer preference."); *id.* at 106 n.30 (quoting district court finding that "'[c]learly, the NCAA controls grossly distort the prices actually paid for an individual game from that to be expected in a free market'").
tuted a harm under *Standard Oil*’s articulation of the Rule of Reason and thus cast upon the defendants a burden of justification.124

Having found the existence of what it deemed anticompetitive harm, the Court then turned to defendants’ argument that proof of market power was nonetheless necessary to establish a prima facie case under the Rule of Reason.125 The Court rejected this argument for two reasons: one “legal” and one “factual.”126 As an initial legal matter, the Court claimed that the restraint in question, while not unlawful per se, was nonetheless a “naked restraint on price or output,” and thus presumptively harmful.127 Invoking Professor Areeda, the most prominent antitrust scholar of his day, the Court asserted that no detailed market analysis was needed under these circumstances to cast on the defendants a burden of justification.128 Quoting language from the Solicitor General’s brief, the Court suggested that an assessment of market power was only one method of ascertaining competitive effects in Rule of Reason litigation, a method that courts could discard whenever the plaintiff had demonstrated anticompetitive effects through other means.129 This reasoning, of course, applied well beyond the context of the restraint in question, to any analysis under the Rule of Reason. At any rate, the Court said that the district court had found as a factual matter that the defendants did have market power, because broadcasts of college football were a distinct product for which there were no reasonable substitutes.130

Just two years later, in *FTC v. Indiana Federation of Dentists*, the Court again addressed the requirement for establishing a prima facie case under the Rule of Reason. There the Justices faced an agreement between

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124. See id. at 107–08 ("A restraint that has the effect of reducing the importance of consumer preference in setting price and output is not consistent with [consumer welfare]. Restrictions on price and output are the paradigmatic examples of restraints of trade that the Sherman Act was intended to prohibit." (citing *Standard Oil Co. of N.J. v. United States*, 221 U.S. 1, 52–60 (1911))); id. at 113 ("[T]he NCAA television plan on its face constitutes a restraint upon the operation of a free market, and the findings of the District Court establish that it has operated to raise prices and reduce output. Under the Rule of Reason, these hallmarks of anticompetitive behavior place upon petitioner a heavy burden of establishing an affirmative defense which competitively justifies this apparent deviation from the operations of a free market.").

125. Id. at 109.

126. Id. ("We must reject this argument for two reasons: one legal, and one factual.").

127. See id. at 109 & n.39.

128. See id. at 109 ("[W]hen there is an agreement not to compete in terms of price or output, 'no elaborate industry analysis is required to demonstrate the anticompetitive character of such an agreement.' (quoting Nat'l Soc'y of Prof'l Eng'rs v. United States, 435 U.S. 679, 692 (1978) (citing PHILLIP E. AREEDA, THE RULE OF REASON IN ANTITRUST ANALYSIS: GENERAL ISSUES 37–38 (1981))).")

129. Id. at 110 n.42. In particular, the Court quoted the Solicitor General's assertion that: While the "reasonableness" of a particular alleged restraint often depends on the market power of the parties involved, because a judgment about market power is the means by which the effects of the conduct on the market place can be assessed, market power is only one test of "reasonableness." And where the anticompetitive effects of conduct can be ascertained through means short of extensive market analysis, and where no countervailing competitive virtues are evident, a lengthy analysis of market power is not necessary. See id. (quoting Brief of the United States as Amicus Curiae, at 19–20) (footnote and citation omitted in original).

130. See id. at 111–12.
dentists in certain Indiana localities not to provide X-rays to their patients' insurers.\textsuperscript{131} While the Court declined to hold the agreement unlawful per se, the Justices rejected the Federation's assertion that proof of market power was necessary to establish a case under the Rule of Reason. In so doing, the Court emphasized that the Commission had found the presence of "actual, sustained adverse effects on competition."\textsuperscript{132} In particular, the Commission had found that insurers were unable to secure compliance with their requests for X-rays from dentists that were parties to the restraint.\textsuperscript{133} In areas not subject to such an agreement, by contrast, insurers had little difficulty obtaining compliance with their requests.\textsuperscript{134} Given this finding that the agreement among the Federation's members had actually affected the terms of trade, the Court said, there was no reason to go further.\textsuperscript{135} Quoting the leading treatise on antitrust law, authored by Professor Areeda, the Court claimed that proof of market power was simply "a 'surrogate for detrimental effects, and that proof of the latter was sufficient to establish a prima facie case.'\textsuperscript{136}

Of course, both NCAA and Indiana Federation of Dentists involved horizontal restraints,\textsuperscript{137} leaving open the possibility that the Court might apply the market power filter to vertical arrangements. Neither decision, however, purported to limit its endorsement of the "detrimental effects" test to the horizontal context; both quoted and relied on sources that contained no such limitation.\textsuperscript{138} Moreover, each defined as "free" the market that had existed before the restraints, and each stated that market power was simply one vehicle for determining whether, in fact, the restraint produced results different from what a free market would otherwise have generated.\textsuperscript{139}

At any rate, even in the vertical context, the Court has declined the opportunity to employ a market power filter, thus implying that proof of direct effects may suffice to establish a prima facie case. In Continental T.V. v. GTE Sylvania, Inc., for instance, the Court held that such restraints

\textsuperscript{131} 476 U.S. 447 (1986).
\textsuperscript{132} Id. at 461.
\textsuperscript{133} See id. at 460-61.
\textsuperscript{134} Id. at 456 (noting evidence that "outside of Indiana, in states where dentists had not collectively refused to submit x rays, insurance companies found little difficulty in obtaining compliance by dentists with their requests").
\textsuperscript{135} Id.
\textsuperscript{136} See id. at 460-61 (quoting 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1511, at 429).
\textsuperscript{137} Id. at 459; NCAA v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Okla., 468 U.S. 85, 99-105 (1984).
\textsuperscript{138} See Ind. Fed'n of Dentists, 476 U.S. at 460-61 (quoting 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1511, at 429); NCAA, 468 U.S. at 110-11 (quoting Brief Amicus Curiae For The United States, at 19-20). It should be noted that Professor Areeda subsequently embraced a different test, albeit not a market power filter, for certain nonprice vertical restraints. See 8 PHILLIP E. AREEDA, ANTITRUST LAW ¶¶ 1648-1649c (1989); infra notes 144-45 (discussing Professor Areeda's approach to establishing a prima facie case for vertical territorial and customer limitations); see also Mark Patterson, The Market Power Requirement Antitrust in Rule of Reason Cases: A Rhetorical History, 37 SAN DIEGO L. REV. 1, 8-9 (2000) (suggesting that rationale of these decisions may apply with equal or greater force in the vertical context).
\textsuperscript{139} See NCAA, 468 U.S. at 113 (stating that "the NCAA television plan on its face constitutes a restraint upon the operation of a free market"); see also supra notes 122-36 and accompanying text.
were unreasonable and that courts should analyze nonprice vertical restraints under the Rule of Reason.\footnote{140} In so doing, however, it indicated that reduction in "intrabrand competition"—i.e., competition in the sale of the manufacturer's own product—was an anticompetitive effect and remanded the case to the lower court for further analysis, even though the defendants' share of the relevant market was only five percent.\footnote{141} Moreover, in \textit{Jefferson Parish Hospital District No. 2 v. Hyde}, the Court declined to declare a tying contract unlawful per se because the market share was insufficient to establish market power, but nonetheless went on to analyze the arrangement under the Rule of Reason.\footnote{142} The Court concluded that the plaintiff had not carried its burden because it had not shown that the arrangement affected the price or quality of the tied product.\footnote{143}

c. An Alternative Approach: The Actual Detrimental Effects Test

Not surprisingly, most lower courts, the enforcement agencies, and several leading scholars have rejected the market power screen proposed by the Seventh Circuit.\footnote{144} Echoing \textit{Indiana Federation of Dentists} and Professor Areeda, these judges, officials, and scholars all conclude that plaintiffs should be able to establish a prima facie case simply by showing that

\footnote{140. 433 U.S. 36, 38-39, 59 (1977).}
\footnote{141. \textit{See id.} at 38, 51-52; \textit{see also} Cont'l T.V., Inc. v. GTE Sylvania, Inc., 694 F.2d 1132 (9th Cir. 1982) (analyzing arrangement on remand without applying market power filter).}
\footnote{143. \textit{See id.} at 30-31 & n.52 ("The record simply tells us little if anything about the effect of this arrangement on price or quality of anesthesiological services. As to price, the arrangement did not lead to an increase in the price charged to the patient. As to quality, the record indicates little more than that there have never been any complaints about the quality of [the defendant's] services, and no contention that his services are in any respect inferior to those of [the plaintiff].").}
\footnote{144. \textit{See, e.g.,} Re/Max Int'l, Inc. v. Realty One Inc., 173 F.3d 995, 1013-15 (6th Cir. 1999) (holding that proof of market power is not necessary to establish a prima facie case) (citing FTC v. Ind. Fed'n of Dentists, 476 U.S. 447 (1986)); \textit{Law v. NCAA}, 134 F.3d 1010, 1019-20 (10th Cir. 1998) (same); Levine v. Cent. Fla. Med. Affiliates, Inc., 72 F.3d 1538, 1551-52 (11th Cir. 1996) (same); \textit{K.M.B. Warehouse v. Walker Mfg. Co.}, 61 F.3d 123, 129 (2d Cir. 1995) (same) (citing \textit{Ind. Fed'n of Dentists}); \textit{United States v. Brown Univ.}, 5 F.3d 658, 668 (3d Cir. 1993) (same) (citing \textit{Ind. Fed'n of Dentists}); \textit{Flegel v. Christian Hosp., Northeast-Northwest}, 4 F.3d 682, 688 (8th Cir. 1993) (same); (citing \textit{Ind. Fed'n of Dentists}); 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1511; \textit{DEPT OF JUSTICE & FTC, GUIDELINES FOR COLLABORATIONS AMONG COMPETITORS} ¶ 3.3 (2000) [hereinafter COMPETITOR COLLABORATION GUIDELINES]; HOVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 256; SULLIVAN & GRIMES, supra note 53, at 210-12 (approving NCAA's rejection of market power inquiry given proof of increased prices). To be sure, Professor Areeda opined that "plaintiffs must ordinarily allege and prove the market that is allegedly restrained and that defendants occupy a sufficient role in that market to impair competition there." 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1507b, at 397. He did not, however, suggest that proof of market power was a legal requirement but instead claimed that plaintiffs would have difficulty proving actual detrimental effects and thus would often be forced to turn to proof of market power as a surrogate for such effects. \textit{See id.} ¶ 1503, at 376.}\n
It should be noted that Professor Areeda did not confine his support for the "actual detrimental effects" test to those instances in which the defendants obviously possessed market power. For instance, he endorsed application of this test in \textit{NCAA}, where the definition of the relevant market was hotly contested. \textit{See 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1511, at 432-34; cf. HOVENKAMP, supra note 486 at 262 (conceding that resolution of the market power question in NCAA is "indeterminate"); Frank H. Easterbrook, \textit{Ignorance and Antitrust}, in \textit{ANTITRUST, INNOVATION AND COMPETITIVENESS} 119, 124-26 (Thomas M. Jorde & David J. Teece eds., 1992) (suggesting that televised college football does not constitute a relevant market).}
the restraint in question produces actual detrimental effects, such as a reduction in output or quality or an increase in price.¹⁴⁵ Such proof, it is said, establishes a presumption of anticompetitive harm, thus giving rise to a prima facie case.¹⁴⁶ These scholars, jurists, and officials do not question the normative or theoretical basis for the market power screen. None questions the premise that consumer welfare should be the sole objective of the antitrust laws, as *Standard Oil* held.¹⁴⁷ All also agree that, as a matter of economic theory, the possession of market power is a *sine qua non* of consumer harm.¹⁴⁸ Still, proponents of a detrimental effects route to a prima facie case argue that market definition is an uncertain and expensive proc-

¹⁴⁵. See, e.g., *Re/Max Int’l Inc.*, 173 F.3d at 1014–15 (proof that practice raised commissions paid by the plaintiff established prima facie case and shifted burden of production to the defendants); *Law*, 134 F.3d at 1020 (finding anticompetitive effect sufficient to establish prima facie case where challenged agreement produced salaries different from those that preceded restraint); *Levine*, 72 F.3d at 1551–52; *K.M.B. Warehouse*, 61 F.3d at 129 (“If a plaintiff can show an actual adverse effect on competition, such as reduced output, we do not require a further showing of market power.”); *Brown Univ.*, 5 F.3d at 668 (“The plaintiff may satisfy [its initial burden of production under the Rule of Reason] by proving the existence of actual anticompetitive effects, such as reduction of output, increase in price, or deterioration in the quality of goods and services.”); *Flegel*, 4 F.3d at 688–89 (stating that proof that restraint reduced quality would establish “actual detrimental effect” and thus give rise to a prima facie case); *COMPETITOR COLLABORATION GUIDELINES*, supra note 144, § 3.3; *HOVENKAMP*, supra note 46, at 256 n.25 (“Detrimental effects include observed decreases in output, an observed increase in price coordination, or exclusion from the market of firms that seem to be competitive entrants.”).

¹⁴⁶. See, e.g., *Re/Max Int’l Inc.*, 173 F.3d at 1014–15 (noting that plaintiff’s showing that defendants’ practices increased its real estate commissions established prima facie case); *Law*, 134 F.3d at 1020 (finding anticompetitive effect sufficient to establish prima facie case where challenged agreement produced salaries different from those that preceded restraint); *Hairston v. Pac. 10 Conference*, 101 F.3d 1315, 1319 (9th Cir. 1996) (noting that proof that athletic conference excluded plaintiff from bowl competition sufficed to establish a prima facie case); *J.F. Feeser, Inc. v. Serve-A-Portion, Inc.*, 909 F.2d 1524, 1542–43 (3d Cir. 1990) (noting that the plaintiff established a prima facie case by showing that a supply contract raised the price of defendant’s competitors); cf. *Levine*, 72 F.3d at 1551–52 (finding that plaintiff did not make out a prima facie case where other factors likely explained defendants’ rising fees); *Tunis Bros. Co. v. Ford Motor Co.*, 952 F.2d 715, 728 (3d Cir. 1991) (finding that the plaintiffs did not make out a prima facie case where, inter alia, competing dealers’ prices, though higher, did not rise after the purported restraint).

¹⁴⁷. See, e.g., *Re/Max Int’l Inc.*, 173 F.3d at 1000 (concluding that the purpose of antitrust is to ensure that efficient enterprises displace inefficient ones so that “consumers’ economic interests are better served”); *Brown Univ.*, 5 F.3d at 673–78 (holding that social and political concerns cannot justify restraint that increases consumer prices); 1 PHILLIP E. AREEDA & HERBERT HOVENKAMP, ANTITRUST LAW ¶ 111 (2d ed. 2000) (arguing that courts should not give dispositive effect to noneconomic values when interpreting and applying the Sherman Act); *COMPETITOR COLLABORATION GUIDELINES*, supra note 144, § 1.2 (“Overview of Analytical Framework”) (“The central question [in Rule of Reason analysis] is whether the relevant agreement likely harms competition by increasing the ability or incentive profitably to raise price above or reduce output, quality, service, or innovation below what likely would prevail in the absence of the relevant agreement.”); id. § 3.3 (same).

It should be noted that two scholars who support the actual detrimental effects test also assert that courts should read noneconomic values into the Sherman Act. See *SULLIVAN & GRIMES*, supra note 53, at 2–4 (arguing that the purpose of antitrust is the prevention of economic oppression). However, Professors Sullivan and Grimes do not rely on noneconomic values to justify their support for the actual detrimental effects test.

¹⁴⁸. See, e.g., *Re/Max Int’l Inc.*, 173 F.3d at 1015 (stating that antitrust violation entails “use of market power” to exclude more efficient competition); *COMPETITOR COLLABORATION GUIDELINES*, supra note 144, § 3.31 (equating “anticompetitive harm” with exercise of market power); 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1507, at 400 (“The plaintiff cannot show a significant trade restraint without giving us some reason to believe that the defendants have some market power.”).
ess, subject to a high rate of error.\textsuperscript{149} Thus, once a tribunal is convinced that anticompetitive effects are present, any further analysis of market structure would seem redundant. Why require the plaintiff to rely on an inference of anticompetitive effects (from market structure), when it can prove those effects directly?\textsuperscript{150}

Lower courts that embrace the actual detrimental effects test do so without qualification. Nonetheless, some of these same courts have declined to apply this approach to certain vertical restraints. These courts assert that plaintiffs challenging some restraints must establish harm to interbrand competition: mere proof that a restraint reduces competition in the sales of a manufacturer's own product will not suffice.\textsuperscript{151} It should be noted that these decisions do not apply the market power filter but instead state that plaintiffs can prevail by showing actual detrimental effects in the market as a whole, albeit without explaining just what such a showing would entail.\textsuperscript{152} In other vertical contexts, however, several courts have embraced some version of the actual detrimental effects test.\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{149} See Stephen Calkins, \textit{California Dental Association: Not a Quick Look but Not the Full Monty}, 67 \textit{Antitrust L.J.} 495, 521 (2000); Patterson, supra note 138, at 2–3 ("The market power inquiry is generally acknowledged to be one of the most difficult and inconclusive in antitrust law, and market definition, which is often a prerequisite to the evaluation of market power, is similarly problematic."); Willard Tom & Chul Pak, \textit{Toward a Flexible Rule of Reason}, 68 \textit{Antitrust L.J.} 391, 399 (2000); see also \textit{Competitor Collaboration Guidelines}, supra note 144, § 3.3 ("The Agencies focus on only those factors, and undertake only that factual inquiry, necessary to make a sound determination of the overall competitive effect of the relevant agreement.").

\textsuperscript{150} See \textit{Re/Max Int'l, Inc.}, 173 F.3d at 1014–15 (stating that proof of actual detrimental effects suggests defendants' "use of market power to prevent a more-efficient competitor from establishing itself"); \textit{Law}, 134 F.3d at 1019 (characterizing proof of market power as "indirect" proof of anticompetitive effects); \textit{Brown Univ.}, 5 F.3d at 668 (noting that courts rely upon market power because proof of actual detrimental effects "is often impossible to make").

\textsuperscript{151} See, e.g., Ezzo's Invs., Inc. v. Royal Beauty Supply, Inc., 243 F.3d 980, 987 (6th Cir. 2001); K.M.B. Warehouse v. Walker Mfg. Co., 61 F.3d at 123, 127–28 (2d Cir. 1995) (proof of harm to interbrand competition not sufficient to establish prima facie case against vertical distribution restraint); cf. NCAA v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Okla., 468 U.S. 85, 99 (1984) (proof that restraint raised prices of defendants' product sufficed to establish prima facie case). One could argue that the singular focus of these decisions on the interbrand market is compelled by the Supreme Court's determination that interbrand competition is the "primary concern of antitrust law." See \textit{Bus. Elecs. Corp. v. Sharp Elecs. Corp.}, 485 U.S. 717, 724 (1988) (quoting \textit{Cont'l T.V.}, Inc. v. GTE Sylvania, Inc., 433 U.S. 435, 52 n.19 (1977)). However, neither \textit{Bus. Elecs. Corp. nor GTE Sylvania} held that interbrand competition is the only concern of antitrust law. If it were, then a cartel of the manufacturer's own dealers would be of no antitrust concern. Thus, to the extent that interbrand competition matters for antitrust purposes, proof that such competition is restrained and that such a restraint leads to "actual detrimental effects" would seem sufficient to establish a prima facie case under the best reading of decisions such as \textit{NCAA, Ind. Fed'n of Dentists}, and \textit{GTE Sylvania}.


\textsuperscript{153} See, e.g., Minn. Ass'n of Nurse Anesthetists v. Unity Hosp., 208 F.3d 655, 661–62 (8th Cir. 2000) (suggesting that proof that exclusive dealing contract raised defendants' own prices would suffice to establish a prima facie case); \textit{Town Sound & Custom Tops, Inc. v. Chrysler Motors, Corp.}, 959 F.2d 468, 483–84 (3d Cir. 1992) (rejecting market power filter when analyzing tying contract under the Rule of Reason); J.F. Feeser, Inc. v. Serv-A-Portion, Inc., 909 F.2d 1524, 1542–43 (3d Cir. 1990) (stating that proof that supply contract raised the prices paid by defendants' competitors sufficed to establish a prima facie case); Grappone, Inc. v. Subaru of New England, Inc., 858 F.2d 792 (1st Cir. 1988) (Breyer, J.) (conducting Rule of Reason analysis without regard to market power).
2. Rebutting the Prima Facie Case

Proof that a restraint is prima facie anticompetitive, however made out, does not itself give rise to liability. Instead, such proof merely casts upon defendants a burden of justification, that is, of adducing evidence that the restraint in fact produces cognizable procompetitive benefits that may justify or offset any anticompetitive effects. 154 Courts and individual judges occasionally assert that defendants bear the burden of proving that a restraint creates such benefits. 155 However, the vast majority of courts and scholars conclude that the defendants' burden at this point is merely a burden of production, that is, of adducing evidence from which a tribunal could conclude that the restraint produces cognizable benefits. 156

Proof that a restraint produces significant cognizable benefits does not entitle the defendants to judgment, however. Instead, courts, enforcers, and leading scholars all conclude that the fact-finder must weigh any such benefits against the arrangement's anticompetitive harms, determining which effects predominate. 157 In so doing, judges, officials, and scholars as-

154. See NCAA, 468 U.S. at 113–20 (holding that because defendant failed to prove existence of procompetitive benefits, plaintiff prevailed); Law, 134 F.3d at 1022–24 (same); 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1503, at 376 (stating that courts allow plaintiffs to rely upon proof of market power because proof of actual effects is difficult).

155. See Cal. Dental Ass'n v. FTC, 526 U.S. 756, 788 (1999) (Breyer, J., concurring in part and dissenting in part) (“In the usual Sherman Act § 1 case, the defendant bears the burden of establishing a pro-competitive justification.”) (emphasis added)); NCAA, 468 U.S. at 113 (stating that defendants bear “a heavy burden of establishing an affirmative defense which competitively justifies [the restraint]”).

156. See, e.g., Capital Imaging Assocs., P.C. v. Mohawk Valley Med. Assocs., Inc., 996 F.2d 537, 543 (2d Cir. 1993) (“After the plaintiff satisfies its threshold burden of proof under the Rule of Reason, the burden shifts to the defendant to offer evidence of the pro-competitive ‘redeeming virtues’ of their combination. Assuming defendant comes forward with such proof, the burden shifts back to plaintiff . . . .” (emphasis added) (citations omitted)); 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶1507b, at 397 (“Once the plaintiff satisfies his burden of persuasion . . . he will prevail unless the defendants introduce evidence sufficient to allow the tribunal to find that their conduct promotes a legitimate objective.”). It should be noted that Justice Breyer has cited each of these authorities in support of his assertion that defendants bear a burden of proof once the plaintiff has established a prima facie case. See Cal. Dental Ass'n, 526 U.S. at 788 (Breyer, J., dissenting). Both of the authorities, however, plainly refer to a burden of production.

157. See Law, 134 F.3d at 1019 ("[T]he harms and benefits must be weighed against each other in order to judge whether the challenged behavior is, on balance, reasonable." (citing 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1502, at 372)); Doctor's Hosp. of Jefferson, Inc. v. Southeast Med. Alliance, Inc., 123 F.3d 301, 307 (5th Cir. 1997) ("[T]he anticompetitive evils of a restrictive practice must be balanced against any procompetitive benefits or justifications within the confines of the relevant market."). (quoting Hornsby Oil Co. v. Champion Spark Plug Co., 714 F.2d 1384, 1392 (5th Cir. 1983))); Hairston v. Pac. 10 Conference, 101 F.3d 1315, 1319 (9th Cir. 1996) ("[C]ourt must determine whether the restraint's harm to competition outweighs the restraint's procompetitive effects."); Fleigl v. Christian Hosp., Northeast-Northwest, 4 F.3d 682, 688 (8th Cir. 1993) ("[C]ourt weighs 'the harms and benefits to determine if the behavior is reasonable on balance.'" (quoting Bhan v. NME Hosp., Inc., 929 F.2d 1404, 1413 (9th Cir. 1991))); Capital Imaging, 996 F.2d at 543 ("[O]nce defendant produces evidence of benefits, the factfinder must weigh the costs and benefits of a restraint."); 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1507b, at 397 ("[A]bsent showing that defendants could achieve benefits via less restrictive means, the tribunal must somehow weigh and balance the harm against the benefit."); COMPETITOR COLLABORATION GUIDELINES, supra note 144, § 3.37 (Agencies' analysis involves "comparison of cognizable efficiencies and anticompetitive harms . . . in assessing the overall competitive effect of the agreement."); HOVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 257–58 (same); SULLIVAN & GRIMES, supra note 53, at 211 (Rule of Reason applied to horizontal restraints requires court to determine "whether benefits are attained and, if so, whether they exceed the harms"); id. at 333–35 (same) (endorsing such an approach to vertical restraints).
sume that any redeeming virtues necessarily coexist with the anticompetitive harm established by the plaintiff. In NCAA, for instance, defendants claimed that the venture and the accompanying restraint produced marketing efficiencies and was thus procompetitive. The Court rejected this argument, claiming that procompetitive efficiencies would necessarily manifest themselves as increased output and lower prices. The district court, however, had found that the plan reduced output and increased prices, and the Court held that these findings established that anticompetitive harm swamped any benefits and thus refuted the defendants' attempt at justification. The Court rejected on similar grounds the defendants' claim that the restraint furthered competitive balance among the various members of the league. Courts, enforcers, and leading scholars have taken the same approach where defendants claim that efficiencies justify an otherwise anticompetitive merger, assuming, as they do, that any efficiencies coexist with anticompetitive effects.

Indeed, the Supreme Court has gone even further, suggesting that a purported justification is not even cognizable in the first place unless it tends to reduce prices to or below the level that obtained before the defendants adopted the challenged restraint. In National Society of Professional Engineers, the Court evaluated a professional association's ban on competitive bidding by its members. Defendants sought to justify the ban by asserting that competitive pressure to offer services at the lowest price would

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158. See infra notes 461-70 and accompanying text.
159. See NCAA, 468 U.S. at 113-14 (describing the NCAA's argument).
160. See id. at 114 ("If the NCAA's television plan produced procompetitive efficiencies, the plan would increase output and reduce the price of televised games."); see also id. at 103 (characterizing Broadcast Music, Inc. as holding that "a joint selling arrangement may be so efficient that it will increase sellers' aggregate output and thus be procompetitive.").
161. See NCAA, 468 U.S. at 114; see also Nat'l Soc'y of Prof'l Eng'rs v. United States, 435 U.S. 679, 693 (1978) (noting that defendants' claim that restraint enhanced quality of product by preventing competitive bidding rested on assumption that restraint led to higher prices and thus was not cognizable); COMPETITOR COLLABORATION GUIDELINES, supra note 144, § 3.37 ("Overall Competitive Effect") ("[T]he Agencies assess the likelihood and magnitude of cognizable efficiencies and anticompetitive harms to determine the agreement's overall actual or likely effect on competition in the relevant market. To make the requisite determination, the Agencies consider whether cognizable efficiencies likely would be sufficient to offset the potential of the agreement to harm consumers in the relevant market, for example, by preventing price increases."); HOVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 264 ("[T]he only justifications that are acceptable are those tending to show that the challenged restraint really does tend to increase output, and thus decrease price.").
162. See NCAA, 468 U.S. at 119-20 ("The hypothesis that legitimates the maintenance of competitive balance as a procompetitive justification under the Rule of Reason is that equal competition will maximize consumer demand for the product. The finding that consumption will materially increase if the controls are removed is a compelling demonstration that they do not in fact serve any such legitimate purpose.").
undermine the quality of services that members would ultimately provide. 165

The Court rejected this argument, holding that the District Court properly refused to consider evidence supporting it. According to the Court, the very description of the argument confirmed that the defendants' agreement had an "anticompetitive purpose and effect." 166 The Court concluded that defendants' argument was premised on the assumption that the agreement would maintain or increase the price level. 167 Recognition of such a justification, then, would be inconsistent with the Sherman Act's "legislative judgment that ultimately competition will produce not only lower prices, but also better goods and services." 168

3. The Less Restrictive Alternative

Indeed, the fact that a restraint results in lower prices or increased output does not necessarily doom the plaintiff's case. Instead, lower courts, agencies, and leading scholars all agree that the fact-finder should subject such proof to a less restrictive alternative test. 169 Thus, even before they

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165. See id. at 685–86 (discussing defendants' proffered justification and associated offer of proof).
166. See Nat'l Soc'y of Prof'l Eng'rs, 435 U.S. at 693.
167. See id. at 693–94.
168. Id. at 695; see also FTC v. Superior Court Trial Lawyers Ass'n, 493 U.S. 411, 423–24 (1990) (rejecting argument that coercive imposition of higher legal fees was justified because increased fees would increase the quality of representation); 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1504, at 380–81 (endorsing this aspect of Professional Engineers); HOVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 194 (stating that defendants' justification in Professional Engineers necessarily rested on a desire to exercise market power).
169. See, e.g., Law v. NCAA, 134 F.3d 1010, 1019 (10th Cir. 1998) (noting that once defendants prove that benefits are present, the plaintiff can prevail by showing that "those objectives can be achieved in a substantially less restrictive manner"); Hairston v. Pac. 10 Conference, 101 F.3d 1315, 1319 (9th Cir. 1996) ("Under the rule of reason, the fact-finder examines the restraint at issue and determines whether the restraint's harm to competition outweighs the restraint's pro-competitive effects."); United States v. Brown Univ., 5 F.3d 658, 679 (3d Cir. 1999) (same); Flegel v. Christian Hosp., Northeast-Northwest, 4 F.3d 682, 688 (8th Cir. 1993) (stating that once the defendant adduces evidence of procompetitive effects, "[t]he plaintiff, driven to this point, must then try to show that any legitimate objectives can be achieved in a substantially less restrictive manner" (quoting Bhan v. NME Hosps., Inc., 929 F.2d 1404, 1413 (9th Cir. 1991))); Capital Imaging Assocs., P.C. v. Mohawk Valley Med. Assocs., Inc., 996 F.2d 537, 543 (2d Cir. 1993) ("Assuming defendant comes forward with such proof, the burden shifts back to plaintiff for it to demonstrate that any legitimate collaborative objectives proffered by defendant could have been achieved by less restrictive alternatives."); U.S. Healthcare, Inc. v. Healthsource, Inc., 986 F.2d 589, 595 (1st Cir. 1993) (Rule of Reason analysis requires "the most careful weighing of alleged dangers and potential benefits"); 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1507b, at 397–99; id. ¶ 1505b, at 385–89; COMPETITOR COLLABORATION GUIDELINES, supra note 144, § 3.36(b) ("Reasonable Necessity and Less Restrictive Alternatives") ("[i]f the participants could have achieved or could achieve similar efficiencies by practical, significantly less restrictive means, then the Agencies conclude that the relevant agreement is not reasonably necessary to their achievement."); HOVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 256–57 (endorsing such a test for evaluation of horizontal restraints ancillary to joint ventures); id. at 489 (endorsing such a test when evaluating vertical distribution restraints); STEPHEN F. ROSS, PRINCIPLES OF ANTITRUST LAW 157–58 (1993) (contending that an ancillary restraint should be unlawful if "broader than necessary to achieve its purpose"); SULLIVAN & GRIMES, supra note 53, at 218–23 (endorsing such a test for analysis of horizontal restraints); id. at 335 (endorsing such an approach for analysis of distribution restraints); Thomas A. Piraino, Jr., Reconciling Competition and Cooperation: A New Antitrust Standard for Joint Ventures, 35 WM. & MARY L. REV. 871, 930 (1994) (endorsing application of less restrictive alternative test to restraints ancillary to legitimate joint ventures).
balance procompetitive benefits against anticompetitive harm, courts and agencies first allow a plaintiff to prove that a restraint or practice less restrictive of rivalry between the parties would create the same benefits produced by the restraint. 170 Such proof entitles the plaintiff to judgment, regardless whether the benefits of the restraint outweigh its costs. 171 Indeed, some scholars have argued that plaintiffs should prevail even if the less restrictive alternative is slightly less effective than the restraint under challenge. 172 While the Supreme Court has not squarely endorsed such a test, it has premised one per se rule on the assertion that less restrictive alternatives are always available to advance any legitimate objective. 173 This ap-

170. See, e.g., Re/Max Int'l, Inc. v. Realty One, Inc., 173 F.3d 995, 1015 (6th Cir. 1999) (rejecting proffered benefits as a matter of law where defendants could have achieved such benefits by less restrictive means); Chi. Prof'l Sports Ltd. P'ship v. NBA, 961 F.2d 667, 675–76 (7th Cir. 1992) (Easterbrook, J.) (rejecting claim that reduction in free riding justified apparent output restriction where defendants could have charged purported free riders a fee for use of common resource); Gen. Leaseways, Inc. v. Nat'l Truck Leasing Ass'n, 744 F.2d 588, 592 (7th Cir. 1984) (voiding territorial allocation where defendants could have and did achieve legitimate objective by means of a less restrictive alternative); Mackey v. NFL, 543 F.2d 606, 621–22 (8th Cir. 1979) (voiding regulation of free agency where league could achieve legitimate objectives via less restrictive means); see also NCAA v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Okla., 468 U.S. 85, 114 (1984) (finding that defendants' attempt at justification failed where, among other things, "NCAA football could be marketed just as effectively without the television plan") (citing NCAA v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Okla. 546 F. Supp. 1276, 1306–08 (W.D. Okla. 1982)); Law, 134 F.3d at 1024 n.16 (declining to consider less restrictive alternatives where defendant had not proved existence of cognizable benefits); cf. County of Tuolumne v. Sonora Cmty. Hosp., 236 F.3d 1148, 1159 (9th Cir. 2001) (rejecting asserted less restrictive alternative as less effective and "significantly more costly" than restraint under challenge).

171. See supra note 169

172. See 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1505, at 383–84 (after a plaintiff has established a prima facie case, a restraint "must not only provide the legitimate objective but must also do so significantly better than the available less restrictive alternatives"); id. ¶ 1507b, at 397 (courts should ask whether "the objective can be achieved (nearly?) as well by a significantly less restrictive alternative"); 11 HERBERT HOVENKAMP, ANTITRUST LAW ¶ 1912i, at 302 (1998) ("[P]laintiff is permitted to show that the same (or nearly the same) procompetitive benefits could be achieved by a realistic, less restrictive alternative."); SULLIVAN & GRIMES, supra note 53, § 5.4b, at 223 (courts should ask whether less restrictive alternative proffered by the plaintiff is "nearly as effective"); Lawrence A. Sullivan, Viability of the Current Law on Horizontal Restraints, 75 CAL. L. REV. 835, 851 (1987) (courts should ask whether legitimate objectives "can be substantially obtained" by less restrictive alternatives offered by the plaintiff). It should be noted that Professor Hovenkamp suggests a different approach in a subsequent discussion of the question. See HOVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 257 (court should inquire whether alternative will achieve "the same efficiencies").

173. See, e.g., Jefferson Parish Hosp. Dist. No. 2 v. Hyde, 466 U.S. 2, 25–26 n.42 (1984); Standard Oil Co. of Cal. v. United States, 337 U.S. 293, 305–06 (1949) (stating that tying agreements are per se unlawful because less restrictive alternatives are "protection enough" for any legitimate objectives); Int'l Salt Co. v. United States, 332 U.S. 392, 397–98 (1947) (stating that presence of less restrictive alternative undermines attempt to justify tying contract); Int'l Bus. Machs. Corp. v. United States, 298 U.S. 131, 138–40 (1936) (same). To be sure, the Court mentioned the presence of less restrictive alternatives in NCAA as one factor militating against the defendants' attempt to justify the restraint at issue. See NCAA, 468 U.S. at 119. Ultimately, however, the Court determined that any cognizable benefits produced by the restraint did not outweigh the restraint's anticompetitive effects, given the district court's findings that the restraint resulted in prices higher than they otherwise would have been. Thus, the Court did not have to determine whether the presence of a less restrictive alternative could render an otherwise beneficial restraint unlawful. See supra notes 169–72 and accompanying text (discussing less restrictive alternative test).
proach is also identical to that taken by courts and enforcement agencies in the merger context. 174

The less restrictive alternative test may seem counterintuitive, given the Rule of Reason’s singular focus on consumer welfare. 175 After all, application of such a test allows courts to void restraints that are beneficial on balance because they do not enhance consumer welfare enough. 176 How is it that courts can void a contract that produces none of the evil consequences of monopoly that Standard Oil deemed the sole target of the Sherman Act? 177

There is, however, some internal logic to the less restrictive alternative test, not to mention some support in the common law. 178 After all, the requirement only comes into play after the plaintiff has demonstrated that the restraint in question produces harmful effects, such as a reduction in output or increase in prices. 179 If the Rule of Reason is designed to enhance consumer welfare, then it seems that antitrust doctrine should be concerned with such a departure from the allocation of resources previously produced by a competitive market, even if such a departure happens to coincide with the creation of cognizable benefits. Such a departure, it seems, produces an externality, an externality that reduces consumer welfare below what it could be. 180 Presumably, the less restrictive alternative requirement, if properly enforced, will induce firms to achieve cognizable benefits without simultaneously creating or exercising market power, thus defeating a market failure and maximizing the welfare of consumers. 181 It therefore seems appropriate that courts ask whether “there [are] other and better ways . . .

174. See FTC v. Univ. Health, Inc., 938 F.2d 1206 (11th Cir. 1991); FTC v. Staples, Inc., 970 F. Supp. 1066, 1090 (D.D.C. 1997) (rejecting efficiency defense where defendants purportedly could have achieved such benefits via less restrictive means); Horizontal Merger Guidelines, supra note 114, § 4; see also Hovenkamp, supra note 46, § 12.263-b4, at 503-04 (endorsing application of less restrictive alternative test in the merger context).

175. See supra note 147 and accompanying text (showing that Standard Oil’s Rule of Reason rests on soliciude for consumer welfare).

176. See Meese, supra note 68, at 73 (showing that, as applied in the tying context, the less restrictive alternative test penalizes defendants “not for imposing net social harm, but instead for failing to benefit society sufficiently”).

177. See supra notes 35-52 and accompanying text (showing that Standard Oil’s Rule of Reason voids only those contracts that lead to monopoly or the evils associated with it).

178. See Gibbs v. Consol. Bait. Gas Co., 130 U.S. 396, 409 (1889) (“[If] the restraint upon one party is not greater than protection to the other party requires, the contract may be sustained.”); see also Ross, supra note 169, at 158.

179. See supra note 10 and accompanying text.

180. See Elzinga & Breit, supra note 46, at 3-4 (characterizing output reduction below competitive level as an externality); Calabresi, supra note 46, at 70.

181. See 7 Areeda, supra note 28, ¶ 1507b, at 397-98 (assuming that procompetitive benefits coexist with anticompetitive effects once a plaintiff has established a prima facie case); Hovenkamp, supra note 46, at 259 (noting that a court that condemns an arrangement because of presence of a less restrictive alternative can limit its relief to a requirement that the parties achieve their objectives by less restrictive means); Sullivan & Grimes, supra note 53, at 223; see also Hovenkamp, supra note 46, at 255-59; Sullivan, supra note 172, at 851.
by which the collaborators can achieve their legitimate objectives with fewer harms to competition."

III. ANTITRUST'S TWO MODELS OF COMPETITION

As noted earlier, Standard Oil's Rule of Reason analysis should distinguish those restraints that unduly limit competition—which the Court equated with rivalry—from normal or usual contracts that limit rivalry but further or develop trade. Application of the Rule of Reason, then, requires courts to employ economic theory to determine whether a contract produces the consequences of monopoly and thus offends the policy laid down by the Sherman Act. For instance, such theory can inform courts as to whether a contract is "always or almost always anticompetitive," "lacking in redeeming virtue," and thus subject to per se condemnation. Such theory can also assist courts in determining how to structure Rule of Reason analysis of those contracts that may produce redeeming virtues and thus survive the per se inquiry.

Courts do not generate economic theory themselves, nor can they locate this theory in legislative history or common-law precedents. Instead, courts exercising reason must select from among those theories that economists and others generate, theories on which advocates rely when litigating Rule of Reason cases. Any attempt to understand antitrust doctrine as well as the results produced by Rule of Reason litigation must begin with an understanding of the economic theories of the time, as such theories in-

182. See 7 Areeda, supra note 28, ¶ 1502, at 371; id. at 384 (noting that a less restrictive alternative analysis asks whether defendants' "objective [can] be achieved as well without restraining competition so much"); see also Hovenkamp, supra note 46, at 258 (justifying less restrictive alternative test as search for "obviously less anticompetitive alternative"); Sullivan & Grimes, supra note 53, at 335 ("[I]f strong evidence is offered for the promotional benefits of the distribution restraint, a court should examine whether less anticompetitive means . . . may be available to achieve the same marketing benefits. That the producer or dealer may prefer a particular distribution restraint is not enough to justify its use because the preference may be based on an anticompetitive gain from the restraint."); id. at 223 (applying similar reasoning in the horizontal context); Sullivan, supra note 172, at 851 ("[I]f efficiencies can be substantially obtained by means significantly less threatening to competition, the inquiry should also end.").

183. See supra notes 34–50 and accompanying text.

184. See Standard Oil Co. of N.J. v. United States, 221 U.S. 1, 63–64 (1910) (explaining that the Sherman Act empowers courts to implement the public policy evinced by the Act in light of reason); see also State Oil Co. v. Khan, 522 U.S. 3, 21 (1993) (noting that court should revise precedents "when the theoretical underpinnings of those decisions are called into question"); Cont'l T.V., Inc. v. GTE Sylvania, Inc., 433 U.S. 36, 47–48 (1977) (relying in part on great weight of scholarly commentary as rationale for overruling prior decision). But see Klor's, Inc. v. Broadway-Hale Stores, Inc., 359 U.S. 207, 211 (1959) (stating that the Sherman Act bans those restraints that were invalid at common law and others that advances in economics show to be unreasonable). See generally Frank H. Easterbrook, Is There a Ratchet in Antitrust Law?, 60 Tex. L. Rev. 705 (1982) (arguing that changes in economic theory can justify expansion or contraction of antitrust prohibitions).

185. See supra note 82 and accompanying text (showing that a per se analysis requires courts to determine whether an agreement is "always or almost always" anticompetitive and, if so, whether the agreements lacks procompetitive redeeming virtues).

186. See supra note 104 and accompanying text (showing that courts decline to apply per se rule where defendants adduce plausible assertion that contract produces redeeming virtues).
As shown below, economists have over the past few decades provided antitrust courts with two different economic paradigms capable of implementing *Standard Oil's* normative focus on consumer welfare: price theory and TCE. Each such paradigm embraces a normative conception of competition functionally related to the efficient allocation of resources. However, while these two paradigms begin with the same normative focus, each offers a radically different descriptive account of the causes and consequences of contractual integration, the main object of Rule of Reason analysis. As a result, each approach implies alternative and contradictory models of competition that courts can and do apply when conducting the descriptive sort of Rule of Reason analysis mandated by *Standard Oil*.

A predecessor to TCE, price theory held a monopoly on antitrust economics for some time, driving both steps of *Standard Oil's* Rule of Reason as well as merger law. More recently, TCE has emerged as a stout competitor to price theory, and each paradigm currently has significant and contradictory influence over the scope and content of per se rules. In particular, the Supreme Court continues to embrace the price-theoretic model of competition in some contexts, relying on price theory to conclude that certain practices are necessarily anticompetitive and without redeeming virtue. At the same time, the Court has rejected price theory in other contexts, relying upon TCE to conclude that contracts once deemed plainly (and only) anticompetitive can in fact possess redeeming virtues and thus should receive further analysis under the Rule of Reason.

This part will elucidate the price-theoretic model of competition and its historical influence on antitrust policy and doctrine. This part will also introduce and explain price theory's competitor—TCE—as well as its concomitant model of competition. Unlike price theory, which recognizes only technological competition, TCE suggests that much competition is essentially contractual, that is, takes the form of competing governance struc-

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187. See Hovenkamp, supra note 41, at 268; Jacobs, supra note 65, at 226 ("In almost every era of antitrust history, policymakers have employed economic models to explain or modify the state of the law and the rationale for its enforcement.").

188. The term paradigm has at least two possible definitions that might be relevant in this context. First, one might define a paradigm as "all the shared commitments of a scientific group." See Thomas Kuhn, Second Thoughts on Paradigms, in THE ESSENTIAL TENSION: SELECTED STUDIES IN SCIENTIFIC TRADITION AND CHANGE 292, 294 (1977). Second, one might define "paradigm" as an "exemplar" or "concrete problem solution" that members of a particular scientific community embrace. See id. at 298. This article uses the term "paradigm" in the first sense: to connote the "shared commitments of a scientific group," namely, economists who pursue the study of "industrial organization."

189. See Hovenkamp, supra note 41, at 270.

190. Id. at 273-95.

191. Id. at 304-05.

192. Id. at 305-07.


tures, each of which is ultimately a creature of contract. Finally, this part will examine the continuing influence of each of these contending models on the current scope of per se rules and thus, by implication, the influence of these paradigms on the category of restraints that survive per se analysis and thus warrant further analysis under the Rule of Reason. In so doing, this section will set the stage for part IV’s analysis and critique of price theory’s continuing influence on the three main elements of Rule of Reason analysis identified earlier.

A. Contractual Integration and Applied Price Theory

For decades courts did not really choose between competing economic theories. Instead, economists created and embraced a uniform economic paradigm which lawyers, enforcement officials, and legal scholars transmitted to the courts. This paradigm, called price theory, dominated economists’ treatment of industrial organization, the study of how firms are organized and conduct their activities. Price theory rested upon several interrelated assumptions which, when taken together, made up a model that economists and others employed to interpret business behavior, including contracts, the focus of antitrust’s Rule of Reason. The assumptions animating this paradigm were straightforward. Firms were autonomous entities that interacted with others through an impersonal and chaotic spot market. The boundary between a firm and the market, that is, the distinction between what a firm produced itself and what it purchased from others, was solely a function of the firm’s own costs and those of potential suppliers of goods or services, including distribution. Firms had little or no control over these costs, which were instead determined by technology.

195. See infra notes 304–08 and accompanying text.


198. See Ronald Coase, The Nature of the Firm, 4 Economica (n.s.) 386, 388 (1937) (asserting that then-current economic theory described firms as “islands of conscious power in an ocean of unconscious co-operation like lumps of butter coagulating in a pail of buttermilk” (quoting D.H. Robertson & Stanley Dennison, Control of Industry 85 (1923)).

199. Id.

200. See Williamson, supra note 197, at 7–8 (“The prevailing orientation toward economic organization [under price theory] was that technological features of firm and market organization were determinative.”); id. at 23–26, 86–89; Richard N. Langlois, Transaction Costs, Production Costs, and the Pas-
Price theory's exclusive focus on technological efficiencies was not arbitrary or accidental, but instead reflected a number of overlapping assumptions about the nature of markets and their supporting institutions as well as the capacity of firms and individuals that participate in them. For instance, price theory assumed that purchasers had perfect information about the items they purchased, or that sellers could convey such information, and buyers could absorb it, without cost. Moreover, price theory assumed that bargaining and enforcement costs were nonexistent, with the result that trading partners could negotiate complete contracts governing every aspect of their relationship that courts would easily enforce. The

*sage of Time, in COASEAN ECONOMICS: LAW AND ECONOMICS AND THE NEW INSTITUTIONAL ECONOMICS 1, 2–4 (Steven G. Medema ed., 1998) (describing technological focus of so-called Pigouvian price theory); George Stigler, The Division of Labor Is Limited by the Extent of the Market, 59 J. POL. ECON. 185, 185 (1951) (stating that economic theory has "generally treated as a (technological?) datum the problem of what the firm does—what governs its range of activities or functions"); Oliver Williamson, Technology and Transaction Cost Economics, 10 J. ECON. BEHAV. & ORG. 355, 356 (1988) (asserting that under, price-theoretic paradigm, "the 'natural' boundaries of the firm were thought to be defined by engineering considerations").

Thus, contemporary descriptions of the benefits of vertical integration emphasized cost reductions of technological origin. See, e.g., BAIN, INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION, supra note 196, at 381 ("[E]conomies of integration generally involve a physical or technical integration of the processes in a single plant. A classic case is that of integrating iron-making and steel-making to effect a saving in fuel costs by eliminating a reheating of the iron before it is fed to a steel furnace."); JOEL B. DIRLAM & ALFRED E. KAHN, FAIR COMPETITION: THE LAW AND ECONOMICS OF ANTITRUST POLICY 23 (1954) ("[I]ntegration may also have strong economic justification and may make competition more effective. To take the most obvious kind of example, a petroleum refinery that operates both a simple distillation and a thermal cracking unit or a steel mill that operates side by side a blast furnace and a Bessemer converter can make use of certain by-products, like gases or heat, which would be wasted if the steps were performed disconnectedly. The possible improvements in efficiency are not confined to such engineering savings from integrated productive operations. A farm machinery manufacturer who can give his salesman a full product line to carry may make fuller use of the gasoline and time they use in distributing his products than if he had only one product to sell. And the economic advantages are not limited to efficiency: by integration a firm may uncover new supplies of raw materials, offer customers new products or alternative sources of old ones, and reduce costs and prices through by-passing or supplanting a monopolist."); F.M. SCHERER, INDUSTRIAL MARKET STRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE 78 (2d ed. 1980) ("One motive for vertical integration is to reduce costs. A classic example is found in the steel industry: Integration of blast furnaces, converters, and primary reduction mills reduces handling and the need for reheating."); WILLIAM G. SHEPHERD, MARKET POWER & ECONOMIC WELFARE 37 (1970) ("The cost advantages in a firm may be of two types: technical and pecuniary. Only technical economies represent a genuine improvement in social efficiencies."); ROBERT H. BORK, VERTICAL INTEGRATION AND THE SHERRMAN ACT: THE LEGAL HISTORY OF AN ECONOMIC MISCONCEPTION, 22 U. CHI. L. REV. 157, 200 (1954) (describing the benefits of vertical integration as "by-pass[ing] a monopoly at one level, or . . . enabling the achievement of internal efficiencies").

201. See Langlois, supra note 200, at 2 ("In this kingdom [the price-theoretic paradigm], knowledge remains explicitly and freely transmittable, and cognitive limits seldom if ever constrain."). This assumption was implicit in the assertion by many economists that purchasers should be "free" to choose whether to purchase a product that the seller wished to tie to the main product. See infra notes 204–06 and accompanying text.

202. See WILLIAMSON, supra note 197, at 7 (explaining that price-theoretic paradigm assumed that judicial enforcement of well-specified contracts would prevent opportunism); KENNETH ARROW, THE ORGANIZATION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY: ISSUES PERTINENT TO THE CHOICE OF MARKET VERSUS NONMARKET ALLOCATION, IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURES AND POLICY ANALYSIS 59, 60 (ROBERT H. HAVEMAN & JULIUS MARGOLIS eds., 1970) ("[T]he existence of vertical integration may suggest that the costs of operating competitive markets are not zero, as is usually assumed in our theoretical analysis." (emphasis added)); RICHARD N. LANGLOIS, CONTRACT, COMPETITION, AND EFFICIENCY, 55 BROOK. L. REV. 831, 834–35 (1989) ("The traditional economic theory of the firm feeds off of . . . the 'classical' theory of contract. Briefly put, classical contracting involves
availability of such perfect contracting would, in turn, prevent opportunism. Indeed, some price theorists assumed that firms and individuals would refrain from opportunism even in the absence of contractual restraints. Others assumed that firms could combat opportunism by adopting less restrictive provisions that did not limit rivalry. In short, price theory assumed that market contracting—transacting—was costless.

These assumptions and concomitant emphasis on technological origins of efficiency rendered economists hostile to vertical integration generally and also had important implications for economists’ interpretation of the causes and consequences of contractual integration. According to price theory, firms realized all relevant efficiencies within their boundaries, in the
process of manufacturing the product in question.\textsuperscript{208} Thus, once a product was sold, and title to it passed beyond the firm's boundaries, a firm could do nothing to influence its quality or the satisfaction that the consumer received from it. As a result, price theory recognized only "standard contracts," that is, agreements of purchase and sale that simply mediated passage of title from firm to consumer (or dealer), perhaps with an accompanying warranty.\textsuperscript{209} Price theorists did recognize that complete vertical integration could, in rare cases, produce technological efficiencies that were realized within a firm, before passage of title.\textsuperscript{210} However, they saw no benevolent purposes for incomplete integration achieved by so-called nonstandard contracts, agreements that reached beyond the firm and controlled the discretion of purchasers after the passage of title or other transaction.\textsuperscript{211} Professor Williamson has summarized this intellectual milieu as follows:

The allocation of economic activity as between firms and markets was taken as a datum; firms were characterized as production functions; markets served as signaling devices; contracting was accomplished through an auctioneer; and disputes were disregarded because of the presumed efficacy of court adjudication. The possibility that subtle economizing purposes are served by organizational variety does not arise within—indeed is effectively beyond the reach of—this orthodox framework. Correspondingly, the prevailing public policy attitude toward unfamiliar or nonstandard business practices during that interval was deep suspicion and even hostility.\textsuperscript{212}

\textsuperscript{208} See \textit{Coase}, supra note 206, at 3 ("The firm to an economist ... 'is effectively defined as a cost curve and a demand curve, and the theory [of the firm] is simply the logic of optimal pricing and input combination.") (quoting Marten Slater, Foreword to \textit{Edith T. Penrose, The Theory of the Growth of the Firm}, ix (2d ed. 1980))); \textit{Williamson} supra note 197, at 371 (describing price-theoretic view that "true economies take a technological form, [and] hence are fully realized within firms" and consequently showing that according to the price-theoretic paradigm, there is nothing to be gained by introducing nonstandard terms into market-mediated exchange); Langlois, supra note 202, at 834 ("[T]he economists' firm—at least until recently—was a black box, a production function that took in inputs and transformed them into outputs."); \textit{id.} at 835 (describing traditional theory's failure to recognize benefits of nonstandard contracting); Oliver Williamson, \textit{Delimiting Antitrust}, 76 Geo. L.J. 271, 272 (1987) (recounting the "prevailing practice [under price theory] of describing the firm as a production function whose natural boundaries were defined by technology. Economic inputs were thus transformed by the production technology into economic outputs. Organizational considerations [that might explain the boundaries of firms] were effectively suppressed.").

\textsuperscript{209} See \textit{Williamson}, supra note 197, at 23 (defining "classical market exchange—whereby a product is sold at a uniform price to all consumers without restriction").

\textsuperscript{210} See supra note 208-09 and accompanying text (describing price-theorists' belief that complete vertical integration could create technological efficiencies).

\textsuperscript{211} See \textit{supra} note 199, at 22-24 (distinguishing between "classical market exchange" and "nonstandard contracting").

\textsuperscript{212} \textit{Id.} at 7. Professor Coase offered a similar evaluation of the economic milieu associated with price theory: [I]f an economist finds something—a business practice of one sort or another—that he does not understand, he looks for a monopoly explanation. And as in this field we are very ignorant, the number of ununderstandable practices tends to be rather large, and the reliance on a monopoly explanation, frequent.
Because nonstandard agreements had no apparent efficiency purposes, price theorists condemned such arrangements as monopolistic attempts to acquire or protect market power.213

B. Price Theory and the Meaning of Competition

Price theory's exclusive focus on technological efficiencies and concomitant hostility toward nonstandard contractual restraints implied a particular, narrow definition of competition. As explained earlier, Standard Oil equated competition with rivalry, without assigning any technical economic meaning to either term.214 Within the lexicon of Standard Oil, then, all contracts are anticompetitive in the sense that they restrain the freedom of action of parties to them.215 The mere fact that a contract was anticompetitive in this sense, however, did not condemn the arrangement under the Rule of Reason.216 In a similar way, the current approach to implementing the per se rule treats any restraint on rivalry as anticompetitive, subject to a plausible assertion that the arrangement produces redeeming virtues.217

Price theory, by contrast, imbued the word competition with normative significance and elevated the term to a technical economic concept functionally related to the efficient allocation of resources.218 Within this

Coase, supra note 196, at 67.

213. For instance, the leading textbook on industrial organization concluded that tying contracts and exclusive dealing arrangements had a “general tendency . . . to create and preserve more concentrated market structures than would otherwise exist, and to elevate barriers to the entry of new sellers to various markets.” See BAIN, INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION, supra note 196, at 364; id. at 567 (asserting that the “exclusionary potential” of tying contracts is “obvious”). Other scholars took similar positions. One economist concluded that tying contracts produced no benefits that could not be achieved by other means and necessarily reflected exercise of market power. See JOHN PERRY MILLER, UNFAIR COMPETITION: A STUDY IN CRITERIA FOR THE CONTROL OF TRADE PRACTICES 199–202 (1941); Turner, supra note 205, at 59–64 (same). Another opined that “it is almost self-evident that exclusive-dealing contracts, when imposed by large suppliers, will injure competition by preventing the smaller manufacturers from getting their goods to the market and by depriving distributors and dealers of their freedom to handle lines of competitive producers. There are few, if any, circumstances under which exclusive dealing imposed by large concerns can be envisaged as promoting competition.” See BLAIR, supra note 207, at 368. Others concluded that contractual restraints on rivalry between dealers could produce no benefits, but would instead lead to excessive promotion that served only to enhance the manufacturer’s market power. See Comanor, supra note 203, at 1436 (arguing that contractual integration cannot produce efficiencies).


215. See supra notes 40–42 and accompanying text (describing Standard Oil’s definition of competition as “rivalry,” without any economic content).

216. See supra notes 29–39 and accompanying text. As Justice Brandeis put it in Chicago Board of Trade, a mere reduction in competition did not indicate that a restraint produced the consequences of monopoly: The [government’s] case was rested upon the bald proposition, that a rule or agreement by which men occupying positions of strength in any branch of trade, fixed prices at which they would buy or sell during an important part of the business day, is an illegal restraint of trade under the Anti-Trust Law. But the legality of an agreement or regulation cannot be determined by so simple a test, as whether it restrains competition. Every agreement concerning trade, every regulation of trade, restrains. To bind, to restrain is of their very essence.


217. See supra notes 102–04 and accompanying text.

218. See McNulty, supra note 41, at 640–50 (describing classical conception of competition and distinguishing it from modern definition).
paradigm, a restraint is competitive if it affects the allocation of resources in a manner likely to enhance social welfare, or, in the lexicon of \textit{Standard Oil}, advances trade.\textsuperscript{219} The assumptions of price theory described earlier\textsuperscript{220} produced a particular, narrow version of legitimate competition, behavior that, when pursued by all market participants, maximized social welfare. In its most doctrinaire form, price-theoretic competition was entirely passive, consisting simply of responding to market demand by setting output where price equaled marginal cost.\textsuperscript{221} Moreover, price-theoretic competition was more than a behavioral concept; it was also a state of affairs.\textsuperscript{222} If replicated in all industries, such competition produced a “general competitive equilibrium,” and with it optimal prices, output, and quality in all sectors.\textsuperscript{223} Derived from the antiseptic model of perfect competition, this definition of competition excluded from its ambit all varieties of nonstandard contracts, as well as practices—like advertising, product differentiation, and price cutting—that businesspeople would deem methods of doing battle with competitors.\textsuperscript{224} According to the models employed by many economists, such practices were not competitive at all, but instead thwarted competition and created or preserved market power.\textsuperscript{225} Commenting on the economist’s vision of “competition” in 1948, Professor Hayek wrote:

The peculiar nature of the assumptions from which the theory of competitive equilibrium starts stands out very clearly if we ask

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\item \textsuperscript{219} See supra notes 34–39 and accompanying text (showing that \textit{Standard Oil} approved contracts that advanced trade).
\item \textsuperscript{220} See supra notes 196–206 and accompanying text.
\item \textsuperscript{221} See CAVES, supra note 196, at 38; COASE, supra note 206, at 3 (“The firm to an economist... ‘is effectively defined as a cost curve and a demand curve, and the theory [of the firm] is simply the logic of optimal pricing and input combination.’” (quoting SLATER, supra note 208, at ix)); MACHOVEC, supra note 41, at 16 (stating that under perfect competition model, “the only acceptable behavior of firms is to mechanically reallocate capital in response to a new set of perfect-information emissions—provided like manna from heaven, indiscriminately and simultaneously—to the robotized helmsmen of each firm”); McNulty, supra note 41, at 648–50; see also SHEPHERD, supra note 200, at 25–27; GEORGE W. STOCKING & MYRON W. WATKINS, MONOPOLY AND FREE ENTERPRISE 6–9 (1951).
\item \textsuperscript{222} See HOVENKAMP, supra note 41, at 273–74 (distinguishing between the classical and modern notions of competition, the latter of which views competition as a “state of affairs”); McNulty, supra note 41, at 643–45.
\item \textsuperscript{223} See SCHERER, supra note 200, at 12–20 (describing model of “general competitive equilibrium”); SHEPHERD, supra note 200, at 25–29 (same); see also KAYSEN & TURNER, supra note 205, at 12–13.
\item \textsuperscript{224} See Langlois, supra note 202, at 835 (linking classical theory of contract and related traditional theory of the firm to perfect competition model); see also McNulty, supra note 41, at 649 (“Perfect competition, on the other hand, is an equilibrium situation in which price becomes a parameter from the standpoint of the individual firm and no market activity is possible. ... [T]hus, the single activity which best characterized the meaning of competition in classical economics—price cutting by an individual firm in order to get rid of excess supplies—becomes the one activity impossible under perfect competition.”).
\item \textsuperscript{225} See Joan Robinson, \textit{The Impossibility of Competition, in Monopoly and Competition and Their Regulation} 245, 245–46 (Edward H. Chamberlin ed., 1954) (noting that “competition in practice is very imperfect and that “competition” in the broad sense in which business men understand it, largely consists in destroying competition in the narrow economist’s sense by product differentiation, advertisement, and the creation of goodwill”); see also FRIEDRICH HAYEK, \textit{Competition as Discovery Procedure, in New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics, and the History of Ideas} 179, 179 (1978) (“[Economists] who seem to derive their conception of competition solely from modern textbooks, have not unnaturally concluded that competition does not exist.”).
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which of the activities that are commonly designated by the verb 'to compete' would still be possible if those conditions were all satisfied. Perhaps it is worth recalling that, according to Dr. Johnson, competition is 'the action of endeavoring to gain what another endeavors to gain at the same time.’ Now, how many of the devices adopted in ordinary life to that end would still be open to a seller in a market in which so-called ‘perfect competition’ prevails. I believe that the answer is exactly none. Advertising, undercutting, and improving ("differentiating") the goods or services produced are all excluded by definition—"perfect' competition means indeed the absence of all competitive activities. 226

While Professor Hayek accurately described the views of many economists, there were others who possessed a more sophisticated view of the subject. Many industrial organization theorists who otherwise embraced the price-theoretic paradigm often recognized that the real world usually departed from that depicted by perfect competition models.227 For instance, economists recognized the existence of negative and positive externalities that might cause markets to fail to achieve the optimum allocation of resources.228 Moreover, economists recognized that firms often strove to improve their products or discover new (technological) methods of production, thus lowering costs.229 These efforts often led firms to ex-

226. See Friedrich A. Hayek, The Meaning of Competition, in Individualism and Economic Order, supra note 3, at 92. This theory [of competitive equilibrium] throughout assumes that state of affairs already to exist which, according to the truer view of the older theory, the process of competition tends to bring about (or to approximate). [Moreover] if the state of affairs assumed by the theory of perfect competition ever existed, it would not only deprive of their scope the activities which the verb “to compete” describes but would make them virtually impossible. Id. at 92; see also Coase, supra note 206, at 9-10 (“Monopoly and impediments to trade such as tariffs are easily handled by normal price theory, whereas the absence of transaction costs in the theory makes the effect of a reduction in them difficult to incorporate in the analysis.”); Hayek, supra note 225, at 179 (“It is difficult to defend economists against the charge that for some 40 to 50 years they have been discussing competition on assumptions that, if they were true of the real world, would make it wholly uninteresting and useless.” (emphasis in original)); McNulty, supra note 41, at 641 (“As it is, it is one of the great paradoxes of economic science that every act of competition on the part of a businessman is evidence, in economic theory, of some degree of monopoly power, while the concepts of monopoly and perfect competition have this important common feature: both are situations in which the possibility of any competitive behavior has been ruled out by definition.”). 227. See Kaysen & Turner, supra note 205, at 8 (“The existence of significant economies of scale at both the plant and the firm level over some size range means that firms are not generally insignificant in relation to the market.”). 228. See id. at 13 n.12; Shephard, supra note 200, at 27-28. 229. See Miller, supra note 213, at 8 (“Competition is a very complex phenomenon. It may take any one of several forms. It may become a rivalry in buying factors of production of better quality or in buying factors on more favorable terms. It may consist in an endeavor to organize and utilize factors more effectively in producing goods and services, this involving a rivalry in technological processes as well as in economy in the use and organization of men and materials. It may take the form of rivalry in attracting customers. This in turn may be done in various ways: by price competition, by informative or competitive advertising, by differentiation of product or of many ancillary terms and conditions of sale, or finally by effective choice and control of the channels of distribution.”). It should be noted that Professor Miller's fulsome definition of competition did not include nonstandard contracts. See id. at 199-200 (explaining that tying contracts only arise where seller has a “strong monopoly position”); id. at 210 (explaining that exclusive dealing arrangements only arise where there is “some element of monopoly control”);
pand significantly, sometimes by merger, taking advantage of (technological) economies of scale. As a result, many industries were populated by only a few sellers, and economists recognized that such a departure from perfect competition was necessary to maximize social welfare. Nonetheless, while economists recognized that markets might not always be populated by numerous sellers, they generally embraced the other assumptions of the perfect competition model, assumptions which suggested that efficiencies could only be realized within the firm.

Price theory's model of competition was more than theoretical: it also influenced the policy prescriptions of scholars, particularly those interested in antitrust regulation. In particular, this account of competition provided a benchmark against which economists and others evaluated the causes and consequences of nonstandard contracts. The classic articulation of this approach can be found in an antitrust text authored by two Harvard economists, who premised their work on the assumption that any business practice that would not be adopted by a similar firm operating in a perfectly competitive market necessarily reflected the possession and exercise of market power. If unchecked, such anticompetitive practices could

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Scherer, supra note 200, at 24 (describing existence of product differentiation as a potentially beneficial departure from perfect competition).

230. Kaysen & Turner, supra note 205, at 128–29 ("From the standpoint of both buyers and sellers, mergers may promote efficiency. Where the appropriate scale of operations or degree of integration of the firm changes, mergers may provide the most economical method of reshaping the structures of existing firms to the new cost conditions.").

231. See, e.g., Dirlam & Kahn, supra note 200, at 32 ("Product differentiation, for example, is often a means of competition that serves the public by providing minimum assurances of quality and by catering to a real consumer desire for product improvement or variation."); id. at 33 ("Rarely does the cause of effective competition demand an attack on an industry because of the fineness of the firms that make it up."); Kaysen & Turner, supra note 205, at 5–8; Stocking & Watkins, supra note 221, at 53–61, 108; id. at 13 ("Pure competition can scarcely be realized in a machine age.").

232. See Hayek, supra note 226, at 94 (asserting that most assumptions of the perfect competition model "are equally assumed in the discussion of the various 'imperfect' or 'monopolistic' markets, which throughout assume certain unrealistic 'perfections'"); Langlois, supra note 200, at 2 (noting that Joan Robinson and Edward Chamberlin, who pioneered the theory of oligopoly, relied upon various assumptions of the perfect competition model); see also Kaysen & Turner, supra note 205, at 7 ("The rigorous model of the perfectly competitive market is the appropriate starting point of any definition [of competition relevant to antitrust policy]."); id. at 8 ("Though the model of [perfectly] competitive market structure is not usable as such in our definition of competition, other concepts of the model are."). While Professors Turner and Kaysen recognized that the perfect competition model could not provide the final definition of competition relevant to antitrust policy, they nonetheless assumed that any practice that a firm would not adopt in a perfectly competitive market reflected an exercise of market power. Id. at 8; see also infra note 235.

233. See Coase, supra note 196, at 66–67 (describing particular influence that price theoretic approach to industrial organization had on antitrust policy).

234. Id.

235. See Kaysen & Turner, supra note 205, at 8 ("Where firms can persistently behave over substantial periods of time in a manner which differs from the behavior that the competitive market would impose on competitive firms facing similar cost and demand conditions, they can be identified as possessing market power."); id. at 75 (same); Stocking & Watkins, supra note 221, at 108 ("The effectiveness of competition is apt to vary directly with the number of sellers up to the maximum consistent with the economies of scale."); see also Bain, Industrial Organization, supra note 196, at 364 (concluding that concentrated "market structure . . . is to some extent created by conduct, although the conduct in question generally is feasible because of certain basic environmental and structural characteristics of in-
entrench and enhance a firm's market power, protecting the oligopolistic structure of noncompetitive industries.\textsuperscript{236} Such reasoning applied with particular force to nonstandard contracts, which limited rivalry, produced no cognizable benefits, and thus exercised or created market power to the detriment of consumers.\textsuperscript{237} According to these scholars, public policy should intervene in the market to eradicate such anticompetitive practices when feasible, and such intervention would eliminate market imperfections, render each industry as competitive as possible, and assure optimal prices, output, and quality.\textsuperscript{238} Many economists held similar views, and other antitrust scholars followed suit, evaluating and condemning various nonstandard contracts as anticompetitive attempts to create, protect, or exercise market power.\textsuperscript{239}

\textsuperscript{236}Kaysen & Turner, supra note 205, at 79–80, 89–91; see also BAIN, INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION, supra note 196, at 363–65 (concluding that various nonstandard practices fortify preexisting market power).

\textsuperscript{237}See Kaysen & Turner, supra note 205, at 157–59 (arguing that tying contracts necessarily reflect an exercise of market power); id. at 156–57 (arguing that concerted refusals to deal are nearly always anticompetitive and thus should be unlawful per se). Other economists agreed. See BAIN, INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION, supra note 196, at 363–65 (defining tying and exclusive dealing contracts as "predatory" practices that thwart effective competition); MILLER, supra note 213, at 199 ("A tying arrangement is a successful business practice only in the circumstance that the seller has a strong monopoly position in one or more products."); id. at 210 ("Exclusive dealing arrangements . . . are useful only in markets where there are some elements of monopoly control in the manufacture of the product.".). It should be noted that Professors Kaysen and Turner made no attempt to explain those tying contracts imposed in apparently competitive markets. Such arrangements, they said, were "random small transactions of no consequence." See Kaysen & Turner, supra note 205, at 159.

\textsuperscript{238}See Kaysen & Turner, supra note 205, at 12–13 (citing A.C. Pigou, Economics of Welfare (4th ed. 1932)); see also BAIN, INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION, supra note 196, at 503 (arguing that public policy should encourage "workably competitive markets" and "reasonably good economic performance" by, inter alia, banning predatory and exclusionary conduct); id. at 506–08; id. at 14 ("[W]orkable (reasonably satisfactory) competition is revealed by, and is the result of whatever gives rise to, reasonably satisfactory or workable market performance—performance that enhances the aggregate economic welfare to a reasonable degree. Ideal performance is found in adaptations of enterprises to their markets which enhance to the maximum possible degree the attainment of the overall economic objectives relating to employment, efficiency, income distribution, and so on. "Workable" performance generally refers to adaptations of enterprises to their markets which reasonably approximate the ideal, or do not embody gross and important discrepancies from it."); id. at 14–15 (describing as "ideal" economic performance that produces prices equal to cost, i.e., perfect competition).

\textsuperscript{239}See supra notes 235–37 (collecting authorities agreeing with Kaysen and Turner). Other classic exemplars of this approach include: DIRLAM & KAHN, supra note 200; EARL W. KINTNER, AN ANTITRUST PRIMER (1964); MILLER, supra note 213; LOUIS SCHWARTZ, FREE ENTERPRISE AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION (1959); STOCKING & WATKINS, supra note 221; LAWRENCE SULLIVAN, ANTITRUST (1977); Comanor, supra note 204; see also Jacobs, supra note 65, at 226–27 (contending that "Harvard School" of industrial organization dominated antitrust thought in the 1960s).

Indeed, even Professor Clark, praised by Professor Hayek for embracing an expansive definition of "competition," defined competition in a manner that seemed to exclude contractual limits on the discretion of firms, i.e., nonstandard contracts. "Competition between business units in the production
C. Judicial Reliance on Price Theory

For over three decades, courts implementing Standard Oil's Rule of Reason embraced price theory with a vengeance, often at the behest of expert enforcement agencies.240 As explained earlier, Standard Oil equated competition with rivalry, which normal contracts could duly restrict.241 Ultimately, however, courts came to adopt price theory's more stylized definition of the term, which treated competition as that collection of business practices leading to the efficient allocation of resources and thus the maximization of social welfare.242 While this redefinition of "competition" retained Standard Oil's normative focus on consumer welfare, courts simultaneously embraced the various descriptive assumptions generated by price theory's brand of industrial organization and the particular model of competition that these assumptions implied.243 More precisely, courts during this era held that antitrust regulation was designed to interdict any and all limitations on competition, which they defined as moment-to-moment technological rivalry between completely autonomous firms unconstrained by nonstandard contracts.244 What followed was the so-called inhospitality tradition of antitrust, which manifested itself in the form of extreme hostility toward any contractual restraint on the freedom of individuals or firms to engage in head-to-head rivalry.245 According to this approach, practices

and sale of goods is the effort of such units, acting independently of one another (without concerted action), each trying to make a profitable volume of sales in the face of the offers of other sellers of identical or closely similar products."

JOHN MAURICE CLARK, COMPETITION AS A DYNAMIC PROCESS 13 (1961) [hereinafter CLARK, COMPETITION]; see also HAYEK, supra note 226, at 92; J.M. Clark, Toward a Concept of Workable Competition, 30 AM. ECON. REV. 241 (1940) (arguing that the perfect competition model did not provide a useful benchmark for judging the efficacy of competition in actual markets).


241. See supra note 41 and accompanying text.

242. See infra Part III.E.

243. See supra notes 196-232 and accompanying text (describing various assumptions associated with price-theoretic industrial organization).

244. Professor Clark, who embraced a broad view of the meaning of competition (approvingly) characterized antitrust's definition of "competition" as follows:

[T]he concept of competition that has grown out of the antitrust laws is not confined to price competition, but accords a place to competition as affecting productive techniques and quality and design of products. As to productive techniques, it is especially concerned that access of producers to good and efficient techniques should be as wide as is consistent with the essential purpose of the patent system. This system is built around the principle of stimulating innovation in products and technical methods by offering inventors a temporary monopoly in the particular inventions each has made, on condition that their specifications are publicly disclosed. ... [A] balanced conception of competition—one in which the aspects of productive techniques, improved and differentiated products, and price all play a part.

See CLARK, COMPETITION, supra note 239, at 47. This, of course, is a purely technological conception of competition.

245. See WILLIAMSON, supra note 197, at 19 (describing inhospitality tradition of antitrust); id. at 370-73 (describing influence of inhospitality tradition on antitrust treatment of nonstandard contracts); Easterbrook, supra note 184, at 715 ("[T]he 'inhospitality tradition of antitrust'... called for courts to strike down business practices that were not clearly procompetitive. In this tradition an inference of monopolization followed from the courts' inability to grasp how a practice might be consistent with substantial competition. The tradition took hold when many practices were genuine mysteries to economists, and
inexplicable under the price-theoretic model of competition were necessarily anticompetitive attempts to acquire or exercise market power and thus resulted in a noncompetitive allocation of resources.  

This inhospitality tradition pervaded antitrust law in general and the Sherman Act in particular, especially the standard courts employed when conducting per se analysis. The result was a vast expansion of the scope of per se rules and concomitant contraction of the scope and importance of more thorough Rule of Reason analysis. Agreements limiting rivalry between joint venturers were unlawful per se, even if such arrangements were ancillary to an otherwise legitimate venture that enhanced rivalry with nonventurers and thus appeared to produce benefits for consumers.  

According to the Supreme Court, such agreements amounted to a “destruction of competition in one sector of the economy,” infringed the “freedom of individual members [of a venture] to compete,” were “always or almost always anticompetitive,” and produced no redeeming virtues. Collective refusals to deal were similarly unlawful per se, regardless whether they produced or threatened to produce tangible harm to consumers. Such arrangements deprived their victims of the “freedom to buy ... in an open competitive market,” “interfered[ d] with the natural flow of ... commerce,” and had monopolistic explanations were congenial. The same tradition emphasized competition in the spot market. Long-term contracts, even those arrived at by competitive processes, were deemed anticompetitive because they shut off day-to-day rivalry.”). The phrase “inhospitality tradition of antitrust” apparently was coined by Professor Donald Turner, an economist who headed the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice in the 1960s. According to Professor Turner, “I approach territorial and customer restrictions not hospitably in the common law tradition, but inhospitably in the tradition of antitrust law.” Donald F. Turner, Some Reflections on Antitrust, 1966 N.Y. ST. B.A. ANTITRUST L. SYMP. 1, 1-2; see also Jacobs, supra note 65, at 227-28 (describing so-called Harvard School of industrial organization and antitrust policy during this period); infra notes 299-301 and accompanying text (collecting decisions contending that (price-theoretic) competition would maximize social welfare).

246. Easterbrook, supra note 184, at 715.

247. See United States v. Topco Assoc's., Inc., 405 U.S. 596 (1972) (declaring ancillary restraints allocating territories among joint venture partners unlawful per se, despite district court finding that participants possessed no market power and that venture enhanced competition); United States v. Sealy, Inc., 388 U.S. 350 (1967) (same). See generally, Meese, supra note 107, at 469-70 n.30-31 (quoting extensively from district court findings in Topco that the restraints facilitated the success of the venture vis-à-vis larger, integrated chains, thus serving the interests of consumers).

248. See Topco, 405 U.S. at 610-11 (“Implicit in such freedom is the notion that it cannot be foreclosed with respect to one sector of the economy because certain private citizens or groups believe that such foreclosure might promote greater competition in a more important sector of the economy.”); Sealy, 388 U.S. at 355 (finding horizontal ancillary restraints unlawful because “their anticompetitive nature and effect are so apparent and so serious that the courts will not pause to assess them in light of the rule of reason”).

249. See Radiant Burners, Inc. v. Peoples Gas Light & Coke Co., 364 U.S. 656 (1961) (declaring gas companies' collective refusal to deal with customers of burner manufacturer unlawful per se); Klor's, Inc. v. Broadway-Hale Stores, Inc., 359 U.S. 207 (1959) (collective refusal by appliance manufacturers to deal with single retailer in San Francisco unlawful per se despite absence of any showing of public harm); Fashion Originators' Guild of America, Inc. v. FTC, 312 U.S. 457 (1940); see also MACHOVEC, supra note 41, at 205-06 (finding link between perfect competition model and this and certain other per se rules).

250. Klor's, Inc., 359 U.S. at 213; id. at 211 (Standard Oil's Rule of Reason voids contracts that "interfered with the 'natural flow' of an appreciable amount of interstate commerce." (quoting Standard Oil Co. of N.J. v. United States, 221 U.S. 1, 57, 61 (1911))).

"by [their] 'nature' and 'character,' a 'monopolistic tendency.'"\textsuperscript{252} Horizontal price-fixing that reduced prices was automatically unlawful, because it "cripple[d] the freedom of traders . . . to sell in accordance with their own judgment."\textsuperscript{253}

Courts did not reserve this hostility for agreements among rivals, but exhibited equal disdain for vertical arrangements. Here again, nonstandard agreements that reduced some form of rivalry were deemed without redeeming virtue and thus anticompetitive attempts to obtain or exercise market power. While not unreasonable per se, vertical mergers between a manufacturer and distributor were unlawful under the Clayton Act if the distributor possessed a nontrivial share of the market, with the result that the transaction resulted in a "foreclosure of a share of the market otherwise open to competitors."\textsuperscript{254} Exclusive dealing contracts that bound a nontrivial number of dealers were unlawful, regardless of their benefits, because they placed a "potential clog on competition,"\textsuperscript{255} took "away freedom of purchasers to buy in an open market," and were thus "anticompetitive."\textsuperscript{256} Arrangements whereby a manufacturer encouraged dealers to purchase and promote the products of a particular supplier were equally problematic, even though they were not de jure or de facto exclusionary. Such arrangements precluded dealers from making purchasing decisions "solely on the basis of competitive merit" because they ensured that "non-sponsored brands do not compete on even terms of price and quality competition."\textsuperscript{257} Such arrangements "impaired competition"\textsuperscript{258} and "adversely affected" the "operation of the competitive market."\textsuperscript{259} They were not normal competi-

\textsuperscript{252} Klor's, Inc., 359 U.S. at 213 (quoting Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 68).


\textsuperscript{254} See Brown Shoe Co., Inc. v. United States, 370 U.S. 294, 327-34 (1962) (finding vertical merger unlawful where transaction would "foreclose" other manufacturers from two to three percent of the nation's shoe stores); United States v. Kencocn Copper Corp., 231 F. Supp. 95, 104-05 (S.D.N.Y. 1964) (finding that merger between copper producer and one of ten manufacturers of "paper insulated copper wire" lessened competition by foreclosing other manufacturers from selling copper to the purchased firm); In re A.G. Spaulding & Bros., Inc., 56 F.T.C. 1125, 1168-69 (1960) (declaring vertical merger unlawful without regard to share of market actually foreclosed).


\textsuperscript{256} See FTC v. Brown Shoe Co., 384 U.S. 316, 320-21 (1966) (finding that such an agreement involving one percent of the nation's shoe retailers offends the "central policy of the Sherman Act" and thus constitutes an "unfair trade practice" in violation of section 5 of the FTC Act); see also Dictograph Prods., Inc. v. FTC, 217 F.2d 821, 828 (2d Cir. 1954) ("It is the policy of the Congress that [the defendant's] merchandise must stand on its own feet in the open market . . . without the competitive advantage to be obtained by the use of prohibited exclusionary agreements.").


\textsuperscript{259} See Texaco, 393 U.S. at 230; see also In re Firestone Tire & Rubber Co., 58 F.T.C. 371, 413 (1961) (banning supplier's agreement to pay distributor large commissions because, under such an arrangement, "[t]he success of the one group is not due to the fact that its members are more able competitors, nor because they offer superior products and services, and the failure of the other group is not traceable solely to the possible inferiority of their products and services. The one outstanding fact is that group
tive practices, but instead involved the “utilization of economic power in one market to curtail competition in another,”\textsuperscript{260} and the “use of economic power as a partial substitute for competitive merit.”\textsuperscript{261} Even if such arrangements produced benefits, they constituted “unfair methods of competition” whenever they involved a substantial amount of commerce.\textsuperscript{262}

Other vertical arrangements suffered a similar fate, and for similar reasons. Thus, tying contracts “den[ied] competitors free access to the market . . . because of [the seller’s] power or leverage” and thus curbed “competition on the merits with respect to the tied product.”\textsuperscript{263} Sellers could invariably achieve any benefits produced by such contracts through less restrictive means.\textsuperscript{264} So, for instance, a seller that wished to protect the goodwill of the tying product by ensuring that purchasers used tied products of sufficient quality could provide information to consumers about the merits of the tied product or even adopt contractual specifications governing the quality of compliments the consumer could purchase.\textsuperscript{265} Such less restrictive alternatives were consistent with (price-theoretic) competition.\textsuperscript{266}

of [defendant] dealers has been successful . . . because of the sales commission system and not because of either their own competitive abilities or because of the competitive advantages of their products.\textsuperscript{260}"

\textsuperscript{260}See Atl. Ref. Co., 381 U.S. at 369; id. at 376 (finding “little point” for the arrangement “were it not for [defendants’] ability to exert power over their wholesalers and dealers”); see also Texaco, 393 U.S. at 228–29 (finding that, despite lack of facts showing actual coercion “Texaco’s dominant economic power was used in a manner which tended to foreclose competition in the marketing of [tires, batteries and accessories]”).

\textsuperscript{261}Texaco, 393 U.S. at 230.

\textsuperscript{262}See id. at 230 (“The Commission is not required to show that a practice it condemns has totally eliminated competition in the relevant market. It is enough that the Commission found that the practice in question unfairly burdened competition for a not insubstantial volume of commerce.”); Atl. Ref. Co., 381 U.S. at 371 (conceding that such contracts “may well provide Atlantic with an economical method of assuring efficient product distribution among its dealers”); id. (finding “it unnecessary to embark upon a full-scale economic analysis of competitive effect . . . [because] the Commission found that a not insubstantial portion of commerce is affected.”).

\textsuperscript{263}See Fortner Enters., Inc. v. United States Steel Corp., 394 U.S. 495, 498 (1969) (quoting N. Pac. Ry. Co. v. United States, 356 U.S. 1, 5–6 (1958)); United States v. Loew’s, Inc., 371 U.S. 38, 44–46 (1963); id. at 48 (describing adverse effects of contracts in question on “free competition”); see also Meese, supra note 68, at 13–16 (describing traditional view that tying contracts are the result of “coercive forcing”).

\textsuperscript{264}See Fortner Enters., 394 U.S. at 503 (“Tying arrangements generally serve no legitimate business purpose that cannot be achieved in some less restrictive way.”); Standard Oil, 337 U.S. at 306 (same).

\textsuperscript{265}See Times-Picayune Publ’g Co. v. United States, 345 U.S. 594, 605 (1953) (claiming that “any intrinsic superiority of the ‘tied’ product would convince freely choosing buyers to select it over others, anyway”); Standard Oil Co. of Cal. v. United States, 337 U.S. 293, 306 (1949); Int’l Salt Co. v. United States, 332 U.S. 392, 397–98 (1948) (finding that seller may not protect goodwill of tying product by resorting to “disguised restraints of free competition”); Int’l Bus. Machs. Corp. v. United States, 298 U.S. 131, 138–39 (1936) (stating that seller could protect goodwill by “proclaiming the virtues of its own cards or warning against the danger of using in its machines, cards which do not conform to the necessary specifications, or . . . make[ ] its leases conditional upon the use of cards which conform to them”); Siegel v. Chicken Delight, Inc., 446 F.2d 43, 51–52 (9th Cir. 1971) (same); Meese, supra note 68, at 71–84 (describing traditional view that various less restrictive alternatives could achieve legitimate objectives of tying contracts).

\textsuperscript{266}The economic merit in tying rivets to machines and an economic justification for such tying will not suffice to prevent the operation of the statute. The Clayton Act is intended to preserve competitive conditions. The open market not the court should be the forum for the presentation of claims as to the merits of tied articles. The lessees are quite capable of judging for themselves in an atmosphere of competition whether or not the rivets of one manufacturer will work in the machines of another.
Firms that sought tying contracts, on the other hand, were exercising market power to force purchasers to take a tied product of lower quality, higher price, or both.267 Thus, such agreements "serve[d] hardly any purpose beyond the suppression of competition."268

Courts even went so far as to ban agreements limiting rivalry between a manufacturer's own dealers in the sale of its product. Resale price maintenance and exclusive territories were unlawful per se, as were restrictions on the identity of customers to whom dealers could resell.269 Like franchising, such arrangements were unusual, "inconsistent with the free-market principles embodied in the Sherman Act,"270 and "so obviously destructive of competition that their mere existence [was] enough" to justify condemnation.271 Exceptions were made only for agreements of consignment, under which the manufacturer retained title to its product and thus realized economic power in the market for the tying product.272 Indeed, courts even banned contractual arrangements that assured consumers lower prices, i.e., maximum resale price maintenance. Such vertical price ceilings, the Court said, interfered with "the forces of a competitive market," crippled the ability of dealers "to compete," and produced no corresponding benefits.273 Here again, the Court equated competition with technological rivalry, unconstrained by nonstandard contracts, even if such competition produced prices higher than those set by the challenged contract.

Judson L. Thompson Mfg. Co. v. FTC, 150 F.2d 952, 958 (1st Cir. 1945) (emphases added); cf. supra note 201 and accompanying text (describing assumptions by price theorists that firms could costlessly convey information and that purchasers would readily absorb such information).

267. See Former Enters., 394 U.S. at 498; N. Pac. Ry. Co., 356 U.S. at 5–6; see also Kaysen & Turner, supra note 205, at 157 ("[T]ying implies some market power on the part of the seller practicing it.").

268. See Former Enters., 394 U.S. at 498 (quoting N. Pac. Ry. Co., 356 U.S. at 5–6). To be sure, courts purported to qualify the per se rule with a requirement that plaintiffs demonstrate the seller's economic power in the market for the tying product. See N. Pac. Ry. Co., 356 U.S. at 6–7. Still, courts found such power so readily as to render this requirement barely relevant. So, for instance, courts held that sellers had sufficient economic power whenever they possessed a product with "unique attributes" that was "attractive to consumers," i.e., whenever the market in question was characterized by product differentiation. See Loew's, Inc., 371 U.S. at 45; id. at 46–48 (finding that possession of a copyright creates presumption of economic power); Chicken Delight, 448 F.2d at 49–50. Indeed, as suggested in the text, courts even went so far as to find that the existence of such contracts itself implied the "power" to impose them. See Former Enters., 394 U.S. at 504; Loew's, Inc., 371 U.S. at 49 (fact of market foreclosure confirmed presumption that copyright conferred economic power); N. Pac. Ry. Co., 356 U.S. at 7–8 ("[T]he very existence of this host of tying arrangements is itself compelling evidence of the defendant's great power."); cf. id. at 6–7 (no "economic power" would be present if "one of a dozen food stores in a community were to refuse to sell flour unless the buyer also took sugar"). In short, any departure from perfect competition (including the very existence of tying contracts) was deemed evidence of economic power.


272. See Arnold, Schwinn & Co., 388 U.S. at 379–82 (recognizing that restrictions governing consignment sales may be reasonable methods of competition with other manufacturers); Comanor, supra note 204, at 1436 (contending that contractual integration cannot produce efficiencies); see also infra notes 278–80 and accompanying text (describing endorsement of similar economic reasoning by the United States); cf. Simpson v. Union Oil Co. of Cal., 377 U.S. 13 (1964).

The Court did not pursue this vision of competition unilaterally, but instead received help and encouragement from expert enforcement agencies, viz., the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission. In administrative decisions and briefs filed with the Court, these agencies repeatedly embraced the assumptions of price theory and the concomitant account of competition that these assumptions implied. If exclusive dealing produced cognizable benefits, the government said, dealers would choose such a course voluntarily, that is, without any contractual requirement. Thus, contracts requiring such exclusivity suppressed competition. According to the Department of Justice, exclusive territories, location clauses, and customer restrictions produced no benefits, because: (1) distribution efficiencies could only be realized within the boundaries of the firm or, at any rate, (2) through less restrictive alternatives. Accord-

274. At least some enforcement officials were aware of their influence on generalist courts and resolved only to bring those cases that rested upon what they believed to be sound legal and economic propositions:

It is the duty of the Department of Justice, not to bring a case simply on the basis that it thinks it can win, but to bring only those cases that it thinks it should win. It is our duty to do the best we can in determining appropriate interpretations of the law, and in assisting the courts in creating a rational body of antitrust law by seeking to win cases only on the basis of legal propositions which the Government believes to be sound, on the basis of the best thought it can bring to bear. I believe that it is important that the Government accept this obligation with particular seriousness when it brings antitrust cases. Because antitrust problems are typically technical and complex, many courts, whether rightly or wrongly, tend to rely to a greater extent than usual upon the Government's presentation of its case. This tendency is reinforced by the fact that many issues of antitrust law are presented to the courts in cases involving the FTC—cases in which the courts tend to defer to the judgment of an administrative agency. Thus the Department of Justice must refrain from arguing cases upon dubious legal grounds, even though, by exercising this restraint, it loses cases that might otherwise be won.

Donald Turner, *Address to the American Bar Association*, 10 *Antitrust Bull.* 685, 686 (1965). Thus, the enforcement agencies shared a significant portion of the responsibility for the dominance of price theory's model of competition during this period.

275. In *FTC v. Brown Shoe Co.*, the Solicitor General, head of the Antitrust Division, and FTC urged the Court to void exclusive dealing contracts because:

Even if it were supposed that complete line concentration was the most efficient approach, one would expect that retailers would be eager to achieve the attendant economies and would not have to be held to the line by contractual agreement. As the Commission concluded, "[w]hile line concentration itself may or may not be economically justifiable, there is no economic justification for making the adherence to this doctrine the subject of agreement between buyer and seller and enforcing the agreement to the latter's advantage". Independent shoe dealers do not need restrictions on their freedom of choice in order to achieve efficiency.


277. In a brief coauthored by Donald Turner and Richard Posner, the United States argued:

A rule that requires manufacturers who assume the distribution function themselves more leniently than those who impose restraints on independent distributors merely reflects the fact that, although integration in distribution may sometimes benefit the economy by leading to cost savings, agreements to maintain resale prices or to impose territorial restrictions of unlimited duration or outlet limitations of the type involved here have never been shown to produce comparable economies.


278. See Brief for the United States at 25–26, *White Motor Co. v. United States*, 372 U.S. 253 (1963) (No. 54); see also Turner, *supra* note 205, at 699 (arguing that legitimate objectives of exclusive territories could be achieved through "less restrictive alternatives such as a clause assigning each dealer a territory of
ingly, such arrangements had no purpose except to "restrict competition among parties who would otherwise compete" and overrode "the independent allocations [of sales effort] which would be made by individual firms in responses to the forces in a free market." 279 The Federal Trade Commission agreed, stating that such arrangements prevented "competitive considerations ... from playing their normal part in distributor and dealer relationships," and marked a "distortion of natural patterns of distribution." 280 Numerous antitrust scholars agreed with these assessments. 281

Exclusive territories ancillary to the formation of a joint venture met similar disdain. Although such arrangements could perhaps encourage local advertising, such advertising was "from the standpoint of the policy of the antitrust laws ... at best, a mixed blessing." 282 At any rate, there were less restrictive methods of achieving such promotion, and exclusive territories would result in a "severe diminution in the amount and vigor of compe-

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primary responsibility which he agrees to use his best efforts to develop"). The endorsement of so-called best efforts clauses is of course an example of the price-theoretic assumption that judicial interpretation and enforcement of contracts is costless. See supra notes 202-06 and accompanying text (explaining that price theory adopted this assumption).

279. See Brief for the United States at 21, 25, White Motor Co. (No. 54); see also id. at 24 ("The policy of the Sherman Act is that the proportion of time, money, and effort to be devoted to interbrand rather than intrabrand competition and to each of the inducements offered by sellers to buyers, is to be determined by the free decisions of individual sellers, not by agreements between a manufacturer and its purchasers."); id. at 22 ("The function of the agreement, thus described, is to restrain competition—the very thing the Sherman Act forbids—and thus the argument stands as its own condemnation. The policy of the Sherman Act does not prefer one form of competition to another. The Act is based on the philosophy that the most efficient distribution of trucks, as of any other product, will result from intrabrand competition between sellers of one brand.").

280. See In re Sandura Co., 61 F.T.C. 756, 815–16 (1958); id. at 814 (referring to the "competitive distortions engendered by respondent's artificial distribution structure").

281. For instance, responding to the argument that exclusive territories or location clauses were legitimate methods of assuring adequate dealer promotion, Professor Lawrence Sullivan opined:

The most comprehensive response to arguments like this is that [intrabrand] competition should be the device which determines what the public really needs or wants. Take the claim that display facilities are needed. If the public prefers expensive shopping amenities to lower prices, it will pay the higher prices to have greater amenities. . . . This is what should happen. . . . The contrary view assumes that the manufacturer knows better than the market how dealers ought to be deployed and what services and facilities they should offer in order to maximize output. But this argument, like the comparable one in favor of resale price maintenance, assumes that the manufacturer will always know what is best and that his administered judgment about the ideal deployment of outlets across the nation will be more efficient than the deployment achieved through [the] myriad individual decisions by dealers investing in the distribution process. This assumption undercuts the primary policy commitment which underlies the whole of antitrust, the conviction that market decisions are likely to be more sensitive, flexible and accurate gauges of the way resources should be deployed than any monolithic, administered decision.

SULLIVAN, supra note 239, at 414–16 (emphasis added). Like price theorists, then, Professor Sullivan drew a distinction between "competition" and "the market," on the one hand, and nonstandard contracts (the manufacturer's "monolithic, administered decision") on the other. The later simply did not constitute "competition." See id. at 15–17 (lauding various price-theoretic industrial organization textbooks as proper basis for antitrust economics).

282. See Brief for the United States at 19, United States v. Sealy, Inc., 388 U.S. 350 (1967) (No. 9); see also Brief for the United States at 28, United States v. Topco Assocs., Inc., 405 U.S. 596 (1972) (No. 70–82) (arguing that brand names necessarily "insulate [a product] to some degree, from competition") (citing JOE S. BAIN, BARRIERS TO NEW COMPETITION: THEIR CHARACTER AND CONSEQUENCES IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES 114–15 (1956)).
tition in the industry." Indeed, the United States went so far as to compare such restrictions (unfavorably) to governmental regulation of market entry, the latter of which was superior because administered by disinterested regulators.

The Court's hostility toward any and all contracts that limited competition as it defined it, may seem inconsistent with Standard Oil's normative conclusion that the Sherman Act only bans undue restraints on competition. Any apparent inconsistency is illusory, however, and close analysis reveals that the Court's embrace of price theory was not inconsistent with Standard Oil's consumer-driven approach. Standard Oil did not equate competition with any formal state of affairs or technological practices leading to that state and thus did not approve any restraints that are anticompetitive in a price-theoretic sense. Instead, as noted earlier, that decision equated competition with rivalry, and recognized that some (but not all) restraints on such "competition" could enhance consumer welfare.

For its part, the price-theoretic Court did not "disintegrate [society]... into individual atoms," but like Standard Oil, instead validated or signaled approval of some restrictions on rivalry that appeared to produce technological efficiencies within firms. Such contractual arrangements, which controlled dealers so long as title remained within the manufacturer, allowed firms some control over their distribution network and thus advanced price-theoretic competition. Moreover, while the Court was generally hostile to horizontal and vertical mergers during this period, it repeatedly signaled its approval of transactions that eliminated rivalry between smaller firms if necessary to produce (technological) economies of scale and thereby create a more effective competitor. Like consignment agreements, such transactions re-
strained competition in some sense, by eliminating rivalry that might otherwise take place. Nonetheless, the Court said, such restrictions advanced overall competition as understood by price theorists, and thus were not undue restrictions of competition of the sort condemned by Standard Oil.292

Even decisions of this era that voided nonstandard contracts often invoked Standard Oil, purporting at least to ban only those restraints that unreasonably restrained trade.293 However, price theory’s conclusion that nonstandard contracts produced no cognizable benefits led the Court to conclude that such agreements were not normal, usual, or ordinary practices that advanced competition and trade, but were instead unusual methods that reflected the exercise of or attempt to acquire market power and thus threatened the “evil consequences” of monopoly.294 Because such restraints were inconsistent with a competitive market, they restrained trade unduly and were thus banned.295 While the Court voided some restraints that the Standard Oil Court may have approved, it did not reject the decision’s normative premise but instead applied that premise in light of new theory, just as Standard Oil suggested.296

To be sure, the vision of competition embraced by the Court served social and political goals aside from the furtherance of economic efficiency.297 In particular, decisions voiding nonstandard contracts appeared

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292. See supra notes 38-39 and accompanying text (Standard Oil forbids only undue limits on competition); see also Phila. Nat’l Bank, 374 U.S. at 367 (“The test of a competitive market is not only whether small competitors flourish but also whether consumers are well served.”).

293. See, e.g., United States v. Topco Assocs., Inc., 405 U.S. 596, 606-07 (1972); Arnold, Schwinn & Co., 388 U.S. at 374 (citing Standard Oil for the proposition that the Court must determine “whether the restraint is ‘reasonable’ in the special sense in which § 1 of the Sherman Act must be read for purposes of this inquiry”); Klor’s, Inc. v. Broadway-Hale Stores, Inc., 359 U.S. 207, 211 (1959) (describing Standard Oil as “[a] landmark [case]” that “read § 1 to prohibit . . . undue restraints of trade”); N. Pac. Ry. Co. v. United States, 356 U.S. 1, 5 (1958) (“The courts have construed § 1 as precluding only those contracts or combinations which ‘unreasonably’ restrain competition.”) (citing Standard Oil). It should be noted that several decisions that failed to cite Standard Oil relied upon N. Pac. Ry. Co.’s articulation of the per se rule. See, e.g., United States v. Gen. Motors Co., 384 U.S. 127, 145-46 (1966).

294. See Arnold, Schwinn & Co., 388 U.S. at 379 (enforcement of vertical restraints “would sanction franchising and confinement of distribution as the ordinary instead of the usual method”); Klor’s, Inc., 359 U.S. at 213 (group boycott per se unlawful because it had a “monopolistic tendency”); id. at 211 (Standard Oil banned contracts with a “monopolistic tendency” (quoting Standard Oil Co. of N.J. v. United States, 221 U.S. 1, 57 (1911))).

295. See, e.g., Klor’s, Inc., 359 U.S. at 213 (group boycott “interferes with the natural flow of interstate commerce”); cf. Standard Oil, 221 U.S. at 61 (Sherman Act forbids contracts that produce an “undue restraint of the course of trade”); id. at 58 (American common law treated as illegal contracts that had the effect of restraining the “free flow of commerce”).

296. See supra notes 35-40 (showing that Standard Oil’s Rule of Reason necessarily requires courts to apply evolving economic theory).

297. See Meese, supra note 107, at 466-68 (describing influence of “Populist” social and political concerns on antitrust doctrine during this period); see also Topco, 405 U.S. at 610-11 (characterizing the Sherman Act as a “Magna Carta of free enterprise” that guarantees individual traders the “right” to be free of voluntary contractual restrictions on competition); United States v. Brown Shoe Co., 370 U.S. 294, 344 (1962) (claiming that Congress intended the Clayton Act to further decentralization of economic power even if higher costs and prices might result).
to enhance the freedom of dealers and others bound by such agreements.\footnote{298} Still, as a rhetorical matter at least, the Court embraced its version of competition primarily because of its economic benefits.\footnote{299} In language that could have come from a textbook on industrial organization, the Court insisted that its version of competition between firms unrestrained by nonstandard contracts would produce competitive markets and thus optimal (competitive) prices, output and quality, maximizing the economic welfare of society and consumers.\footnote{300} Any furtherance of noneconomic values was incidental to competition’s tendency to enhance economic welfare.

The Sherman Act was designed to be a comprehensive charter of economic liberty aimed at preserving free and unfettered competition as the rule of trade. It rests on the premise that “the unrestrained interaction of competitive forces will yield the best allocation of our economic resources, the lowest prices, the highest quality and the greatest material progress, while at the same time providing an environment conducive to the preservation of our democratic political and social institutions.”\footnote{301}

By defining competition so narrowly, to exclude nonstandard contracts as monopolistic, the Court was able to justify expansive interference in the economy, under the guise of correcting market failure.\footnote{302} So long as the

\footnote{298} See Meese, supra note 112, at 176–83 (describing so-called Populist approach to vertical restraints that seeks to enhance the “freedom” of dealers and others from such contracts). But see id. at 184–95 (arguing that nonstandard agreements actually enhance freedom).


\footnote{300} See infra notes 378–80 and accompanying text (describing price theory’s conclusion that “competitive” markets produce optimal allocation of resources, prices, output, and quality).

\footnote{301} N. Pac. Ry. Co. v. United States, 356 U.S. 1, 4 (1958) (emphases added); see also Times-Picayune Pub’g Co. v. United States, 345 U.S. 594, 605 (1953) (“Tying arrangements, we may readily agree, flout the Sherman Act’s policy that competition rule the marts of trade. Basic to the faith that a free economy best promotes the public weal is that goods must stand the cold test of competition; that the public, acting through the market’s impersonal judgment, shall allocate the Nation’s resources and thus direct the course its economic development will take.”). The United States agreed: “The policy of the Sherman Act is that the most efficient use of economic resources and the most desirable distribution of economic power results from the separately made choices of buyers and sellers in a competitive marketplace.” Brief for the United States at 7, White Motor Co. v. United States, 372 U.S. 253 (1963) (No. 54).

\footnote{302} See MACHOVEC, supra note 41, at 194–200 (arguing that application of perfect competition model justified expanded antitrust intervention); see also id. at 52–95 (exploring link between perfect competition model and calls for central planning to achieve “perfect” result); Carl J. Dahlman, The Problem of Externality, 22 ILL. & ECON. 141 (1979) (arguing that many economists improperly assume that any departure from perfect competition justifies regulatory intervention). See generally HAYEK, supra note 226, at 100 (arguing that the unrealistic definition of “competition” embraced by many economists creates
dominant economic paradigm defined competition to exclude such agreements, the Court could employ economic theory as a fig leaf, justifying a pursuit of social values by invoking efficiency concerns. 303

D. The Collapse of Price Theory and a New Definition of Competition

Price theory did not maintain its monopoly on industrial organization and antitrust policy indefinitely. Just as rules of per se illegality had reached their greatest scope, a competitor emerged in the form of transaction cost economics. TCE embraced price theory's normative premise, seeking to determine whether practices are competitive in the sense of furthering economic welfare. 304 In so doing, however, TCE challenged the root assumption of price theory's descriptive model of competition, namely, that technological factors gave rise to the existence of firms and determined the proper boundary between the firm and the market. 305 While technological considerations might explain why two stages of a production process should take place in close physical proximity, they could not explain why a single owner should coordinate both stages of the process. 306 In particular, proponents of TCE's new paradigm emphasized that reliance upon market contracting to perform a particular economic function involves a unique cost, namely, the cost of transacting, not incurred when a firm performs an activity itself. 307 The choice between the firm and the market, then, de-

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303. See Meese, supra note 299, at 789-94 (arguing that changes in economic theory have made it more clear that protection of "trader freedom" entails an economic cost and thus caused the Supreme Court to pursue consumer welfare exclusively).

304. See supra note 219 and accompanying text.

305. See supra notes 211-12 and accompanying text.

306. Consider what Professor Bain called the "classic case" of technological benefits purportedly produced by vertical integration: the unification "of iron-making and steel-making to effect a saving in fuel costs by eliminating a reheating of the iron before it is fed into the steel furnace." See BAIN, INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION, supra note 196, at 381; DIRLAM & KAHN, supra note 200, at 23 (employing similar examples); KAYSER & TURNER, supra note 205, at 120 (giving "integrated steel plant" as example of technical economies produced by vertical integration which "leads to an alteration of the structure of the plant as well as the firm" (emphasis added)); see also supra note 200 (collecting additional authorities invoking this example). As Professor Williamson has pointed out, such considerations may well explain why two processes are located in close proximity. They do not, however, explain why both processes fall under common ownership. See Oliver E. Williamson, The Vertical Integration of Production: Market Failure Considerations, 61 AM. ECON. REV. 112 (1971) (discussing traditional view that vertical integration produces economies through technical complementarity in flow process operations); id. at 116-17 (arguing that "flow process economies between otherwise separable stages of production [are] really a special case of the contractual incompleteness argument.... The advantages of integration thus are not that technological (flow process) economies are unavailable to nonintegrated firms, but that integration harmonizes interests (or reconciles differences, often by fiat) and permits an efficient (adaptive, sequential) decision process to be utilized.").

307. See Coase, supra note 198, at 390 ("The main reason why it is profitable to establish a firm would seem to be that there is a cost of using the price mechanism.").
pends at least in part upon the transaction costs of using the latter, costs that are unrelated to production technology. 308

The antiseptic models of price theory—what Professor Coase called "blackboard economics"—had ignored these costs, assuming, for instance, that bargaining and information costs did not exist, and that market transactions consisted simply of costless standard contracts readily enforceable by the courts. 309 By contrast, practitioners of TCE emphasized that the real world often differed substantially from the state of the world assumed by price theory, thus suggesting that price theory's methodology for evaluating the cause and consequence of vertical integration was incomplete. 310 Most importantly, attention to the real world revealed transaction costs in abundance. Firms must identify trading partners and determine the price and quality of the product or service offered. 311 They must negotiate and memorialize agreements governing the transaction, attempting to anticipate and provide for each and every contingency that might occur over a long-term transaction—including the possibility that one or both parties might behave opportunistically, that is, take advantage of the other party so as to reallocate to itself a greater portion of the benefits of the relationship than the parties initially anticipated. 312 While parties could, theoretically provide for all contingencies by relying upon implicit or explicit requirements of good faith, the costs of enforcing such provisions are very real, and courts

308. Coase, supra note 206, at 7 ("The limit to the size of the firm is set where its costs of organizing a transaction become equal to the cost of carrying it out through the market."); Coase, supra note 198, at 390-91; Williamson, supra note 306, passim.

309. See supra notes 189-232 and accompanying text.

310. See Langlois, supra note 200, at 13-14. Here again Professor Coase was prophetic. Speaking of economists' general approach to problems of regulating industry, he said:

Contemplation of an optimal system may suggest ways of improving the system, it may provide techniques of analysis that would otherwise have been missed, and, in certain special cases, it may go far to providing a solution. But in general its influence has been pernicious. It has directed economists' attention away from the main question, which is how alternative arrangements will actually work in practice. It has led economists to derive conclusions for economic policy from a study of an abstract model of a market situation. It is no accident that in the literature (and for that matter in Professor Caves's paper) we find a category "market failure" but no category "government failure." Until we realize that we are choosing between social arrangements which are all more or less failures, we are not likely to make much headway.

Ronald H. Coase, The Regulated Industries—Discussion, 54 AM. ECON. REV. 194, 195 (1964); see also Hayek, supra note 226, at 92 (arguing that the price-theoretic definition of competition "has little claim to be called 'competition' at all" and that "its conclusions are of little use as guides to policy").

311. See Dahlman, supra note 302, at 144-47 (defining transaction costs); see also COASE, supra note 206, at 6 ("In order to carry out a market transaction it is necessary to discover who it is that one wishes to deal with, to inform people that one wishes to deal and on what terms, to conduct negotiations leading up to a bargain, to draw up a contract, to undertake the inspection needed to make sure that the terms of the contract are being observed, and so on." (quoting Ronald H. Coase, The Problem of Social Cost, 3 J.L. & ECON. 1, 15 (1960))).

312. WILLIAMSON, supra note 197, at 47-52 (defining opportunism); id. at 32 (contending that, in the real world, parties must contend with possibility of opportunism when negotiating contracts); Williamson, supra note 306, at 115-17.
are blunt instruments for interpreting and adjusting commercial relationships.\textsuperscript{313}

This new TCE provided an entirely new lens through which to examine the causes and consequences of vertical integration. Even if potential trading partners possessed superior technology and thus lower production costs, reliance upon such partners, i.e., the market, to perform a particular function might be ill-advised given the cost of transacting. Put more bluntly, price theory's market—a series of spot transactions governed by standard contracts—often failed to provide the cheapest way of coordinating the use of a given technology.\textsuperscript{314} As a result, practitioners of TCE came to presume that complete vertical integration is an attempt to avoid or overcome such market failures, thus assuring the best possible allocation of resources in an imperfect world.\textsuperscript{315} Forms of integration that economists and courts once treated as attempts to leverage market power to gain strategic advantage over rivals were now seen by many as attempts to overcome market failure and enhance social welfare, without creating or relying upon market power.\textsuperscript{316}

TCE did more than explain many instances of complete vertical integration—it also offered insights into the rationale of partial integration accomplished solely by contract. Indeed, TCE suggested that the firm is simply a shorthand description of a particular set of contractual relationships, i.e., "a nexus of contracts."\textsuperscript{317} Adoption of this particular set of contractual arrangements (complete vertical integration) can generate its own costs, and the firm and the (spot) market are not the only means of conducting economic activity.\textsuperscript{318} There are an infinite variety of (nonstandard) arrangements "in between," arrangements for which price theory had pro-

\textsuperscript{313} WILLIAMSON, supra note 197, at 32 ("Since the efficacy of court ordering is problematic, contract execution falls heavily on the institutions of private ordering."); id. at 68–84 (describing shortcomings of classical contract law as a vehicle for policing opportunism).

\textsuperscript{314} See OLIVER WILLIAMSON, MARKETS AND HIERARCHIES 8–10, 20–21 (1975) [hereinafter WILLIAMSON, MARKETS].

\textsuperscript{315} See COASE, supra note 206, at 5–7; WILLIAMSON, supra note 197, at 103–30 (arguing that "vertical integration . . . is more consistent with transaction cost economizing than with the leading alternatives"); WILLIAMSON, MARKETS, supra note 314, at 20 (stating that "a presumption of market failure is warranted where it is observed that transactions are shifted out of a market and into a firm"); Williamson, supra note 208, at 273 ("The older theory of the firm as production function gradually made way (or gave way) to a theory of the firm in which express allowance was made for transaction costs. Accordingly, the firm was thereafter described as a governance structure . . . . technology was no longer determinative, and the boundaries of the firm (what to make, what to buy, how to trade, etc.) now needed to be derived.").

\textsuperscript{316} See COASE, supra note 196, at 67–68 (asserting that nonstandard contracts and other practices inexplicable under price theory are often necessary for "bringing about a competitive situation"); cf. HAYEK, supra note 226, at 96 (suggesting that many activities inconsistent with the perfect competition model are in fact methods of achieving a more "competitive" result).

\textsuperscript{317} See Armen A. Alchian & Harold Demsetz, Production, Information Costs, and Economic Organization, 62 AM. ECON. REV. 777 (1972); see also Scott E. Masten, A Legal Basis for the Firm, 4 J.L. ECON. & ORG. 181, 194–95 (1968) (observing that transactors could replicate by contract the various rights and obligations that arise by default within a firm).

duced no benign explanation.319 Relying upon a revised paradigm based upon transaction cost reasoning, economists and others offered new interpretations of old phenomena—nonstandard contracts—the price-theoretic inhospitality tradition had condemned.320 Tying contracts, for instance, were often beneficial methods of protecting the goodwill of a manufacturer or franchisor by ensuring that purchasers would choose complements of sufficient quality.321 Vertical restraints on dealers such as exclusive territories or minimum resale price maintenance could encourage optimal promotional efforts by ensuring that dealers who invested in such promotion received remuneration for their efforts.322 Maximum resale price maintenance could also enhance a manufacturer’s goodwill, by preventing opportunistic price gouging by dealers that could undermine the manufacturer’s reputation.323

Although initially couched as an explanation for vertical restraints, TCE suggested new explanations for horizontal agreements as well. The firm itself, of course, was simply a nexus of contracts between potential competitors.324 Like vertical restraints, horizontal limits on rivalry by joint venture partners could combat market failure and make the venture a more effective competitor.325 Price ceilings set by otherwise independent venture partners could protect consumers and the venture from opportunism.326 Concerted refusals to deal could be salutary methods of self-help by ven-

319. See Steven Cheung, The Contractual Nature of the Firm, 26 J.L. & ECON. 1, 19 (1983) (“The polar cases are complicated by middlemen and subcontractors; agents contract among themselves; and any type of input may support a variety of contractual arrangements. We surmise that these very complications, which render the ‘firm’ ambiguous, have arisen from attempts to save transaction costs that were not avoidable in the polar cases.”); Benjamin Klein et al., Vertical Integration, Appropriable Rents, and the Competitive Contracting Process, 21 J.L. & ECON. 297, 326 (1978) (“[The] primary distinction between transactions made within a firm and transactions made in the marketplace may be too simplistic. Many long-term contractual relationships . . . blur the line between the market and the firm.”).

320. See COASE, supra note 206, at 6–7 (“The existence of transaction costs will lead those who wish to trade to engage in practices which bring about a reduction of transaction costs whenever the loss suffered in other ways from the adoption of those practices is less than the transaction cost saved. The people one deals with, the type of contract entered into, the kind of product or service supplied, will all be affected.”) (emphasis added)); see also THOMAS KUHN, THE STRUCTURE OF SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS 114–17 (2d ed. 1970) (explaining that paradigm shifts cause reinterpretation of previously observed phenomena).

321. See Benjamin Klein & Lester F. Saft, The Law and Economics of Franchise Tying Contracts, 28 J.L. & ECON. 345 (1985) (arguing that franchise tying contracts can protect goodwill of a franchise system); Paul H. Rubin, The Theory of the Firm and the Structure of the Franchise Contract, 21 J.L. & ECON. 223 (1978); see also Meese, supra note 68, at 61–94 (employing transaction-cost reasoning to show that tying contracts are often voluntary integration designed to obviate market failure).


324. See generally Alchian & Demsetz, supra note 317, passim.

325. See Bork, supra note 322, at 429–65.

326. See Easterbrook, supra note 323, at 893–95.
ture partners enforcing beneficial forms of contractual integration. Proponents of a transaction cost approach opined that such nonstandard practices were presumptively efficient attempts to avoid the market failures that would otherwise result from reliance on standard contracting in an atomistic market.

TCE did more than provide new explanations for a variety of practices. It also implied an entirely different model of competition relevant to application of Standard Oil's Rule of Reason and its distinction between ordinary and undue restraints on competition or rivalry. Price theory, it will be recalled, equated competition with technological rivalry between autonomous firms, unconstrained by nonstandard contracts. Such rivalry took the form of quality improvements and price reductions and, when unconstrained, produced the best possible allocation of resources. While mergers or internal expansion could enhance such competition by generating technological efficiencies, contracts that limited rivalry between otherwise independent firms produced no cognizable benefits. Such agreements were therefore anticompetitive in a price-theoretic sense and thus undue restraints under Standard Oil, restraints that exercised market power and produced a departure from the optimal mix of price, quality, and output that a "competitive" market would produce. Government, it was said, should employ antitrust regulation to correct these market failures.

According to the new paradigm, however, it was price-theoretic competition that would often lead to market failure and thus interfere with an efficient allocation of resources. Instead of producing the most favorable mixture of price, output, and quality, reliance upon technological rivalry and standard contracts to conduct economic activity often led to suboptimal results from the perspective of society and consumers. Far from "destroying" useful competition and enhancing market power, then, complete

327. See, e.g., HOVENKAMP, supra note 42, at 224–27 (describing possible procompetitive purposes of collective refusals to deal); see also RICHARD A. POSNER, ANTITRUST LAW: AN ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE 207–11 (1976) (characterizing boycotts as self-help measures that can often serve beneficial purposes).

328. See WILLIAMSON, supra note 198, at 28 (concluding that there is a "rebuttable presumption that nonstandard forms of contracting have efficiency purposes"); see also COASE, supra note 206, at 26 (noting the ubiquity of transaction costs and resulting market failure in the real world).

To be sure, some proponents of this more hospitable approach to nonstandard contracts purported to rest their arguments on "price theory." See, e.g., BORK, supra note 100, at 117–29 (arguing that "price-theory" should guide application of antitrust statutes); Robert H. Bork, Resale Price Maintenance and Consumer Welfare, 77 YALE L. J. 950, 952 (1968) (contending that arguments in favor of minimum rpm are "grounded in basic price theory"); Richard A. Posner, The Chicago School of Antitrust Analysis, 127 U. PA. L. REV. 925, 928 (1979) (arguing that hospitable, "Chicago" approach to antitrust rests upon rigorous application of price theory); see also Jacobs, supra note 65, at 228–29 (arguing that Chicago School approach rested on applied price theory). However, close analysis shows that, despite this rhetorical embrace of price theory, these insights in fact rested upon a rejection of many assumptions of price theory in favor of Transaction Cost Economics. See Meese, supra note 112, at 166–70.

329. See supra note 239 and accompanying text.

330. Id.

331. See supra notes 233–39 and accompanying text.

332. See infra notes 338–68 and accompanying text.

333. See supra notes 240–51 and accompanying text.
vertical integration and various forms of nonstandard contracting often promoted competition and consumer welfare by guiding the allocation of resources closer to the socially optimal result that a well-functioning market would actually produce.\textsuperscript{334} An exclusive territory that induced dealers to provide appropriate services and information to consumers produced a better allocation of resources and more consumer satisfaction, while at the same time furthering rivalry between manufacturers.\textsuperscript{335} Similarly, a franchisor’s requirement that its franchisees purchase inputs from it could encourage investments in quality that consumers were willing to pay for, avoiding the suboptimal inefficient equilibrium that unconstrained rivalry might otherwise produce and furthering rivalry between franchise systems.\textsuperscript{336} Finally, restrictions on the marketing discretion of joint venture partners could induce each venturer to engage in optimal promotion of the venture’s product, enhancing competition with other ventures and assuring more consumer satisfaction than unconstrained competition would produce.\textsuperscript{337}

To be sure, each such contract restrains competition in one sense. Yet, if courts insist, as they have, on defining competition as that process which best serves the interests of consumers, none of these arrangements is anticompetitive in a sense relevant to Rule of Reason analysis.\textsuperscript{338} That rule does not treat competitive rivalry as an end in itself, but instead views rivalry and cooperation as complementary tools for maximizing social welfare.\textsuperscript{339} The competition that takes place in the real world and between various groups ultimately depends upon the institution of private contracts, many of which, including the firm itself, are nonstandard.\textsuperscript{340} Innovation includes the discovery of new organizational forms and the application of old

\textsuperscript{334} See William F. Baxter, The Viability of Vertical Restraints Doctrine, 75 CAL. L. REV. 933, 947-48 (1987) (arguing that vertical restraints are forms of partial integration that overcome market failures and associated distortions of the allocation of resources); Coase, supra note 196, at 68 (arguing that nonstandard contracts and other practices are often “a necessary element in bringing about a competitive situation”); Oliver Williamson, Assessing Vertical Market Restrictions: Antitrust Ramifications of the Transaction Cost Approach, 127 U. PA. L. REV. 953, 987-88 (1979) (“[A]llocative inefficiency is more apt to arise with respect to cost concerns, such as diseconomies of scale, failure to operate assets in a least cost way, and the incurring of significant transaction costs. Organizational changes that give rise to cost savings in any of the respects will, if not accompanied by offsetting price distortions, invariably yield social gains.”); cf. Kayser & Turner, supra note 205, at 12-13 (arguing that courts should void anticompetitive arrangements, thus furthering “competition” in each industry and enhancing social welfare) (citing Pigou, supra note 238).

\textsuperscript{335} See Bork, supra note 328, at 950; Bork, supra note 35, at 473-75; Williamson, supra note 334, passim.

\textsuperscript{336} See Klein & Saft, supra note 321, at 349-54.

\textsuperscript{337} See Bork, supra note 35, at 472-75.

\textsuperscript{338} See supra notes 240-45 and accompanying text (showing that courts embraced this technical model of competition during the inhospitality era); see also supra notes 41-42 and accompanying text ("Standard Oil equated competition with "rivalry").

\textsuperscript{339} See supra notes 41-42 and accompanying text; see also supra notes 286-88 and accompanying text (arguing that courts embracing the price-theoretic paradigm did not void all restrictions on rivalry).

\textsuperscript{340} See Nat’l Soc’y of Prof’l Eng’rs v. United States, 435 U.S. 679, 688 (1978); Cont’l T.V., Inc. v. GTE Sylvania, Inc., 433 U.S. 36, 53 n.21 (1977); Chi. Bd. of Trade v. United States, 246 U.S. 231, 238 (1918); Standard Oil Co. of N.J. v. United States, 221 U.S. 1, 62 (1911); cf. Hayek, supra note 226, at 96 (arguing that various activities inexplicable under price theory’s model of competition are in fact necessary to achieving a competitive result).
forms to new contexts.\textsuperscript{341} Such contracts prevent or attenuate market failure, moving the market toward what economists would deem a more competitive result. Indeed, as Professor Coase pointed out, many markets deemed "perfectly competitive" are in fact the end result of complex contracts limiting rivalry between competitors.\textsuperscript{342} This contractual competition cannot produce perfect results—no human institution ever can. Nonetheless, the result is superior to that which would obtain in a (real) world without nonstandard contracting.\textsuperscript{343} These contracts do not depend upon the creation or enhancement of market power and thus do not produce the evils against which antitrust law is directed. From the perspective of the Sherman Act and Standard Oil’s Rule of Reason, such limitations are not undue, but instead serve to promote and enhance the sort of real world

\textsuperscript{341} See JOSEPH A. SCHUMPETER, CAPITALISM, SOCIALISM, AND DEMOCRACY 84 (1943) (arguing that price competition is "a matter of comparative indifference" when compared to "the competition from the new commodity, the new technology, the new source of supply, [or] the new type of organization" (emphasis added)); Oliver E. Williamson, Antitrust Lenses and Transaction Cost Economics, in ANTITRUST, INNOVATION, AND COMPETITIVENESS 139 (Thomas M. Jorde & David J. Teece eds., 1992) ("That the ‘same technical facilities’ produce with a ‘great variety of costs’ comes as no surprise if nontrivial cost consequences result when firms are organized and managed differently.").

\textsuperscript{342} Speaking in particular about commodity exchanges, Coase noted:

I refer to commodity exchanges and stock exchanges. These are normally organized by a group of traders (the members of the exchange) which owns (or rents) the physical facility within which transactions take place. All exchanges regulate in great detail the activities of those who trade in these markets (the times at which transactions can be made, what can be traded, the responsibilities of the parties, the terms of settlement, etc.), and they all provide machinery for the settlement of disputes and impose sanctions against those who infringe the rules of the exchange. It is not without significance that these exchanges, often used by economists as examples of a perfect market and perfect competition, are markets in which transactions are highly regulated (and this quite apart from any government regulation that there may be). It suggests, I think correctly, that for anything approaching perfect competition to exist, an intricate system of rules and regulations would normally be needed. Economists observing the regulations of the exchanges often assume that they represent an attempt to exercise monopoly power and aim to restrain competition. They ignore or, at any rate, fail to emphasize an alternative explanation for these regulations: that they exist in order to reduce transaction costs and therefore to increase the volume of trade.

COASE, supra note 206, at 8–9 (emphasis added); see also Frank H. Easterbrook, The Limits of Antitrust, 63 TEX. L. REV. 1, 1 (1984) ("The goal of antitrust is to perfect the operation of competitive markets. What does this mean? A ‘competitive market’ is not necessarily the one with the most rivalry moment-to-moment. The auction in which atomistically small buyers and sellers continuously shout out bid and asked prices, the picture of ‘perfect competition’ found in economic texts, is a hypothetical construct. Every market entails substantial cooperation over some domain in order to facilitate competition elsewhere. . . . Markets themselves are organized. The Chicago Board of Trade, perhaps the closest of modern markets to the textbook ideal, has a sheaf of rules and cooperative arrangements that reduce the cost of competition."). Compare Anderson v. United States, 171 U.S. 604, 616 (1898) (sustaining rules ancillary to cattle exchange whose object was to "provide for the ready transaction of the business of the associates by obtaining a general headquarters for its conduct, and thus to ensure a quick and certain market for the sale or purchase of the article dealt in"), with HAYEK, supra note 226, at 96 ("The whole organization of the market serves mainly the need of spreading the information on which the buyer is to act." (emphasis added)).

\textsuperscript{343} See HAYEK, supra note 226, at 100 ("The basis of comparison, on the grounds of which the achievement of competition [in the real world] ought to be judged, cannot be a situation which is different from the objective facts and which cannot be brought about by any known means. It ought to be the situation as it would exist if competition were prevented from operating. Not the approach to an unachievable and meaningless ideal but the improvement upon the conditions that would exist without competition should be the test."). Applying Professor Hayek’s wisdom, then, many decisions during the price-theoretic era “prevented competition from operating.”
competition that would develop trade and advance society’s welfare.\(^\text{344}\) Given this recognition of contractual competition, proof that a nonstandard contract limits rivalry in no way indicates that it is anticompetitive.

**E. TCE in the Supreme Court: A Partial Victory for the New Paradigm**

The insights produced by TCE soon came to influence antitrust policy, leading the Supreme Court to contract the scope of certain per se rules. Most notably, these advances in theory caused the courts and enforcement agencies to abandon their hostility toward many vertical restraints. In *Continental T.V., Inc. v. GTE Sylvania Inc.*, for instance, the Court abandoned the per se rule against manufacturer restrictions on locations, territories, and customers that dealers could serve.\(^\text{345}\) The Court relied expressly upon transaction cost reasoning, emphasizing that a “purely competitive situation” between dealers could produce a market failure, namely, inadequate promotional expenditures.\(^\text{346}\) Thus, while vertical restraints necessarily hindered intrabrand competition, they could in some cases enhance interbrand competition between manufacturers by preventing dealers from free riding on the promotional efforts of their colleagues.\(^\text{347}\) While such restraints constrained the discretion of dealers, such a noneconomic concern was beyond the scope of the Sherman Act.\(^\text{348}\)

A decade later, the Court narrowed the definition of minimum resale price maintenance, excluding agreements between a dealer and manufacturer to terminate another dealer that was cutting prices.\(^\text{349}\) Here again, the Court relied upon transaction cost reasoning, noting that reductions in dealer prices could go hand-in-hand with a reduction in promotional efforts, to the detriment of interbrand competition and consumers.\(^\text{350}\) An-

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\(^{344}\) See Coase, supra note 198, at 68.


\(^{346}\) "Because of market imperfections such as the ‘free rider’ effect, these [promotional] services might not be provided by retailers in a purely competitive situation, despite the fact that each retailer’s benefit would be greater if all provided the service than if none did." *Id.* at 55.

\(^{347}\) *Id.* at 55-56; see also Williamson, supra note 197, at 370–73 (describing the transaction-cost basis of *GTE Sylvania*).

\(^{348}\) *GTE Sylvania, Inc.*, 433 U.S. at 53 n.21 (“Competitive economies have social and political as well as economic advantages, but an antitrust policy divorced from market considerations would lack any objective benchmarks. As Mr. Justice Brandeis reminded us: ‘Every agreement concerning trade, every regulation of trade, restraints. To bind, to restrain, is of their very essence.’” (quoting Chi. Bd. of Trade v. United States, 246 U.S. 231, 238 (1918))).


\(^{350}\) See Bus. Elecs. Corp., 485 U.S. at 727–28. To be sure, the Court did not carefully examine whether, in fact, the restraint at issue actually produced the benefits the defendants claimed for it. See Williamson, supra note 341, at 156–57 (criticizing the Court for simply “parroting” defendants’ free rider argument, even though the evidence was “conflicting”). It should be emphasized, though, that the reasonableness *vel non* of the restraint was not before the Court. Instead, the narrow question presented was whether the restraint *plausibly* produced procompetitive benefits and thus survived per se scrutiny. See *Bus. Elecs. Corp.*, 485 U.S. at 728–30 (declining to apply a per se rule because “a quite plausible purpose
other decade would pass before the Court abandoned the per se ban on maximum resale price maintenance, finding that such restraints could further interbrand competition by protecting consumers from opportunist price gouging by a manufacturer's dealers.\footnote{351}

At the same time, the Court slowly contracted the scope of the per se rule against horizontal restraints on rivalry, recognizing in the process that such restraints can produce nontechnological efficiencies.\footnote{352} In \textit{Broadcast Music, Inc. v. CBS, Inc.}, for instance, the Court refused to apply the per se rule to a price agreement between thousands of composers, finding that the arrangement was necessary to the creation of a new product—a blanket license—and thus properly subject to analysis under the Rule of Reason.\footnote{353} In \textit{NCAA}, discussed earlier,\footnote{354} the Court further contracted the per se rule, holding that some cooperation between competitors—including cooperation on price—was necessary to create college football, with the result that Rule of Reason treatment of other horizontal ancillary restraints was appropriate.\footnote{355} Like \textit{GTE Sylvania, Inc.}, and its progeny, each of these decisions relied on transaction cost reasoning. In \textit{Broadcast Music, Inc.}, for instance, the Court emphasized that individual bargains between composers and performers—price-theoretic competition—were rarely feasible, and that the blanket license under challenge was necessary to overcome these costs and thus increase the output of performances and compositions.\footnote{356} Moreover, the Court in \textit{NCAA} concluded that (price-theoretic) "competition" between schools to attract athletes would transform amateur football into professional football, undermining the league's effort to offer a distinctive product to consumers.\footnote{357} In each case, the Court recognized that un-
constrained rivalry between horizontal competitors could produce a market failure, reducing the welfare of consumers and society. 358

Each of these modern decisions rejected a price-theoretic account of competition in favor of one derived from TCE. In so doing, courts translated Standard Oil's normative premise in light of new understandings of the economic causes and consequences of certain restraints. 359 Restraints once deemed entirely anticompetitive and thus unlawful per se now could produce cognizable benefits and were properly subject to a more discriminating analysis under the Rule of Reason. 360

This reliance upon a new economic paradigm led some to proclaim the death of the inhospitality tradition. 361 The tradition is alive, if not entirely well, however. GTE Sylvania, Inc., itself drew a line between non-price vertical restraints and minimum resale price maintenance, suggesting that the latter would remain unlawful per se, as it has. 362 Such a distinction has no basis in TCE, which views both practices as methods of overcoming the market failure that unbridled rivalry would produce. 363 Nearly a decade after GTE Sylvania, Inc., the Court reaffirmed the per se rule against tying contracts, failing to recognize the various benefits of these arrangements and reitering the claim that such agreements necessarily thwart "competition on the merits" when obtained by sellers with market power. 364 In so doing, the Court reiterated its claim that technological competition would maximize social wealth. 365 Finally, the Court has also reaffirmed the per se

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358. See supra notes 352–57 and accompanying text.
359. See supra notes 59–68 and accompanying text (showing that Standard Oil contemplates such translation).
364. Jefferson Parish Hosp. Dist. No. 2 v. Hyde, 466 U.S. 2, 12 (1984) (concluding that where seller possesses market power, "forcing" is present, [and] competition on the merits in the market for the tied item is restrained); accord Eastman Kodak Co. v. Image Technical Servs., Inc., 504 U.S. 451 (1992); see also Meese, supra note 68, at 86–94 (arguing that developments in transaction cost economics require repudiation of Jefferson Parish). It should be noted that, despite its adherence to the per se rule, Jefferson Parish adopted a more rigorous definition of market power than that embraced by prior decisions. See id. at 26–29. But see Eastman Kodak, 504 U.S. at 467–78 (holding that the existence of information gaps and specific-investments confers market power for per se purposes).
365. See Jefferson Parish, 466 U.S. at 12.
rule against maximum horizontal price-fixing, reiterating its previous assertion that such conduct thwarts "the forces of the competitive market." 366

Despite the revolution in economic theory worked by TCE, the case law governing the scope of per se rules lacks a coherent account of competition. Some doctrines still equate competition with technological rivalry, unconstrained by nonstandard contracts. 367 Arrangements inconsistent with such rivalry are therefore anticompetitive. Other decisions embrace a more modern, contractual version, which recognizes that real world competition usually requires contracts and other practices inexplicable with price-theoretic models. 368 The trend, if there is one, would seem to be away from price theory.

IV. THE RULE OF REASON'S OUTMODED MODEL OF COMPETITION

By embracing TCE in some per se contexts, the Court has significantly expanded the number of contracts subject to full analysis under the Rule of Reason. Unlike per se analysis, which consists of purely hypothetical assertions about a restraint's costs and benefits, analysis under the Rule of Reason calls for examination of a restraint's actual economic impact. 369 Under current law this analysis contains three main elements. First, the plaintiff must establish a prima facie case, by showing that a restraint produces actual detrimental effects or offering indirect evidence that the defendants possess or may acquire market power. 370 Second, if the plaintiff makes such a showing, defendants must respond by offering proof of real cognizable benefits that outweigh any harm identified by the plaintiff. 371 Third, even if the defendants show that the benefits of a practice outweigh its harms, a plaintiff can respond by showing that a less restrictive alternative will produce the same benefits. 372

As shown below, the current structure of Rule of Reason analysis as applied to contractual integration reflects an outmoded model of competition, a model that the Court has often rejected in the per se context. Although judicial embrace of TCE and a contractual version of competition has saved many forms of contractual integration from condemnation under

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366. See Arizona v. Maricopa County Med. Soc'y, 457 U.S. 332, 346-47 (1982) (quoting Albrecht v. Herald Co., 390 U.S. 145, 152 (1968)). It should also be noted that the Court has retained the distinction between "competition on the merits" and presumptively anticompetitive nonstandard contracts in the monopolization context. See Eastman Kodak, 504 U.S. at 482-83 (holding that contracts by monopolists that foreclose "competition on the merits" for a significant portion of the marketplace are presumptively unlawful); accord Aspen Skiing Co. v. Aspen Highlands Skiing Corp., 472 U.S. 585 (1985); see also Alan J. Meese, Don't Disintegrate Microsoft (Yet), 9 GEO. MASON L. REV. 761, 786-90 (2001) (showing that Court's preference for "competition on the merits" in the monopolization context reflects the inhospitality approach to antitrust).

367. See supra note 244 and accompanying text.

368. See supra Part III.D.

369. See supra notes 103-04.

370. See supra Part II.C.1.

371. See supra Part II.C.2.

372. See supra Part II.C.3 (describing current law).
the per se rule, the current structure of Rule of Reason analysis applied to these very same restraints rejects TCE in favor of a price-theoretic, technological account of competition. More precisely, each element of the current Rule of Reason balancing test rests upon the sort of outmoded price-theoretic premises that gave rise to the inhospitality tradition and its broad per se rules.

Application of the TCE paradigm suggests that the current Rule of Reason test is flawed as applied to contractual integration in three distinct ways. First, proof of actual detrimental effects should not suffice to establish a *prima facie* case that contractual integration that plausibly overcomes market failure is harmful. Second, if such proof does suffice and defendants show that such integration will overcome a market failure, courts should not balance such benefits against purported harms. Third, proof that a less restrictive alternative will produce benefits similar to those produced by the restraint in question should not entitle a plaintiff to judgment. While the current Rule of Reason test may well make sense when applied to restraints or mergers that create technological efficiencies that arise within a firm, application of that test to contractual integration that purportedly prevents market failure cannot be justified. Courts and the enforcement agencies should alter the structure of Rule of Reason analysis to account for recent advances in economic theory, just as they have done so often in the per se context.

**A. The Prima Facie Case**

Current law allows plaintiffs to establish a *prima facie* case by showing that the contract under challenge produces higher prices or a reduction in output or quality when compared to the status quo *ante*.373 While plaintiffs can also rely upon proof that the defendants possess a significant share of a properly defined market characterized by entry barriers, relatively few plaintiffs are able to make such a showing. Leading scholars and the enforcement agencies have endorsed the actual detrimental effects approach, although some lower courts, particularly the Seventh Circuit, have demurred.374

On its face, the actual detrimental effects test seems a straightforward application of *Standard Oil*. That decision, after all, held that the Sherman Act bans those contracts producing the "evils" or consequences of monopoly, *viz.* higher prices, lower output, or a deterioration in quality.375 Proof that a restraint results in a change in price or output should therefore, it seems, cast upon the defendants some burden of justification.

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374. *See, e.g.*, Chi. Prof'l Sports Ltd. P'ship v. NBA, 95 F.3d 593, 600–01 (7th Cir. 1996); *see also* Murrow Furniture Galleries, Inc. v. Thomasville Furniture Indus., Inc., 889 F.2d 524, 528 (4th Cir. 1989).
375. *See supra* notes 44–46 and accompanying text (explaining *Standard Oil*'s normative premise).
Current law's definition of a prima facie case is a faithful application of *Standard Oil* if the price-theoretic approach to industrial organization provides a satisfactory model for interpreting the causes and consequences of economic activity in general and nonstandard contracts in particular. As explained earlier, the price-theoretic paradigm assumes that competition consists of constant technological rivalry between various firms, unconstrained by nonstandard contracts. This rivalry manifests itself in unilateral efforts to alter the cost and quality of a firm’s products. While mergers and other practices producing technological efficiencies can be competitive within this paradigm, nonstandard contracts cannot produce cognizable benefits and are thus monopolistic.

The competition imagined by price theory and endorsed during the inhospitality era results in a competitive result, that is, a competitive equilibrium in prices, output, and quality. This equilibrium reflects an optimal allocation of resources and thus maximizes the welfare of society. These results, in turn, form a sort of baseline, the departure from which is presumptively (and etymologically) anticompetitive. By their nature, nonstandard contracts produce no cognizable benefits and thus reflect an anticompetitive attempt to exercise or obtain market power and thereby produce price, quality, and output different from the competitive baseline. Such reasoning led courts at one time to condemn all such nonstandard contracts as unlawful per se or nearly so, with little or no analysis of their actual effects.

As explained earlier, the Supreme Court has rejected the price-theoretic account of competition in certain per se contexts, mandating Rule of Reason scrutiny of many nonstandard contracts as a result. Moreover, a requirement that a plaintiff actually prove that a restraint produces tangible anticompetitive effects would seem to be an improvement over the hostility toward such restraints manifested by the inhospitality tradition. Nonetheless, reliance upon actual detrimental effects to establish a prima facie case rests upon a similar embrace of price-theoretic competition as a baseline for evaluating the effect of contractual integration. For instance, any presumption that a price increase caused by the adoption of a restraint reflects the exercise of market power necessarily depends upon an assumption that the prices set by the preexisting unrestrained market were competitive in some relevant sense. Such an assumption, of course, flows

376. *See supra* notes 218–26 and accompanying text.
377. *See supra* notes 227–32 and accompanying text.
379. *See N. Pac. Ry. Co. v. United States*, 356 U.S. 1, 4 (1958); *Times-Picayune Publ’g Co. v. United States*, 345 U.S. 594, 605 (1953); *see also supra* notes 218–26 and accompanying text.
380. *See supra* notes 246–73.
381. *See supra* notes 346–52 and accompanying text.
382. The enforcement agencies have embraced this assumption explicitly, stating that the “central question” in Rule of Reason analysis is whether a restraint results in prices or output different from what an “unrestrained” market would produce. *See Competitor Collaboration Guidelines, supra* note 144, § 3.1 (“Rule of reason analysis focuses on the state of competition with, as compared to without, the
naturally from application of the price-theoretic paradigm and its account of competition.

Adoption of the revised economic paradigm produced by TCE undermines price theory’s model of competition and with it the account of anticompetitive harm that drives the definition of a prima facie case embraced by courts, enforcement agencies, and numerous leading scholars. According to this new paradigm, there is no reason to presume that results produced by rivalry unconstrained by nonstandard contracts are competitive in any relevant sense or otherwise appropriate benchmarks for measuring the effect of a restraint.\textsuperscript{383} To the contrary, TCE predicts that unrestrained rivalry between autonomous firms will often result in a market failure, that is, a departure from the optimal allocation of resources that a perfectly competitive market would produce.\textsuperscript{384} Such a departure will necessarily manifest itself in prices, output, or quality different from what a well-functioning market would bring about.

As a result, where defendants avoid per se liability by plausibly asserting that a restraint combats a market failure, proof that contractual integration results in prices or other terms of trade different from those that existed before the agreement does not suggest the presence of or attempt to obtain market power. As noted earlier, TCE adopts a presumption that nonstandard contracts have efficiency purposes, absent concrete proof to the contrary.\textsuperscript{385} By embracing TCE in the per se context, the Supreme Court has adopted a similar presumption, which plaintiffs must rebut by establishing a prima facie case when challenging a restraint under the Rule of Reason.

Proof that an agreement results in prices or output different from the status quo ante in no way establishes that a restraint produces cognizable antitrust harm. Here it is important to keep in mind that: (1) the defendant has avoided per se treatment by adducing a plausible story that the restraint overcomes market failure; (2) the plaintiff has adduced no evidence regarding the structure of the relevant market; and (3) market failures are wide-

\textsuperscript{383} See supra notes 329-44 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{384} See supra notes 331-34 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{385} See supra notes 321-28 and accompanying text; see also WILLIAMSON, supra note 197, at 28 (concluding that there is “[a] rebuttable presumption that nonstandard forms of contracting have efficiency purposes”).
spread. As a result, proof that a restraint alters price or output when compared to the status quo ante is at least equally consistent with an alternative explanation, namely, that the agreement under scrutiny corrects a market failure and does not involve the exercise or creation of market power. Because such failures can result in prices that are below the optimum, or output that is above it, contracts that correct or attenuate market failure will often increase prices or reduce output when compared to the status quo ante. As a result, proof that such a restraint alters price or other terms of trade is at least equally consistent with a procompetitive explanation, and thus cannot give rise to a prima facie case under settled antitrust doctrine. Absent proof that market structure is conducive to the creation or exercise of market power, a plaintiff’s attempt to establish a prima facie case should fail.

Consideration of three examples will illustrate this counterintuitive point. First, assume that a manufacturer grants its dealers exclusive territories, departing from a prior policy that allowed dealers to sell where they pleased. Assume further that a terminated dealer (or the government) challenges the policy under the Sherman Act. Under current law, the parties to the arrangement could avoid per se condemnation by claiming that the restraint will prevent dealers from free riding on each others’ promo-

386. See Coase, supra note 206, at 26 (noting that transaction costs and thus market failures are ubiquitous in the real world).

One might argue that the very fact that a plaintiff has selected a particular case for litigation itself suggests that the defendants’ conduct is more harmful than the average contract. Why, after all, would a plaintiff waste resources challenging an arrangement that a court will most likely deem reasonable? However, it should be noted that a plaintiff’s chance of success will itself be a function of the structure of Rule of Reason analysis articulated by the courts. If a plaintiff could establish a prima facie case simply by showing that a restraint produced prices above the status quo ante, then plaintiffs could more readily avoid summary judgment and thus use the threat of treble damage liability to negotiate a generous settlement. The prospect of such a settlement, and not the underlying economics of the challenged agreement, may drive much antitrust litigation, with the result that there is no reason to assume that challenged agreements are significantly more anticompetitive than those that are not, at least so long as courts adhere to the current approach to Rule of Reason litigation.

387. See Baxter, supra note 334, at 948; Coase, supra note 196, at 68 (contending that nonstandard contracts and other practices are often attempts at “bringing about a competitive situation”); Williamson, supra note 334, at 987–88 (“[A]llocative inefficiency is more apt to arise with respect to cost concerns, such as diseconomies of scale, failure to operate assets in a least cost way, and the incurring of significant transaction costs. Organizational changes that give rise to cost savings in any of these respects will, if not accompanied by offsetting price distortions, invariably yield social gains.”).

388. See supra notes 297–301 (explaining that price-theoretic “competition” can produce prices, output and quality that depart from the optimum).


tionally efforts and thus counteract a market failure. Moreover, the logic of decisions such as NCAA and Indiana Federation of Dentists suggests that proof that the restraint increases the retail price of the manufacturer's product should establish a prima facie case that the arrangement is "anti-competitive." Should proof that the restraint produces prices above the preexisting level establish a prima facie case? Empathically not. A market that is competitive in a price-theoretic sense may not produce sufficient dealer investment in promotional activity or other services. Such activity costs money, and a dealer will not invest money in promotion unless it can capture the benefits of such expenditures. Thus, reliance on unconstrained dealers to distribute a product may produce a market failure.

An exclusive territory could correct this market failure, by conferring a sort of property right on dealers to sell in a particular area. Armed with


392. See NCAA v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Okla., 468 U.S. 85, 104–08 (1984) (holding that proof that a restraint increases prices of defendants' products suffices to establish a prima facie case); see also Jefferson Parish Hosp. Dist. No. 2 v. Hyde, 466 U.S. 2, 29–31 (1984) (conducting Rule of Reason analysis despite absence of market power); GTE Sylvania, Inc., 433 U.S. at 51–59 (suggesting that courts should analyze nonprice vertical restraints by comparing impact on "intrabrand" and "interbrand" competition); supra notes 117–38 and accompanying text (showing that the Supreme Court has not limited the "actual detrimental effects" test to the horizontal context). But see supra notes 151–52 and accompanying text (suggesting that some courts apparently require proof of marketwide "actual detrimental effects" where certain vertical restraints are concerned).

393. See GTE Sylvania, Inc., 433 U.S. at 51–52 (assuming that reduction in intrabrand competition is an antitrust harm). It should be noted that some scholars who would otherwise apply the "actual detrimental effects" approach conclude that a plaintiff should have to offer some evidence of market shares to establish a prima facie case when challenging a vertical distribution restraint. None of these scholars, however, would require plaintiffs to establish the sort of market structure ordinarily associated with a market power filter, and each offers a test that seems to ignore the presence or absence of barriers to entry. See 8 AREEDA, supra note 138, ¶ 1648d2B, at 530 (stating that manufacturer's possession of thirty-percent share of relevant market sufficient to establish prima facie case; no analysis of entry barriers indicated); cf. Jefferson Parish, 466 U.S. at 26–29 (noting that thirty-percent share of properly defined market does not establish market power, despite the existence of some customers with strong preferences for the defendant's product); HOVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 488–89 (stating that proof that a manufacturer has a forty-percent share of a relevant market and that one half of its dealers are governed by a restraint should establish a prima facie case, apparently without regard to entry conditions); id. at 446 (asserting that entry by multiproduct retailers cannot be presumed "easy"); SULLIVAN & GRIMES, supra note 53, at 327–32 (purporting to apply market power screen but defining market power as including successful "brand differentiation" without regard to presence or absence of barriers to entry).


395. See GTE Sylvania, Inc., 433 U.S. at 55 ("Because of market imperfections such as the so-called 'free rider' effect, the [promotional] services might not be provided by retailers in a purely competitive situation, despite the fact that each retailer's benefit would be greater if all provided the services than if none did."); Bork, supra note 322, at 429–38; Telser, supra note 322, at 89–92.


397. See Bork, supra note 328, at 956 ("Contract law delegates to private persons the power to create property rights because of their superior knowledge of the efficiencies to be gained in particular situa-
this right, dealers could invest in optimal levels of promotion, knowing that they could capture the benefits of such investment.\textsuperscript{398} Such investment would raise dealers' cost of operation and thus result in prices higher than those that obtained before the restraint, so long as consumers are willing to pay the premium that reflects this additional service. All beneficial vertical restraints are designed to increase price in exactly this manner.\textsuperscript{399}

Such a price increase would not reflect any exercise of market power and thus would not manifest the sort of "evil consequence" the Sherman Act condemns.\textsuperscript{400} Economists, including those who adhere to price theory, define market power as the ability profitably to restrict output and price above the cost of production, and this is the sort of power Standard Oil had in mind.\textsuperscript{401} If an exclusive territory raises prices by eliminating or attenuating market failure, such an increase would reflect increased dealer costs and thus not reflect any exercise of market power.\textsuperscript{402} Despite its (indirect) impact on price, such a restraint would not be undue, but would instead constitute a normal, ordinary, or usual method of furthering trade.\textsuperscript{403} Although a nonstandard contract that reaches beyond the firm, such an arrangement would be economically indistinguishable from a manufacturer's (cost-
increasing) decision to enter employment contracts with additional salespeople or advertising experts to promote the product "itself." 404 Even price-theorists would treat such "intrafirm" activities as "competitive"; there is no reason to treat other contracts that produce the same results any differently. 405 Thus, proof that such a restraint produces increased prices may simply confirm that the arrangement is having its laudable, welfare-enhancing effect. 406 Because such proof is equally consistent with the defendants' procompetitive account of the restraint, it cannot establish any presumptive entitlement to judgment. 407

Ironically, the Supreme Court's approach to nonprice vertical restraints in the per se context would seem to compel rejection of the actual detrimental effects test in this context. As already noted, the Court has embraced TCE's model of competition when addressing nonprice vertical restraints, recognizing that restraints limiting intrabrand competition may be reasonable insofar as they prevent free riding. 408 The Court has also refused to apply the per se rule simply because a vertical practice results in prices higher than those that obtained before the restraint. 409 In so doing,

404. See Walsh v. Dwight, 58 N.Y.S. 91, 93 (App. Div. 1899) (holding resale price maintenance not an unlawful restraint of trade because manufacturer could have achieved same objective by relying upon its own employees to distribute the product in question); Bork, supra note 322, at 438 ("[S]ince there is presently no antitrust objection to the most efficient utilization of local sales effort by ownership integrated firms, there seems no reason to discriminate against the achievement of the same objective by contract-integrated systems through the use of market division agreements.").


406. See Baxter, supra note 334, at 945-46; Easterbrook, supra note 144, at 127 ("[M]onopoly and efficiency explanations so often imply similar traits. Think of vertical restrictions within a dealership network. If these monopolize, the price rises and output falls. If the restraints cause dealers to supply efficient point-of-sale services delivered to consumers, again price rises, and quantity may fall (although consumers' surplus would rise because they value the higher quality."); Meese, supra note 107, at 495.


Of course, manufacturers that adopt vertical restraints in an attempt to overcome market failure hope that additional sales effort induced by the restraint will ultimately result in increased output, as consumers demand more of the product. Nonetheless, proof that such a restraint results in reduced output should not suffice to establish a prima facie case. Such proof may simply reflect a variety of phenomena unrelated to the exercise of market power. For instance, a manufacturer may lose sales because it has miscalculated consumers' response to additional promotion only to find consumers have chosen substitute products in response to the increased price of the manufacturer's product. It would be perverse to rest a prima facie case on evidence that the market had punished a firm's poor judgment. Moreover, much promotional activity will only enhance consumer demand over the longer run. For instance, automobile dealers may slowly enhance goodwill by advertising, participating in community activities, and providing excellent post-sale service. Such activities could actually reduce the dealer's sales in the short run, with the result that a plaintiff challenging an exclusive territory could show that output fell after a manufacturer granted the dealer such protection. However, such a showing should not suffice to establish a prima facie case.


the Court has explicitly recognized that vertical agreements may increase prices by inducing dealer promotion and that such price increases are pro-competitive.\(^{410}\) Moreover, the Court has explicitly held that product differentiation is procompetitive.\(^{411}\) Application of an actual detrimental effects test, by contrast, necessarily rests upon a repudiation of TCE's more plausible conception of competition in favor of the outmoded model associated with price theory.

Consider as a second example a horizontal restraint, drawn from an actual case.\(^{412}\) Assume that a number of local moving companies form a joint venture (Hercules) designed to create a national moving system. The venture engages in national advertising, takes calls on a "1-800" number from customers, and settles customer complaints.\(^{413}\) The venture also promulgates uniform standards governing various aspects of member services, trains member employees in how to meet those standards, and monitors compliance with those requirements.\(^{414}\) The venture itself owns no trucks and employs no drivers but instead refers customers who contact it to individual members, who display the venture trademark on their trucks, the uniforms of their employees, and their own local advertising.\(^{415}\) Finally, assume that the venture sets rates for moving services provided to those customers that contact the venture directly, leaving members free to set rates for customers generated by their own local sales effort.\(^{416}\)

Two years after the venture's inception, Hercules revises its bylaws, to provide that the venture shall set rates governing any carriage of goods under the venture's trademark, without regard to the source of the customer in question.\(^{417}\) The bylaws also provide that members are free to carry

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410. See Bus. Elecs. Corp., 485 U.S. at 727-28 ("Any agreement between a manufacturer and a dealer to terminate another dealer who happens to have charged lower prices can be alleged to have been directed against the terminated dealer's 'price cutting.' In the vast majority of cases, it will be extremely difficult for the manufacturer to convince a jury that its motivation was to ensure adequate services, since price cutting and some measure of service cutting usually go hand in hand."); id. at 731 (noting that "price cutting is frequently made possible by 'free riding' on the services provided by other dealers"); Monsanto Co., 465 U.S. at 762-63 ("The manufacturer often will want to ensure that its distributors earn sufficient profit to pay for programs such as hiring and training additional salesmen or demonstrating the technical features of the product, and will want to see that 'free-riders' do not interfere. . . . Thus, the manufacturer's strongly felt concern about resale prices does not necessarily mean that [a violation of the Sherman Act has occurred].").

411. See NCAA v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Okla., 468 U.S. 85, 101-02 (1984) (stating that contractual restrictions on horizontal rivalry were necessary to enable the NCAA to differentiate its product from minor league sports); see also GTE Sylvania, Inc., 433 U.S. at 56 n.25 (asserting that "a large part of the promotional efforts resulting from vertical restrictions [will] convey socially desirable information about product availability, price, quality, and services").


413. See id. at 211.

414. See id. at 211-12.

415. See id. at 212 (describing such an allocation of responsibility).

416. It should be noted that this assumption is a slight departure from the actual facts in Rothery. There the venture initially allowed members absolute price discretion with respect to all customers. See id. at 211-12.

417. See id. at 213 (describing such a policy change).
goods at other rates, so long as they generate and conduct such business under their own local trademarks.418

Assume now that the venture expels a member for carrying goods under its trademark at rates below what the venture has prescribed. The former member challenges the expulsion under the Sherman Act, claiming that the expulsion enforced unlawful price maintenance.419 While the plaintiff asserts that the restraint is unlawful per se, the venture avoids summary condemnation by asserting that the agreement on price is ancillary to the formation of the venture and necessary to prevent some members from underselling others and thus expropriating an undue share of the opportunities created by the venture.420 Although the Supreme Court declined to recognize such arguments during the inhospitality era, more recent legal developments suggest that the Court might treat such benefits as cognizable, thus obviating application of the per se rule.421

How then might the plaintiff go about establishing a prima facie case under the Rule of Reason? Under current law, the most obvious route would be to establish that prices for the carriage of goods by the venture rose, or that the venture's output fell, after the bylaw amendment.422 Here

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418. See id. at 213.
419. Id. at 216–18 (describing plaintiff's assertion that similar conduct constitutes price maintenance). As a formal matter, the plaintiff could also allege that the expulsion constitutes a group boycott. See id. at 215–16 (evaluating such an argument and finding that such boycotts are analyzed under the Rule of Reason).
420. See id. at 224–30 (agreement on price charged by members operating under venture's trademark analyzed under the Rule of Reason); see also, e.g., NCAA v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Okla., 468 U.S. 85, 101–02 (1984) (noting that horizontal agreement not to pay athletes a salary could thwart market failure that unbridled competition would produce); Broad. Music, Inc. v. CBS, Inc., 441 U.S. 1, 20–21 (1979) (joint price setting that accompanied creation and enforcement of blanket license analyzed under the Rule of Reason); Chi. Bd. of Trade v. United States, 246 U.S. 231, 238–40 (1918) (analyzing horizontal price restraint ancillary to the formation of a grain exchange under the Rule of Reason); Chi. Prof't Sports Ltd. v. NBA, 95 F.3d 593, 597–600 (7th Cir. 1996) (Easterbrook, J.) (agreement by rival NBA franchises to limit output of televised games judged under the full Rule of Reason given plausible benefits and extent of contractual integration between the parties); SCFC ILC, Inc. v. Visa USA, Inc., 36 F.3d 958, 969–72 (10th Cir. 1994) (finding that joint venture could exclude competitor to prevent latter from reaping undue portion of the fruits of the venture); Polk Bros., Inc. v. Forest City Enters., Inc., 776 F.2d 185 (7th Cir. 1985) (Easterbrook, J.) (finding that horizontal division of markets ancillary to creation of a shopping center could reduce free riding and was thus properly analyzed under the Rule of Reason).
421. See United States v. Topco Assocs., Inc., 405 U.S. 596, 606–12 (1972) (finding that the presence or absence of such benefits was irrelevant to the per se inquiry). But see Rothery Storage, 792 F.2d at 223–30 (Topco does not survive rationale of NCAA, GTE Sylvania, Inc., and Broadcast Music, Inc.); see also Chi. Prof't Sports Ltd. v. NBA, 95 F.3d at 597–600 (output limitation ancillary to joint venture analyzed under the Rule of Reason); Polk Bros., 776 F.2d at 188–90 (analyzing agreement restricting products each party could sell under the Rule of Reason).

Two scholars have suggested that Topco is still good law, even with respect to ancillary restraints, because the Supreme Court declined to modify the decision in Palmer v. BRG of Ga., Inc., 498 U.S. 46 (1990) (per curiam). See Sullivan & Grimes, supra note 53, 229–30. There was, however, no assertion in Palmer that the horizontal division of territories in question produced the sort of cognizable benefits involved in Topco. Thus, the Court's failure in Palmer to opine regarding an issue not before it should not be taken as a reaffirmation of this aspect of Topco.

422. See FTC v. Ind. Fed'n of Dentists, 476 U.S. 447, 460–61 (1986); NCAA, 468 U.S. at 104–08 (proof that an ancillary restraint increased price and reduced output of defendants' product sufficed to establish a prima facie case); Re/Max Int'l, Inc. v. Realty One, Inc., 173 F.3d 995, 1014–15 (6th Cir. 1999) (proof that practice raised commissions paid by the plaintiffs established prima facie case); Law v.
again, though, such proof should not raise a presumption that the restraints produce anticompetitive harm.

To be sure, the arrangement eliminates horizontal rivalry with respect to price, but then so do restraints ancillary to the formation of a partnership. In so far as the defendants have adduced a plausible claim that unrestrained rivalry results in a market failure, there is no reason to assume that the rivalry that preexisted the restraint produced prices or output that were competitive in any meaningful sense. To the contrary, a policy allowing venture members to set whatever rates they wished for locally generated customers could well produce an inefficient equilibrium, that is, prices and quality below the social optimum and output above it. After all, even customers generated by individual members would rely at least in part on the reputation associated with the venture’s trademark. That reputation, in turn, would be a function of expenditures on national advertising, as well as the quality of service provided by each member of the venture. By announcing and charging cut-rate rates for locally generated business, some members could deprive others of the prices necessary to cover the cost of maintaining high quality service. Moreover, such price cutting could deprive the venture’s membership of the resources necessary to cover the cost of sufficient national advertising, which price cutters who generate a signifi-

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NCAA, 134 F.3d 1010, 1020 (10th Cir. 1998) (finding that the plaintiff had established a prima facie case because the challenged practice “was successful in artificially lowering the price of coaching services” purchased by defendants); Hairston v. Pac. 10 Conference, 101 F.3d 1315, 1319 (9th Cir. 1996) (proof that restraint excluded member school from bowl competition sufficed to establish prima facie case); J.F. Feeser, Inc. v. Serve-A-Portion, Inc., 909 F.2d 1524, 1542-43 (3d Cir. 1990) (finding that proof that supply contract caused some firms to pay higher prices for the defendant’s products established prima facie case); 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1511, at 432-33; COMPETITOR COLLABORATION GUIDELINES, supra note 144, § 3.3; HOVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 256 & n.25 (“Observed decreases in output, an observed increase in price coordination or exclusion from the market of firms that seem to be competitive entrants” is sufficient to establish a prima facie case); id. at 262 (finding that proof that restraint results in a reduction in output establishes a prima facie case); see also supra notes 116-53 and accompanying text.

Indeed, it should be noted that the enforcement agencies would apparently require even less of a plaintiff in this context. See COMPETITOR COLLABORATION GUIDELINES, supra note 144, ¶ 3.3 (stating that proof of explicit agreement on price or output itself requires some evidence of justification). Of course, the argument in the text, namely, that proof of actual detrimental effects should not suffice to establish a prima facie case, applies with even greater force against this position. See generally Meese, supra note 107, at 478-89 (arguing that mere proof of explicit agreement on price or output should not establish a prima facie case).

Finally, it should be noted that Professor Hovenkamp concludes that the restraint in Topco should survive Rule of Reason scrutiny because of the venture’s low market share. See HOVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 260. He does not explain why application of a market power screen is appropriate in this context, but inappropriate in a case like NCAA, where he approves application of an “actual detrimental effects” route to establish a prima facie case. See id. at 262-63.

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424. See Rubin, supra note 321, at 227-28 (stating that the reputation associated with franchise system depends upon collective efforts of franchisees).

425. See Rothery Storage & Van Co. v. Atlas Van Lines, Inc., 792 F.2d 210, 222-23 (D.C. Cir. 1986); Rubin, supra note 321, at 228 (describing propensity of franchisees to free ride on efforts of others absent effective monitoring).
cant portion of their business locally might deem less important than average members of the venture. Of course, tolerance of absolute pricing discretion could reduce prices and seemingly enhance output of the venture's services—the number of moves—in the short run, as price cutters attract business by free riding off the quality image associated with the venture trademark. Over the longer run, however, consumers stung by low quality may choose a different venture for their future moves. By setting uniform rates, then, the venture can prevent this deterioration in quality, protecting the reputation associated with the trademark and enhancing the overall demand for the venture's product over the longer run. While such a restraint would increase price or reduce output compared to the status quo ante, such effects are entirely consistent with the defendants' account of the restraint's cognizable benefits.

In the same way, of course, the formation of a partnership by two previously independent lawyers would eliminate the pricing discretion that

426. More precisely, venture members may find that their own costs plus the pro-rata costs of sustaining the venture's operations are higher than the market price that results from unbridled rivalry among members. Cf. Chi. Prof'l Sports, Ltd. P'ship v. NBA, 961 F.2d 667, 673 (7th Cir. 1992) (describing disparate incentives faced by sporting teams that generate substantial revenue in national market through television contracts and those that generate most revenue locally through gate receipts).

427. See Klein & Saft, supra note 321, at 349–51 (describing the so-called superhighway problem whereby consumers attribute poor quality of one franchise to other firms operating under the same trademark, ultimately reducing the demand for products sold under the franchise trademark). The Federal Trade Commission's opinion in In re California Dental Association also illustrates the shortcomings of an "actual detrimental effects" test. See In re Cal. Dental Ass'n, 121 F.T.C. 190 (1996), aff'd, 128 F.3d 720 (9th Cir. 1997), vacated on other grounds, 526 U.S. 756 (1999). There the Commission relied on evidence that certain dentists used advertising to increase their sales to support its conclusion that the Association's rules against false advertising were presumptively anticompetitive. See Cal. Dental, 121 F.T.C. at 310–11. Such evidence, however, was equally consistent with the Association's assertion that the advertising was inherently misleading and that regulation of members' advertising was therefore necessary to forestall an inefficient equilibrium. See Cal. Dental, 526 U.S. at 771–73 (finding that such self-regulation of advertising could be procompetitive for this reason). After all, firms engage in false advertising to increase their sales, and proof that the Association's regulations reduced the advertising and output of some dentists may simply have indicated that the regulations were having their intended, beneficial effect. See Meese, supra note 107, at 495–96 n.143.

428. See, e.g., Telser, supra note 322. Some scholars have argued that price maintenance cannot by itself induce venture members to invest in an appropriate amount of promotion. See Benjamin Klein & Kevin M. Murphy, Vertical Restraints as Contract Enforcement Mechanisms, 31 J.L. & ECON. 265 (1989). These scholars claim that dealers subject to price maintenance might simply "pocket" the difference between the price set by the manufacturer and the preexisting price, without providing any additional promotional services. Id. As a result, these scholars conclude that price maintenance merely guarantees dealers economic rents, and that manufacturers still must monitor and police dealers' promotional efforts, terminating those who shirk by not providing sufficient promotional services. See id.

The author respectfully disagrees with this analysis of vertical restraints. So long as there is effective interbrand competition, dealers who fail to provide an effective level of promotion will suffer vis-à-vis dealers of competing products. In other words, while price maintenance may not itself guarantee that dealers will engage in promotional efforts, an agreement setting a floor on retail prices ensures that dealers who engage in such promotion will reap the rewards of their efforts. Dealers who face significant interbrand competition will have every incentive to engage in such promotion. Because the presence of "actual detrimental effects" does not negate the existence of interbrand competition, proof of such effects is equally consistent with defendants' assertion that such a restraint solves a market failure.
each lawyer previously enjoyed. Moreover, restraints on moonlighting could prevent one partner from luring customers away from the partnership with cut rates for shoddy work.\textsuperscript{429} Thus, the formation of the partnership and associated restraints could increase prices, by enhancing the quality associated with the venture and thus differentiating its product. Under current law, a plaintiff challenging the initial formation of the partnership—a merger of once independent firms—would have to establish a relevant market and the existence of concentration within it before the defendant would bear any burden of production.\textsuperscript{430} Proof of actual detrimental effects would not suffice. Moreover, once the merger took place, any pricing decisions would be beyond scrutiny under section 1 of the Sherman Act.\textsuperscript{431} There is simply no good reason to treat one variety of contractual cooperation—the formation and operation of a partnership—differently from another—the creation of a legitimate joint venture with ancillary restraints.\textsuperscript{432} Proof that an ancillary restraint increases prices is entirely consistent with the venture’s account of its benefits and thus cannot itself form the basis for a judgment against the defendants.\textsuperscript{433} Similar logic applies to other horizontal restraints that plausibly counteract market failure.\textsuperscript{434}

Here again, reliance upon actual detrimental effects to establish a prima facie case would seem inconsistent with the Supreme Court’s pronouncements in the per se context. As explained earlier, the Court’s jurisprudence on nonprice vertical restraints assumes that such restraints can eliminate market failure and thus result in prices higher than those that existed before the restraint.\textsuperscript{435} There is simply no reason in law or economics to confine this rationale to the vertical context; horizontal restraints can

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\item \textsuperscript{429} See United States v. Addyston Pipe & Steel Co., 85 F. 271, 280 (6th Cir. 1898) (Taft, J.) (“[W]hen two men became partners in a business, although their union might reduce competition, this effect was only incidental to the main purpose of a union of their capital, enterprise, and energy to carry on a successful business, and one useful to the community. Restrictions in the articles of partnership upon the business activity of the members, with a view of securing their entire effort in the common enterprise, were, of course, only ancillary to the main end of the union, and were to be encouraged.”), aff’d, 175 U.S. 211 (1899); Matthews v. Associated Press of N.Y., 136 N.Y. 333, 341 (1893) (Peckham, J.) (“A business partnership could provide that none of its members should attend to any business other than that of the partnership, and that each partner who came in must agree not to do any other business and must give up all such business as he had theretofore done. Such an agreement would not be in restraint of trade, although its direct effect might be to restrain to some extent the trade which had been done.”).
\item \textsuperscript{431} See Copperweld Corp. v. Independence Tube Corp., 467 U.S. 752 (1984) (finding that wholly owned subsidiaries or divisions of the same firm are not capable of conspiring for section 1 purposes); see also Arizona v. Maricopa County Med. Soc’y, 457 U.S. 332, 357 (1982) (stating that price setting by doctors in a partnership would be “perfectly proper”).
\item \textsuperscript{432} See Chi. Prof’l Sports Ltd. P’ship v. NBA, 95 F.3d 593, 597–98 (7th Cir. 1996) (Easterbrook, J.) (characterizing a business firm as contractual cooperation between otherwise independent actors); supra notes 317–19 and accompanying text (explaining that a “firm” is simply one variety of contractual integration).
\item \textsuperscript{433} See supra notes 148–57 and accompanying text.
\item \textsuperscript{434} See, e.g., Polk Bros., Inc. v. Forest City Enters., Inc., 776 F.2d 185, 188–90 (7th Cir. 1985) (analyzing ancillary horizontal agreement under Rule of Reason).
\item \textsuperscript{435} See supra notes 409–11 and accompanying text.
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also combat market failure in a variety of ways.\textsuperscript{436} Indeed, the line between vertical and horizontal restraints is not always clear. Franchising, for instance, is a vertical restraint to some and a horizontal restraint to others.\textsuperscript{437} The effect of such arrangements is the same regardless of the label attached. More to the point, the Court in NCAA expressly recognized that unbridled horizontal rivalry—there, the competition for student athletes—could result in a market failure, namely, the devolution of college football into professional.\textsuperscript{438} Thus, the Court suggested, a horizontal restraint on price rivalry could produce cognizable benefits, \textit{viz.}, the reduction of prices for athletes' services to a level below that which price-theoretic competition would produce.\textsuperscript{439} Here again, the Court has embraced alternative definitions of competition in the Rule of Reason and per se contexts.

Consider a third example, namely, an agreement between several elite universities eliminating competition with respect to methods of setting financial aid.\textsuperscript{440} In particular, the agreement prevents participating schools from offering financial aid on any basis other than demonstrated financial need.\textsuperscript{441} While such an agreement is not ancillary to any larger venture, participants could perhaps avoid per se condemnation by arguing that the

\textsuperscript{436} See HORVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 205–11; Martin B. Louis, Restraints Ancillary to Joint Ventures and Licensing Agreements: Do Sealy and Topco Logically Survive Sylvania and Broadcast Music?, 66 VA. L. REV. 879, 912–13 (1980) (arguing that rationale of Sylvania applies with similar force to horizontal ancillary restraints); Meese, supra note 107, at 479–81 (arguing that restraints characterized as "vertical" are often equally "horizontal"); Posner, supra note 396, at 298–99 (antitrust treatment should not turn on characterization of restraints as "horizontal" or "vertical" but instead upon whether restraints produce benefits); \textit{id.} (arguing that horizontal ancillary restraints should be lawful absent showing of market power); see also SCFC ILC, Inc. v. Visa USA, Inc., 36 F.3d 958, 970–72 (10th Cir. 1994) (finding that horizontal restraint ancillary to joint venture was reasonably necessary to protect venture from free riding); Polk Bros., 776 F.2d at 189–90 (explaining how restraint ancillary to the formation of a shopping center could prevent free riding and thus encourage investment in the initial venture).

\textsuperscript{437} See HORVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 205 ("[R]estaurateurs scattered across a wide area might develop joint menus, building plans, and methods of doing business, and then promote their 'chain' nationally. This national name recognition will enable them to reach traveling customers that might otherwise avoid a local restaurant about which they know nothing; The \textit{...} Case . . . involved such a venture."); WILLIAMSON, supra note 197, at 181–82 (characterizing franchise contract as agreement between various potential competitors); Meese, supra note 107, at 491–92 (arguing that franchise systems can be characterized as a horizontal agreement); see \textit{also} Chi. Prof'l Sports Ltd. P'ship v. NBA, 95 F.3d 593, 598 (7th Cir. 1996) (describing McDonald's franchise system as agreement among potential competitors); Rubin, \textit{supra} note 321, \textit{passim}.

\textsuperscript{438} See NCAA v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Okla., 468 U.S. 85, 101–02 (1984); \textit{see also} Broad. Music, Inc. v. CBS, Inc., 441 U.S. 1, 7–23 (1979) (holding that horizontal price setting minimized transaction costs and thus increased output).

\textsuperscript{439} See NCAA, 468 U.S. at 102. Moreover, as Professor Hovenkamp has recognized, the existence of a sports league implies the ability to determine the number of games in a season and thus the output of the league's members. \textit{See} HORVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 262. Presumably a league's decision to reduce the number of games in season would not—and certainly should not—\textit{ipso facto} give rise to a prima facie case, even if the plaintiff could show that the restraint actually reduced the number of games played. There is no apparent distinction between such a decision and a decision to limit the number of games that are televised. \textit{But see} HORVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 256–57 n.25 (endorsing actual detrimental effects test); \textit{id.} at 262–63 (arguing that government established a prima facie case in NCAA despite the absence of any convincing market definition).

\textsuperscript{440} See United States v. Brown Univ., 5 F.3d 658 (3d Cir. 1993) (evaluating such an agreement among members of the Ivy League and MIT).

\textsuperscript{441} \textit{Id.} at 662.
restraint allows parties to allocate limited financial aid toward students whose personal characteristics or backgrounds would enhance the socioeconomic diversity of each school. Assuming that such a justification is cognizable, proof that the restraint produces prices higher than those that previously obtained should not suffice to establish a prima facie case. Here again, the defendants’ justification depends upon an assertion that unbridled rivalry in financial aid determinations would produce an inefficient equilibrium; lower prices, yes, and perhaps higher output, but also reduced educational quality manifested in less diverse student bodies. Thus, proof that the restraint results in higher prices is entirely consistent with the defendants’ account of the arrangement’s legitimate purpose and effect. Increased quality often involves higher costs—here the cost of providing the aid necessary to attract diverse students. Because they are cost-justified, these higher prices do not reflect any exercise of market power, but instead a higher quality product for which consumers are willing to pay.

Certainly the rationale for the three restraints discussed above depends upon the existence of product differentiation, differentiation that might confer some modest market power on the manufacturer. In some cases, for instance, the restraint in question may itself be a source of differentiation, as when colleges agree not to pay athletes, thus creating a product different from other forms of athletic entertainment. In other cases, such restraints might facilitate the advertising and promotion of a manufacturer’s product, thus accentuating such differentiation, and enhancing any market power such differentiation might confer. Moreover, the availability of various promotional devices that inform consumers of functional distinctions between products may encourage manufacturers to innovate, knowing that a “better mousetrap” will win consumer patronage.

442. See Brown Univ., 5 F.3d at 675-78 (accepting variant of this argument); Meese, supra note 107, at 490 (arguing courts should evaluate such restraints under the Rule of Reason); cf. Thomas C. Arthur, A Workable Rule of Reason, 68 ANTITRUST L.J. 337, 379 n.263 (2000) (arguing that the benefits touted by the Ivy League overlap group were not cognizable).

443. See Meese, supra note 107, at 495 (asserting that defendants’ justification in this context rests upon an assertion that unbridled rivalry will produce an inefficient equilibrium). To be sure, output as measured simply by number of matriculations could increase as lower prices attracted additional “non-diverse” students who might otherwise matriculate elsewhere if the restraints were enforced. These students would be paying a lower price, but they would also be obtaining an inferior product. As a result, proof that “output” fell after the parties imposed the restraint should not give rise to a prima facie case.

444. See Meese, supra note 107, at 495–96.

445. See id.; see also supra notes 397–411 and accompanying text (showing that price increases associated with vertical restraints are cost-justified and do not reflect an exercise of market power).

446. See Telser, supra note 322, at 87 (assuming that product differentiation that leads firms to adopt vertical restraints gives rise to market power).

447. See NCAA v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Okla., 468 U.S. 85, 101-02 (1984) (opining that restrictions on compensation designed to preserve amateur quality of college football was legitimate attempt at product differentiation).

The presence or prospect of such differentiation does not change the analysis offered here. While firms may seek market power through product differentiation, they do not always succeed. The Edsel was different from all other cars, and the new Coke was different from Pepsi and, for that matter, the old Coke. Although both Ford and Coke spent millions of dollars promoting their innovations, it seems highly unlikely that either product conferred market power on its inventor. Few business mistakes are as spectacular as these, of course, and many attempts at differentiation are successful. Nonetheless, success in a free economy often simply means the absence of failure, that is, the ability to price at marginal cost and earn a normal return in competition—present or future—with other differentiated products. Such competition, of course, may radically change the character of consumer demand for the differentiated product, rendering once loyal customers entirely indifferent. Thus, even where a justification depends upon the creation or enhancement of product differentiation, proof that the restraint produces detrimental effects is entirely consistent with defendants' attempt simply to obtain a normal return and the existence of enough substitutes to render the seller a price taker. That the firm hopes for more does not create antitrust harm.

At any rate, even if one stipulates that such differentiation always gives rise to market power, there is still no reason to embrace the actual detrimental effects test. So long as entry is feasible, even firms that sell differentiated products will find themselves confined to a normal rate of re-

449. The assertion that product differentiation need not confer market power may seem incorrect to economists and economically sophisticated antitrust scholars, who assume that such differentiation always confers some degree of market power, no matter how modest. See, e.g., F.M. Scherer & David Ross, INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE 32–33 (1990); see also Hovenkamp, supra note 46, at 97 (“[I]n a product differentiated market firms have the ability to exploit a small amount of market power.”). This assumption, however, is purely tautological, insofar as economists define as “differentiated” any product for which a seller faces a downward sloping demand curve in the region above its average cost curve. See, e.g. Scherer & Ross, supra, at 16. This downward slope, it is said, reflects the fact that some consumers prefer the product in question to any substitutes. See Hovenkamp, supra note 46, at 36–37 (“Although Ford and Chrysler automobiles compete, some buyers prefer one to the other and are willing to pay more for their first choice. To the extent this is true, the manufacturer faces a slightly downward sloping demand curve and may charge a price above marginal cost.”) (emphasis added)); Scherer & Ross, supra, at 16 (same). The ability to price above cost in this manner, of course, rests upon the assumption that: (1) firms fully understand the demand curves they will face and; (2) technology is sufficiently plastic that a firm can enter at a scale small enough to price above marginal cost, but large enough to achieve a profitable level of average costs.

Nonetheless, the mere fact that a demand curve is downward sloping at some levels of output at a particular time does not mean that it is downward sloping at all levels of output at all times. A firm with numerous loyal consumers today may find most of the same consumers indifferent tomorrow, after a rival introduces a similar product. In such a case, the firm's demand curve may well shift to the left and become horizontal at all profitable levels of output. See generally Schumpeter, supra note 341, at 80–86. The discussion in the text therefore departs from the economist's tautology and defines “product differentiation” as any difference in attributes among products, including brand names, without regard to the effect of such differences on the shape of demand curves at a firm's conceivable levels of output. See also infra notes 446–60 and accompanying text (arguing that, even if product differentiation does confer market power, such differentiation should not suffice to establish a prima facie case).
turn, as any above-normal profits attract new rivals. To be sure, the existence of a downward sloping demand curve implies that such firms will price above marginal cost, and such pricing is an exercise of market power. Nonetheless, differentiation meets real consumer tastes and needs, and there is no reason to believe that the alternative, a world of entirely homogenous products priced at marginal cost, would be superior from the perspective of consumers or anyone else. Nor will attempts to penalize contractual attempts at differentiation cause sellers of differentiated products to expand output and price at marginal cost. Absent some examination of entry conditions—an inquiry the actual detrimental effects test abjures—there is simply no reason to treat the presence or creation of differentiation as a harm for antitrust purposes.

Indeed, even if barriers to entry ensure that a defendant selling a differentiated product might earn more than a normal return, there is still no reason to treat such differentiation as an antitrust harm. While the American economy is generally competitive, the prospect of achieving super-competitive returns is a powerful motivating force, driving firms to innovate in the search for that ever-elusive monopoly. Moreover, the benefits of innovation usually outweigh the allocational losses that accompany any resulting market power. Punishing mere product differentiation would thus

450. Edward Hastings Chamberlin, The Theory of Monopolistic Competition 69–88 (1933); Clark, supra note 239, at 21, 53, 120; Hayek, supra note 226, at 105 (suggesting that entry or threat thereof will ensure that no firm earns more than a normal rate of return).
451. See Chamberlin, supra note 450, at 74–81; see also Scherer & Ross, supra note 449, at 23.
452. Indeed, Professor Chamberlin, who popularized the theory of monopolistic competition, argued that a world containing such differentiation was superior to that portrayed by the perfect competition model. “Differences in tastes, desires, incomes, and locations of buyers, and differences in the uses which they wish to make of commodities all indicate the need for variety and the necessity of substituting for the concept of a ‘competitive ideal’ an ideal involving both monopoly and competition.” See Edward Hastings Chamberlin, The Theory of Monopolistic Competition 214–15 (6th ed. 1948), quoted in Scherer & Ross, supra note 449, at 2; Clark, supra note 239, at 4–5; see also supra note 411 and accompanying text (showing that price theorists generally believed that some differentiation was healthy).
453. Cf. Clark, supra note 239, at 214 (noting that attacks on product differentiation based on marginal-cost pricing standard are “meaningless”).
454. Cf. supra note 114 and accompanying text (noting that courts that apply a market power filter require plaintiffs to show the existence of barriers to entry to establish a prima facie case). The argument made in this paragraph may seem inconsistent with Standard Oil’s normative premise that above-cost pricing is the sort of harmful “consequence of monopoly” at which the Rule of Reason is directed. See supra note 179 and accompanying text. However, classical economics did not recognize the concept of “marginal cost,” and it therefore seems likely that the Standard Oil court was referring to average cost. See generally Hovenkamp, supra note 41, at 273 (“[C]lassicism knew nothing of marginal cost . . . .”). Thus, to the extent that: (1) Standard Oil’s overriding concern is the enhancement of purchaser welfare and; (2) the existence of product differentiation enhances that welfare, proof that a restraint produces or enhances product differentiation should not ipso facto give rise to a prima facie case. A contrary approach would produce absurd results, presumptively banning all contractual restrictions that tend to differentiate a product. Cf. NCAA Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Okla., 468 U.S. 85, 102 (1984) (suggesting that contractual restrictions that limit competition for players are procompetitive efforts to differentiate the NCAA’s product).
455. See Hayek, supra note 226, at 101 (“A person who possesses the exclusive knowledge or skill which enables him to reduce the cost of production of a commodity by 50 percent still renders an enormous service to society if he enters its production and reduces its price by only 25 percent—not only through that price reduction but also through his additional savings of cost. But it is only through compe-
sap the economy of its driving force. "The successful competitor, having been urged to compete, must not be turned on when he wins." While many such innovations are technological (the better mousetrap), others require nonstandard contracts, as when franchisees agree to be open from seven until eleven or to serve Coca-Cola instead of Pepsi. Moreover, all innovations are worthless unless consumers know about them, and nonstandard contracts often facilitate promotion and advertising. Even price theorists recognized that technological innovations that result in product differentiation are competitive because they enhance the welfare of consumers who naturally have varying preferences. Like new technologies, nonstandard contracts can qualify as innovations, helping to create a new product. They can also help innovating firms inform consumers of their "better mousetrap." There is no reason to treat such contractual competition any differently from technological competition that takes place within the firm.

B. Balancing Harms and Benefits

Of course, even if a plaintiff makes out a prima facie case, defendants may still introduce evidence in rebuttal. Under current law, defendants must do more than show that a restraint produces significant benefits by, for instance, combating a market failure. Instead, defendants must also show that such benefits outweigh, counteract, or offset any anticompetitive harm. For instance, if the plaintiff's prima facie case consists of a showing that a restraint increases prices, the defendants must offer evidence that because of these benefits, the restraint reduces or at least does not increase prices. This, of course, is the same approach lower courts and the en-
Enforcement agencies employ when evaluating mergers. Such an approach assumes that once a plaintiff has established a prima facie case, any pro-competitive benefits necessarily coexist with some anticompetitive harm, thus necessitating some comparison of the two effects. This assumption rests upon price theory's partial equilibrium trade-off model, which economists and antitrust scholars use to model the welfare effects of mergers and other transactions that produce technological efficiencies such as economies of scale.

As shown below, this requirement that courts balance justifications for nonstandard contracts against actual detrimental effects rests upon outmoded price-theoretic assumptions, namely, that higher prices or reduced output are necessarily anticompetitive harms, that any benefits must counteract or outweigh. Application of TCE, by contrast, suggests that proof that contractual integration combats a market failure should ipso facto rebut any prima facie case, regardless whether such proof tends to show that prices are lower or output higher than before the restraint. Thus, such proof undermines the price-theoretic assumption inherent in the partial equilibrium trade-off model that any benefits necessarily coexist with anticompetitive effects.

Return first to the example of an exclusive territory discussed earlier. Assume that a plaintiff has made out a prima facie case by showing that the restraint has resulted in prices higher than those that existed before it. Assume further that the defendants prove that, but for the restraints, individual dealers would underinvest in promotional services, free riding on the efforts of fellow dealers. Under the current standards governing Rule of Reason analysis, such proof would be an invitation to further inquiry, as a court attempts to determine whether these benefits outweighed the presumed harm. Or, as courts often put it, the fact-finder would balance any

464. See supra note 163 and accompanying text.
466. BORK, supra note 328, at 107–10 (arguing that this model should be the basis for antitrust policy); HOVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 501–02 (describing application of this model in the merger context); see also Wesley J. Liebler, Comments, 28 J.L. & ECON. 335, 335–36 (1985) (arguing that Rule of Reason analysis should “balance the gains from increased efficiency against the losses from increased market power”).
467. See supra notes 381–84 and accompanying text.
468. See supra notes 390–99 and accompanying text.
469. See supra notes 390–92 and accompanying text; see also, e.g., 8 AREEDA, supra note 138, § 1649, at 547–49 (outlining balancing test to be applied in this context); SULLIVAN & GRIMES, supra note 53, at 333–35 (same). It should be noted that Professor Hovenkamp would generally eschew balancing in this context and approve any restraint for which the defendant is able to establish the existence of significant benefits. See HOVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 489 (arguing that once defendant demonstrates that the restraint advances a legitimate business purpose, the court should approve the restraint, unless the plaintiff shows actual collusion or “anticompetitive dealer domination”). He would, however, continue to apply the less restrictive alternative test in this context. See id.
improvement in interbrand competition against the harm flowing from a reduction in intrabrand competition.470

While such an approach makes sense under a price-theoretic, technological conception of competition, it cannot survive application of the transaction cost paradigm and its recognition of contractual competition. According to TCE, proof that a restraint combats free riding suggests that the unrestrained rivalry that preexisted the arrangement produced an inefficient equilibrium and with it a nonoptimal price.471 This price was not competitive in any meaningful sense, and thus not an appropriate benchmark for ascertaining whether, in fact, the restraint produces net procompetitive effects. Thus, proof that the restraint in fact produces cognizable benefits undermines any presumption that the agreement creates anticompetitive harm, since such proof establishes that the prices (and output) that preexisted the restraint were a product of market failure. Absent such a presumption, of course, the plaintiff's case collapses, without regard to whether the restraint's benefits outweigh any purported harms by reducing prices or otherwise. For, any conclusion at the per se stage that such benefits are cognizable under the Sherman Act necessarily rests on the assumption that the elimination of market failure is an unambiguous benefit, and that elimination of that failure may increase prices.472 Any attempt to balance an increase in interbrand competition against the harm of reduced intrabrand competition misses the point.473 Proof that the restraint ameliorates a market failure by reducing overzealous intrabrand rivalry establishes that there is no harm in the first place, period, thus undermining the case for application of the partial equilibrium trade-off model.

It is true that the restraint may have increased prices above those that previously obtained. But then so would a manufacturer's decision to forgo

470. See Cont'l T.V., Inc. v. GTE Sylvania, Inc., 433 U.S. 36, 51-52 (1977) ("The market impact of vertical restrictions is complex because of their potential for a simultaneous reduction of intrabrand competition and stimulation of interbrand competition."); id. at 57 n.27 (concluding that such balancing is an appropriate judicial function).

471. See supra notes 332-37 and accompanying text.


473. As then-Professor Easterbrook put it when speaking of vertical restraints:

No one can sensibly weigh inter- and intrabrand competition against one another; they are not commensurable. The reduction in "intrabrand competition" is the source of the competitive benefit that helps one product compete against another. Intrabrand competition as such is worthless; one might as well complain when a corporation does not have internal competition to make the product more cheaply . . . . No manufacturer wants to have less competition among its dealers for the sake of less competition. The reduction in dealers' rivalry in the price dimension is just the tool the manufacturer uses to induce greater competition in the service dimension. As I spelled out above, restricted dealing alters the product's attributes. There is no "less" in one column to "balance against a gain" in the other, any more than the manufacturer's sole prerogative to decide what physical product to make creates a "reduction in intrabrand competition."

See Easterbrook, supra note 399, at 155-56; Richard A. Posner, The Next Step in the Antitrust Treatment of Restricted Distribution: Per Se Legality, 48 U. Chi. L. Rev. 6, 18-21 (1981); see also Alan J. Meese, Antitrust Balancing in a (Near) Coasean World: The Case of Franchise Tying Contracts, 95 Mich. L. Rev. 111, 141-42 (1996) (arguing that proof that a franchise tying contract produces significant benefits rebuts any presumption that the agreement is the result of forcing and should entitle the defendant to judgment).
contracts with independent dealers and enter employment contracts with its own sales force in an attempt to increase expenditures on promotion.\textsuperscript{474} Both forms of (contractual) competition would result in price increases. Each price increase would be entirely procompetitive, however, and neither would depend upon any exercise of market power. There is, therefore, simply no reason to ask whether the benefits of these arrangements outweigh the purported harms of such higher prices.

Similar analysis applies to the ancillary and “naked” horizontal price restraints discussed earlier.\textsuperscript{475} As suggested above, the ancillary restraint between members of the Hercules venture could prevent some members of the venture from free riding on the goodwill associated with the venture trademark and driving prices so low that the venture could not sustain an optimal level of service quality and advertising.\textsuperscript{476} Here again, current law and scholarly opinion would require courts to determine whether any benefits produced by such restraints offset the harms presumed once a plaintiff established a prima facie case.\textsuperscript{477} However, proof that the venture in fact produces such benefits undermines any assertion by the plaintiff that higher prices indicate that the restraint creates or exercises market power.\textsuperscript{478} For, as described earlier, such price increases may simply reflect the enhanced quality produced by the restraint.\textsuperscript{479} As a result, there is simply no reason

\textsuperscript{474}. See Bork, supra note 322, at 438 ("[S]ince there is presently no antitrust objection to the most efficient utilization of local sales effort by ownership integrated firms, there seems no reason to discriminate against the achievement of the same objective by contract-integrated systems through the use of market division agreements."); see also Chi., St. Louis & New Orleans R.R. Co. v. Pullman S. Car Co., 139 U.S. 79, 89 (1891) (finding contract granting one company the exclusive right to obtain sleeping cars valid at common law because "[the defendant's] duty, as a carrier of passengers, was to make suitable provisions for their comfort and safety. Instead of furnishing its own drawing-room and sleeping cars, as it might have done, it employed the plaintiff, whose special business was to provide cars of that character"); Illinois Corporate Travel, Inc v. Am. Air Lines, 806 F.2d 722, 727 (7th Cir. 1986) (Easterbrook, J.) ("The question is not whether the arrangement affects moment-to-moment rivalry in a way that raises today's prices, but whether this effect is associated with potential benefits to consumers that are worth the price. Higher quality may come with higher prices. The antitrust laws do not adopt a model of atomistic competition that condemns all organization; otherwise they would forbid Sears to tell the managers of its stores what prices to charge." (emphasis added)); United States v. Addyston Pipe & Steel Co., 85 F. 271, 287 (6th Cir. 1898) (Taft, J.) (suggesting that such a contract would be valid under the Sherman Act because "[t]he railroad company ... may secure to the sleeping-car company the same freedom from competition that it would have itself in discharging the duty"), aff'd, 175 U.S. 211 (1899); Walsh v. Dwight, 58 N.Y.S. 91, 93 (App. Div. 1899) (holding that minimum rpm was not an unlawful restraint of trade because "the defendants would have the right to establish agencies for the sale of their goods, or to employ others to sell them, at such prices as the defendants should designate").

\textsuperscript{475}. See supra notes 412–35 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{476}. See supra notes 423–35 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{477}. See supra notes 152–54 and accompanying text. Indeed, Professor Hovenkamp argues that, where horizontal restraints are concerned, a plaintiff should prevail whenever procompetitive benefits and anticompetitive effects coexist. See HOVENKAMP, supra note 46, at 257. That is, he would not allow a defendant to show that the benefits of the practice outweigh the harms.

\textsuperscript{478}. See supra notes 152–54 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{479}. See supra notes 152–54 and accompanying text; see also SCFC ILC, Inc. v. Visa USA, Inc., 36 F.3d 958, 970 (10th Cir. 1994) (noting that exclusion of competitor from joint venture could prevent latecomer from reaping benefits of members' investments and thus encourage initial investment in the venture product); Rothery Storage & Van Co. v. Atlas Van Lines, Inc., 792 F.2d 210, 222–23 (D.C. Cir. 1986) (Bork, J.) (explaining that horizontal price restraints could protect quality of the venture's product by
to balance benefits against harms, since proof of benefits negates the existence of any harms by establishing that any price increase shown by the plaintiff does not necessarily reflect an exercise of market power.\textsuperscript{480} Similarly, proof that the agreement between Ivy League universities on financial aid actually enhances educational quality rebuts any assertion that higher tuition or reduced output is a manifestation of above-cost pricing.\textsuperscript{481} Thus, there is no reason to weigh benefits against anticompetitive harm, since the very existence of such benefits undermines any presumption of harm. While the plaintiff should be free to prove that any benefits produced by the restraint are illusory,\textsuperscript{482} a tribunal should not allow the plaintiff simply to rest on its initial proof that the restraint produces actual detrimental effects, hoping that the fact-finder will strike a balance in its favor.

It will not do to argue, as some have, that such claims of benefits necessarily depend upon the possession of market power with the result that some balancing is inevitable.\textsuperscript{483} They do not. Numerous horizontal restraints on price and output exist despite the apparent absence of any market power.\textsuperscript{484} In a world of perfect competition, it is true, no firm or subset preventing price deterioration and ensuring members adequate return on their investments in quality); Polk Bros., Inc. v. Forest City Enters., Inc., 776 F.2d 185, 190 (7th Cir. 1985) (Easterbrook, J.) (arguing that covenant restricting products that each party could sell could enhance welfare by encouraging investment in promotion by each party).

\textsuperscript{480} The same analysis would apply, it should be noted, if the restraint in question was an ancillary horizontal division of territories. See United States v. Topco Assocs., Inc., 405 U.S. 596 passim (1972); supra notes 471–74 (collecting authorities showing that such restraints can combat market failure and thus encourage optimal promotion).

\textsuperscript{481} One need not rely upon the assertion by Judge Bork that such balancing is beyond judicial capacity. See 

\textsuperscript{482} See supra notes 442–51.

\textsuperscript{483} See NCAA v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Okla., 468 U.S. 85, 117–19 (1984) (finding that restraint did not in fact produce the benefits that the defendants touted); Law v. NCAA, 134 F.3d 1010, 1020–24 (10th Cir. 1998) (same).

\textsuperscript{484} See Nat'l Soc'y of Prof'l Eng'rs v. United States, 435 U.S. 679, 692–95 (1978) (rejecting justification as necessarily depending upon ability to price above the "competitive" level); SULLIVAN & GRIMES, supra note 53, at 211 (stating that the possession of market power was implicit in defendants' characterization of the justification in NCAA); Herbert Hovenkamp, Competitor Collaboration After California Dental Association, 2000 U. Chi. Legal F. 149, 179–80 (arguing that the justifications offered in NCAA necessarily contemplated a "market-wide output decrease" and "depend[ed]on the exercise of market power"); see also 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, § 1504, at 380–81 (arguing that justification in Professional Engineers depended upon existence of noncompetitive pricing).

The assertion that the restraints in NCAA necessarily depended upon the exercise of market power seems particularly difficult to accept, given their humble origins. The NCAA first adopted restraints on output in 1951, long before college football had any conceivable market power. See NCAA, 468 U.S. at 89–91 (detailing origins of the restraints). Moreover, for reasons explained in the text, and by the Court itself, not every instance of cooperation between competitors that affects price or output involves an exercise of market power. See id. at 101–02 (concluding that some horizontal cooperation, including an agreement not to pay athletes a salary, is necessary to create and enhance the product of college football); see also infra note 491 (describing various horizontal restraints that cannot be explained as attempts to acquire or exercise market power).

\textsuperscript{484} See, e.g., Topco, 405 U.S. 596 passim (declaring unlawful ancillary horizontal restraint among firms with six-percent share of relevant market); Rothery Storage, 792 F.2d 210 passim (evaluating restraint ancillary to joint venture among firms with six percent of the relevant market); Polk Bros., 776
of firms can affect the price or output of their own products through contractual restraint or otherwise. In this world, any change in a firm’s price will cause all consumers to shift to other products which, by hypothesis, are perfect substitutes. In the real world, however, substitutes are rarely perfect, and firms are constantly striving to build a new mousetrap and convince consumers that it is better. Such quality improvements cost money, and improvements that are cost-justified will win over consumers, even if prices are higher than those of substitutes. Contractual integration can play an important role in this process, as firms moderate rivalry that undermines attempts at differentiation or thwarts efforts to communicate such differentiation to consumers. At any given time, of course, several firms within the same market may be pursuing such strategies; others might be pondering entry or extension of product lines. The end result is a market full of differentiated products, serving the various needs of consumers. While economists generally assume that such differentiation creates market power, it need not; a firm with a loyal customer base may lose most of its customers tomorrow to an innovative substitute. Moreover, a firm may create a new product expecting a loyal customer base, only to find that most view its innovation with relative indifference. All firms hope that their efforts lead to market power, but such efforts are equally consistent with the achievement of a normal return and marginal cost pricing. This is not to say that balancing is never a valid method of evaluating defendants’ justification for a restraint that is apparently detrimental. Where a restraint purportedly creates benefits that are technological in origin, ostensibly reducing the cost of production, such balancing pursuant to the partial equilibrium model is certainly in order. If, for instance, defen-

F.2d 185 passim (evaluating restraint ancillary to formation of a shopping center selling appliances and lawn care products).

Similarly, some college sports leagues have adopted horizontal restrictions on competition for athletes more stringent than those mandated by the NCAA. Members of the Patriot League, for instance, have agreed not to grant athletic scholarships in all sports except basketball. See Mark Asher & Seth Emerson, American to Leave CAA for the Patriot League, WASH. POST, Apr. 25, 2000, at D-1; The Official Site of the Patriot League, About the Patriot League, at http://patriotleague.ocsn.com/school-bio/pat-school-bio-aboutpl.html (last visited Sept. 18, 2002). These restrictions obviously reduce the price that these schools pay for the services of hundreds of athletes. See Law, 134 F.3d at 1020 (finding proof that salary cap had reduced salaries of “restricted earnings coaches” sufficed to establish a prima facie case). Is it possible that American, Army, Bucknell, Colgate, Holy Cross, Lafayette, Lehigh, and Navy—the members of the Patriot League—have “market power” in the market for collegiate sports talent? Moreover, numerous law firm partnerships and physician practices set prices and bind their members to noncompete agreements and other ancillary restraints. Do each of these firms have “market power?”

485. See supra note 330 and accompanying text.

486. See NCAA, 468 U.S. at 98-104; Cont’l T.V., Inc. v. GTE Sylvania, Inc., 433 U.S. 36, 45-47 (1977); see also supra notes 224-25 and accompanying text (describing role that nonstandard contracts can play in enhancing product differentiation).

487. See supra note 449 and accompanying text (arguing that firms with differentiated products may not possess market power due to existence of substitutes that lure away once loyal consumers); see also SCHUMPETER, supra note 341, at 80-86.

488. See HAYEK, supra note 226, at 104-05; supra notes 446-49 and accompanying text (arguing that mere distinction between products does not ipso facto confer market power).
dants claim that an apparently anticompetitive merger will result in economies of scale and thus reduce the unit cost of production, courts should weigh those benefits against any anticompetitive harms the transaction might create. For, unlike those instances in which a restraint purportedly attenuates a market failure, the creation of technological efficiencies by merger does not ipso facto undermine a plaintiff's prima facie case, and application of the partial equilibrium trade off model is appropriate. By their very nature, such efficiencies produce lower costs of production that can logically coexist with the exercise of market power. Thus, the presence of such efficiencies does not explain or rebut proof that the transaction produces actual detrimental effects.

C. The Less Restrictive Alternative

Under current law, proof that a restraint's benefits outweigh the harms identified by the plaintiff will not necessarily sustain it. For, courts and the enforcement agencies uniformly declare such restraints unlawful if the plaintiff can demonstrate a less restrictive alternative that will produce the same benefits as the restraint. Many scholars have gone even further, arguing that proof that an alternative produces "nearly" the same benefits or "adequately" advances defendants' objective, should suffice. Applica-

489. See Horizontal Merger Guidelines, supra note 114, § 4; Hovenkamp, supra note 46, at 500-01. The exact nature of such weighing will depend upon the normative premise that one adopts. If the antitrust statutes merely outlaw those transactions that result in a net reduction in social wealth, courts will want to balance any cost savings against the deadweight allocative losses resulting from a transaction. See Williamson, supra note 455, at 728. If, on the other hand, these statutes outlaw any transaction that results in higher consumer prices, courts should determine whether the efficiencies in question are so large that they offset any increase in market power, thus preventing a price increase. See Horizontal Merger Guidelines, supra note 114, § 4; Hovenkamp, supra note 46, at 502-03.

490. See generally Williamson, supra note 455, at 18.

491. See Re/Max Int'l, Inc. v. Realty One, Inc., 173 F.3d 995, 1015 (6th Cir. 1999) (rejecting claim that price-fixing was necessary to protect investment in employees where such benefits could be realized via less restrictive alternative of long-term contracts and covenants not to compete); Chi. Prof'l Sports Ltd. P'ship v. NBA, 961 F.2d 667, 675-76 (7th Cir. 1992) (Easterbrook, J.) (declaring restriction on output of televised games unlawful where same benefits could be achieved by charging members of venture a fee for every game broadcast); Gen. Leaseways, Inc. v. Nat'l Truck Leasing Ass'n, 744 F.2d 588, 592 (7th Cir. 1984) (Posner, J.) (finding that horizontal allocation of territories was not justified by desire to prevent free riding by members on provision of repair services because venture could and did charge members for such services); Mackey v. NFL, 543 F.2d 606, 621 (8th Cir. 1976) (finding limits on free agency unreasonable in light of purported less restrictive alternatives); see also supra notes 169-70 (collecting other judicial, executive, and scholarly authorities endorsing use of the less restrictive alternative test). It should be emphasized that scholars do not distinguish between vertical and horizontal restraints on this score. See, e.g., 8 Areeda, supra note 138, ¶ 1649d3, at 557-58; Hovenkamp, supra note 46, at 489.

492. See 7 Areeda, supra note 28, ¶ 1505, at 383-89; 7 id., ¶ 1507b, at 397-99; Sullivan & Grimes, supra note 53, at 223 (arguing that courts should ask whether less restrictive alternative proffered by the plaintiff is "nearly as effective"); Sullivan, supra note 172, at 851. Moreover, Professor Hovenkamp has suggested on one occasion that less restrictive alternatives need not be equally effective. See Hovenkamp, supra note 172, ¶ 1912i, at 302 ("If the defendant succeeds [in showing that a restraint produces benefits], then the plaintiff is permitted to show that the same (or nearly the same) procompetitive benefits could be achieved by a realistic, less restrictive alternative."). In a subsequent work, however, he indicates that a less restrictive alternative should serve the purported objective equally well. See Hovenkamp, supra note 46, at 257 (asking whether the "same efficiencies" can be achieved via a less restrictive means).
tion of such a test, it is said, ensures that defendants achieve their objectives with as little harm to competition as possible.493

The less restrictive alternative test is plainly flawed, resting, as it does, on an outmoded, price-theoretic model of competition. To begin with, many of the less restrictive alternatives posited by courts and scholars are either less effective, more expensive to administer, or both.494 Indeed, some scholarly proponents of this test admit as much, contending that plaintiffs should prevail if they show that an alternative will advance an objective "nearly as much" as the challenged restraint, or further it "adequately."495 Adoption of such alternatives, it is said, would render the market in question more competitive.496

Given the vision of competition suggested by TCE and the recognition that less restrictive alternatives are likely less effective, there is no reason to believe that such alternatives are in fact more competitive than restraints under challenge. An assertion that alternatives are more competitive depends upon the assumption that the restraints in question actually injure competition in the first place. To be sure, proof that defendants could have adopted a less restrictive and less effective restraint is consistent with the hypothesis that the restraint exercises or creates market power, and that the benefits it creates coexist with anticompetitive harm. However, such proof is at least equally consistent with an alternative hypothesis, namely, that the defendants are attempting to minimize market failure at the lowest cost possible and that the restraints are unrelated to any exercise of market power.497 Such a cost-minimizing business strategy is exactly the sort of (contractual) "competition" that TCE suggests is necessary to maximize society's welfare.498 Moreover, while such a strategy limits rivalry between firms bound by the restraint, it does not depend upon the possession or attempt to obtain market power.

493. See, e.g., 7 AREEDA, supra note 28, ¶ 1505, at 384 (application of less restrictive alternative test determines whether defendants' "objective [can] be achieved as well without restraining competition so much").
494. See, e.g., WILLIAMSON, supra note 197, at 187 (arguing that various less restrictive alternatives to vertical distribution restraints are also less effective); Bork, supra note 322, at 465-69 (discussing various alternatives and arguing that they are generally less effective); Victor P. Goldberg, The Law and Economics of Vertical Restrictions: A Relational Perspective, 58 TEX. L. REV. 91, 107 (1979) (arguing that less restrictive alternatives to vertical distribution restraints are also less effective); Meese, supra note 107, at 487 n.109 (arguing that alternatives proffered for horizontal allocation of territories are generally less effective at achieving the proffered benefits). Meese, supra note 68, at 71-84 ( canvassing various less restrictive alternatives to tying contracts and showing that such alternatives are generally less effective as well); Meese, supra note 112, at 189-95 (showing that various less restrictive alternatives often proffered for vertical restraints are also less effective); Easterbrook, supra note 342, at 9 (arguing that less restrictive alternatives are often more costly to administer).
495. See supra notes 22-26 and accompanying text.
496. See supra notes 107-12 and accompanying text.
497. See, e.g., Meese, supra note 112, at 192-93 (arguing that failure to adopt less effective but less restrictive alternative to vertical restraint suggests parties are attempting to minimize transaction costs); Meese, supra note 68, at 71-86 (arguing that failure to adopt less restrictive alternatives to tying contracts is consistent with cost-minimizing objective).
498. See supra notes 334-44 and accompanying text.
By itself, then, proof that defendants could have employed a less restrictive, less effective alternative is entirely consistent with the defendants' assertion that any "detrimental effects" produced by the restraint reflect a correction of preexisting market failure and not any anticompetitive harm.\(^{499}\) Proof of such an alternative cannot therefore support a conclusion that procompetitive and anticompetitive effects coexist.\(^{500}\) Absent such coexistence, the rationale for application of a less restrictive alternative test collapses.\(^{501}\)

Consider, as just one example, the so-called area of primary responsibility, often touted as an alternative to vertically imposed exclusive territories or exclusive territories created ancillary to a joint venture between competitors.\(^{502}\) Such restraints assign dealers or venture members a particular area in which they must make their "best efforts" to promote the venture product. In this way, it is said, a manufacturer or venture can further its legitimate interest in promotion without restricting competition "too much."\(^{503}\)

As many scholars have recognized, however, so-called areas of primary responsibility are less effective and more expensive to administer than an airtight exclusive territory.\(^{504}\) The fact that a firm has the primary responsibility for one area does not prevent other firms from invading its territory and thus does little to prevent free riding.\(^{505}\) Moreover, there are real costs to determining whether, in fact, a dealer has engaged in sufficient promotion within its territory, an issue on which dealer and manufacturer will likely disagree, and enforcement of such a vague contractual obligation will be costly.\(^{506}\) An airtight exclusive territory, by contrast, avoids these shortcomings while at the same time furthering the manufacturer's or ven-

\(^{499}\) See supra notes 386–445 and accompanying text (arguing that proof that a restraint increases prices is consistent with the assertion that a restraint combats a market failure).

\(^{500}\) See supra note 407 (collecting authorities holding that evidence equally consistent with a procompetitive justification for a challenged agreement cannot support a judgment against a defendant).

\(^{501}\) See supra notes 178–82 and accompanying text (explaining that application of less restrictive alternative test depends upon assumption that procompetitive and anticompetitive effects coexist).

\(^{502}\) See, e.g., Sullivan, supra note 239, at 386 (arguing that manufacturer can adequately further interest in promotion by stipulating desired service in distribution contract and monitoring dealer's compliance with it); Sullivan & Grimes, supra note 53, at 332 (identifying area of primary responsibility as less restrictive means of encouraging promotion by joint venture partners); Piraino, supra note 169, at 930 (same); Robert Pitoisky, A Framework for Antitrust Analysis of Joint Ventures, 74 Geo. L.J. 1605, 1621 (1986) (arguing that the defendants in Topco could have achieved the legitimate objective of furthering promotion by adopting areas of primary responsibility); Sullivan, supra note 172, at 886 (arguing that area of primary responsibility was viable less restrictive alternative to restraints in Topco); Turner, supra note 205, at 699 (stating that the area of primary responsibility will assure effective promotion by dealers thus obviating need for exclusive territories).

\(^{503}\) See supra note 501 (collecting authorities).

\(^{504}\) See Bork, supra note 322, at 467–69; Meese, supra note 107, at 487 n.109 (arguing that areas of primary responsibility are generally less effective at achieving legitimate benefits than airtight exclusive territories); see also Williamson, supra note 197, at 187 (arguing that more complex restraints are more difficult to police and enforce than less complicated ones).

\(^{505}\) See Bork, supra note 322, at 467–68; Meese, supra note 107, at 487 n.109.

\(^{506}\) See Bork, supra note 322, at 468–69; Meese, supra note 107, at 487 n.109.
ture's interest in promotion.\textsuperscript{507} Proof that defendants have adopted exclusive territories instead of areas of primary responsibility is thus entirely consistent with an assertion that the restraints further competition, properly understood. More importantly, such proof undermines entirely any assertion that the procompetitive benefits of the restraint coexist with anticompetitive effects. Any reduction in competition is entirely illusory, then, and there is no reason to require the defendants to achieve their objectives via a "less anticompetitive means."

In some cases, plaintiffs may establish the existence of less restrictive alternatives that are in fact every bit as effective as the restraint under challenge. Even here, however, such proof should not entitle the plaintiff to judgment. For, the existence of such an alternative does not tend to exclude the hypothesis that the restraint merely combats market failure and thus produces no competitive harm in the first place. To be sure, the challenged restraint places a greater limitation on rivalry than the proffered alternative, and such limitation is consistent with the plaintiff's assertion that the benefits produced by the restraint coexist with procompetitive effects. At the same time, however, adoption of the more restrictive restraint is also consistent with an alternative hypothesis, namely, that the defendants have made a random selection of one equally effective restraint over the other. Such a selection, in tum, is entirely consistent with defendants' assertion that the restraint combats a market failure, and that elimination of that failure is responsible for any change in price or output. Thus, proof that an equally effective restraint is available should not give rise to liability.\textsuperscript{508}

V. CONCLUSION

\textit{Standard Oil} requires courts to apply reason to determine whether a restraint harms consumers.\textsuperscript{509} While courts have often embraced TCE when policing the boundaries of the per se rule, they have clung to an outmoded price-theoretic definition of competition when conducting analysis under the Rule of Reason. Courts should restructure Rule of Reason analysis to account for the modernization of economic theory.

\textsuperscript{507} See Bork, \textit{supra} note 322, at 467-68 ("Market division cures these problems [associated with areas of primary responsibility] automatically by making the reseller's interest in local sales effort coextensive with the manufacturer's interest."); Meese, \textit{supra} note 107, at 487 n.109 (analogizing exclusive territory to a property right that overcomes shortcomings of areas of primary responsibilities).

\textsuperscript{508} There may be one instance in which proof of a less restrictive alternative should be sufficient to establish that a challenged restraint is unreasonable. If the alternative offered by the plaintiff is more effective or less costly to administer, then the existence of the alternative suggests that the restraint under question is not simply an attempt to combat a market failure.

\textsuperscript{509} Standard Oil Co. v. United States, 221 U.S. 1 (1911).