

# Consumer Bankruptcy as Aggregate Demand Management

Adrien Auclert

Stanford

Kurt Mitman

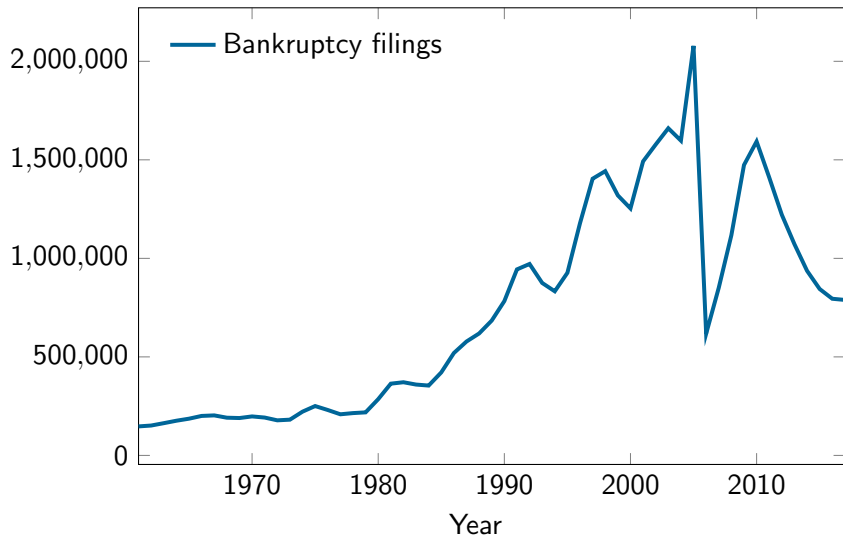
CEMFI & IIES

PSE

14 December 2023

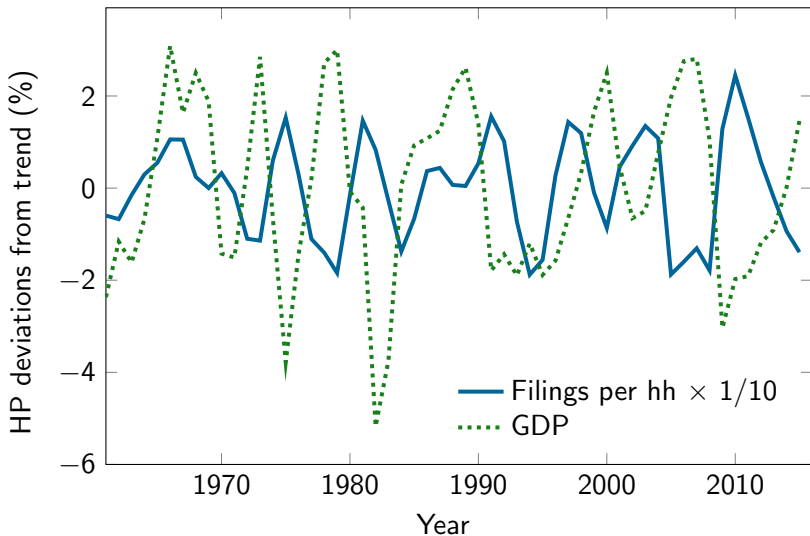
## Consumer bankruptcy in the U.S.

► Common phenomenon...



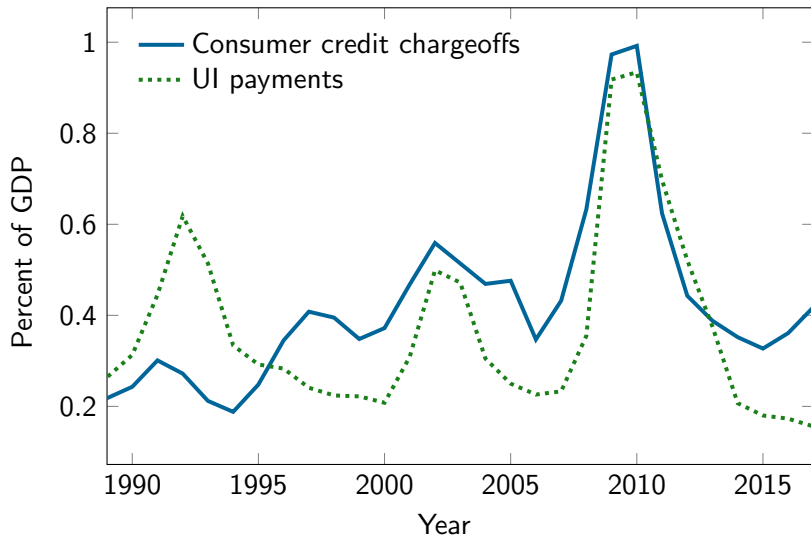
# Consumer bankruptcy in the U.S.

- Common phenomenon, and highly countercyclical



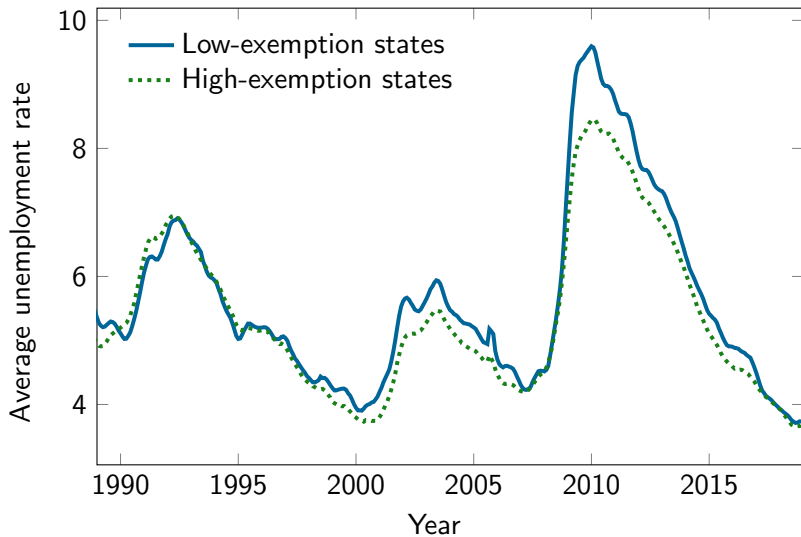
## Consumer bankruptcy in the U.S.

- Credit relief comparable to unemployment insurance in magnitude



## Consumer bankruptcy in the U.S.

- More generous states less sensitive to the cycle [more](#)



# Consumer bankruptcy and aggregate stabilization

- ▶ In the data:
  - a) Consumer bankruptcy is large and countercyclical
  - b) Downturns tend to be less severe when there is more debt relief, at least across regions [Verner-Gyongyosi 2019, Auclert et al 2021]
- ▶ Q: To what extent does bankruptcy act as an *automatic stabilizer*?

# Consumer bankruptcy and aggregate stabilization

- ▶ In the data:
  - a) Consumer bankruptcy is large and countercyclical
  - b) Downturns tend to be less severe when there is more debt relief, at least across regions [Verner-Gyongyosi 2019, Auclert et al 2021]
- ▶ Q: To what extent does bankruptcy act as an *automatic stabilizer*?
- ▶ Our paper: a framework + quantitative theory to answer this Q

# Consumer bankruptcy and aggregate stabilization

- ▶ In the data:
  - a) Consumer bankruptcy is large and countercyclical
  - b) Downturns tend to be less severe when there is more debt relief, at least across regions [Verner-Gyongyosi 2019, Auclert et al 2021]
- ▶ Q: To what extent does bankruptcy act as an *automatic stabilizer*?
- ▶ Our paper: a framework + quantitative theory to answer this Q
  1. Define what an automatic stabilizer *is*
  2. Show that consumer bankruptcy has the features of one
  3. Quantitatively evaluate the extent to which bankruptcy reduces the magnitude of output fluctuations, and effect of alternative policy rules



## Related literatures

- ▶ Automatic stabilizers and the business cycle
  - ▶ IS-LM: income tax, govt spending [Musgrave-Miller 1948, Christiano 1984]
  - ▶ HANK: income tax [McKay-Reis 2016], UI [McKay-Reis 2020, Kekre 2021]
- ▶ Aggregate demand effect of credit-relief policy
  - ▶ [recently student loans: Dinerstein-Yannelis-Chen 2023; Katz 2023]
- ▶ Quantitative literature on consumer bankruptcy
  - ▶ Insurance vs credit access [Zame 93, Livshits et al 07, Chatterjee et al 07, ...]
  - ▶ Add business cycle fluctuations [Nakajima Rios-Rull 16, Fieldhouse et al 11]
  - ▶ Add nominal rigidities [new!]

# Outline

1. Automatic stabilizers in a two period framework
2. Consumer default as an automatic stabilizer
3. Quantitative evaluation

# Outline

1. Automatic stabilizers in a two period framework
2. Consumer default as an automatic stabilizer
3. Quantitative evaluation

# Overview

- ▶ **Q:** What is an automatic stabilizer?

# Overview

- ▶ **Q:** What is an automatic stabilizer?

*“I know it when I see it”*

# Overview

- **Q:** What is an automatic stabilizer?

*"I know it when I see it"*

- We propose the following practical definition: let
  1.  $\epsilon_s \equiv \frac{\partial s}{\partial y}$  be the sensitivity of some aggregate  $s$  to output  $y$
  2.  $\alpha_s \equiv \frac{\partial AD}{\partial s}$  be the sensitivity of aggregate demand to  $s$

Then we say that  $s$  is an **automatic stabilizer** if  $\epsilon_s \cdot \alpha_s < 0$

# Overview

- ▶ **Q:** What is an automatic stabilizer?

*"I know it when I see it"*

- ▶ We propose the following practical definition: let

1.  $\epsilon_s \equiv \frac{\partial s}{\partial y}$  be the sensitivity of some aggregate  $s$  to output  $y$
2.  $\alpha_s \equiv \frac{\partial AD}{\partial s}$  be the sensitivity of aggregate demand to  $s$

Then we say that  $s$  is an **automatic stabilizer** if  $\epsilon_s \cdot \alpha_s < 0$

- ▶ Examples of stabilizers:

- ▶ government spending  $g$ :  $\epsilon_g < 0$ ,  $\alpha_g > 0$
- ▶ income tax  $t$ :  $\epsilon_t > 0$ ,  $\alpha_t < 0$
- ▶ monetary policy (real interest rate  $r$ ):  $\epsilon_r > 0$ ,  $\alpha_r < 0$

# Overview

- ▶ **Q:** What is an automatic stabilizer?

*"I know it when I see it"*

- ▶ We propose the following practical definition: let

1.  $\epsilon_s \equiv \frac{\partial s}{\partial y}$  be the sensitivity of some aggregate  $s$  to output  $y$
2.  $\alpha_s \equiv \frac{\partial AD}{\partial s}$  be the sensitivity of aggregate demand to  $s$

Then we say that  $s$  is an **automatic stabilizer** if  $\epsilon_s \cdot \alpha_s < 0$

- ▶ Examples of stabilizers:

- ▶ government spending  $g$ :  $\epsilon_g < 0$ ,  $\alpha_g > 0$
- ▶ income tax  $t$ :  $\epsilon_t > 0$ ,  $\alpha_t < 0$
- ▶ monetary policy (real interest rate  $r$ ):  $\epsilon_r > 0$ ,  $\alpha_r < 0$

- ▶ If  $\epsilon_s \cdot \alpha_s > 0$ , it's an **automatic destabilizer**

- ▶ e.g. Fisher debt deflation (price level  $P$ ):  $\epsilon_P > 0$ ,  $\alpha_P > 0$



## Model setup: households

- ▶ Two periods  $t = 0, 1$  (short and long-run)
  - ▶ Production in period 0:  $y_0 = A_0 n_0$ , flex prices, partially rigid wages
  - ▶ Endowment in period 1:  $y_1 = 1$

## Model setup: households

- ▶ Two periods  $t = 0, 1$  (short and long-run)
  - ▶ Production in period 0:  $y_0 = A_0 n_0$ , flex prices, partially rigid wages
  - ▶ Endowment in period 1:  $y_1 = 1$
- ▶  $I$  groups of heterogeneous agents, mass  $\mu^i$  each
  - ▶ discount factor  $\beta^i$ , borrowing constraint  $\overline{b_1^i}$ , inequality  $e_0^i$ , risk  $e_1^i \sim F^i$
  - ▶ proportional taxation: post-tax income  $z_{it} = (1 - \tau_t) y_{it}$ ;  $z_t \equiv \mathbb{E}[z_{it}]$
  - ▶ write  $\Theta \equiv (\beta^i, \overline{b_1^i}, e_0^i, F^i)$

## Model setup: households

- ▶ Two periods  $t = 0, 1$  (short and long-run)
  - ▶ Production in period 0:  $y_0 = A_0 n_0$ , flex prices, partially rigid wages
  - ▶ Endowment in period 1:  $y_1 = 1$
- ▶  $I$  groups of heterogeneous agents, mass  $\mu^i$  each
  - ▶ discount factor  $\beta^i$ , borrowing constraint  $\overline{b_1^i}$ , inequality  $e_0^i$ , risk  $e_1^i \sim F^i$
  - ▶ proportional taxation: post-tax income  $z_{it} = (1 - \tau_t) y_{it}$ ;  $z_t \equiv \mathbb{E}[z_{it}]$
  - ▶ write  $\Theta \equiv (\beta^i, \overline{b_1^i}, e_0^i, F^i)$
- ▶ **Consumption function**  $c_0(z_0, z_1, \Theta) \equiv \sum_i \mu^i c_0^i(z_0, z_1, \Theta)$ , with

$$c_0^i(z_0, z_1, \Theta) = \arg \max_{b_1^i \leq \overline{b_1^i}} u(c_0^i) + \beta^i \mathbb{E}[u(c_1^i)]$$

$$c_0^i = \frac{e_0^i}{\mathbb{E}[e_0^i]} z_0 + \frac{1}{R} b_1^i; \quad c_1^i = \frac{e_1^i}{\mathbb{E}[e_1^i]} z_1 - b_1^i$$

# Monetary and fiscal policy and equilibrium

- ▶ **Monetary policy:** set real rate  $R$  and  $P_1 = P_0$

# Monetary and fiscal policy and equilibrium

- ▶ **Monetary policy:** set real rate  $R$  and  $P_1 = P_0$
- ▶ **Fiscal policy:**
  - ▶ Period 0: govt spending rule  $g_0(y_0)$ , tax revenue rule  $t_0(y_0)$
  - ▶ Period 1: constant  $g_1$ ,  $t_1$  is residual to ensure:

$$t_0(y_0) + \frac{t_1}{R} = g_0(y_0) + \frac{g_1}{R} \quad (\text{GIBC})$$

- ▶  $(t_0, t_1)$  levied by changing tax rate  $\tau_0, \tau_1$
- ▶ Empirically relevant case:  $g'_0 < 0$ ,  $t'_0 > 0$  (e.g.  $t'_0 = \tau_0$  if  $\tau_0$  constant)

# Monetary and fiscal policy and equilibrium

- ▶ **Monetary policy:** set real rate  $R$  and  $P_1 = P_0$
- ▶ **Fiscal policy:**
  - ▶ Period 0: govt spending rule  $g_0(y_0)$ , tax revenue rule  $t_0(y_0)$
  - ▶ Period 1: constant  $g_1$ ,  $t_1$  is residual to ensure:

$$t_0(y_0) + \frac{t_1}{R} = g_0(y_0) + \frac{g_1}{R} \quad (\text{GIBC})$$

- ▶  $(t_0, t_1)$  levied by changing tax rate  $\tau_0, \tau_1$
  - ▶ Empirically relevant case:  $g'_0 < 0$ ,  $t'_0 > 0$  (e.g.  $t'_0 = \tau_0$  if  $\tau_0$  constant)
- ▶ Aggregate post-tax income in period  $t$ :  $z_t = y_t - t_t$

# Monetary and fiscal policy and equilibrium

- ▶ **Monetary policy:** set real rate  $R$  and  $P_1 = P_0$
- ▶ **Fiscal policy:**
  - ▶ Period 0: govt spending rule  $g_0(y_0)$ , tax revenue rule  $t_0(y_0)$
  - ▶ Period 1: constant  $g_1$ ,  $t_1$  is residual to ensure:

$$t_0(y_0) + \frac{t_1}{R} = g_0(y_0) + \frac{g_1}{R} \quad (\text{GIBC})$$

- ▶  $(t_0, t_1)$  levied by changing tax rate  $\tau_0, \tau_1$
  - ▶ Empirically relevant case:  $g'_0 < 0$ ,  $t'_0 > 0$  (e.g.  $t'_0 = \tau_0$  if  $\tau_0$  constant)
- ▶ Aggregate post-tax income in period  $t$ :  $z_t = y_t - t_t$
- ▶ **Equilibrium** for given  $\Theta$  is  $y_0$  that solves:

$$c_0(y_0 - t_0(y_0), 1 - t_1, \Theta) + g_0(y_0) = y_0 \quad \text{s.t.} \quad (\text{GIBC})$$

# Monetary and fiscal policy and equilibrium

- ▶ **Monetary policy:** set real rate  $R$  and  $P_1 = P_0$
- ▶ **Fiscal policy:**
  - ▶ Period 0: govt spending rule  $g_0(y_0)$ , tax revenue rule  $t_0(y_0)$
  - ▶ Period 1: constant  $g_1$ ,  $t_1$  is residual to ensure:

$$t_0(y_0) + \frac{t_1}{R} = g_0(y_0) + \frac{g_1}{R} \quad (\text{GIBC})$$

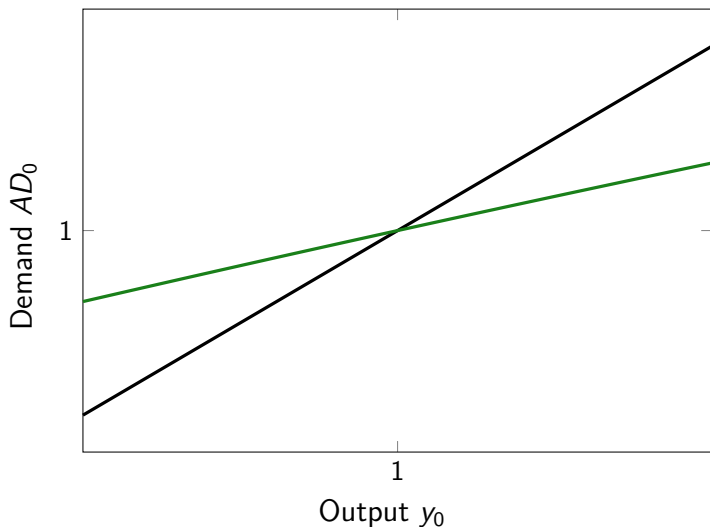
- ▶  $(t_0, t_1)$  levied by changing tax rate  $\tau_0, \tau_1$
  - ▶ Empirically relevant case:  $g'_0 < 0$ ,  $t'_0 > 0$  (e.g.  $t'_0 = \tau_0$  if  $\tau_0$  constant)
- ▶ Aggregate post-tax income in period  $t$ :  $z_t = y_t - t_t$
- ▶ **Equilibrium** for given  $\Theta$  is  $y_0$  that solves:

$$AD_0(y_0, t_0(y_0), g_0(y_0), \Theta) = y_0$$



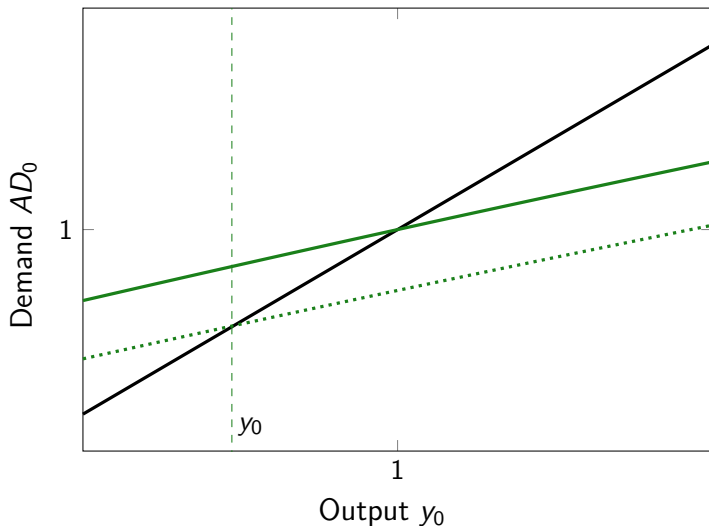
## Taxes and spending as automatic stabilizers

- Initial equilibrium  $y_0 = 1$ ,  $\Theta = 0$ :  $AD_0(1, t_0(1), g_0(1), 0) = 1$



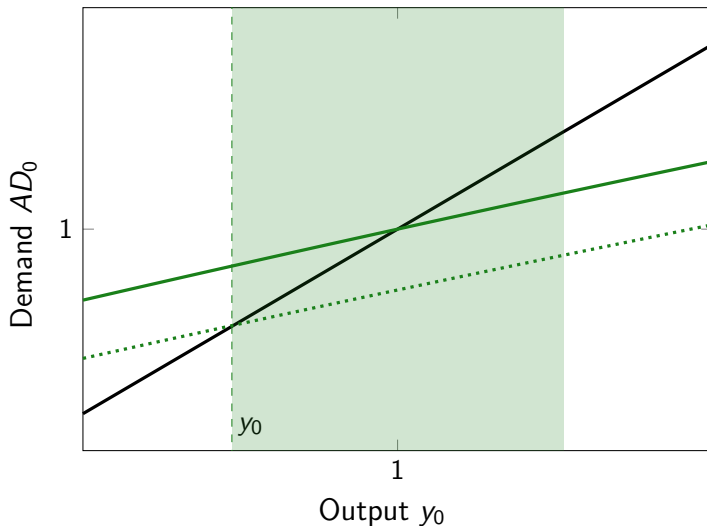
## Taxes and spending as automatic stabilizers

- Negative demand shock:  $AD_0(y_0, t_0(y_0), g_0(y_0), \Theta) = y_0$



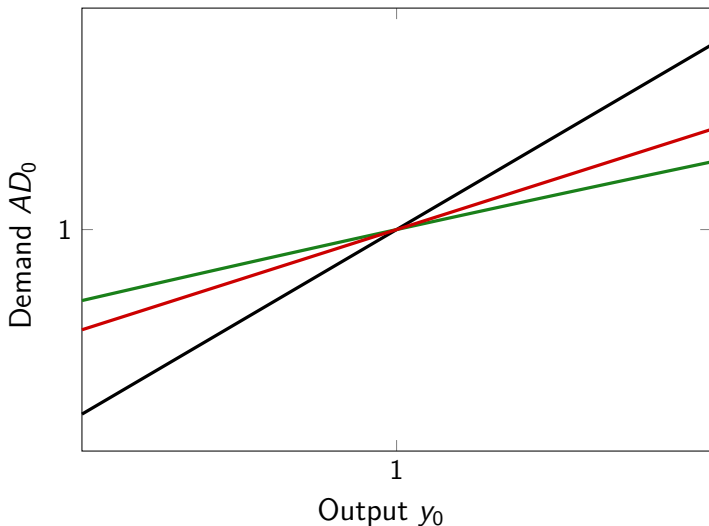
# Taxes and spending as automatic stabilizers

- Output fluctuations under demand shocks



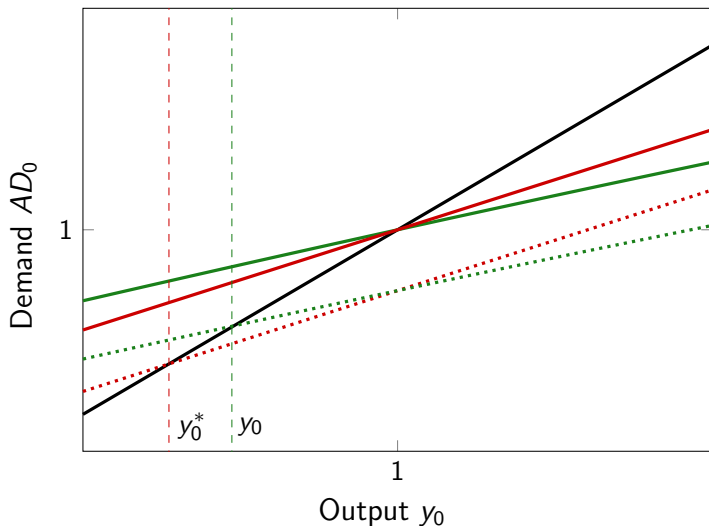
## Taxes and spending as automatic stabilizers

- ▶ Counterfactual with fixed  $t_0, g_0$ : we'll see that  $AD_0(y_0)$  *steepens*



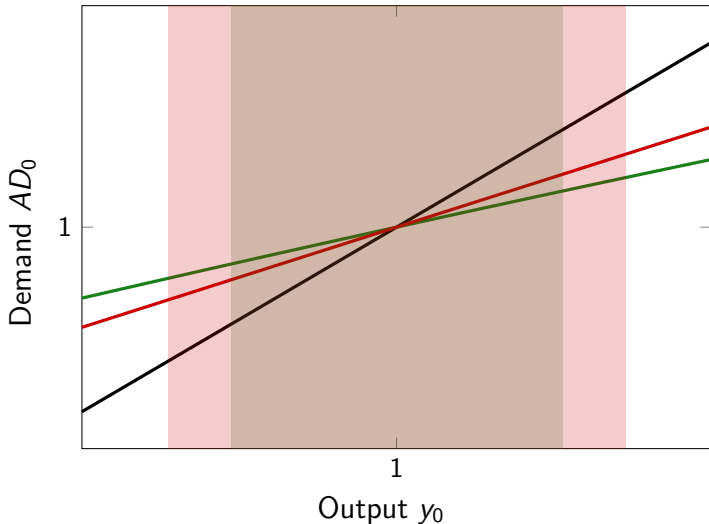
## Taxes and spending as automatic stabilizers

- Same demand shock, larger change in  $y_0^*$  st  $AD_0(y_0^*, t_0, g_0, \Theta) = y_0^*$



# Taxes and spending as automatic stabilizers

- ▶ Same demand shocks, larger output fluctuations



## General formulation

- ▶ With  $S$  stabilizers, determination of period 0 output is

$$AD(y, s_1(y) \cdots s_S(y), \Theta) = y$$

- ▶ Let  $dy^*$  be outcome with all stabilizers shut off,  $\epsilon_s = 0$ .
- ▶ Let  $M^* \equiv \left(1 - \frac{\partial AD}{\partial y}\right)^{-1}$  be the Keynesian multiplier in that case.

## General formulation

- ▶ With  $S$  stabilizers, determination of period 0 output is

$$AD(y, s_1(y) \cdots s_S(y), \Theta) = y$$

- ▶ Let  $dy^*$  be outcome with all stabilizers shut off,  $\epsilon_s = 0$ .
- ▶ Let  $M^* \equiv \left(1 - \frac{\partial AD}{\partial y}\right)^{-1}$  be the Keynesian multiplier in that case.

Proposition (Contribution of automatic stabilizers to fluctuations)

$$\frac{\text{std}(dy^*)}{\text{std}(dy)} = 1 + M^* \cdot \sum_{s \in S} (-\epsilon_s \cdot \alpha_s)$$



# Taxes and spending as automatic stabilizers

► **Stabilization ratio:**

$$\eta = \frac{\text{std}(dy^*)}{\text{std}(dy)} = 1 + M^* \cdot \sum_{s \in S} (-\epsilon_s \cdot \alpha_s)$$

"How much more volatile would output be without stabilizers?"

# Taxes and spending as automatic stabilizers

## ► Stabilization ratio:

$$\eta = \frac{\text{std}(dy^*)}{\text{std}(dy)} = 1 + M^* \cdot \sum_{s \in S} (-\epsilon_s \cdot \alpha_s)$$

"How much more volatile would output be without stabilizers?"

- $\epsilon_s = \frac{\partial s}{\partial y}$  is measurable in data.  $M^*, \alpha_s$  given by sufficient statistics!

# Taxes and spending as automatic stabilizers

## ► Stabilization ratio:

$$\eta = \frac{\text{std}(dy^*)}{\text{std}(dy)} = 1 + M^* \cdot \sum_{s \in S} (-\epsilon_s \cdot \alpha_s)$$

"How much more volatile would output be without stabilizers?"

- $\epsilon_s = \frac{\partial s}{\partial y}$  is measurable in data.  $M^*, \alpha_s$  given by sufficient statistics!
- For instance, here with  $t$  and  $g$  as stabilizers,

$$\eta = 1 + \epsilon_t \cdot \frac{MPC_0 - R \cdot MPC_1}{1 - MPC_0} + (-\epsilon_g) \cdot \frac{1 - R \cdot MPC_1}{1 - MPC_0}$$

where  $MPC_0 = \frac{\partial c_0}{\partial z_0}$  and  $MPC_1 = \frac{\partial c_0}{\partial z_1}$ .

# Taxes and spending as automatic stabilizers

## ► Stabilization ratio:

$$\eta = \frac{\text{std}(dy^*)}{\text{std}(dy)} = 1 + M^* \cdot \sum_{s \in S} (-\epsilon_s \cdot \alpha_s)$$

"How much more volatile would output be without stabilizers?"

- $\epsilon_s = \frac{\partial s}{\partial y}$  is measurable in data.  $M^*, \alpha_s$  given by sufficient statistics!
- For instance, here with  $t$  and  $g$  as stabilizers,

$$\eta = 1 + \epsilon_t \cdot \frac{MPC_0 - R \cdot MPC_1}{1 - MPC_0} + (-\epsilon_g) \cdot \frac{1 - R \cdot MPC_1}{1 - MPC_0}$$

where  $MPC_0 = \frac{\partial c_0}{\partial z_0}$  and  $MPC_1 = \frac{\partial c_0}{\partial z_1}$ .

- In full-fledged HANK model [go](#), similar formula, but need to adjust " $MPC_0$ " for persistence of shock, then can set " $MPC_1$ " = 0.

## Automatic stabilizers quantified

	<b>Stabilization ratio</b>		
	Suff. stat.	Simple HANK	Quant. Model
Acyclical $G$	1.20	1.21	
Acyclical deficits	1.09	1.09	
Acyclical bankruptcy	—	—	
All three acyclical	—	—	
Active bankruptcy policy	—	—	

# Outline

1. Automatic stabilizers in a two period framework
2. Consumer default as an automatic stabilizer
3. Quantitative evaluation

## Updated environment

- ▶ Two types  $I = 2$  (borrowers and savers)
  - ▶ Mass  $1/2$  of savers  $S$
  - ▶ Mass  $1/2$  of borrowers  $B$ , with option to default in both periods
  - ▶ For simplicity: no taxes/spending,  $z_{it} = e_{it}y_t$
- ▶ Borrowers now have defaultable legacy debt  $b_0 > 0$  owed to savers

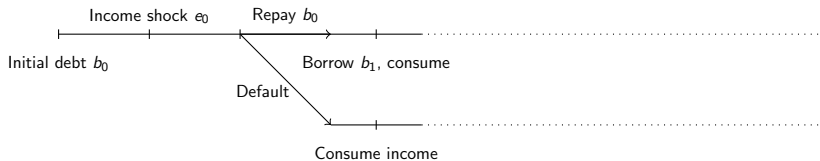
# Updated environment

- ▶ Two types  $I = 2$  (borrowers and savers)
  - ▶ Mass 1/2 of savers  $S$
  - ▶ Mass 1/2 of borrowers  $B$ , with option to default in both periods
  - ▶ For simplicity: no taxes/spending,  $z_{it} = e_{it} y_t$
- ▶ Borrowers now have defaultable legacy debt  $b_0 > 0$  owed to savers
  - ▶ Default involves utility cost  $K_0, K_1$  and financial market exclusion
  - ▶ We think of  $K_0, K_1$  as an **instruments of policy** (more instruments later)



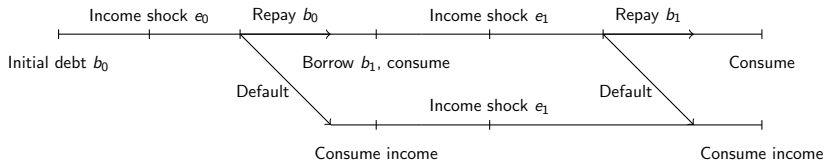
# Timeline

- Two periods  $t = 0, 1$



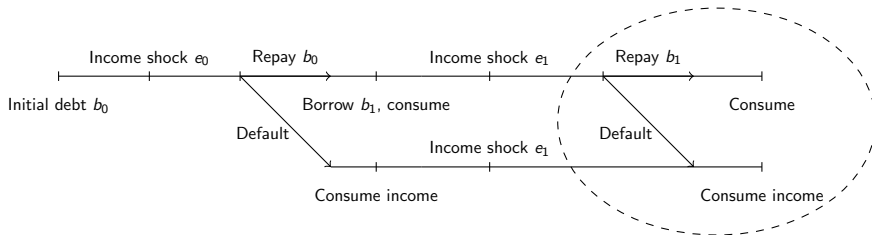
# Timeline

- Two periods  $t = 0, 1$



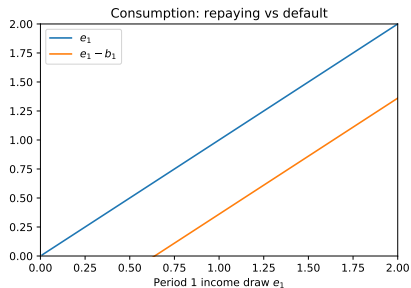
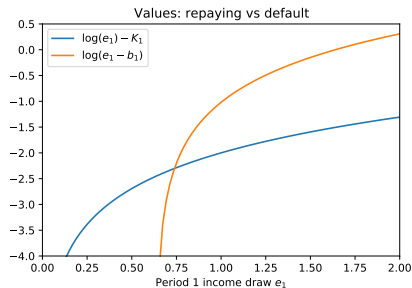
# Timeline

- Two periods  $t = 0, 1$



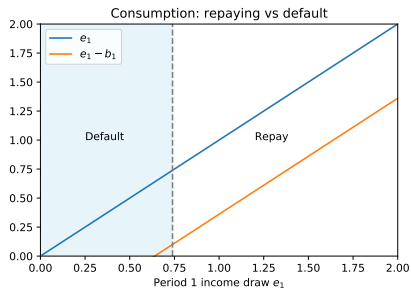
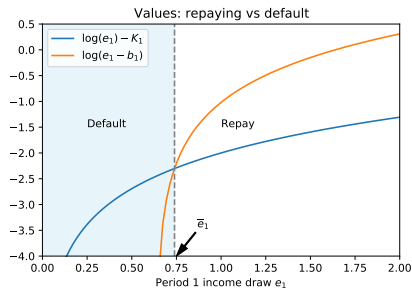
# Period 1 choice

$$V(e_1, b_1) = \max \{ u(e_1 - b_1); u(e_1) - K_1 \}$$



## Period 1 choice

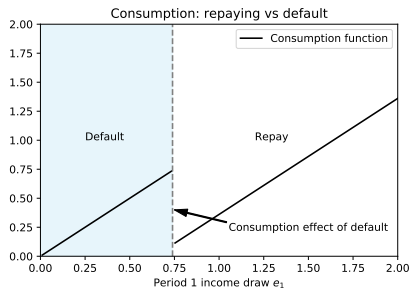
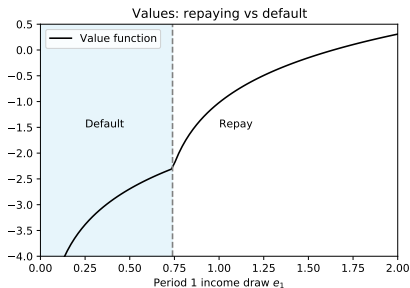
$$V(e_1, b_1) = \max \{ u(e_1 - b_1); u(e_1) - K_1 \}$$



- Default decision characterized by income threshold  $\bar{e}_1$
- Repay when  $e_1 \geq \bar{e}_1$

## Period 1 choice

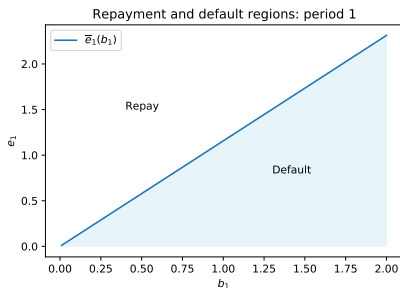
$$V(e_1, b_1) = \begin{cases} u(e_1) - K_1 & e_1 \leq \bar{e}_1(b_1) \\ u(e_1 - b_1) & e_1 > \bar{e}_1(b_1) \end{cases}$$



- ▶ Here, **consumption effect of default** is  $CED = b_1$
- ▶ Intuitively, debt repayment is foregone consumption

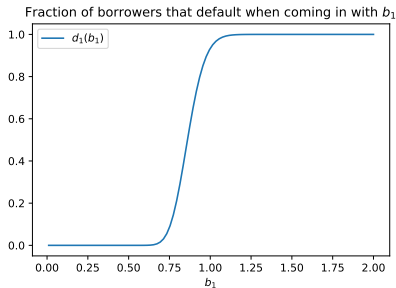
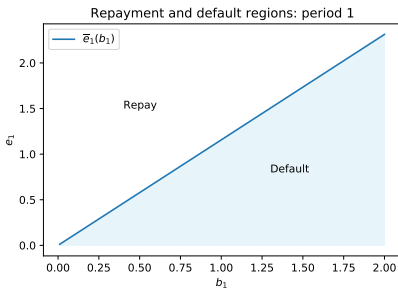
## Entering period 1: probability of default

- ▶ Bottom line: default if  $e_1 \leq \bar{e}_1(b_1)$
- ▶ More likely to default if more indebted, or lower income



# Entering period 1: probability of default

- ▶ Bottom line: default if  $e_1 \leq \bar{e}_1(b_1)$
- ▶ More likely to default if more indebted, or lower income
- ▶ Income shocks  $e_1$  distributed i.i.d with cdf  $F$
- ▶ Fraction of borrowers that default given  $b_1$ :  $d_1(b_1) = F(\bar{e}_1(b_1))$





## Loan pricing: banks internalize default risk

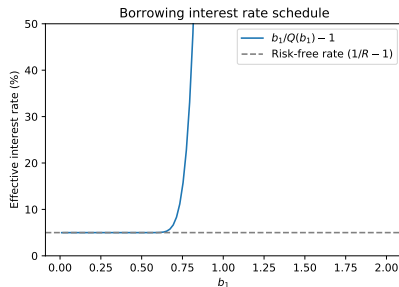
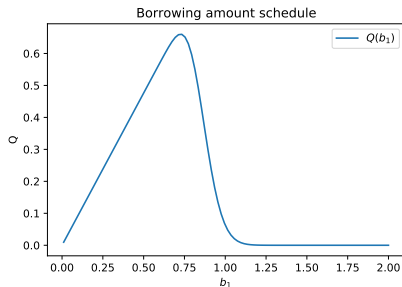
- ▶ Competitive intermediaries face cost of funds  $R$ , diversify loan risks
- ▶ Amount they offer to a borrower that promises to repay  $b_1$ :

$$Q(b_1) = \frac{b_1}{R} (1 - d_1(b_1))$$

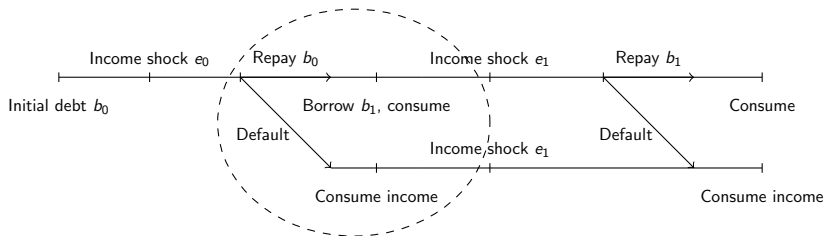
# Loan pricing: banks internalize default risk

- ▶ Competitive intermediaries face cost of funds  $R$ , diversify loan risks
- ▶ Amount they offer to a borrower that promises to repay  $b_1$ :

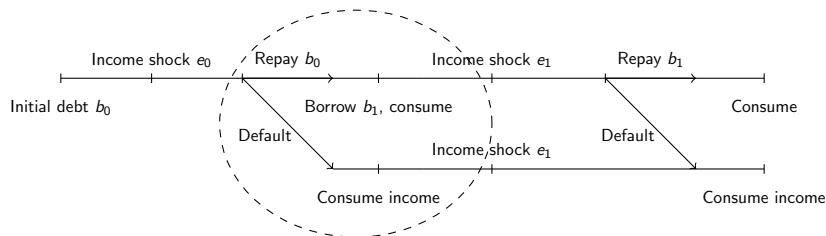
$$Q(b_1) = \frac{b_1}{R} (1 - d_1(b_1)) = \frac{b_1}{R} (1 - F(\bar{e}_1(b_1)))$$



## Period 0 choice



## Period 0 choice



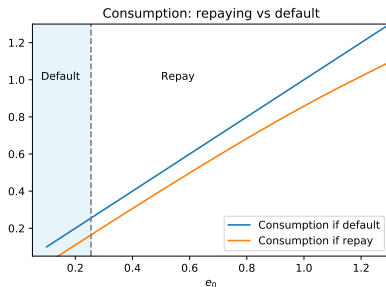
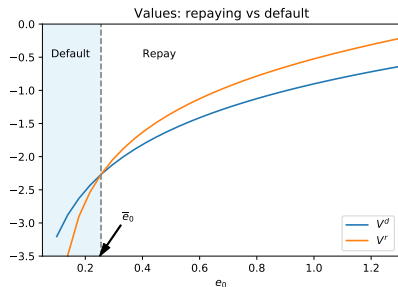
- Period 0 GDP is  $y_0$
- Household with income shock  $e_0$  chooses  $\max \{ V^r(e_0), V^d(e_0) \}$  w.

$$V^r(e_0) = \max_{b_1} \{ u(y_0 e_0 - b_0 + Q(b_1)) + \beta \mathbb{E}_{e_1} [V(e_1, b_1)] \}$$

$$V^d(e_0) = u(y_0 e_0) + \beta \mathbb{E}_{e_1} [u(e_1)] - K_0$$

## Period 0 choice and default rate

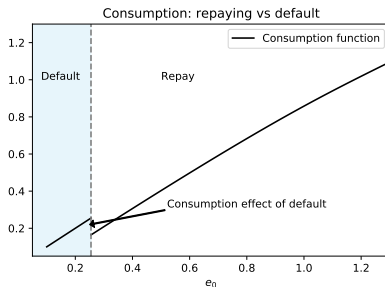
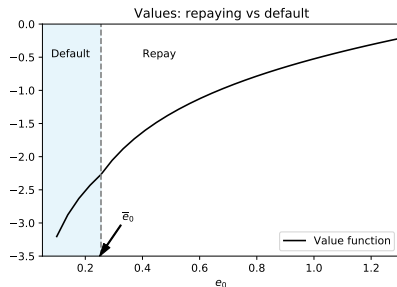
$$V_0(e_0) = \max \{ V^r(e_0); V^d(e_0) \}$$



- Assume parameters are such that there is a single threshold  $\bar{e}_0$

# Period 0 choice and default rate

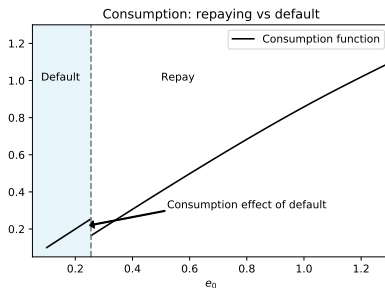
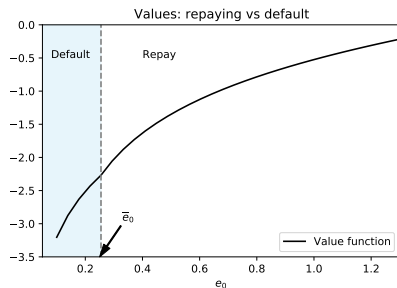
$$V_0(e_0) = \max \{ V^r(e_0); V^d(e_0) \}$$



- ▶ Consumption effect of default still positive, but less than  $b_0$
- ▶ Repayers can roll over some of their debt (depending on  $Q$ )

# Period 0 choice and default rate

$$V_0(e_0) = \max \{ V^r(e_0); V^d(e_0) \}$$



- ▶ Income shocks  $e_0$  distributed i.i.d with cdf  $F$  (mean 1)
- ▶ Fraction of consumers who default at date 0:  $d_0 = F(\bar{e}_0)$

## General equilibrium

- ▶ Savers own financial intermediaries, have  $e_t = 1$  & are unconstrained
  - ▶ consume  $MPC^S$  out of the PV of income and intermediary profits:

$$c_0^S = MPC^S \left( y_0 + \frac{1}{R} + b_0(1 - d_0) \right)$$



## General equilibrium

- ▶ Savers own financial intermediaries, have  $e_t = 1$  & are unconstrained
  - ▶ consume  $MPC^S$  out of the PV of income and intermediary profits:

$$c_0^S = MPC^S \left( y_0 + \frac{1}{R} + b_0 (1 - d_0) \right)$$

- ▶ Aggregate spending in period 0:

$$c_0(y_0, d_0(y_0)) = \frac{1}{2} \int c_0^B(e_0) dF(e_0) + \frac{1}{2} c_0^S$$

## General equilibrium

- ▶ Savers own financial intermediaries, have  $e_t = 1$  & are unconstrained
  - ▶ consume  $MPC^S$  out of the PV of income and intermediary profits:

$$c_0^S = MPC^S \left( y_0 + \frac{1}{R} + b_0 (1 - d_0) \right)$$

- ▶ Aggregate spending in period 0:

$$c_0(y_0, d_0(y_0)) = \frac{1}{2} \int c_0^B(e_0) dF(e_0) + \frac{1}{2} c_0^S$$

- ▶ New equation characterizing equilibrium:

$$c_0(y_0, d_0(y_0)) = y_0$$

## How consumer default affects the Keynesian cross

- What is  $\alpha$  for consumer default  $d$  ?

$$\alpha_d = \frac{\partial AD}{\partial d} = (ACED - MPC^S) \cdot \frac{b_0}{2}$$

$ACED$  is the consumption effect of default for the marginal defaulter, normalized by her debt  $b_0$

## How consumer default affects the Keynesian cross

- ▶ What is  $\alpha_d$  for consumer default  $d$  ?

$$\alpha_d = \frac{\partial AD}{\partial d} = (ACED - MPC^S) \cdot \frac{b_0}{2}$$

$ACED$  is the consumption effect of default for the marginal defaulter, normalized by her debt  $b_0$

- ▶ What is  $\epsilon_d$  for consumer default  $d$  ?

$$\epsilon_d = \frac{\partial d}{\partial y} = F'(\bar{e}_0) \frac{\partial \bar{e}_0}{\partial y} < 0$$

since higher output raises  $V^r - V^d$  for all  $e_0$

- ▶ So, provided that:

$$ACED > MPC^S$$

consumer default fits our definition of an automatic stabilizer

# Bankruptcy as an automatic stabilizer

## Lemma (Automatic stabilizer role of bankruptcy)

*Let  $y_0^*$  denote output in counterfactual with cst  $d_0$ . For small shocks:*

$$\frac{\text{std}(dy_0^*)}{\text{std}(dy_0)} = 1 + M^* \cdot (ACED - MPC^S) \frac{b_0}{2y_0} \left( -\frac{\partial d_0}{\partial \log y_0} \right)$$

# Bankruptcy as an automatic stabilizer

## Lemma (Automatic stabilizer role of bankruptcy)

Let  $y_0^*$  denote output in counterfactual with *cst*  $d_0$ . For small shocks:

$$\frac{\text{std}(dy_0^*)}{\text{std}(dy_0)} = 1 + M^* \cdot (ACED - MPC^S) \frac{b_0}{2y_0} \left( -\frac{\partial d_0}{\partial \log y_0} \right)$$

- ▶ Sufficient statistic for original **Q**. Back of envelope:
  - ▶  $MPC^S \simeq 0$  to 0.15 from studies of spending from illiquid accounts
  - ▶  $ACED$  is more complicated: requires unobserved counterfactual

# Bankruptcy as an automatic stabilizer

## Lemma (Automatic stabilizer role of bankruptcy)

Let  $y_0^*$  denote output in counterfactual with *cst*  $d_0$ . For small shocks:

$$\frac{\text{std}(dy_0^*)}{\text{std}(dy_0)} = 1 + M^* \cdot (ACED - MPC^S) \frac{b_0}{2y_0} \left( -\frac{\partial d_0}{\partial \log y_0} \right)$$

- ▶ Sufficient statistic for original **Q**. Back of envelope:
  - ▶  $MPC^S \simeq 0$  to 0.15 from studies of spending from illiquid accounts
  - ▶  $ACED$  is more complicated: requires unobserved counterfactual
  - ▶ Strategy from Indarte (2021): ratio of  $\Delta d_0$  from raising income in both states vs only in default state reveals the  $ACED$ .
  - ▶ Her estimates imply  $ACED \simeq 0.2$  to 0.5 [depending on risk aversion]

# Bankruptcy as an automatic stabilizer

## Lemma (Automatic stabilizer role of bankruptcy)

Let  $y_0^*$  denote output in counterfactual with  $cst d_0$ . For small shocks:

$$\frac{\text{std}(dy_0^*)}{\text{std}(dy_0)} = 1 + M^* \cdot (ACED - MPC^S) \frac{b_0}{2y_0} \left( -\frac{\partial d_0}{\partial \log y_0} \right)$$

- ▶ Sufficient statistic for original **Q**. Back of envelope:
  - ▶  $MPC^S \simeq 0$  to 0.15 from studies of spending from illiquid accounts
  - ▶  $ACED$  is more complicated: requires unobserved counterfactual
  - ▶ Strategy from Indarte (2021): ratio of  $\Delta d_0$  from raising income in both states vs only in default state reveals the  $ACED$ .
  - ▶ Her estimates imply  $ACED \simeq 0.2$  to 0.5 [depending on risk aversion]
  - ▶ For instance:

$$1 + \underbrace{M^*}_2 \cdot \left( \underbrace{ACED}_{0.5} - \underbrace{MPC^S}_0 \right) \cdot \underbrace{\frac{b_0}{2y_0}}_{0.25} \cdot \underbrace{\left( -\frac{\partial d_0}{\partial \log y_0} \right)}_{\sim 0.5} \sim 1.13$$



## Automatic stabilizers quantified

	Stabilization ratio		
	Suff. stat.	Simple HANK	Quant. Model
Acyclical $G$	1.20	1.21	
Acyclical deficits	1.09	1.09	
Acyclical bankruptcy	1.13	—	
All three acyclical	1.42	—	
Active bankruptcy policy	—	—	

# Outline

1. Automatic stabilizers in a two period framework
2. Consumer default as an automatic stabilizer
3. Quantitative evaluation

# Quantitative model overview

- ▶ “HANK” w/ household default
  - ▶ similar to Livshits, MacGee, Tertilt (2007)
  - ▶ but general equilibrium + nominal rigidities
- ▶ Household model:
  - ▶ OLG, ages  $j = 1 \dots J$
  - ▶ Idiosyncratic income risk and expenditure risk
- ▶ Production:
  - ▶ Cobb-Douglas production in  $k, n$ , adj costs on  $k$
  - ▶ Sticky prices and wages  $\rightarrow$  standard price and wage NKPCs
- ▶ Government policy:
  - ▶ Bankruptcy code: filing fee, exclusion from credit, Chapter 7 & 13
  - ▶ Fiscal: progressive taxation, PAYGO pensions, rules for  $g, t$
  - ▶ Monetary: constant  $R$  benchmark (also consider Taylor rule)

# Calibration / Estimation

- ▶ Calibrate steady state parameters to match
  - ▶ life-cycle profiles: income, wealth, consumption, debt and default
  - ▶ cross-section: debt, chargeoffs, default, income
- ▶ Estimate slopes of NKPCs, fiscal rule parameters, and shock processes for  $\beta, g, mp, tfp, tax, \epsilon^P, \epsilon^W, \zeta^m$ , via SMM to match
  - ▶ standard deviations and covariances of standard aggregates
  - ▶ cyclicity of bankruptcy, chargeoffs and debt
  - ▶ regression coefficient of output on taxes and spending
  - ▶ fiscal rule parameter estimates:  $\phi_{ty} = 0.34, \phi_{gy} = -0.15$

# Cyclical Properties of Data & Model

Var	Model			Data		
	Std Dev	$\text{Cor}(y, x)$	$\text{Cor}(x, x_{-1})$	Std Dev	$\text{Cor}(y, x)$	$\text{Cor}(x, x_{-1})$
Y	0.011	1.000	0.619	0.010	1.000	0.880
C	0.015	0.502	0.355	0.009	0.883	0.876
G	0.014	-0.768	0.634	0.012	-0.420	0.848
I	0.050	0.928	0.621	0.054	0.894	0.872
N	0.015	0.938	0.629	0.011	0.808	0.960
BK	0.144	-0.173	0.612	0.170	-0.251	0.409
CO	0.172	-0.327	0.785	0.185	-0.604	0.812
D	0.039	-0.323	0.869	0.024	-0.180	0.914
w	0.019	0.466	0.496	0.931	-0.048	0.229
$\pi$	0.033	-0.042	0.314	0.011	0.198	0.777
i	0.024	0.251	0.690	0.028	0.370	0.988
$\pi^w$	0.023	0.112	0.715	1.675	0.103	0.766
tax	0.037	0.651	0.557	0.060	0.579	0.567
$B^g/Y$	0.017	-0.794	0.745	0.048	-0.558	0.901

# Model counterfactuals

## Counterfactuals

1. Baseline: turn off benchmark automatic stabilizers
  - ▶ Countercyclical government spending
  - ▶ Countercyclical deficits
2. Eliminate countercyclical bankruptcy
  - ▶ Penalties increase in recessions to ensure acyclical default rate
3. Active use of bankruptcy policy for demand management
  - ▶ Penalties reduced in recession, triples bankruptcy rate cyclical

## Automatic stabilizers quantified

	Stabilization ratio		
	Suff. stat.	Simple HANK	Quant. Model
Acyclical $G$	1.20	1.21	1.22
Acyclical deficits	1.09	1.09	1.11
Acyclical bankruptcy	1.13	—	1.06
All three acyclical	1.42	—	1.44
Active bankruptcy policy	—	—	0.92

# Comparison to earlier papers on automatic stabilizers

- ▶ McKay-Reis (2016)

- ▶ Remove income tax stabilizers  $\rightarrow$  *reduce*  $\text{std}(Y)$  by 0.5%
- ▶ Our model  $\rightarrow$  increase  $\text{std}(Y)$  by 11%

- ▶ Kekre (2021)

- ▶ Increase generosity of UI by  $4\times \rightarrow$  reduce  $\text{std}(Y)$  by 8%
- ▶ Our active policy: increase  $\frac{\partial d}{\partial \log y}$  by  $3\times \rightarrow$  reduce  $\text{std}(Y)$  by 8%

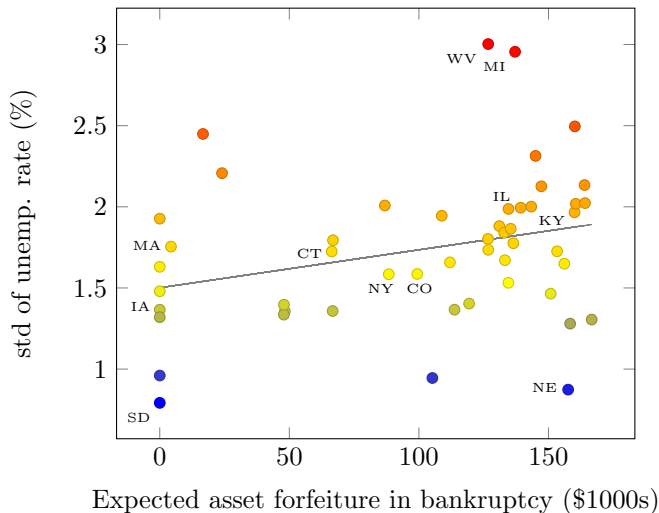


# Conclusion

- ▶ Bankruptcy serves as an automatic stabilizer in response to shocks
  - ▶ Transfer that rises in bad times, reduces magnitude of fluctuations
  - ▶ Quantitatively, dampens output fluctuations by around 6%
- ▶ Active bankruptcy policy can help aggregate demand management
  - ▶ Simple “lean against wind” policy further dampens by 8%
- ▶ Feasible alternative to ad-hoc policy changes that
  - ▶ achieves ex-post redistribution to constrained households
  - ▶ avoids credit supply contraction

Thank you!

# Bankruptcy generosity and unemployment cyclicalcy



## Simple HANK model

- ▶ Consider a canonical HANK model with demand shock  $\Theta$
- ▶ Intertemporal Keynesian Cross: [Auclert-Rognlie-Straub]

$$d\mathbf{Y} = d\mathbf{C} + d\mathbf{G} = \mathbf{M}(d\mathbf{Y} - d\mathbf{T}) + \mathbf{M}^\Theta d\Theta + \mathbf{M}d\mathbf{G}$$

- ▶ Fiscal rules

$$dG_t = \epsilon_g dY_t$$

$$dT_t = \epsilon_t dY_t + \phi_t dB_{t-1}$$

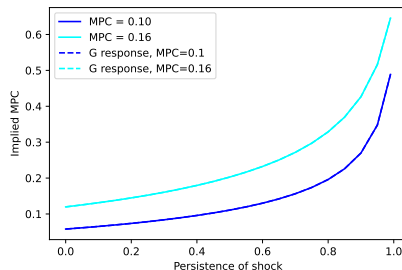
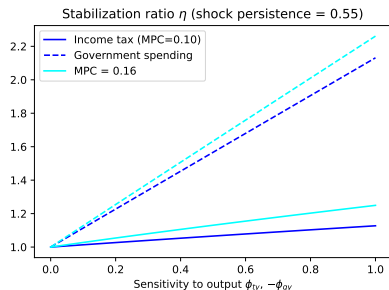
- ▶ Then:

$$[I - \mathbf{M} + \epsilon_t(\mathbf{M} - \phi_t \mathbf{M}\mathbf{C}(\rho)) + (-\epsilon_g)(I - \phi_t \mathbf{M}\mathbf{C}(\rho))] d\mathbf{Y} = \mathbf{M}^\Theta d\Theta$$

where  $\rho \equiv 1 + r - \phi_t < 1$ .

- ▶ Calibrate the model to feature a certain  $M_{0,0}$ , then feed in shocks  $d\Theta$  with different persistences, calculate  $\eta \equiv \text{sd}(d\mathbf{Y}^*) / \text{sd}(d\mathbf{Y}^*)$

# Stabilization coefficient in simple HANK model



Implied MPC from

$$\eta = 1 + \epsilon_t \cdot \frac{MPC}{1 - MPC} + (-\epsilon_g) \cdot \frac{1}{1 - MPC}$$

## Model setup: household problem

- ▶ Write  $S$  for aggregate state
- ▶ Consider interim state after shocks  $z, \kappa$  have realized
- ▶ Household with option to default solves:

$$W_j(b, z, \kappa; S) = \mathbb{E}_{\epsilon^R, \epsilon^D} \left[ \max_{d \in \{0,1\}} (1-d) (V_j^R(b, z, \kappa; S) + \epsilon^R) + d (V_j^D(z; S) + \epsilon^D) \right]$$

where  $\epsilon^R, \epsilon^D$  are type-I EV distributed with parameter  $\frac{1}{\alpha}$ .

- ▶ Value of repaying is:

$$V_j^R(b, z, \kappa; S) = \max_{c, beq \geq 0, b'} u(c) - v(n) + 1_{\{j=J\}} w(beq) \\ + \beta 1_{\{j \neq J\}} \mathbb{E} [W_{j+1}(b', z', \kappa'; S')]$$

s.t.

$$c + \frac{beq}{1+r} + Q_j^R(b', z; S) = b - \kappa + y_j(z, n)$$

## Model setup: household problem

- ▶ Write  $S$  for aggregate state
- ▶ Consider interim state after shocks  $z, \kappa$  have realized
- ▶ Household with option to default solves:

$$W_j(b, z, \kappa; S) = \mathbb{E}_{\epsilon^R, \epsilon^D} \left[ \max_{d \in \{0,1\}} (1-d) (V_j^R(b, z, \kappa; S) + \epsilon^R) + d (V_j^D(z; S) + \epsilon^D) \right]$$

where  $\epsilon^R, \epsilon^D$  are type-I EV distributed with parameter  $\frac{1}{\alpha}$ .

- ▶ Value of defaulting is:

$$V_j^D(z; S) = \begin{cases} X_j(-F - \gamma y_j(z, n), z; S) - K & y_j(z, n) \leq \bar{y}_j \\ X_j(\bar{b}_j(z) - F, z; S) - K & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

where

$$\bar{b}_j(z) = -\frac{\bar{\zeta} y_j(z, n)}{\nu}$$

## Model setup: exclusion value

- Value function in exclusion given by:

$$\begin{aligned} X_j(b, z, \kappa; S) = & \max_{c, beq \geq 0, b' > b^{max}} u(c) - v(n) + 1_{\{j=J\}} w(b') \\ & + \beta 1_{\{j \neq J\}} \left\{ \nu \mathbb{E} [V_{j+1}(b', z', \kappa'; S')] \right. \\ & \left. + (1 - \nu) \mathbb{E} [X_{j+1}(b', z', \kappa'; S')] \right\} \end{aligned}$$

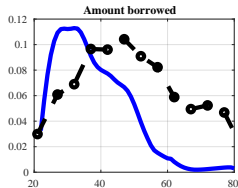
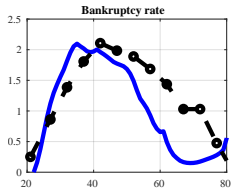
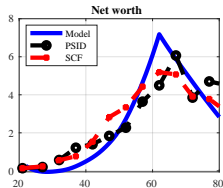
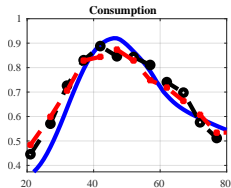
subject to

$$\begin{aligned} c + \frac{beq}{1+r} + Q_j^X(b', z; S) &= b + y_j(z, n) + T_j(b, z, \kappa) \\ b^{max} &\equiv \min \{0, Q_j^X(b', z; S) - b = \bar{\zeta} y_j(z, n)\} \end{aligned}$$

where  $T_j(b, z, \kappa)$  is a transfer to guarantee households a consumption floor  $\underline{c}$  in exclusion.



# Calibrated life-cycle profiles



Back

## Estimated shock processes

$Z$	$\sigma^Z$	$\rho^Z$
$mp$	0.01	0.65
$\beta$	0.001	0.54
$G$	0.002	0.90
$tfp$	0.001	0.98
$\epsilon$	1.05	0.5
$\epsilon^w$	0.64	0.32
$tax$	0.007	0.30

Model all shocks as AR(1), eg,  $Z_t = \rho^Z Z_{t-1} + \sigma^Z \eta$ ,  $\eta \sim N(0, 1)$

## Estimated parameters

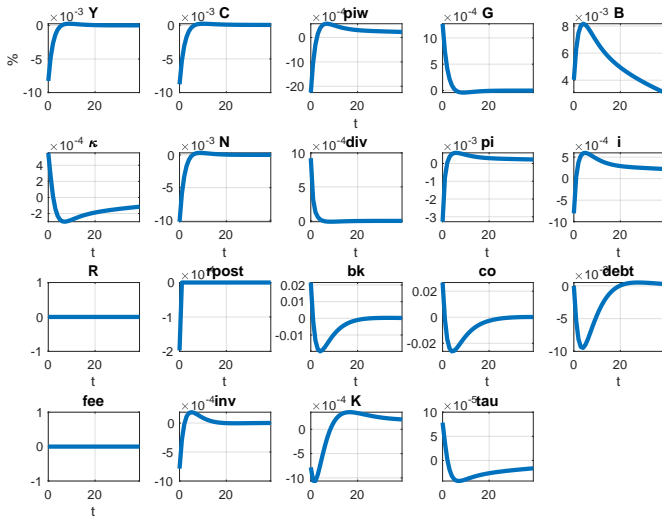
Parameter	Interpretation	Value
$\kappa^w$	Slope of wage NKPC	0.005
$\kappa^p$	Slope of price NKPC	2.69
$\Psi$	Elasticity of investment to Q	1.89
$\phi_\pi$	Taylor rule coef. on $\pi_{t+1}$	1
$\phi_{g,y}$	Spending rule coef. on $y_t$	-0.155
$\phi_{\tau,y}$	Tax rule coef. on $y_t$	0.3357
$\phi_{g,b}$	Spending rule coef. on $b_{t-1}$	0
$\phi_{\tau,b}$	Tax rule coef. on $b_{t-1}$	0.024

## Variance decomposition

Variance Decomposition								
Variable	Std Dev	$\beta$	$mp$	$G$	$tfp$	$\epsilon$	$\epsilon^w$	$tax$
$Y$	0.0185	7%	29%	48%	1%	0%	8%	7%
$C$	0.0143	31%	4%	33%	2%	0%	12%	18%
$G$	0.0262	2%	7%	87%	0%	0%	2%	2%
$I$	0.0711	0%	60%	26%	0%	0%	9%	3%
$N$	0.0230	7%	30%	45%	5%	0%	8%	7%
$BK$	0.118	1%	17%	33%	3%	0%	7%	40%
$CO$	0.180	1%	12%	38%	3%	0%	8%	38%
$d$	0.0592	1%	7%	46%	3%	0%	14%	30%
$w$	0.0096	1%	1%	51%	1%	0%	33%	13%
$\pi^w$	0.0102	1%	4%	50%	2%	0%	26%	17%
$\pi$	0.0271	1%	4%	49%	2%	0%	26%	18%
$i$	0.0270	1%	11%	46%	2%	0%	24%	17%

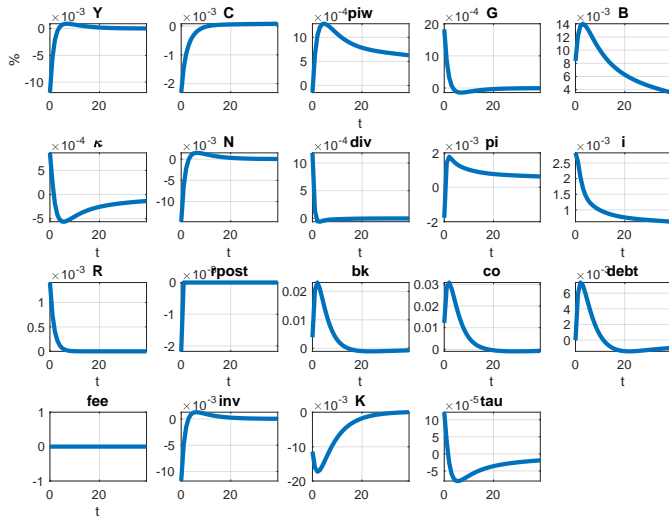
# IRFs to Estimated Shocks

$\beta$  shock



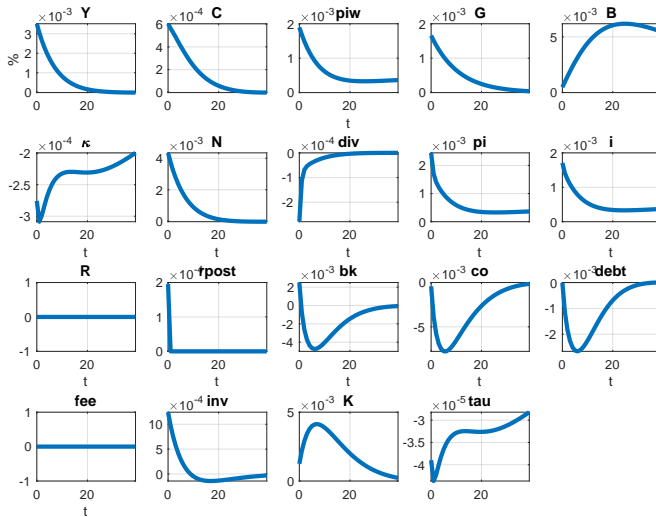
# IRFs to Estimated Shocks

mp shock

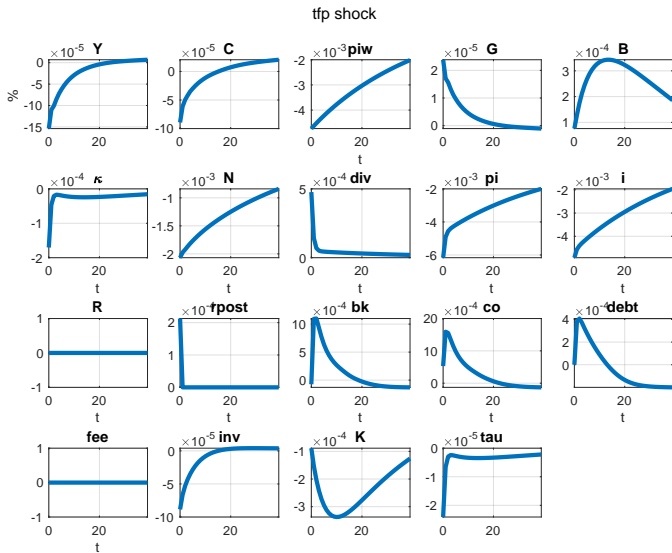


# IRFs to Estimated Shocks

G shock



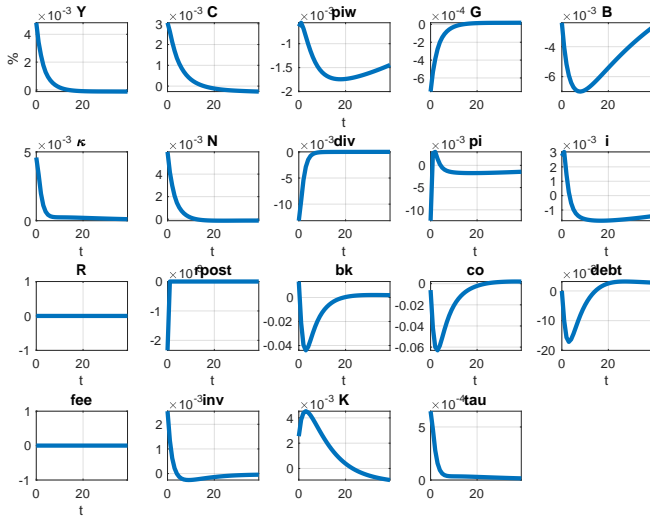
# IRFs to Estimated Shocks



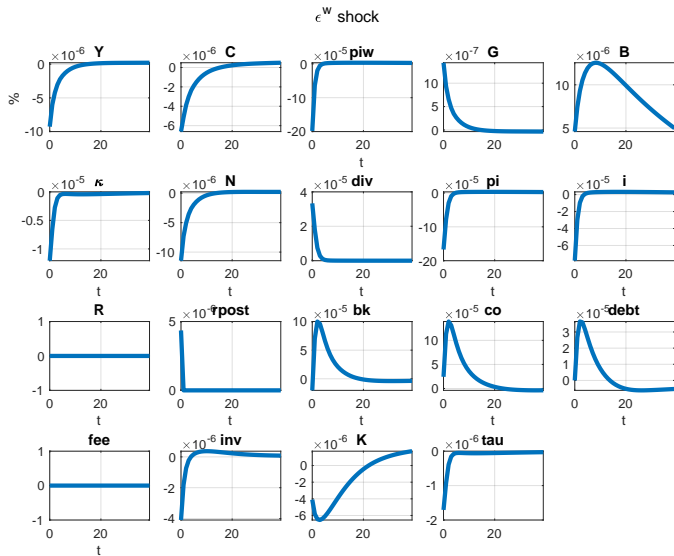


# IRFs to Estimated Shocks

$\epsilon$  shock



# IRFs to Estimated Shocks



# IRFs to Estimated Shocks

