Content Moderation in Presence of Fringe Platforms

Iván Rendo (TSE)

Motivation

- **Online** extreme/**unsafe content** bad *per se*, and:

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  ‣ e.g. **20%** of terrorists radicalized **exclusively** online

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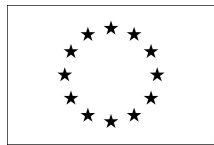 (Hamiz and Ariza, 2022)

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Broad question: consequences of **content moderation**?

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Content Moderation on the level of Content Unsafety

...while **allowing** for **Migration*** to a **fringe, unmoderated** platform

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Research Questions:

➡ How **users choice** is affected by **content moderation policies**

➡ How the **level of unsafe content** is determined by **users choice**

➡What incentives do platforms have to self-regulate?

➡ **Characterize the optimal regulation to minimize unsafe content**

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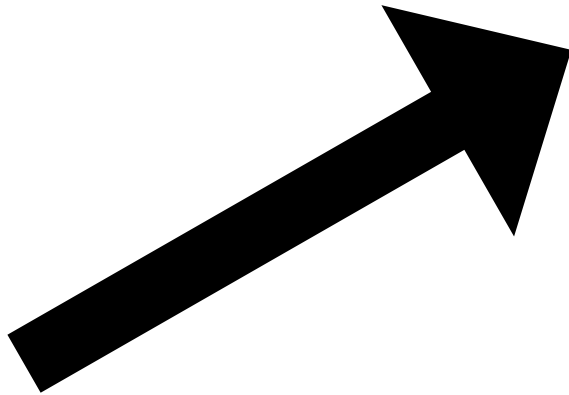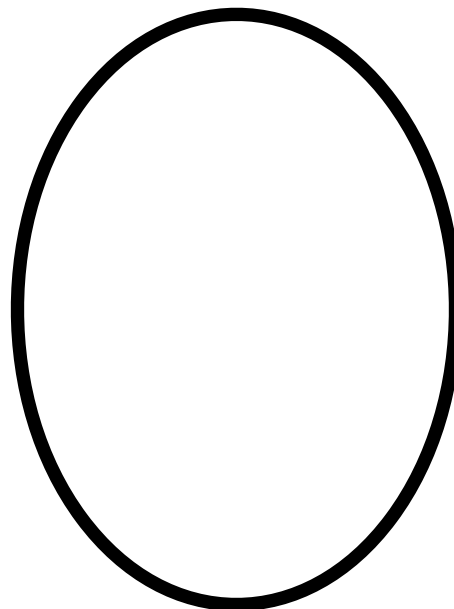# Main User's Trade-off
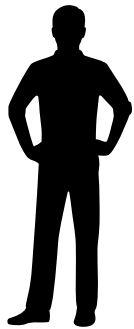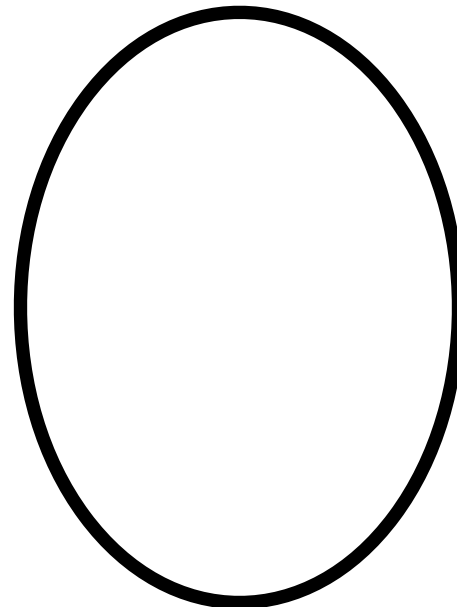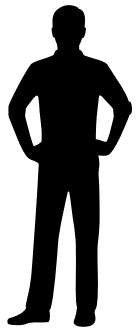
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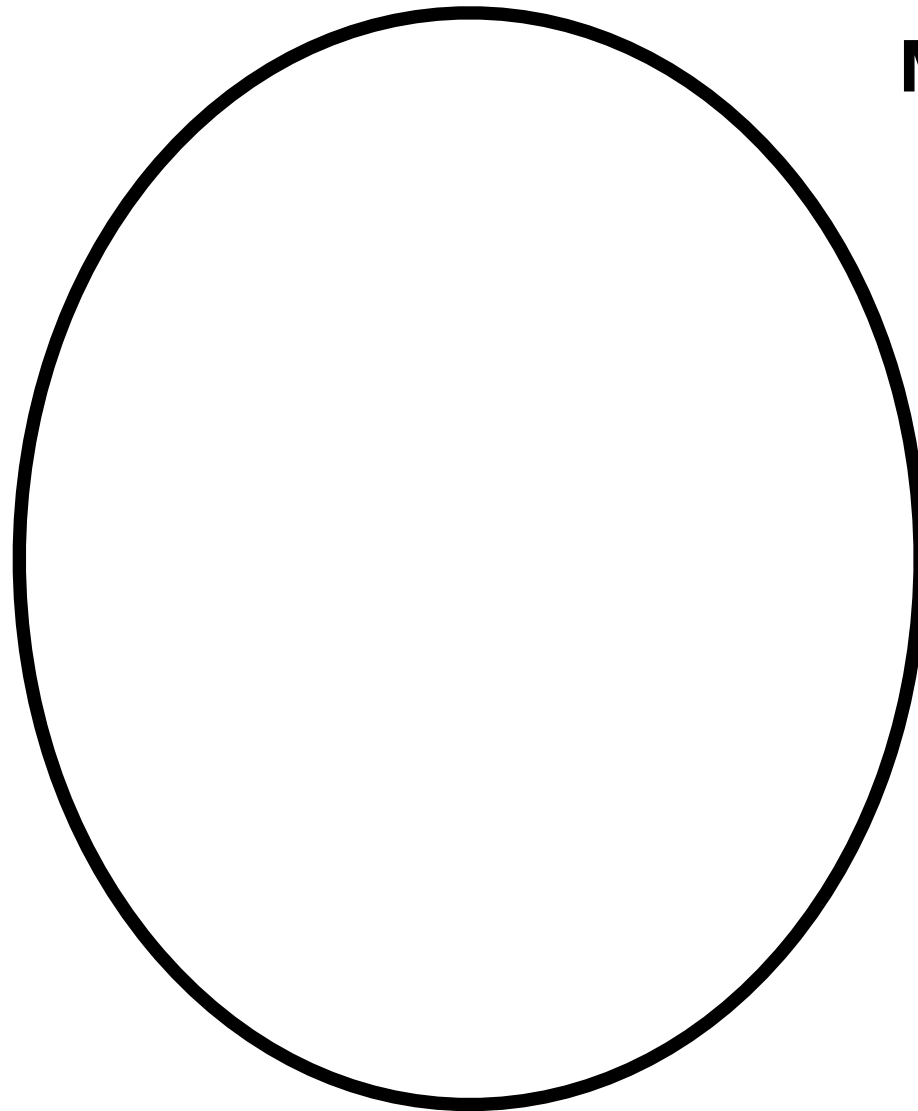# Main User's Trade-off

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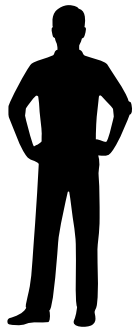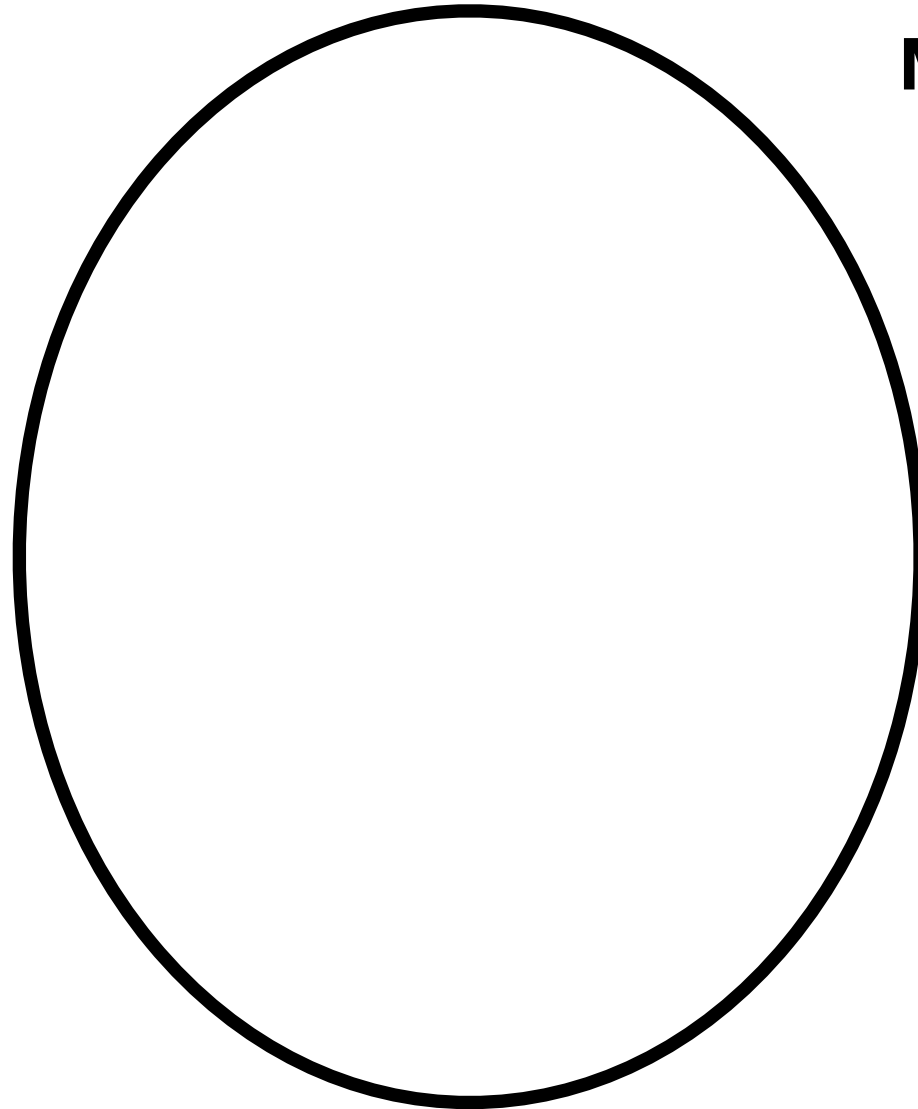
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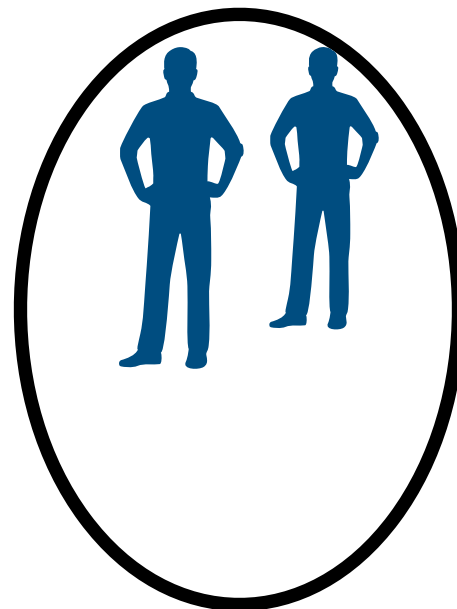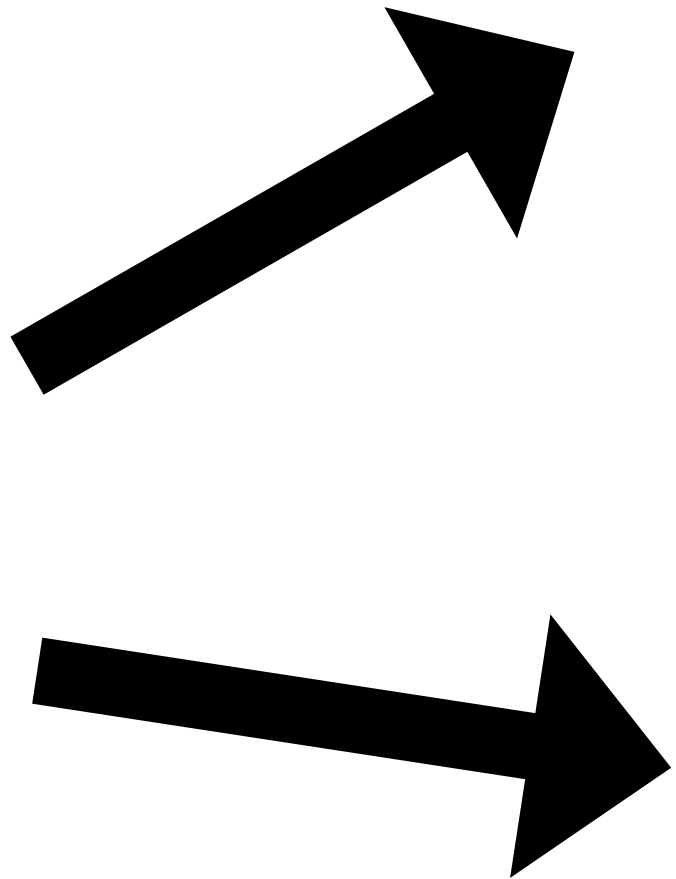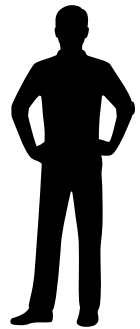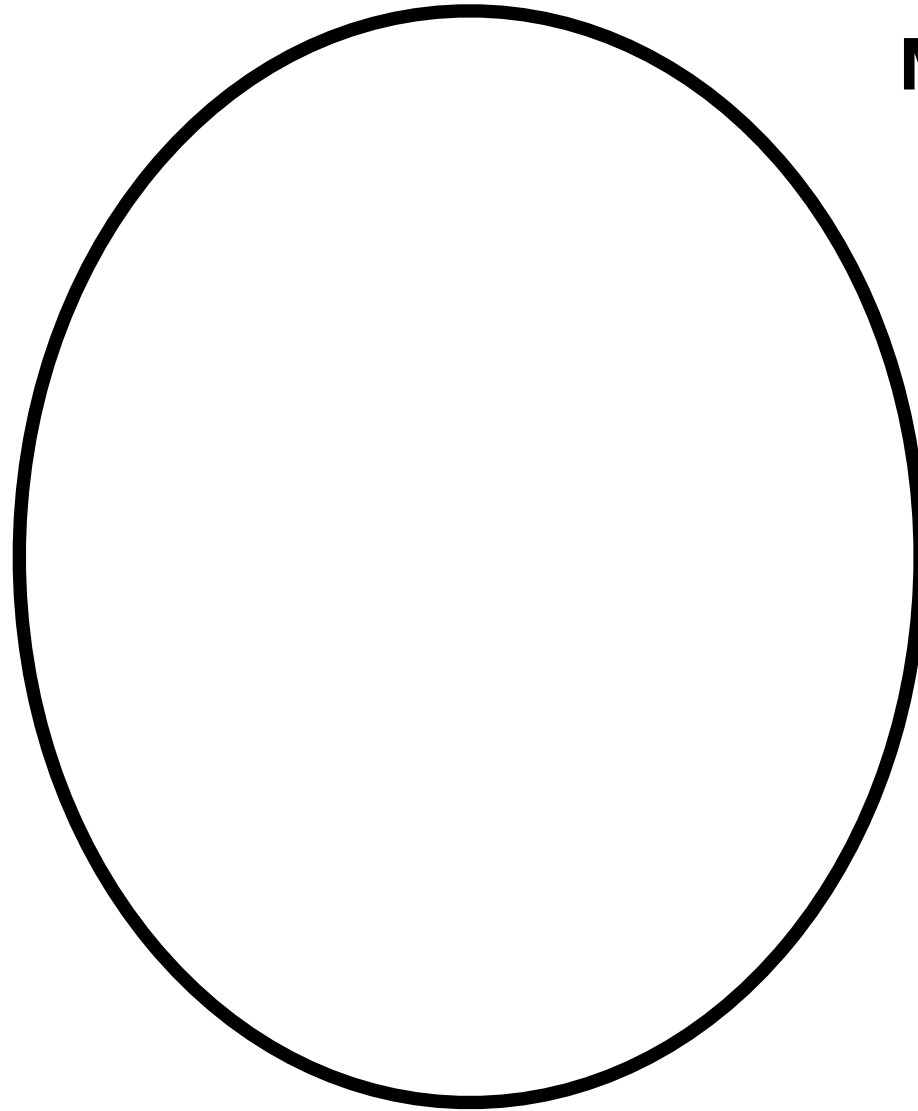**Fringe Platform**

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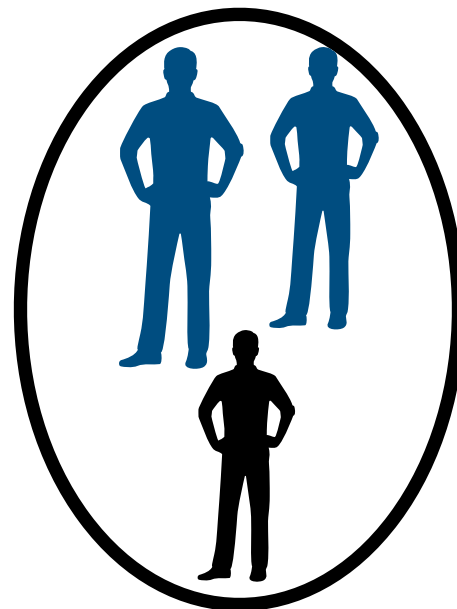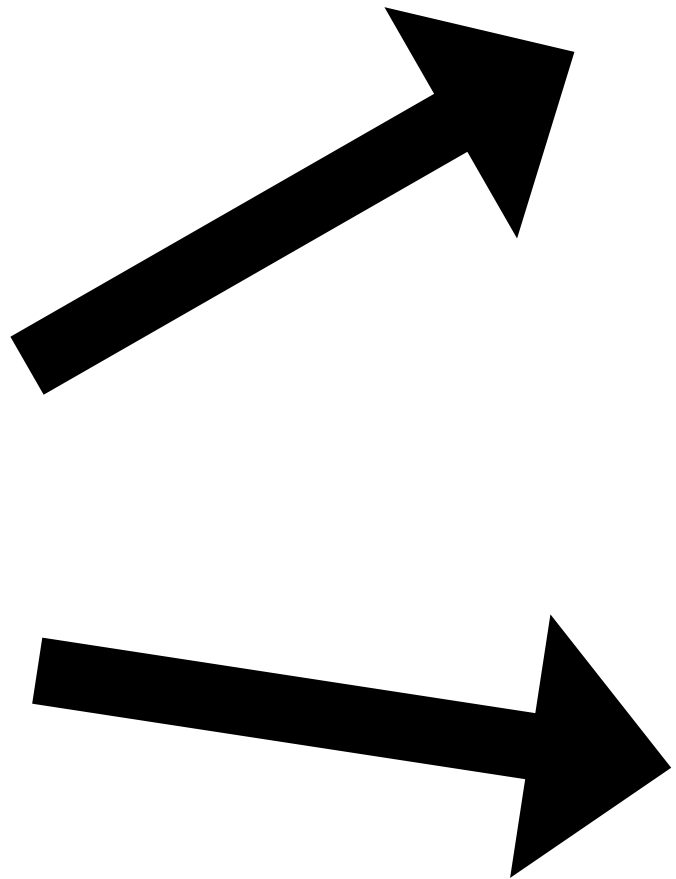
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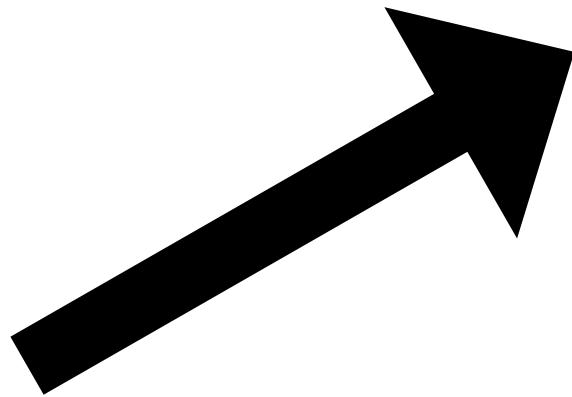
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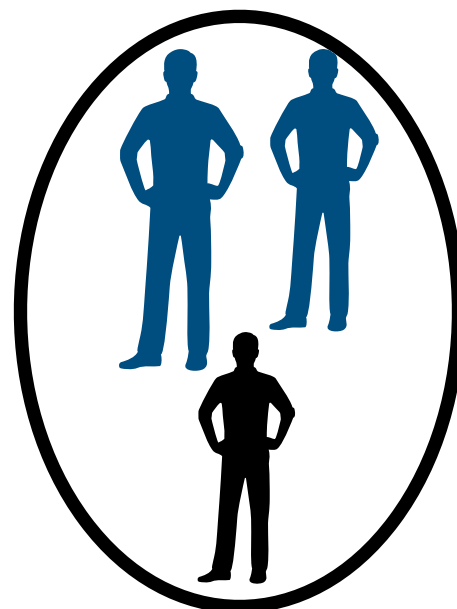- Safer users (bad)
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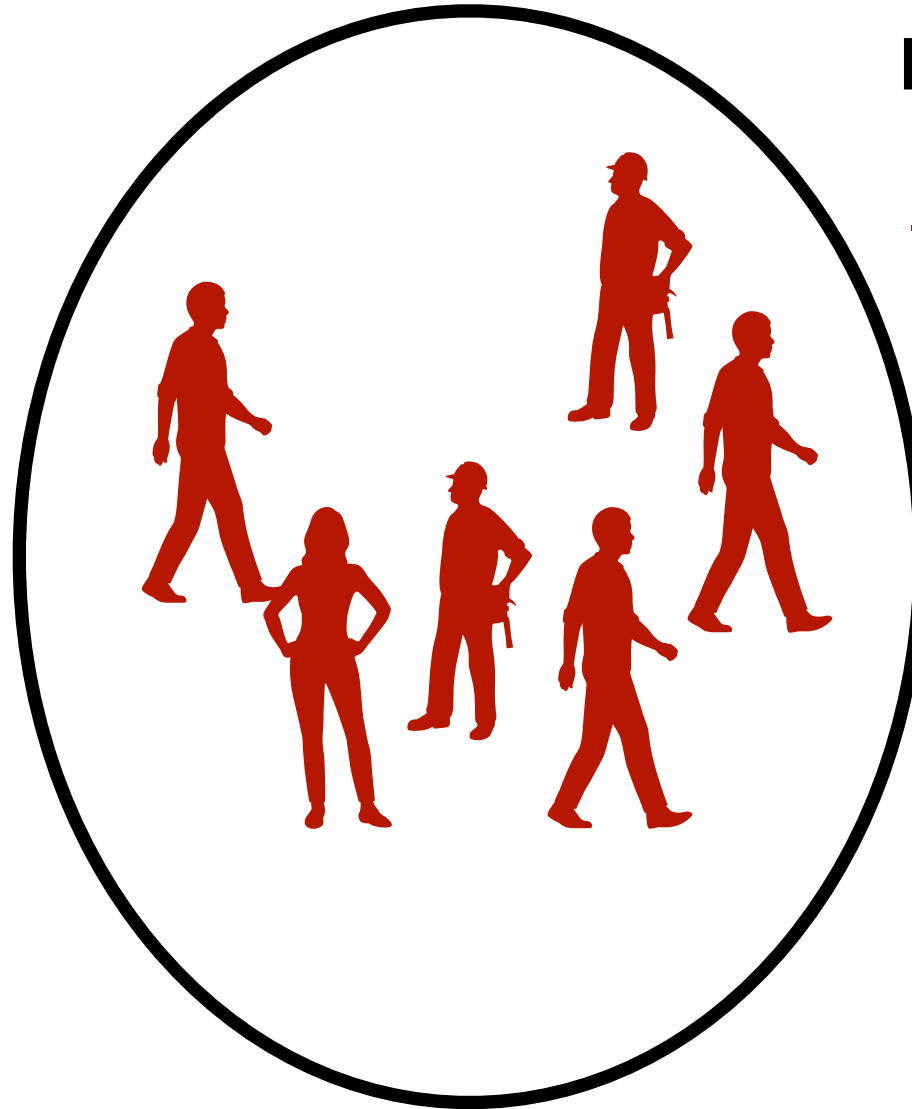- Users like him (in unsafe terms)
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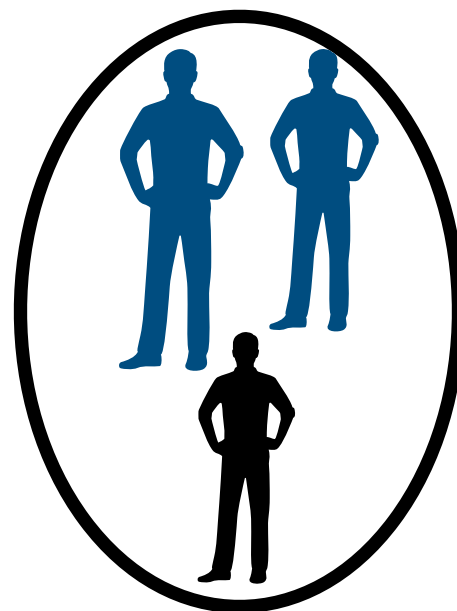
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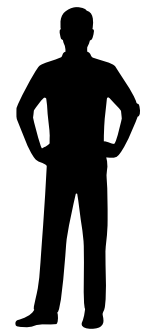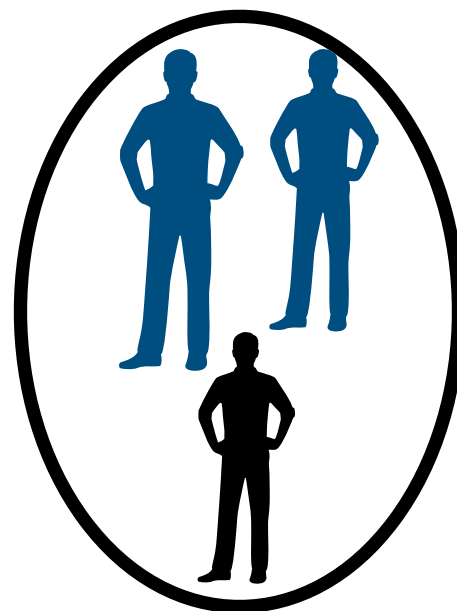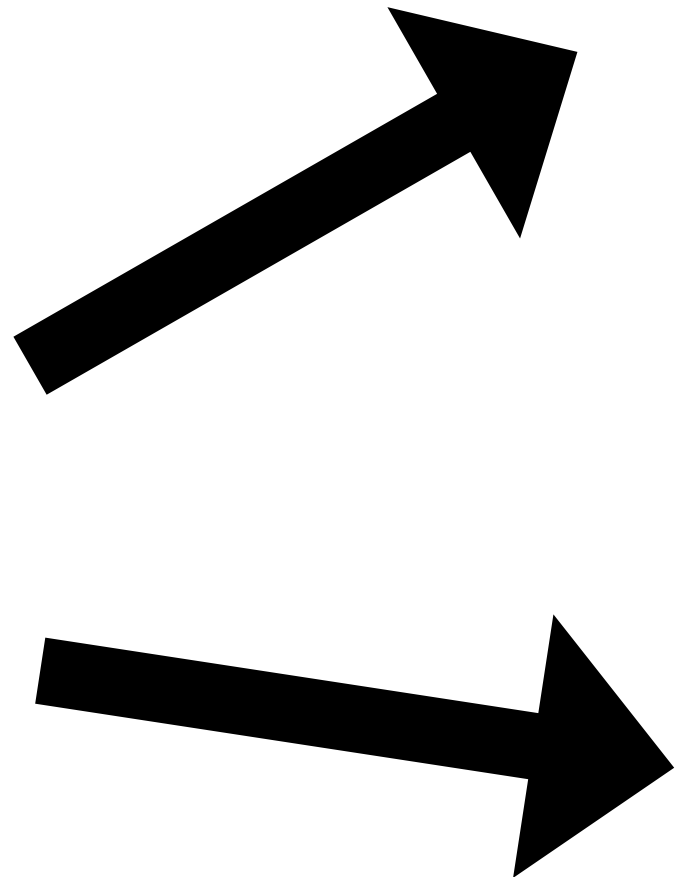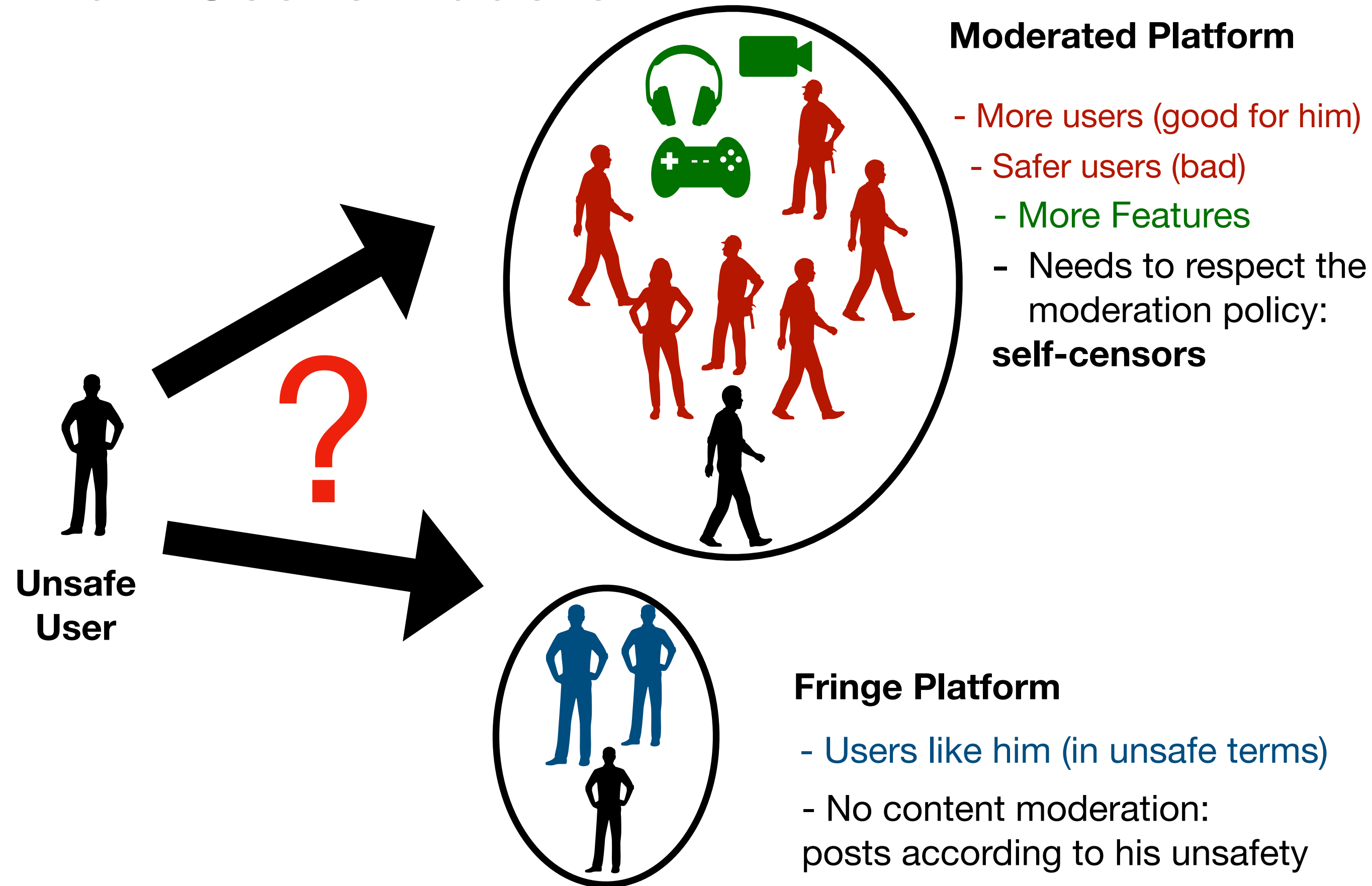
Preview of the Main Results

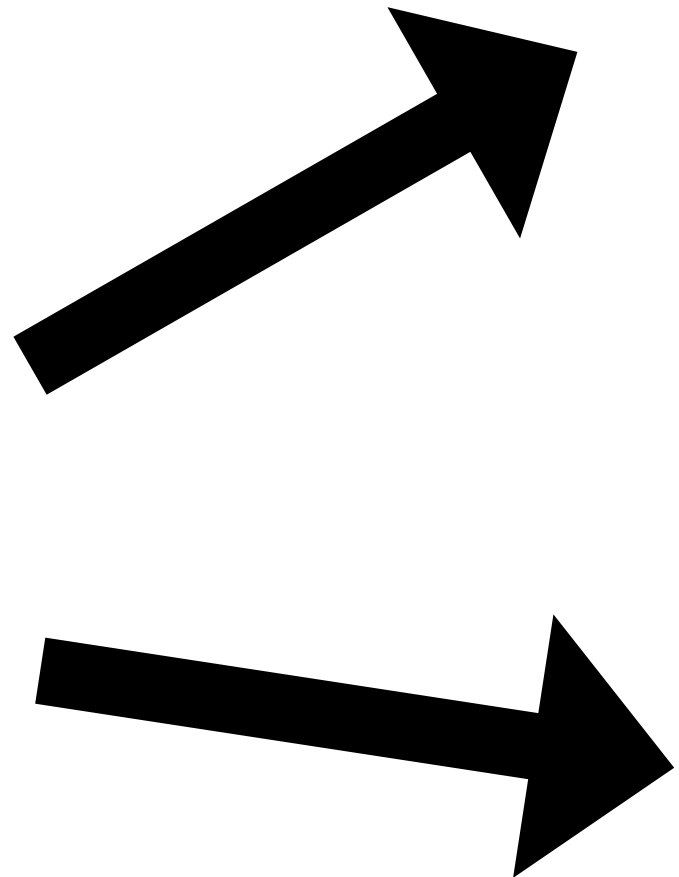# Preview of the Main Results

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2. **Policy** (to minimize the level of unsafe content):

   - With **large** network effects, **too much self-regulation**

   - **Regulation** only **useful** with **small** network effects (or high competition)

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- Analyzed potential mechanism behind empirical observations (Rizzi, 2023; Agarwal et al., 2022)

- Other Literature on Social Media (Zhang & Sarvary, 2012; Abreu & Jeon, 2019)

Roadmap

I. Model and Equilibrium

II. Policy

III. Extensions (if time allows)

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- User i in platform j **reads** a random sample of the content, of avg type $\bar{\theta}_j$

$$\bar{\theta}_j = \int_{i \in j} \theta_i^C \mathrm{d}i \qquad \text{= average type of content in platform } j$$

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…platform (2) just exists with $K_2 = 1$

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3. Profits and payoffs are realized

Threshold Equilibrium (subgame for given K)

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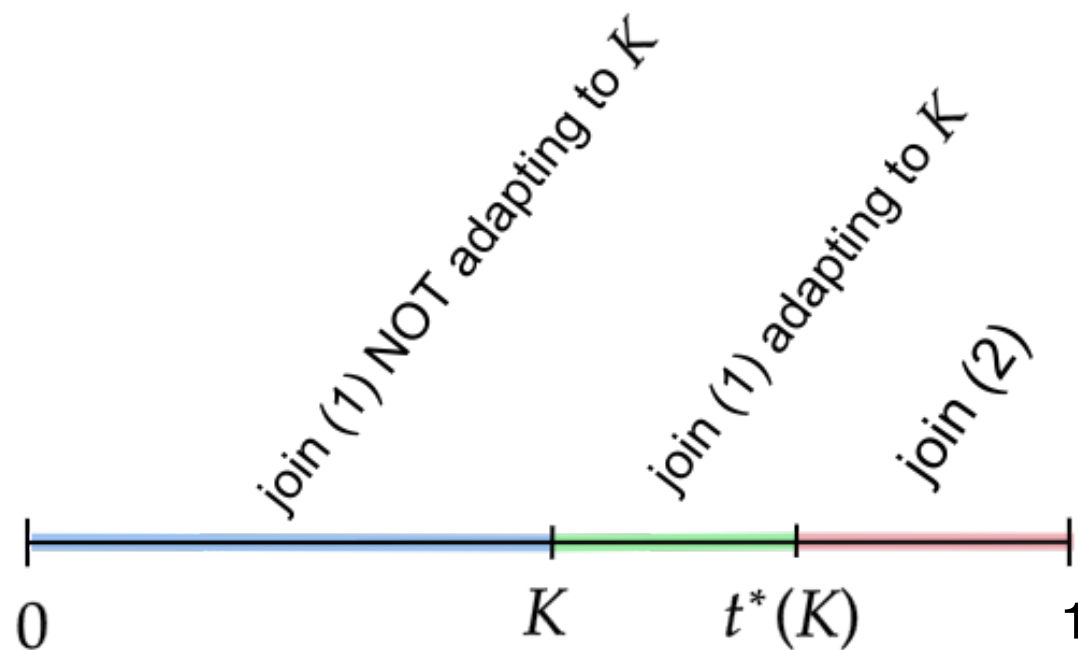
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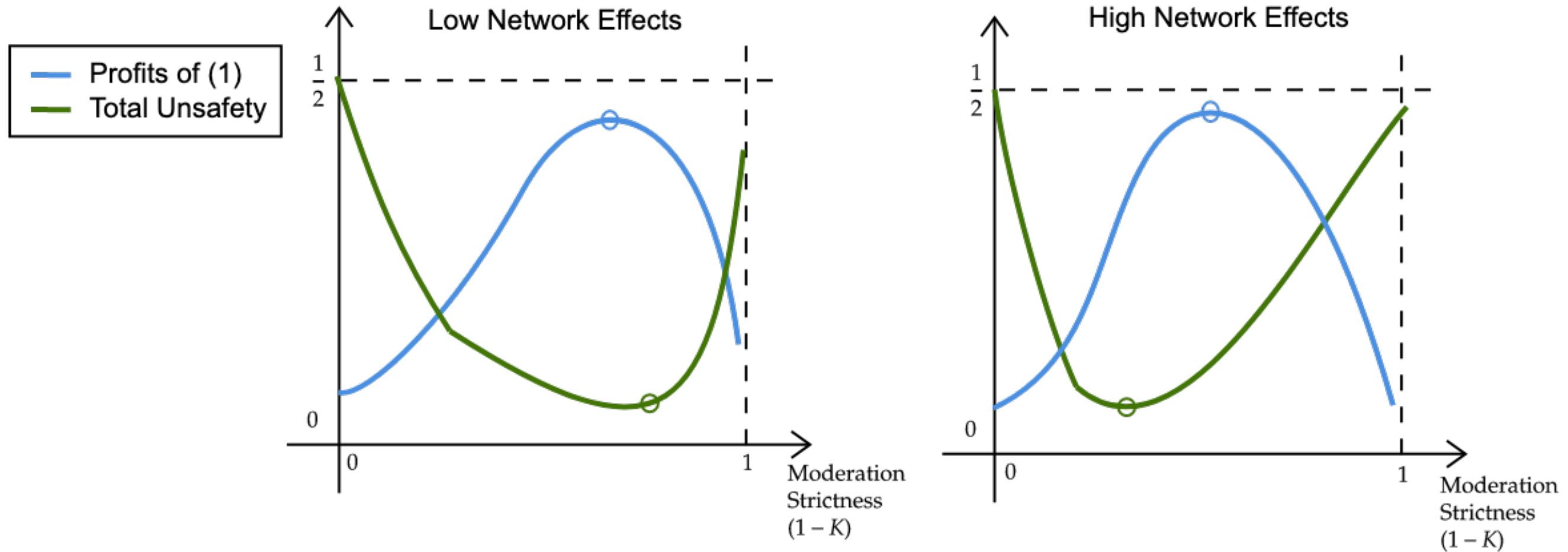
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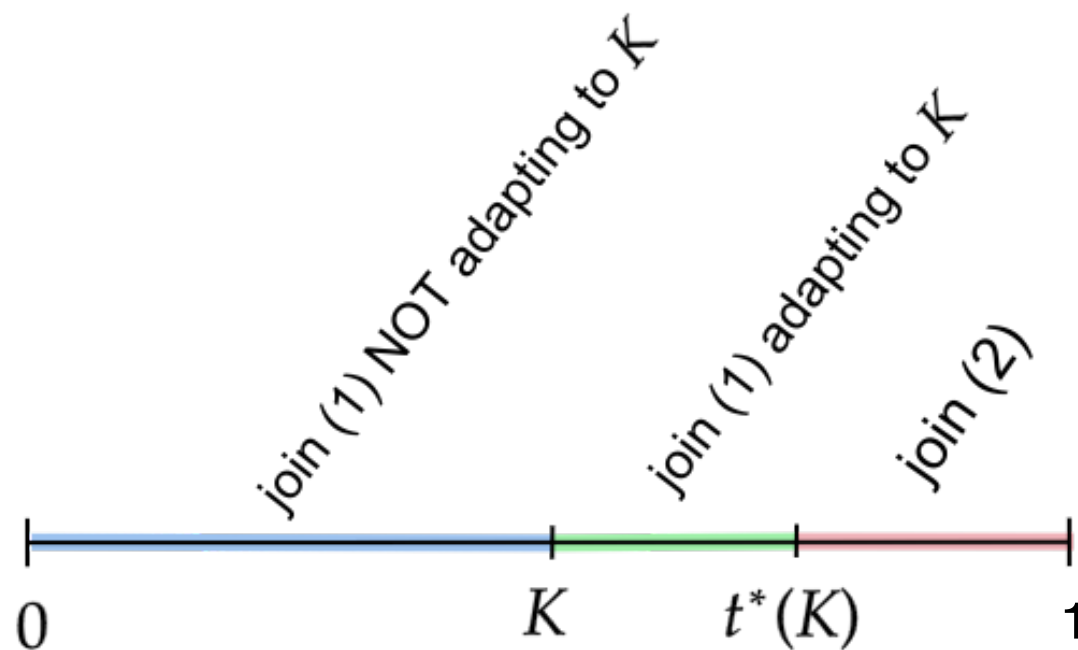
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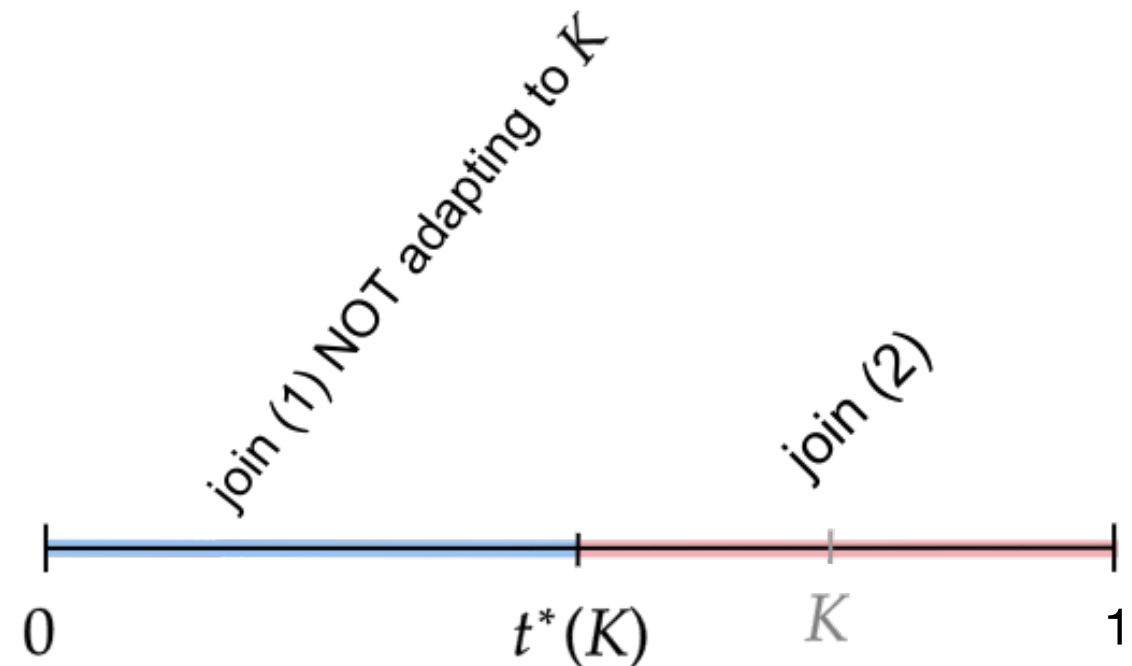
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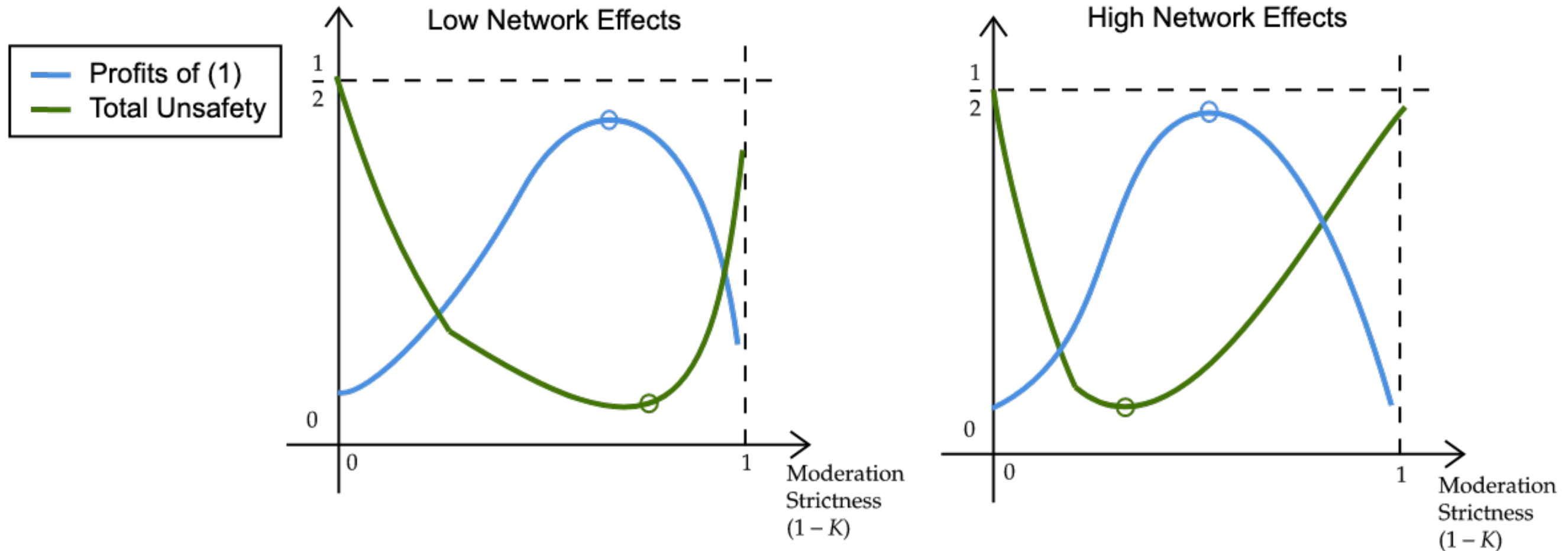
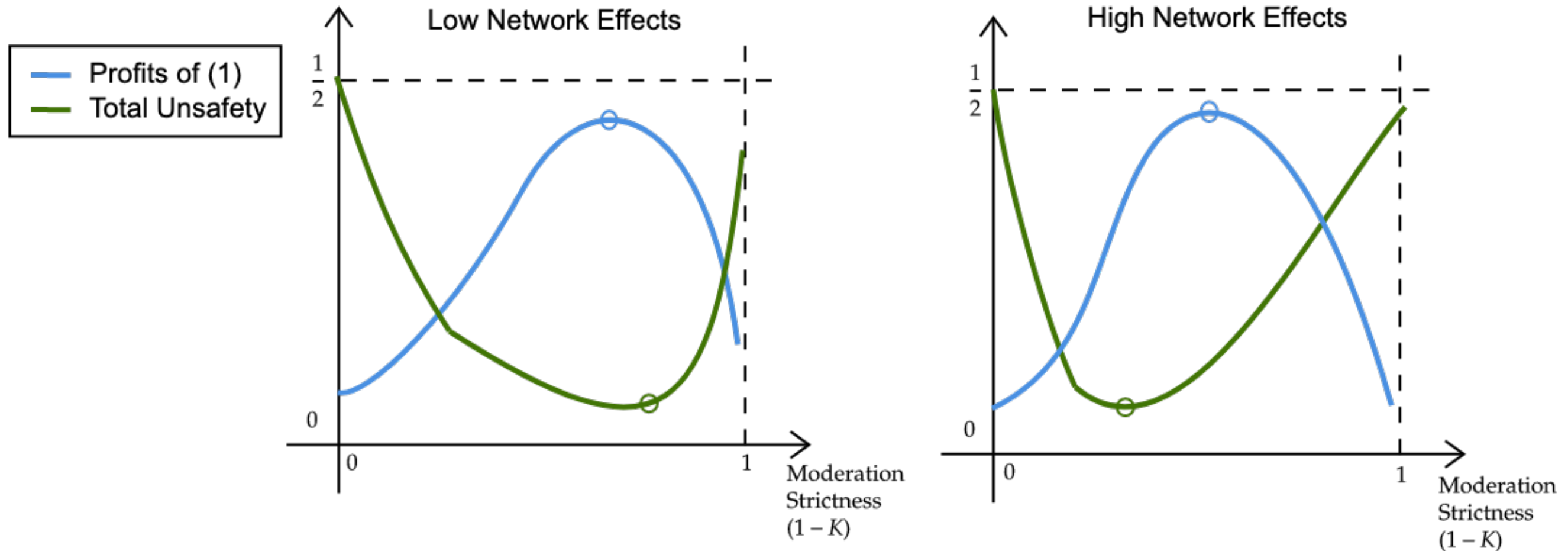# Characterization of the Equilibrium

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Comparative statics: (excluding corner solutions)

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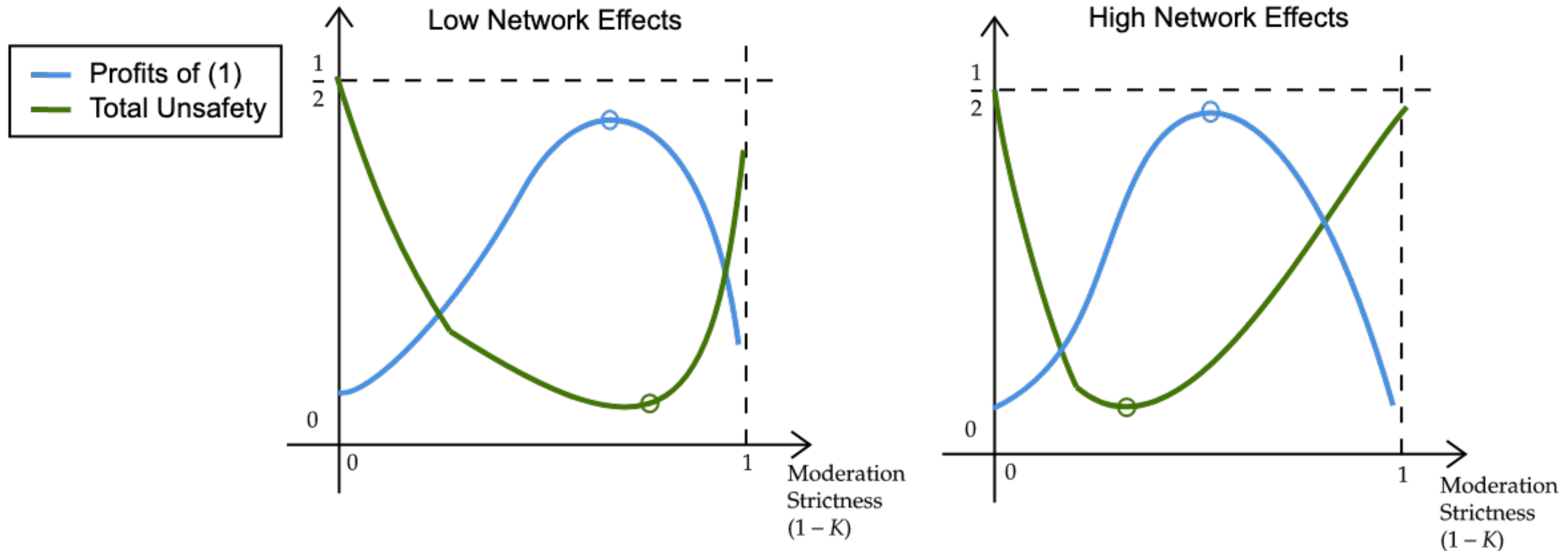I)   As N.E. ↑, moderation strictness ↓ for **platform** and **regulator**

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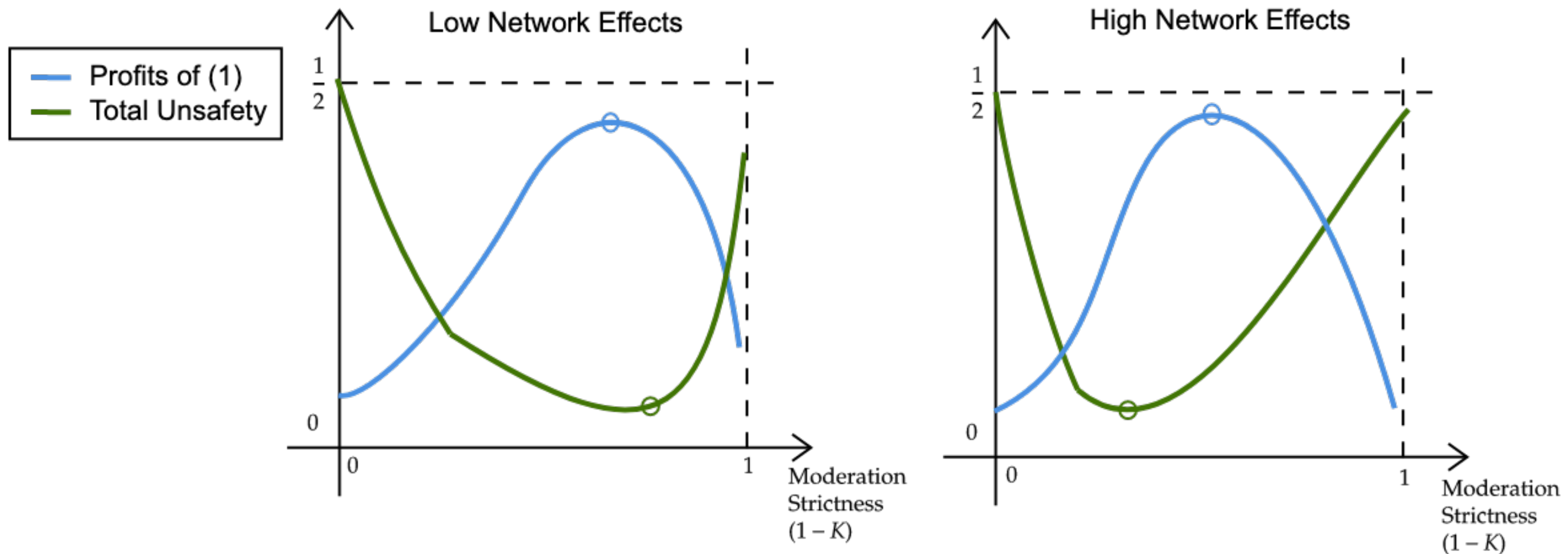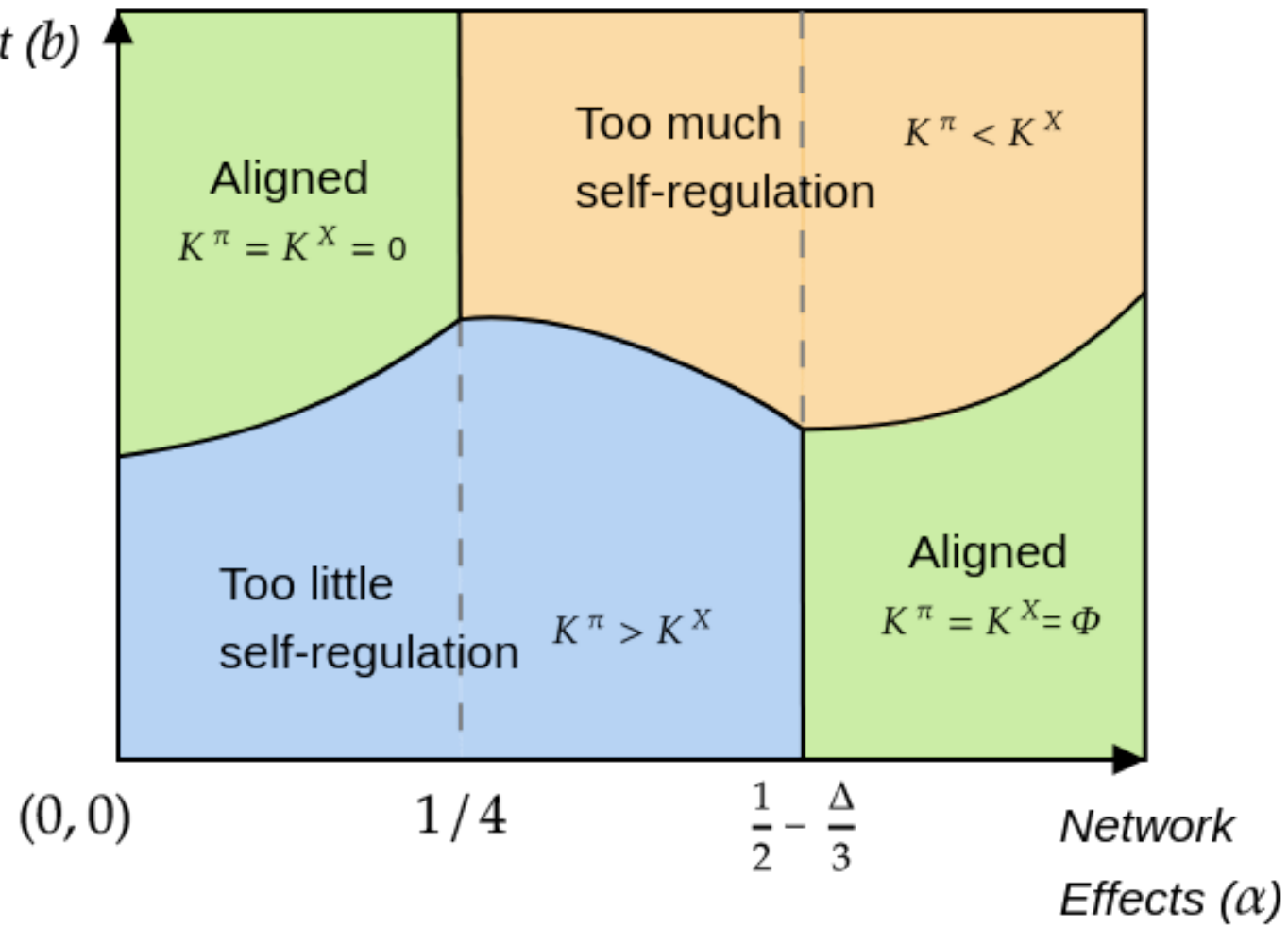I)   As N.E. ↑, moderation strictness ↓ for **platform** and **regulator**

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III) As quality prem ↑, strictness ↑ for **platform** but ↓ for **regulator**

Policy
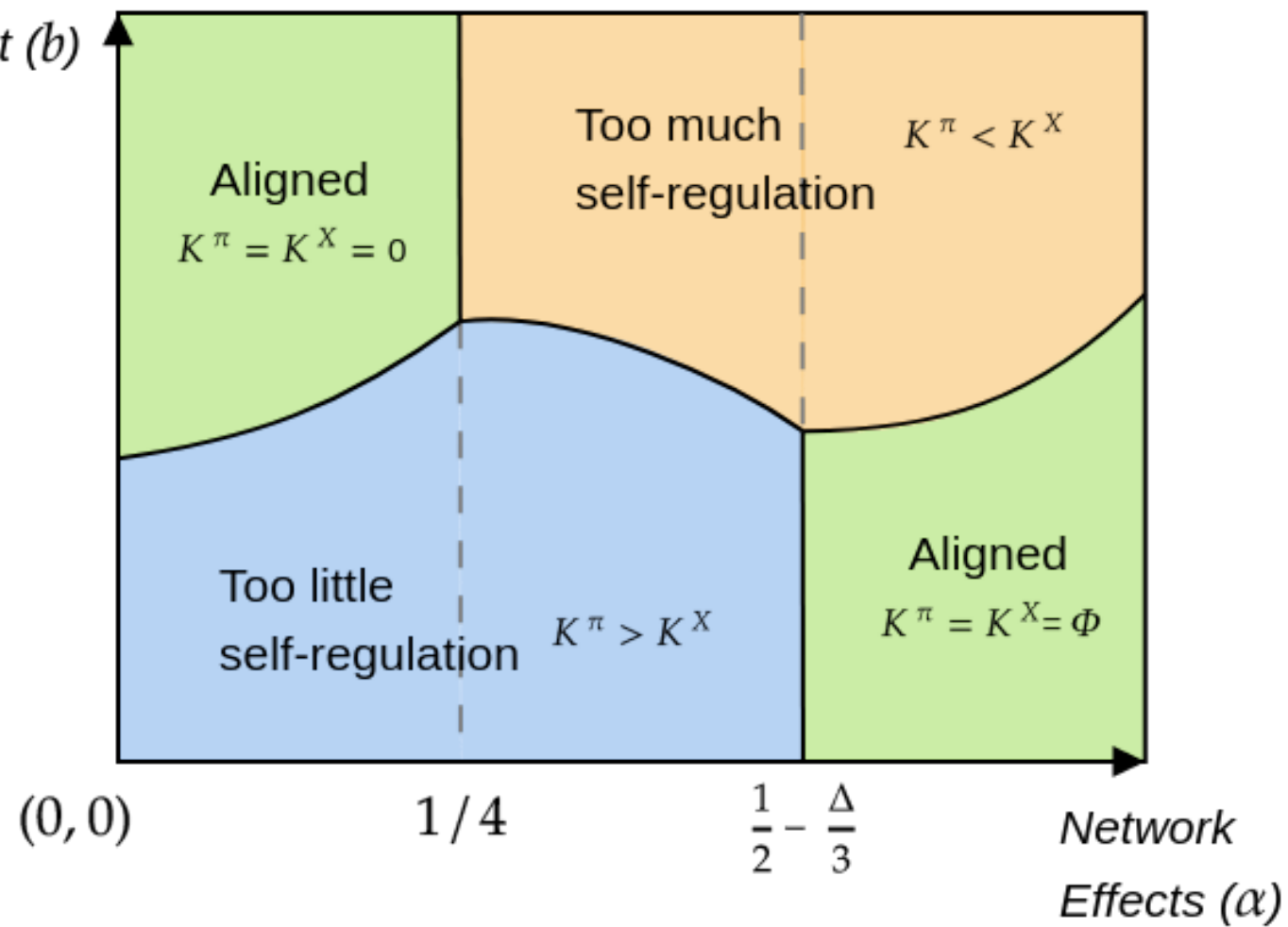
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Imposing a minimal content moderation:
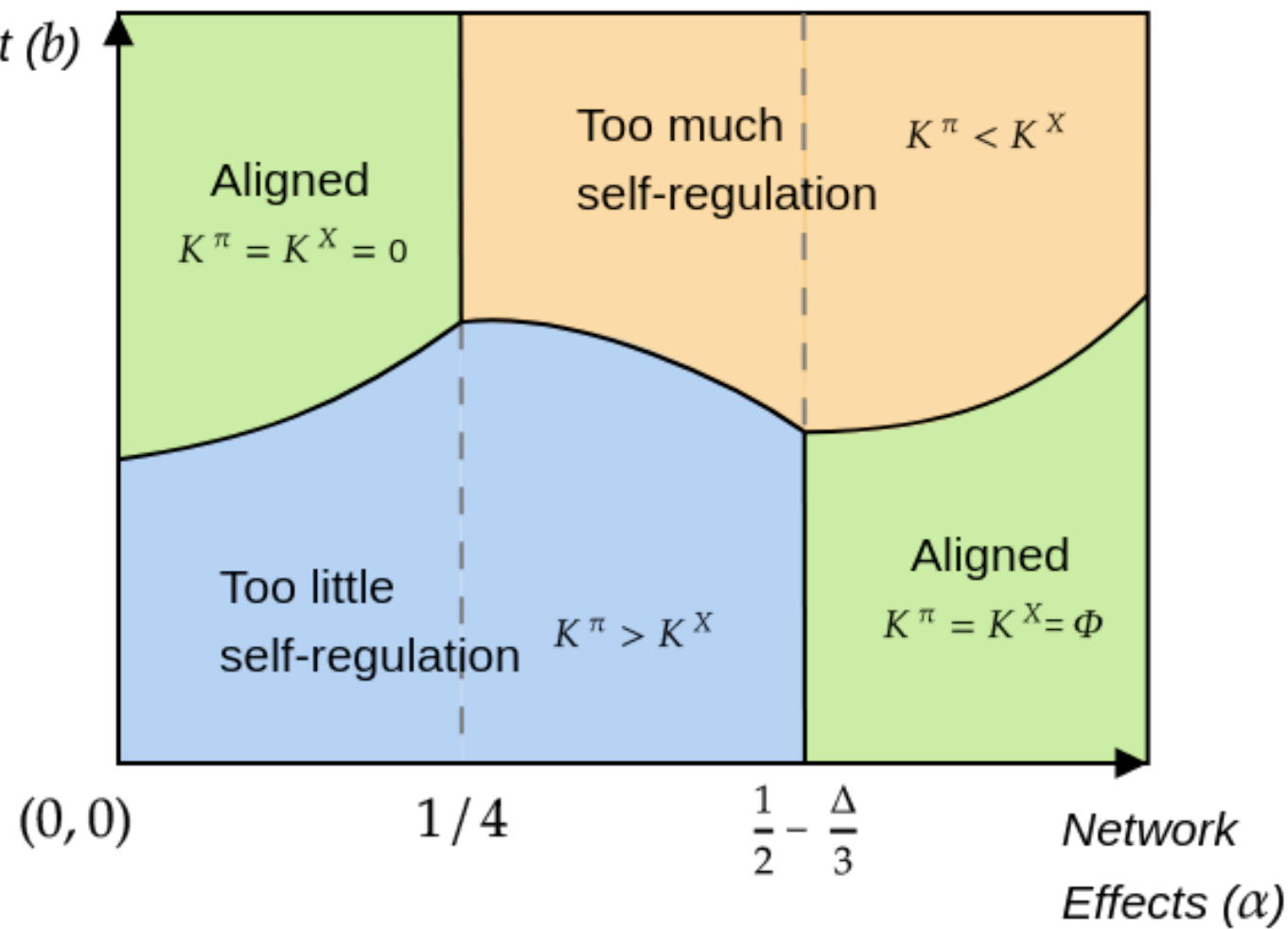
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Beneficial for the regulator
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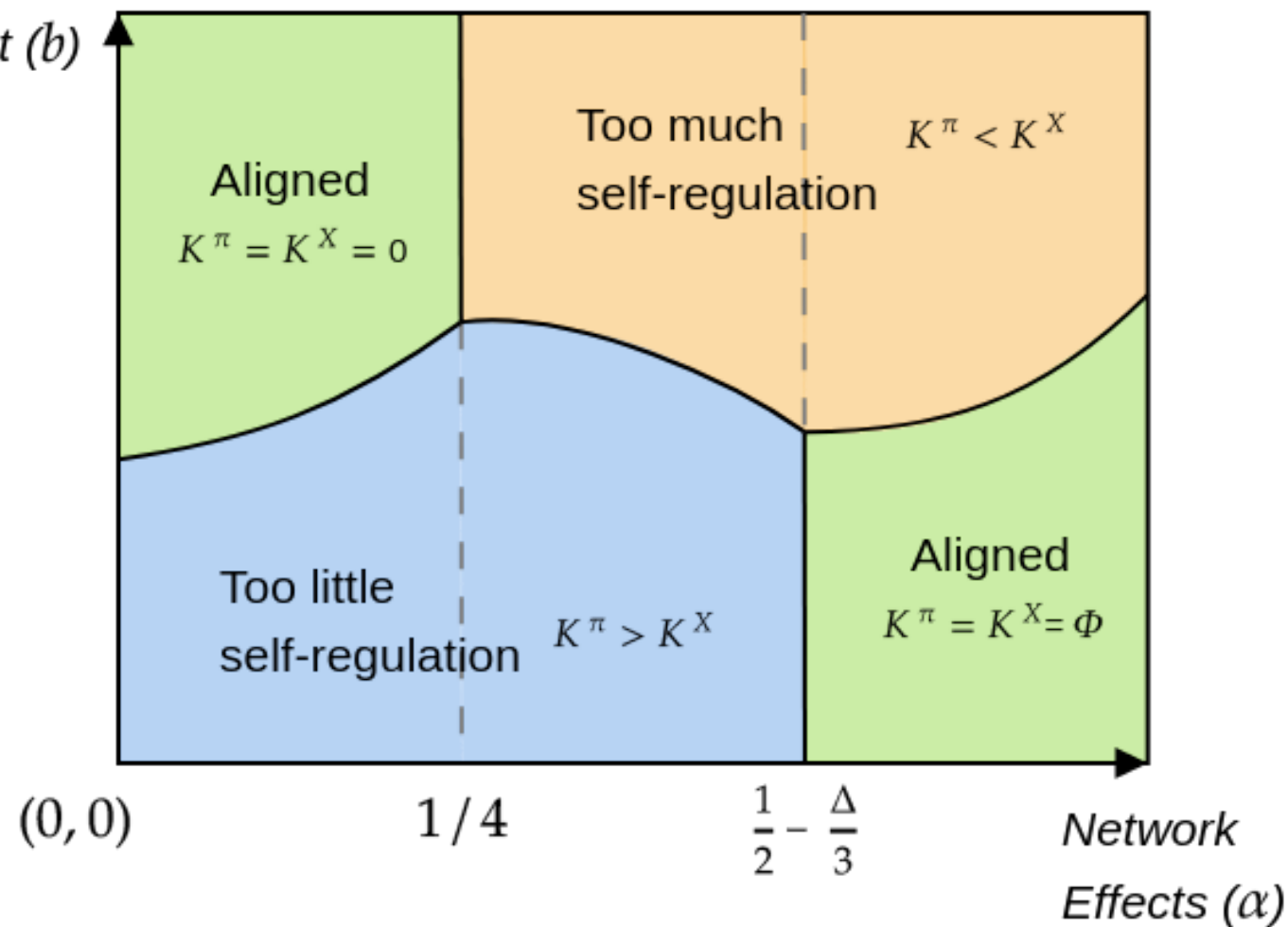
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Orange Area: such a policy wouldn't bind. Regulators would like to impose a maximal moderation policy to attract users from the fringe platform.

Extensions

MULTIHOMING

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(Lemma 5)

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   Result in the literature
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Main Result:

Moderate content moderation can reduce (increase) offline violence

Users are attracted to safer platforms and converge to the safer content they find there

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Main takeaways:

- Potential **migration** reshapes the economic incentives of the agents

- Minimal content moderation policy ONLY if

  ▸ Weak Network Effects (Low α), High 'Competition' (Low Δ)

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- Other *non-IO* applications

  e.g. Cancel culture (~Tirole's safe spaces)