

# The Economic Impacts of Altruism, Trust and Reciprocity: An Experimental Approach to Social Capital

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## Abstract

This paper experimentally measures the 'social capital' of altruism, trust and reciprocity and empirically explores the impact of these norms on economic well-being. Using an experimental economic design that distinguishes trust and reciprocity from altruism, data were collected from individuals in a random sample of South African communities. Analyzed at the community level, these data suggest that while related, trust and reciprocity are clearly different from altruism. Moreover, the relatively strong correlation between trust and reciprocity indicates that communities are in a sort of normative equilibrium, with trust strongest where reciprocity norms are most active. Finally, econometric analysis of household living standard data drawn from these same communities shows that these norms have real economic effects on households' well-being. The effects of both altruism and trust are most strongly positive in urban communities, whereas the effects of these same norms are weaker and, or negative in more traditional rural areas.

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## 1. Introduction

The growing literature that identifies trust and norms as essential to economic interactions would not have surprised Adam Smith. Similar to Smith in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, this literature underscores the importance of norms that control the “self-regarding passions” and lead individuals to behave in a trustworthy fashion. This literature uses trust to explain why some Italian regions have better local governments than others (Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993); why some countries are better suited to develop large organizations (La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, Shleifer, and Vishny, 1996); why financial systems develop more easily in some regions than in others (Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales, 2000); and, why some countries grow faster than others (Knack and Keefer, 1997). Trust might make cooperation possible while avoiding the cost associated with the enforcement of legal contracts (Putnam, 1995; Fukuyama, 1999). In less developed economies where the cost of legality is high (de Soto, 1989), and where financial markets are thin or missing, relations based on trust or informal enforcement mechanisms may provide the only avenue of access to the credit and insurance. Confirming this conjecture, Narayan and Prichard (1998) and other studies find that a greater density of civic associations (which they interpret as an indicator of ‘social capital’ and trust) enhances households’ ability to generate a livelihood.

This goal of this paper is to directly measure and empirically explore the effects of the social capital of altruism, trust and reciprocity on economic well-being. Using an experimental economic design that isolates trust and reciprocity from altruism, data were collected from individuals in a random sample of South African communities. Analyzed at the community level, these data suggest that while related, trust and reciprocity are clearly different from altruism. Moreover, the relatively strong correlation between trust and reciprocity indicates that communities are in a sort of normative equilibrium, with trust strongest where reciprocity norms are most active. Finally, econometric analysis of household living standard data drawn from these same communities shows that these norms have real economic effects on households’ well-being. Interestingly, the effects of both altruism and trust are most strongly positive in urban communities, whereas the effects of these same norms are weaker and, or are negative in more traditional rural areas.

Trust and trustworthiness are complex concepts, and the recent literature contains multiple meanings and measures of them. At a conceptual level, trustworthy behavior sometimes appears as the stable equilibrium to a repeated game among passionately self-regarding individuals (as in Ghosh and Ray, 1996). Trustwor-

thiness is also interpreted as an internalized moral norm that renders unthinkable untrustworthy actions, effectively removing them from the strategy set (Platteau, 2000).

At an empirical level, research on trust has either relied on associational density measures (e.g., number and strength of civic associations), or on direct survey questions that ask respondents to self-report trust and trustworthiness (e.g., respondents are asked how much they trust family, neighbors, and government.; how much they contribute to charities; how often they lend money to neighbors; etc.). Neither approach is entirely satisfactory. Associational density measures may conflate simple (incentive compatible) information sharing that flows through networks (what Fafchamps and Minten, forthcoming, call social network capital) with the operation of norms that stabilize time-sensitive exchanges. Self-reported trust measures, which ask people to report on their own virtues and those of their friends and neighbors have been criticized as suspect by Putnam (1995) and others. Different respondents might also understand such questions differently, or they may respond differently according to the identity of the interviewer. More importantly, even if these questions do reveal information about the person, it is difficult to understand what exactly we have uncovered. Finally, neither empirical approach offers any prospect of separating out the effects of different norms (e.g., altruistic sharing norms versus norms of reciprocity), despite the fact that these different norms may have radically different economic impacts, as Platteau (2000) argues.<sup>1</sup>

Experimental economic methods offer a potentially more appealing way to measure behavioral norms. A number of experimental economists have used dictator games—in which an individual is given an endowment of money that they may either share with others or keep for themselves—to measure the strength of other-regarding, or altruistic norms. Glaeser et al. (2000) propose an experimental measure of trust and trustworthiness using a “trust game.” The trust game consists of two players, one endowed with money, the trustor, and one without, the trustee. The trustor decides whether to keep the money for herself, or whether

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<sup>1</sup>Theoretical analyses that suggest that different norms have different effects include studies that show that fiscal policy is neutral in the case of inter-generational altruism but not so if inter-vivos transfers are explained by exchange or reciprocity motives (see Bernheim, Shleifer, and Summers, 1985; Cox, 1987; Cox, Zekeriya, and Jimenez, 1998). Analogously, reciprocal behavior in the workplace might explain unemployment, as suggested by Akerlof (1982) and Akerlof and Yellen (1990). What local institutions a community has could also depend on whether altruism or reciprocity is prevalent therein. For instance, contracts might need to be incomplete in order to let reciprocity intervene (Fehr and Gächter, 2000).

to 'invest' some or all of it by sending it to the trustee. Any money invested generates a return (e.g., it is doubled or tripled.) The trustee, after receiving the multiplied money, decides whether to keep the money, or whether to return some to the trustor. A selfish trustor would send the trustee money only if she expects the trustee to return more money than was sent. Since, without such trust, a selfish trustor would be better off by keeping all the money for herself, Glaeser et al. consider the amount of money sent to the trustee as a measure of trust.

However, amounts invested in trust games do not necessarily isolate trust (nor would amounts returned by trustees cleanly measure the strength of reciprocity norms). Trust games reveal only how much purely selfish trustors trust—i.e., measuring trust with this trust game assumes that no other motives explain acts of giving. But assuming that people are selfish (as trustors) and reciprocate (as trustees) is asymmetric. Moreover, this assumption is certainly at odds with the implicit notion that people trust because they are immersed in a normative universe. People can return money in the trust game out of fairness or inequality aversion rather than out of reciprocity. In the same manner, people can send money away as a trustor out of altruism as well as trust.<sup>2</sup>

Building on these insights, this paper attempts to disentangle norms of altruism, trust and reciprocity. Beyond its logical appeal, this decomposition of norms is potentially useful because different norms may have distinct economic impacts. This paper then tests whether or not these different norms really matter (and matter differently) in terms of influencing people's capacity to get ahead economically, as the work on social capital has suggested. This matching of experimental data with real life data permits a deeper exploration of the meaning of norms, as well as of the meaning of experimental measures.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the experimental design and shows how trust and trustworthiness can be confused with altruism. We also show, in this section, how to measure the altruistic component of trustors' and trustees' decisions. Section 3 describes the experimental procedures, while section 4 presents the basic experimental results, derives measures of trust and altruism and tests for the presence of reciprocity norms. Section 5 looks at the relationships between normative behavior and economic performance. We conclude in the last section.

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<sup>2</sup>Forsythe, Horowitz, Savin and Sefton (1994) and Andreoni and Miller (2000) are among those who have shown that individuals will send money to others in similar experimental situations out of respect for these norms.

## 2. Altruism, Trust and Reciprocity

We denote as ‘purely selfish’ the following representation of the trustor’s decision in the trust game described in the introduction above:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Max}_{x_s, x_o} \quad & u(x_s + r(x_o)) & (2.1) \\ \text{subject to} \quad & x_s + px_o \leq B^t \\ & p \leq 1 \end{aligned}$$

The trustor maximizes utility by allocating available funds between herself and her partner. Here  $x_s$  is the amount of money retained by the trustor, and  $x_o$  is the amount of money that the trustor gives to trustee. The cost of keeping a unit of money is one, and the cost of passing one unit of money to the trustee is  $p$ . There is no formal, nor enforceable contract that guarantees that any of the money passed to the trustee will be returned to the trustor. We assume that trustee returns funds according to the response or reciprocation function,  $r(x_o)$ , and that this function is deterministic and known by the trustor.<sup>3</sup>

Under the representation in (2.1), a selfish trustor will only give money to the trustee if  $r(x_o) > px_o$  for some  $x_o$ . For a selfish trustor  $i$ , a measure of trust is the share of the budget that he or she sends to the other person,  $\beta_i^t$ ; defined as

$$\beta_i^t \equiv px_o = B^t \quad (2.2)$$

as this reveals the minimum amount trustor  $i$  expects a trustee will return per unit of money received from him or her.

However,  $\beta_i^t$  is not a good measure of trust if the trustor’s preferences are not strictly selfish (i.e., monotone in her own payoff). More precisely,  $\beta_i^t$  no longer reflects expectations if trustors care about trustees, regardless of the possibility of reciprocation. To permit the possibility of altruism, we modify problem (2.1) by

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<sup>3</sup>Experimenters and experimental subjects alike rarely observe the preferences behind reciprocal actions. A more general approach would represent reciprocity by a function  $r(x_o; \mu)$ , where  $\mu$  is a preference parameter over which trustor can place a prior probability distribution  $p(\mu)$ . This brings new elements to the analysis, that while potentially crucial, would take us far afield. We exclude a detailed discussion of behavior under risk in the present version of the paper. But see Barr (2001) for a first take onto these issues.

allowing utility to depend on own as well as other's payoffs. Formally, we redefine the utility function as

$$u(x_s + r(x_0); x_0; r(x_0)) \quad (2.3)$$

Under this more general representation, an altruistic trustor who cares about the trustee might select  $x_0 > 0$  even if she expected no return from the trustee. Trust measure (2.2) would in this circumstance confound trust with altruism.

## 2.1. Trust Controlling for Altruism

In order to isolate the impact of trust on behavior, it would be useful to observe trustor behavior when no reciprocity is expected, i.e., when the trustor assumes that  $r(x_0) = 0$ . Denote the budget share that trustor  $i$  would send conditional on an expectation of zero return as  $\alpha_i^t$ . Using this conditional, or zero expectation budget share, a measure of trust that controls for altruism

$$\alpha_i^t = \frac{x_i}{x_i + r(x_0)} \quad (2.4)$$

Note that measure (2.4) is based on an intra-personal comparison and requires that we observe the behavior of person  $i$  under multiple scenarios.

While conceptually appealing, measure (2.4) requires that the trust game be played under the counterfactual expectation of zero-reciprocity so that  $\alpha_i^t$  can be measured. We propose here to use a dictator game to approximate the situation in which trustors expect no reciprocity, and so estimate the degree of altruism on the part of trustors. The dictator game is a simple allocation exercise that abstracts from the strategic considerations of the trust game (Forsythe et al. 1995; Andreoni and Miller, 2002). The dictator game consists of two players, a dictator and a receiver. The dictator is endowed with an initial endowment that she can either keep for herself, or allocate to the receiver at a price of giving,  $p$ . The receiver has to accept any decision made by the dictator.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Since the maximum amount of money that the receiver can return is always zero, the dictator game is equivalent to a dictator game in which no reciprocity is expected. There is a caveat, however, trustors could evaluate decisions based not only on trustee's choices but also on trustee's available choices (Sen, 1996; Rabin, 1993; Falk and Fischbacher, 1999; Rabin and Charness, 2000). Trustors would be more lenient with trustees that are not able to reciprocate than with trustees that choose not to reciprocate. If this is the case, measures of altruism may be biased upwards. In this paper, we abstract from this possibility.

The dictator's decision can be represented as a restricted version of the trust game:

$$\text{Max}_{z_s, z_o} \quad u(z_s + r(z_o); z_o \mid r(z_o)) \quad (2.5)$$

$$\text{subject to :} \quad (2.6)$$

$$r(z_o) = 0$$

$$z_s + pz_o \cdot B^d$$

$$p \cdot 1$$

Denote by  $\alpha_i^d$  the budget share that dictator (or restricted trustor)  $i$  allocates to the receiver, i.e.,  $\alpha_i^d \cdot pz_o = B^d$ . Since  $z_o$  itself depends on  $p$  and  $B^d$ , it follows that  $\alpha_i^d$  depends on  $p$  and  $B^d$ . Therefore, if the price of giving,  $p$ , and money available to the trustor,  $B^d$ , are the same in the dictator game as in the trust game (equation 2.1),  $\alpha_i^d$  would directly indicate how much a trustor gives to a trustee out of altruism alone,  $\alpha_i^t$ . A measure of trust free of altruism would be:

$$\alpha_i^t = \alpha_i^t \mid \alpha_i^d \quad (2.7)$$

This measure indicates that if we are uncertain of subjects' underlying preferences, the measurement of trust would require us to observe individuals choices in at least these two games.

As explained in section 3 below, the experimental evidence collected for dictator and trust games assumed different prices of giving and different budget constraints. In the dictator game, participants had a budget of 16 Rand (or approximately \$2) and faced a price of giving of  $p = 1$ . The budget for the trust game was 10 Rand and the price of giving was  $p = \frac{1}{3}$ . While the modest absolute difference in the budgets makes it unlikely that different income elasticities would influence amounts sent in the two game, the change in the price of giving is potentially more influential.

Figure 2.1 shows the familiar tangency conditions for the two games. When  $p = 1$ , the budget constraint is steeper, reflecting the higher price of giving. In general, the share of the budget sent away ( $\alpha_i^d$ ) as the price of giving changes will depend on the elasticity of substitution between payment to oneself and payment to other. The level curves in Figure 2.1 show the cases when the altruistic preferences (2.3) can be represented by a Cobb-Douglas utility function and a Leontief utility function.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>The Leontief utility function represents an extreme case of inequality aversion (Bolton and Ockenfels, 2000; Fehr and Schmidt, 1999).

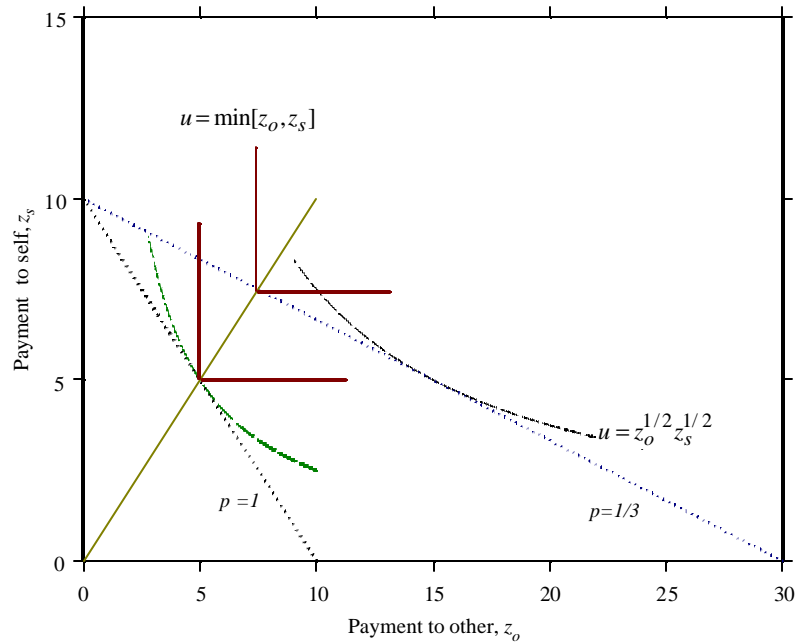


Figure 2.1: Altruism and the Price of Giving

For the Cobb-Douglas case a decrease in the price of giving money to the other person induces a substitution towards the other's own payoff, decreasing the ratio  $z_s = z_o$ . But, since the elasticity of substitution equals one, the share of the budget sent to the trustee would remain constant. For the Leontief utility function, with zero elasticity of substitution between  $z_s$  and  $z_o$ , the ratio  $z_s = z_o$  would remain constant, while the budget or expenditure share allocated to the other person would fall. In the extreme case of infinite elasticity of substitution (linear indifference curves) the entire budget would be allocated either to  $z_s$  or  $z_o$ .

In the face of a changing price of giving, the pure altruism counterfactual trust share,  $\alpha_j^t$ , can therefore only be identified under an assumption about the elasticity of substitution, denoted here as  $\frac{1}{2}$ . To denote the dependence of this measure on both play in the dictator game and the elasticity of substitution, we

denote the expected pure altruism trust share as  $b^t$  ( $\frac{3}{4}j^d$ ). Figure 2.2 displays this function ( $p = \frac{1}{3}$ ) as a function of amount sent in the dictator game (with  $p = 1$ ) for differing values of  $\frac{1}{2}$ , assuming that the dictator game is played with a price of one and the trust game is played with a price of one third. The solid forty-five degree line in the figure illustrates this relationship for the Cobb-Douglas case. In this case, any increase in the budget share sent in the trust game over the dictator game would be interpreted as a measure of trust purged of altruism.

If substitution were less elastic (e.g., if preferences were Leontieff such that  $\frac{1}{2} = 0$ ), then the relation between  $b^t$  and  $\frac{3}{4}j^d$  would be as shown by the flatter, dashed line in Figure 2.2. On the other hand, more elastic substitution ( $\frac{1}{2} < \frac{1}{3}$ ) would imply a steeper relationship than that implied by the Cobb-Douglas case. The uppermost dotted line in Figure 2.2 illustrates the case where  $\frac{1}{2} = \frac{1}{3}$ .

As Figure 2.2 makes clear, an altruism-free measure of trust calculated using (2.4) is sensitive to assumptions about the elasticity of substitution. For example, observed budget shares of 40% in both the dictator and trust games would imply a trust measure of 25% under Leontieff assumptions versus 0% under Cobb-Douglas assumptions. The assumption of even more elastic substitution would, in this hypothetical example, imply 'negative trust.'

While it may seem intuitively appealing to assume that the elasticity of substitution is no greater than one, Andreoni and Miller (2001) provide evidence that the substitution is more elastic than the Cobb-Douglas case for a subset of the undergraduate students that they studied. These authors estimate that the actions of most of their experimental participants are consistent with one of three preference profiles. The behavior that would be predicted for each of these preference profiles in our dictator and counterfactual, zero reciprocity trust games are marked on Figure 2.2. Under the 'weak selfish' profile (which Andreoni and Miller estimate affects 47% of their sample), a person would exhibit an elasticity of substitution of -2.6 and dictator and trust shares of 5% and 31%, respectively. The 'weak Leontieff' profile (30% of the Andreoni and Miller sample) has an elasticity of substitution of -0.7 and dictator and trust shares of 39% and 32%. Finally, the 'weak perfect substitutes' profile ( $\frac{1}{2} = \frac{1}{3}$  and applying to 22% of the population) predicts dictator and trust shares of 27% and 78%. While these results indicate that some people substitute very elastically between themselves and others, the overall levels of altruism (as evidenced by the predicted dictator shares) are modest among Andreoni and Miller's undergraduate student population. As we shall see in Section 4, altruism is much higher in the South African participants in this study, making it difficult to infer preference parameters from

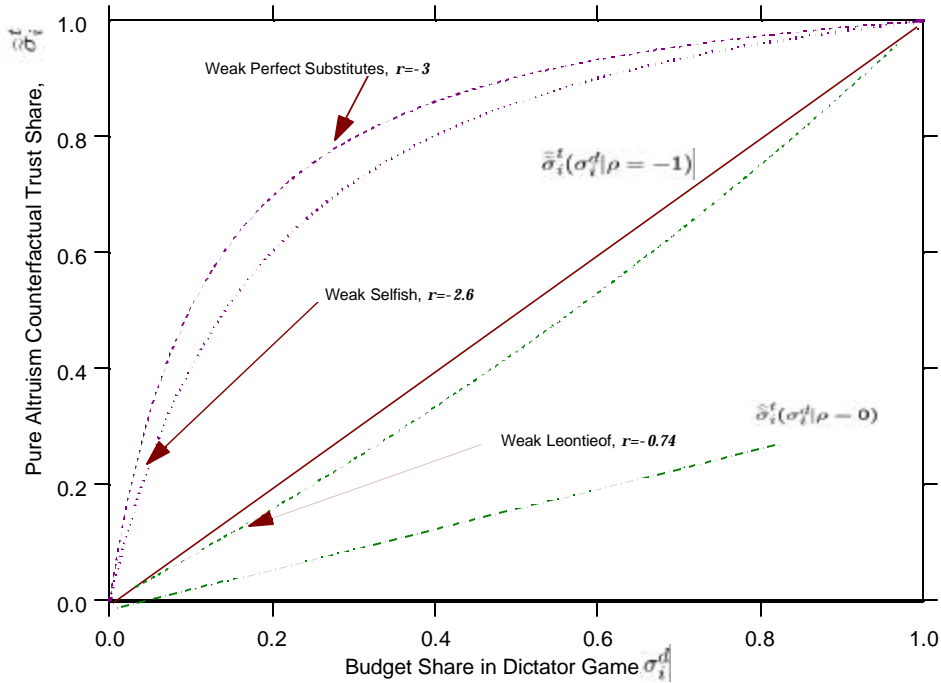


Figure 2.2: Expected Trustor Budget Shares under Pure Altruism Counterfactual

the Andreoni and Miller results.

## 2.2. Reciprocity Controlling for Altruism

This section considers the impact of altruism on the trustee's decision that determine the return function,  $r(x_0)$ . We can formally represent the trustee's decision of how much money to return to the trustee ( $y_0$ ), and how much to retain for himself ( $y_s$ ) as:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Max}_{y_s, y_0} \quad & u(y_s; (B^t_i \cdot p x_0) + y_0) & (2.8) \\ \text{subject to} \quad & y_s + y_0 \cdot X_0 \end{aligned}$$

As before, the subscript  $s$  indicates money kept by the decisionmaker for himself, while the subscript  $o$  indicates funds sent to the other person. This representation of the decisionmaking problem makes clear that the trustee's budget constraint depends on the trustor's prior decision,  $x_o$ . The terms in the utility function recognize that the trustor may have kept some money for herself. However, problem (2.8) makes no reference to whether  $u(c)$  is shaped by altruistic motives or reciprocity norms.

A natural measure of the strength of reciprocity norms might seem to be the budget share that he returns to the trustor:

$$\beta_j^r = r(x_o) = x_o \quad (2.9)$$

However, paralleling the prior section's analysis of the impact of altruism on the trustor's decision, note that an altruistic trustee would be willing to return money to the trustor independent of the fact that he may feel obligated to return some of the money that was entrusted to him. While it may matter little to an individual trustee whether money is returned out of altruism or out of reciprocity norm, the larger economic impact of these norms may be distinct. Analogous to prior section's analysis of trust, it is thus useful to define a purely altruism counterfactual budget share,  $\beta_j^a$ , that denotes the amount that the trustee would return to the trustor when no reciprocity norms were involved. Using this share, a measure of the strength of reciprocity norms for individual  $j$ , controlling for  $j$ 's altruism would be:

$$\beta_j^r = \beta_j^a + \alpha_j^r \quad (2.10)$$

Note that in environments of high altruism ( $\beta_j^a \rightarrow 1$ ), there is little scope for the operation of reciprocity norms to further enhance returns to the trustee. Like trust measure (2.4), (2.10) is also an intra-personal comparison measure.

To isolate the effect of reciprocity and calculate measure (2.10), we would need to observe the trustee's behavior when his return decision is independent of, or not preceded by, the trustor's actions. We can formalize this counterfactual trustee problems as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Max}_{y_s, y_o} \quad & u(y_s; C + y_o) & (2.11) \\ \text{subject to} \quad & & \\ & y_s + y_o = B & \\ & y_s, y_o \geq 0 & \end{aligned}$$

where the trustee treats his own budget,  $B$ ; as exogenous, and treats  $C$  as an exogenous endowment enjoyed by the trustor. In contrast, problem (2.8) treats these as endogenous—dependent on the trustee’s decisions—and hence capable of inducing reciprocity norms. Formally, problem (2.11) is equivalent to the dictator decision (2.5) with a price of giving equal to one and an endowment  $C \geq 0$ .

The solution to the counterfactual trustee problem (2.11) will in general not be the same as the dictator game without endowments. If trustees care only about personal payoffs, the fact that the trustor already has endowment  $C$  will reduce the amount of money that a trustee would otherwise allocate to the trustor. Consequently, the share sent by a trustee in pure dictator game will overstate the amount that trustee would return to the trustor under the counterfactual, zero reciprocity scenario. However, the amount that would be sent can be straightforwardly inferred from the pure dictator game under assumptions about the nature of the utility function.

Assuming that trustee  $j$ ’s preferences can be represented by a Cobb-Douglas utility function of the form  $u_j = (y_s)^{1-\alpha_j^d} (C + y_o)^{\alpha_j^d}$ , and noting that  $B = x_o$  and  $C = (B^t - p x_o)$ , the solution to problem (2.11) will take the following form:<sup>6</sup>

$$y_o^* = \max \{ 0, [\alpha_j^d + (1 - \alpha_j^d)p] x_o - (1 - \alpha_j^d) B^t \} \quad (2.12)$$

This pure altruism model of the trustee decision provides some interesting intuition. The solid line in Figure 2.3 graphs (2.12) assuming that  $p = 0.33$ ;  $B^t = 10$  and  $\alpha_j^d = 0.38$ .<sup>7</sup> First, as indicated by the intercept term  $-(1 - \alpha_j^d) B^t$  in both (2.12) and the figure, altruistic trustees will feel less compelled to redistribute to trustors the better endowed is the trustor. Second, the slope  $(\alpha_j^d + (1 - \alpha_j^d)p)$  is strictly greater than  $p$  (for  $p < 1$ ), indicating that regardless of the trustee’s altruism, he will always marginally repay more than the amount that the trustee sent to the trustor ( $p x_o$ ). The more expensive it was for a trustor to share with a trustee the kinder a trustee will be in returning funds at the margin.

Figure 2.3 displays the net effect of these two forces that shape the purely altruistic return decision. The dashed line in the figure is a breakeven level of return, meaning the amount that if returned would leave the trustee no worse

<sup>6</sup>Note that we use the dictator game budget share,  $\alpha_j^d$ , to parameterize this Cobb-Douglas utility specification, because an individual would send a budget share exactly equal to this utility function parameter in the dictator game (2.5).

<sup>7</sup>The first two numbers are the parameters from the experimental design described below, while the third reflects the median level of altruism in revealed in our study.

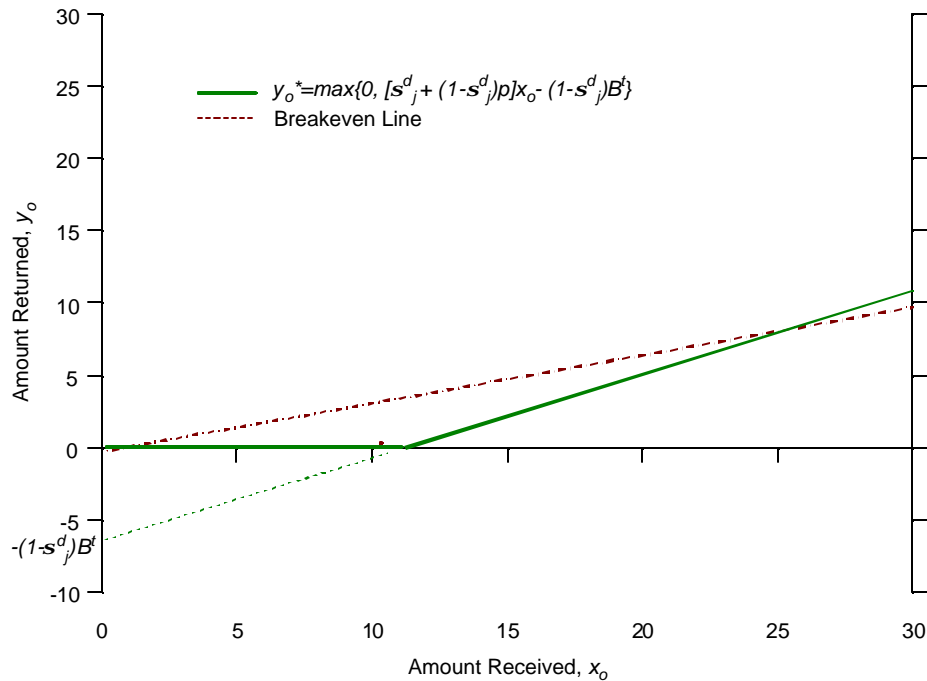


Figure 2.3: Trustee Decision under Pure Altruism Counterfactual

than if she had kept the entire endowment for themselves. As can be seen for the particular parameter values used to create the figure, a trustee will only breakeven in sending funds to a purely altruistic trustee if she sends nearly the entire budget to the trustee. In this sense, a purely altruistic trustee would not prove to be especially trustworthy for a selfish trustor who wanted to recoup at least the amount of funds that she sent to the trustee.

Using equation (2.12), we can now estimate the counterfactual, zero-reciprocity budget share  $b_j^r$  as:

$$b_j^r = y_{j0}^a = x_{j0} \quad (2.13)$$

Inserting this estimate into expression (2.10) will yield the desired measure of reciprocity, controlling for altruism.

### 3. Instrument and Field Procedures

As argued in the previous section, distinguishing trust and reciprocity from altruism requires intra-personal comparisons of behavior under different games. All experimental subjects were thus asked to play three games, one in the position of a dictator, one in the position of a trustor, and one in the position of a trustee. All data were collected in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. An English version of the instructions can be found in the appendix. The experiments were conducted in Zulu except in the Indian community of Chatsworth.

The experiments were implemented in 14 separate South African communities, seven urban and seven rural. These communities were originally selected at random as part of the 1994 South African national living standards survey (PSLSD 1994 details the survey methodology). For the living standards study, approximately 20 households were randomly selected for an in-depth interview, and in the KwaZulu-Natal province, these same households were re-interviewed in 1998. Forty percent of our experimental subjects were recruited from the respondents to the living standard surveys, while the other sixty percent were selected from other families in the community who had not been included in the survey. Not more than one participant per household was allowed. All the participants were of 18 years of age or more and they were not told about experimental payments at the time of recruitment.<sup>8</sup> The average age of participants was 43 years old, with 2 out of 5 being male. 25% of the sample was at least 57 years of age and 25% was at most 28 years of age. Participants had on average 6 years of education, with 25% of them having at most 2 years of schooling and 25% of them having at least 10 years of schooling. On average, there were 20 subjects per session. Two sessions were smaller (10 and 15), and three sessions were large (25). All participants in each session belonged to the same neighborhood. On average, participants knew 30% of the people in the room by name. The average payment to a participant in the experiment was R37 (around \$5), which amounts to two-days wage in rural areas.

To play the dictator game, subjects were given 2 envelopes, one red and one blue. The red envelope contained R16 in R2 coins, and the blue envelope was empty. To pass some of the R16 to another person in the room, subjects were instructed to pass it from the red envelope to the blue envelope. If a subject did not want to share any money, they were told to leave the blue envelope empty.

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<sup>8</sup>In two communities, people were aware that they would be paid a show-up fee for participating in the study.

To protect the privacy of subjects' decisions, they were given a 'privacy box,' a cardboard box that prevented other people from seeing their manipulation of envelopes. This 'privacy box' was used in all decisions thereafter. Before any decision was made, a tip chart reproducing Table A.1 in the appendix, was used to explain all the choices available to dictators. After everyone had a chance to make a decision, envelopes were collected,<sup>9</sup> shu- ed in front of everyone and assigned to new subjects. Careful attention was paid to delivering envelopes in a way that no subjects were able to know their content. The envelopes were not opened until the end of the session, so subjects did not know their payoα from previous decisions prior to making the next.

To play the trust game, subjects were given 3 envelopes, one red, one blue and one green. The red envelope contained R10 in R2 coins, and the blue and green envelope were empty and stapled together. After delivering the envelopes the game was explained as shown in the instructions. To pass some of the R10 to some other person in the room, subjects were instructed to pass it from the red envelope to the blue envelope. Subjects were told that any money put in the blue envelope was going to be tripled before being given to another subject. If the receiver wanted to return any of the tripled money in the blue envelope, they were instructed to use the green envelope to do so.<sup>10</sup> If a subject wanted to pass no money they were instructed to leave the blue envelope empty.<sup>11</sup>

Before any decision was made, a tip chart reproducing Table A.2 to Table A.4 in the appendix, was used to explain the choices available to trustors. Moreover, subjects were asked to ...ll out an empty chart expressing how much money they thought would be returned to them had they chosen to send each of the possible options shown there. After this exercise was completed, subjects were asked to make a decision. Envelopes were collected, money in them tripled and shu- ed in front of everyone to be assigned to new subjects. But before the blue and green envelopes were delivered, new tip charts reproducing Table A.5 to Table A.7 were used to explain the possibilities available to trustees. In addition, an empty chart was given to everyone to be ...lled with the amount of money they thought they would have returned had they received any of the amounts listed

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<sup>9</sup>Envelopes were collected in trails in order to minimize the contact that experimenters could have with them, and so minimize influencing subjects' decisions.

<sup>10</sup>Envelopes were coded to keep track of the origin and destination of an envelope. The coding was such that nobody knew which code was associated to the envelope sent or received.

<sup>11</sup>We should mention that our design differs with Berg et al. (1995) in that trustees act also as trustors. This is, all subject played the role of trustors. This should diminish the distributional concerns a trustor might have when deciding how much money to pass.

there. After the charts were completed, subjects were given the blue and green envelopes with the tripled money. They were told to pass to the green envelope any money they wanted to return to the sender. Finally, decisions were recorded and the green envelopes returned to the senders. A post-experiment questionnaire was administered immediately after.

All subjects played as dictators first, then as trustors, and finally as trustees. This order of play could potentially bias our results. We unfortunately do not have an alternative design that could allow us to determine the size of this bias. The work of Harbaugh, Krause, and Liday (2000) with children suggests that dictator game giving would have been lower if the dictator game had been played after the trust game rather than before it. That is, our measure of altruism might be biased upwards by these order effects. However, under our experimental protocol, the only new information that trustors acquired when playing the dictator game was the amount of money they themselves sent, not the amount of money that was sent to them (i.e., participants could only check their earnings after the full set of games was completed). Finally, the price of giving and endowments were changed from the dictator game to the trust game. While these changes raise substitution elasticity issues as discussed earlier, we chose to make these changes to diminish the analogies between one game and the other and diminish the impact of order effects.

Our design included also an expectation elicitation stage. Eliciting beliefs about other players' actions might have an impact on the way the game is played. Croson (2000) shows that in public good games and prisoner dilemma games people tend to play more accordingly to theoretical predictions when asked what they think their opponent will do. Croson's results imply that our measure of trust is biased downwards, since trustors would think more carefully about the incentives faced by trustees. Another potential problem of eliciting beliefs is that experimenters might lead subjects towards a particular way of playing the game. As shown in the appendix, we were careful to present multiple examples to minimize this possibility. Experimenters repeatedly stressed that decisions as well as responses were personal and that there was not a correct way to play the game. They also refused questions that were not a clarification of the instructions.

A third issue is whether or not the method of payment could have biased the results. Indeed, all subjects played all the roles making less salient the fact that some subjects have assets while others lack them. However, post-experiment questionnaires indicate that subjects overwhelmingly regarded dictators' decision as an issue of equity. With regard to the trust game, subjects' main reasons

explaining their actions divided evenly between issues of equity and reciprocity. In addition, if subjects felt less the urgency to give as dictators, we would argue that our measure of altruism is biased downwards. If so, our argument that issues of altruism may be confused with trust and reciprocity would remain valid.

## 4. Experimental Evidence on Altruism, Trust and Reciprocity

This section presents the results from the experimental design described above, including the intra-personal comparison measures of trust and reciprocity. After presenting basic descriptive and distributional information on experimental play, we employ regression analysis of the key trustor and trustee decisions to show that while altruism explains an important part of the observed behavior, other norms are clearly operative as we can statistically reject the restrictions implied by the pure altruism (zero reciprocity) models of trustor and trustee behavior. Finally, this section concludes by showing that different norms are correlated within communities in a way that is consistent with the notion that communities are in a normative equilibrium. These findings increase our confidence in our measures and underwrite Section 5's analysis of the impact of norms on economic well-being within these communities.

### 4.1. Trust and Altruism

As reported in Table 4.1, mean (median) budget share sent by trustors in the trust game was 53% (60%). Over 70% of the subjects sent between 40% and 60% of their budget to their trustees. At the aggregate level, we cannot reject the hypothesis that the share passed is equal to 50%. These results resemble previous experiments using the trust game (Berg et al., 1995; Verhoben et al., 1997). However, as Table 4.1 also shows, the average amount passed varied across the 13 communities where the experiments were conducted. For instance, in one community (Kwabrush) the median amount sent was 60% of the initial endowment, while in another community (Umpumalanga) the median share sent was only 40%.

However, these relatively robust shares sent in the trust game do not necessarily reflect the existence of trust, understood as an expectation that trustees will return funds to trustors. As discussed in Section 3 above, amounts sent in the trust game may in part reflect the trustor's altruistic regard for others rather

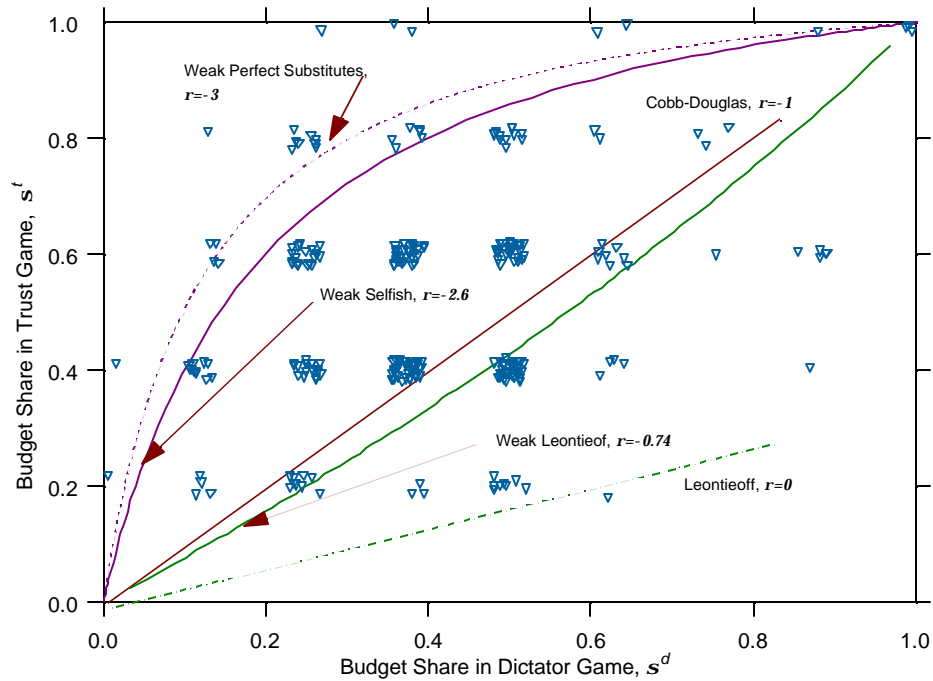


Figure 4.1: Behavior in Altruism and Trust Games

than purely an expectation of reciprocal behavior by the trustee. Indeed, levels of altruism among this population appear quite high as measured by the dictator game. Figure 4.1 duplicates Figure 2.2 except that we have projected onto it the actual budget share data points from the dictator and trust experiments.<sup>12</sup> The average share sent in the dictator game,  $\bar{s}^d$ , is 42% (versus 53% in the trust game). As can be appreciated from the figure, nearly all experimental participants sent larger dictator budget shares than would be predicted by any of the stylized Andreoni and Miller preference profiles discussed in section 2.1.

Under the assumption that trustors have a unitary elasticity of substitution between money for themselves and money for trustees, the 45-degree line in Figure

<sup>12</sup>Since choices in both games are discrete, the graph shows “jittered” data, i.e., a random component has been added in order to show graphically where the population is concentrated.

4.1 represents the predicted trust game shares that would be sent by a trustee who expected the trustee to return nothing to her. As can be appreciated visually, most observations lie above the 45-degree line. Fully 70% of the subjects sent away a larger share in the trust game than in the dictator game.<sup>13</sup> Assuming unitary elasticity of substitution, our intra-personal comparison trust measure that controls for altruism,  $\alpha^t$ ; averages 11% in the sample. We cannot reject the hypothesis that this measure is greater than zero.

Before looking more closely at further evidence on the veracity of this trust measure, it should be recalled that we would expect to see  $\alpha^t > \alpha^d$  even in the absence of any trust if the elasticity of substitution were greater than one. The zero expected return trust shares,  $\alpha^t$ , that would be predicted under the higher substitution elasticity values identified by Andreoni and Miller are again displayed in Figure 4.1. As can be seen, under these higher substitution elasticity values, trust would not only be nonexistent for most of the sample, but it would actually have to be negative (i.e., people give less when there is a possibility of return than they do when there is no possibility of return). On these grounds, higher substitution elasticities seem unlikely. Indeed, the only elasticity of substitution assumption envelopes the data from below, and rules out 'negative trust,' is a Leontief assumption. Further support for the notion that other norms beyond altruism are driving the trust results comes from the observation that the correlation between the share passed in the dictator game and the share passed in the trust game is a modest 0.38. While we cannot incontrovertibly rule out higher or lower substitution elasticity values, we will in the remainder of this analysis base our trust measure on a Cobb-Douglas, unitary substitution elasticity assumption.

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<sup>13</sup>It might be worried that the difference between trust and dictator shares is an artifact of the relatively limited number of discrete choices available in the trust game where trustees had to choose between sending 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80% and 100% to trustees. Options were more varied in the dictator game where the available choices were 0%, 12.5%, 25%, etc. However, while 36% of subjects passed 20 percentage points of their endowments more as trustor than as dictators, only 8% of subjects sent 20 percentage points of their endowments more as dictators than as trustors. This asymmetry indicates that the increase in the share sent in the trust games cannot be explained solely by the experimental design.

Table 4.1  
Altruism, Trust and Reciprocity Measures

	N	% Budget Shares Sent as:			Intra-personal Comp Measures	
		Dictator $\frac{3}{4}^d$	Trustor $\frac{3}{4}^t$	Trustee $\frac{3}{4}^r$	Trust $\pm^t$	Reciprocity $\pm^r$
Full Sample Measures	283					
Mean		42	53	38	11	13
Median		38	60	33	10	13
Medians by Community						
Umlazi	19	25	40	33	22	30
Mpumalanga	15	25	40	33	10	40
Imbali	18	38	40	33	16	30
Mpakama	21	38	60	42	13	19
Kwamashu	19	38	60	33	19	12
Madaeni	21	38	40	33	5	7
Umzumbe	10	38	40	33	5	33
Kwabrush	17	38	60	50	18	26
Emkindini	25	38	60	33	20	9
Buxeden	25	38	40	33	6	9
Chatsworth	20	50	60	39	4	7
Dundee	25	50	60	42	5	5
Okhlahlamba	23	50	40	33	4	15
Nkandla	25	50	60	42	11	10
		Individual Correlation			Community Correlation	
$\frac{1}{2}(\frac{3}{4}^d; \frac{3}{4}^t)$		0.38			0.45	
$\frac{1}{2}(\frac{3}{4}^d; \frac{3}{4}^r)$		0.18			0.34	
$\frac{1}{2}(\frac{3}{4}^t; \frac{3}{4}^r)$		0.25			0.67	
$\frac{1}{2}(\pm^t; \pm^r)$		0.44			0.30	

#### 4.2. Reciprocity Norms and Altruism

The amount of money returned by trustees in the trust game is likely shaped by altruism and reciprocity. From a selfish trustor's point of view, however, this distinction is immaterial. A trustee is trustworthy if, for some trustor's investment, he returns at least as much as trustor original investment (i.e.,  $y_o > px_o$ ). Under

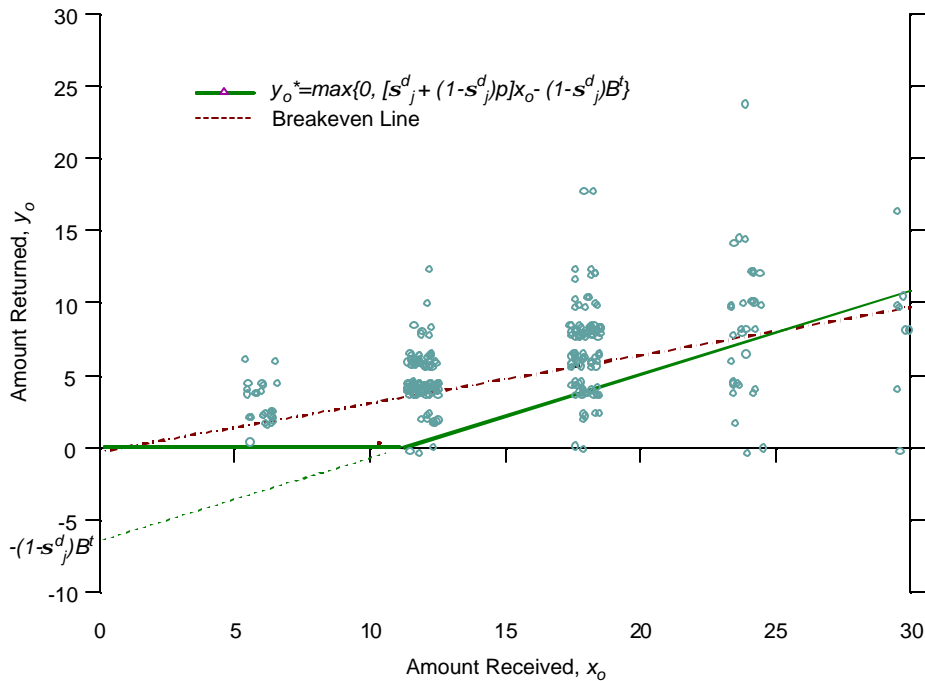


Figure 4.2: Trustee Decision

our experimental design where  $p = \frac{1}{3}$ , if the trustee returns less than one third, than a selfish trustor would have been better-off by not sending any funds to the trustee.

Figure 4.2 shows the data points from our experiments projected onto Figure 2.3 (the data points have again been jittered—see note 11). Most of the data points lie above the break-even line, as 42% of the subjects chose to return more than  $\frac{1}{3}$ , while another 38% of subjects returned exactly a  $\frac{1}{3}$  budget share to the trustors. Only 20% of trustees returned less to their trustor than she had originally sent, and the average budget share returned was 38%. This result is quite remarkable if we note that this intertemporal exchange is not incentive compatible. Trustees have no incentive to return any money, since unless everyone returns nothing to trustors, they remain anonymous.

While most trustees proved trustworthy, it is not clear whether this behavior results from the already noted high levels of altruism, or whether it reflects the operation of distinct reciprocity norms. While the distributions of trustee and dictator budget shares are somewhat similar,<sup>14</sup> they are statistically different from each other as the hypothesis that they are equal is rejected by Fisher's exact test.<sup>15</sup> Consistent with the notion that norms other than altruism are operative is the modest 0.18 correlation between dictator (altruism) shares and trustor shares.

A more precise decomposition of the trustee behavior into altruistic and reciprocity components is possible using the prediction from the model of purely altruistic behavior (2.9). Overall, 71% of subjects returned more as trustee than the purely altruistic model of the trustee decision predicts according to equation (2.9).<sup>16</sup> This purely altruistic model predicts that 23% of subjects would have returned a zero share as trustee based on their revealed levels of altruism and the modest amounts sent to them by their trustors. (As can be seen in Figure 4.2, a trustee with a median level of altruism would have returned zero to the trustor anytime he received less than approximately 10 Rand.) In fact, only 3.5% of trustees returned zero budget shares to their trustor. The measure of reciprocity net of altruism measure,  $\pm^r$ , has median and mean values of 13%. The correlation between this measure and the trust net of altruism measure,  $\pm^t$ , is 0.43. The magnitude of this correlation, which exceeds that between the other pairs of norm measures, lends further support to the idea that in there is an effective norm of reciprocity that shapes individual's behavior in their roles as both trustees and trustors..

#### 4.3. Econometric Analysis of Trustor and Trustee Decisions

The descriptive analysis in the prior subsections suggests that while altruism is high amongst participants in our experiments, there are norms of trust and reci-

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<sup>14</sup>In addition to having similar means, when examined as histograms, the two distributions appear visually similar.

<sup>15</sup>It is interesting to notice that the difference in distributions is explained by the behavior of trustees receiving less than R18 from trustors. Indeed, the distribution of budget shares of dictators and trustees for the subsample of subjects receiving R18 or more as trustees is statistically indistinguishable.

<sup>16</sup>We may again worry that this result is an artifact of the discrete choices available to individuals. However, 46% of the subjects returned, as trustees, a budget share that was at least 20 percentage points more than the altruistic model would have predicted. Only 10% of subjects returned, as trustees, a budget share that was at least 20 percentage points less than the altruistic model would have predicted.

procuity that influence behavior above and beyond what would be expected based on altruism alone. This section solidifies this insight with econometric analysis of the trustee and trustor decisions.<sup>17</sup>

Table 4.2 shows the regression estimates of the amount of money sent by participants in their roles as trustors and trustees. The regressions were estimated as double-censored Tobits. For both trustor and trustee decisions, a pure altruism model was specified and estimated in conformity with the prior theoretical analysis of these choices when trustees expect nothing in return and trustees are not influenced by reciprocity norms. For the trustor decision, the purely altruistic model (under the assumption that the trustor has a unitary elasticity of substitution between money kept for herself and money for the trustee) predicts that the budget share sent to the trustee will equal the budget share the individual sent as dictator in the dictator game. This prediction implies that for trustor  $j$ , the intercept of the regression should be zero and that the coefficient on the term  $\frac{3}{4}B^t$  should be one. However, both of these predictions are easily rejected as the intercept term is strongly and significantly positive, while the point estimate of the slope term is tightly estimated as 0.5.

The estimated positive intercept term indicates that even a completely non-altruistic individual would send 3.5 Rand (35% of the trustee budget) to the trustor. To further explore the forces that shape the trustor decision, the regression model was augmented with other variables that might be expected to influence trust. While the inclusion of these variables does not change the point estimates of the parameters of the altruism model, several interesting results do emerge. First, the significance of two variables that measure of the trustor's expected returns corroborate the role of trust beyond altruism in shaping trustors' decisions.<sup>20</sup> Second, contrary to findings reported in Henrich et al. (2001) we do find that more market-oriented communities exhibit higher levels of trust. Urban

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<sup>17</sup>We also investigated decisions taken in the dictator game. As in previous experimental research (Eckel and Grossman, 1998; Andreoni and Vesterlund, 2001, Croson and Buchan, 2001), we found that women tend to be less selfish than men. We also see that amounts passed in the dictator game were not affected by the familiarity of the subject with other participants. Market dependence as evidenced by food self-sufficiency does not significantly influence altruism.

<sup>20</sup>These results also allay any fears that the results might be distorted by order effects created by the experimental design. Since subjects faced a sequences of three decisions, it is possible that later decisions were influenced by earlier ones for reasons other than altruism itself. For instance, if learning took place, the results could overestimate the importance of trust. However, the response of trustors' decisions to reciprocity expectations increases confidence that the trust measures indeed reflect trust.

Table 4.2  
 Double-Censored Tobit Estimates of Experimental Decisions  
 Money Sent to Other as:

	Trustor, $x_0$		Trustee, $y_0$	
	Altruism Model	Augmented Model	Altruism Model	Augmented Model
<b>Altruism Variables</b>				
Constant	3.5 (0.30)	3.5 (1.03)	0.1 (0.89)	-1.3 (1.63)
$\frac{3}{4}^d B^T$	0.5 (0.06)	0.5 (0.07)		
$(1 - \frac{3}{4}^d) B^T$			0.2 (0.10)	0.3 (0.11)
$[\frac{3}{4}^d + (1 - \frac{3}{4}^d)p] B^T$			0.5 (0.04)	0.4 (0.05)
<b>Reciprocity Expectations</b>				
% Reciprocators <sup>18</sup>		0.7 (0.40)		1.0 (0.58)
Returns if send R8, r(8)		0.1 (0.03)		0.0 (0.04)
<b>Demographics</b>				
Age		0.0 (0.01)		-0.0 (0.01)
1=Urban, 0 = Rural		-0.6 (0.60)		-2.1 (0.88)
1=Male, 0=Female		0.0 (0.26)		-0.2 (0.37)
Years of Education		0.1 (0.04)		0.0 (0.06)
<b>Social Assets</b>				
No. of Associations <sup>19</sup>		0.1 (0.07)		0.1 (0.10)
% of Acquaintances		-0.5 (0.49)		-0.1 (0.73)
<b>Economic Status</b>				
Per Capita Income		-0.3 (0.62)		-1.7 (0.90)
Food Self-Sufficiency		-0.4 (0.16)		0.4 (0.23)
<b>Community Fixed Effects</b>				
Coefficients not shown				
Log-Likelihood	-584.3	-512.0	-691.3	-614.0

Standard Errors in parentheses

\* Significant at the 10% level

\*\* Significant at the 5% level

residence, which correlates with market dependence has a negative but insignificant effect on the amount sent in the trust decision. In addition, independence from the market, as measured by the self-sufficiency of food production significantly increases amounts sent by trustees.

The pure altruism model of the trustee return decision predicts that the constant should be zero and that the coefficients on the  $(1 - \beta_j^d)B^T$  and  $[\beta_j^d + (1 - \beta_j^d)\rho]B^T$  terms should be -1 and 1, respectively (see equation 2.12). Again, none of these predictions are supported by the data. Indeed, when fitted for the median level of altruism ( $\beta_j^d = 0.4$ ), the estimated regression function closely approximates the break-even line shown in Figure 4.3. The addition of other explanatory variables again has scant impact on the coefficients of the altruism variables. Urban location is negatively and significantly related to the amount returned by trustees, though food market dependence increases amounts sent. Finally, we found that trustees decisions are not correlated with the expectation of being reciprocated. This result is intriguing because models of reciprocity, like Falk and Fischbacher (2000), would predict correlation between expectations and the amount returned.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4.4. Characterizing the Normative Environments of Communities

The literature suggests that trust and trustworthiness do not automatically operate amongst all groups of people, but that they instead must be achieved. Moreover, the benefits that have been attached to trust are hypothesized to occur when trust characterizes a social grouping as opposed to being an idiosyncratic trait. As a first step in our analysis of how the social capital of community norms shapes households' economic prospects, this section aggregates our experimental data into community level measures of altruism, trust and reciprocity.

Table 4.1 above aggregates individuals' decisions in the dictator game and the trust game into community norm measures.<sup>22</sup> The table shows the median levels of the different norm measures for each of the 14 communities where we carried out experiments.<sup>23</sup> Looking across these communities, we see that community

<sup>21</sup>The logic of Falk and Fischbacher is as follows. The more a trustee thinks a trustor expects him to return the less a trustee will judge that a trustor is being kind to him. A trustor will be judged kind if he passes money even when he expects little in return.

<sup>22</sup>Strictly speaking, what we call communities are enumerator survey clusters. While all people within a cluster live close to one another, some clusters are literally tight-knit communities, while others are socially looser neighborhoods.

<sup>23</sup>We used median in preference to means on the grounds that the insensitivity of the former

altruism as measured by the median share sent in the dictator game ranges from 25% to 50%. The correlation coefficient between community altruism and the median budget share sent by trustees is 45%, with the community median trust shares ranging from 40% to 60%. Strikingly, the community median trust share correlates very strongly with the median budget share returned by trustees with a correlation coefficient of 67%. As noted earlier, trustees interested in their private returns on funds sent to trustees would care deeply about the percentage returned to them by trustees, irrespective of the trustee's motive. This strong correlation at the community level between trustee and trustor shares suggest that communities are in a sort of equilibrium in which expectations of returns are matched by the actual behavior of trustees.

Finally, when we filter out the component of trustor and trustee decisions that are solely explained by revealed altruistic preferences, we find that the median level of pure trust ranges from 4% to 20% across the 14 communities, while reciprocity norms that boost the amount returned by the median trustee ranges from 5% to 30%. The cross-community correlation between these two norm measures is 35%. Interestingly, the 15 to 25 percentage point variation in the median levels of these norms across our communities is as strong as the cross-community variation in altruism. We turn now to explore the impact of these varying normative environments of altruism, trust and reciprocity on the capacity of households to generate an economic livelihood.

## 5. The Economic Value of Norms and 'Social Capital'

Interest in the economic value of social capital—which Robert Putnam (1995:67) defines as “...features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit”—has grown with the accumulating evidence that intertemporal markets are systematically weak, missing or non-price rationed in many low and middle income countries, and that the absence of these markets can severely retard and distort the distributional consequences of economic growth.<sup>24</sup> While Putnam's and other similar definitions have been criticized because they tautologically define social capital in terms of its effects (e.g., see Durlauf 1999 and Portes 1998), quantitative empirical efforts

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to outliers makes them a more accurate measure of community norms.

<sup>24</sup>Bannerjee and Newman (1992) and Eswaran and Kotwal (1986) are among the classic theoretical demonstrations of this point.

have had to struggle with the problem of measuring social capital separately from its putative good effects.

As described in the introduction to this paper, prior empirical efforts have either relied on social associational density indicators as signals of the depth of trust, or they have relied on surveys that ask respondents to self-report trust in neighbors, local institutions, etc. While both these approaches suffer from fundamental weaknesses, our use of economic experiments to characterize the normative environment in different South African communities opens the door to novel microeconomic analysis of the impact of norms on the ability of individuals to succeed materially in South Africa's liberalized, post-apartheid economy.

### 5.1. Meaning and Measurement of Social Capital

While there is considerable controversy over Putnam's and other broad definitions of social capital (and indeed, over whether social capital is even a useful concept—Bowles, 1999), a less ambitious approach is to define social capital as norms that enhance the incentive compatibility of non-contractual or legally unenforceable exchange. Prime examples of such exchanges include time-sensitive transactions such as informal loans and mutual insurance arrangements. In such transactions, a good (credit or insurance) is delivered today without legal recourse should the recipient fail to repay the loan or reciprocate with mutual aid when the need arises in the future.

The trust game used in this study is in an analogue for legally unenforceable, time-sensitive exchange. If we were to rewrite the first constraint in problem (2.1) as:

$$x_0 = (B^t - x_s^t) \frac{1}{1+p}; \tag{5.1}$$

then the trust game would appear as a loan of amount  $B^t - x_s^t$  from trustor to trustee;  $\frac{1}{1+p} > 1$  would be the gross rate of return on the trustee's investment project; and, the return function,  $r(x_0)$ , would be the legally unenforceable loan repayment from trustee to trustor. Put this way, we might indeed expect that communities in which trust is high as revealed by our experiments, would also be communities in which norms of trust and reciprocity facilitate real non-contractual loans and other time-sensitive exchanges that facilitate households' ability to generate economic livelihood in the presence of imperfect markets. Moreover, as Platteau (2000) argues, strong sharing norms akin to our altruism measure, may actually act as a tax and diminish the ability of households to generate liveli-

hood.<sup>25</sup>

In order to investigate this proposition, we follow the basic approach suggested in the Narayan and Pritchett's (1998) study of Tanzanian households. In their study, Narayan and Pritchett regress household per-capita expenditures (as a measure of material well-being) on a set of basic control variables (household size, location and human capital) and on social capital variables. They measure the latter with an index meant to capture the quantity and quality of associational life (the number of social groups and how well they function). In order to test whether social capital is an individual or community level phenomenon, they include both a household-specific measure as well as a community average measure in their regression specification.

Narayan and Pritchett's OLS estimates show that the community social capital measure has a strong positive effect on household's realized level of per-capita expenditures. Worried about simultaneity bias (i.e., higher expenditures may explain greater participation in groups and association, rather than vice versa), Narayan and Pritchett employ a two-stage regression procedure in which they instrument for their social capital measure using self-reported trust measure.<sup>26</sup> They found that even after controlling for the endogeneity of associational life in this fashion, community level social capital continues to have a significant effect on households' material well-being.

For the analysis here, we use the KwaZulu-Natal Income Dynamics Study (KIDS) data that were collected from households in the same communities where we undertook our economic experiments.<sup>27</sup> Prior analysis of KIDS households has shown that financial market constraints appear to strongly limit the ability of households to generate a livelihood (see Carter and May, 1999), suggesting that there is indeed space for social capital to make a difference by enhancing households' ability to access credit and insurance. Indeed, two prior studies of social capital using the KIDS data (Maluccio et al., 1999, and Haddad and Maluccio, 2000) found that social capital indeed appears to significantly enhance households' ability to generate livelihood. However, the first of these studies uses a social association index akin to that used by Narayan and Pritchett, while

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<sup>25</sup> It can also be that altruism will underwrite risk-taking and hence improve the investment and livelihood climate.

<sup>26</sup> In using these instruments, argue that the norms of trust are econometrically exogenous to any individual household's level of well-being, an argument on which we rely in our own analysis.

<sup>27</sup> Approximately 40% of experimental participants came from households that were surveyed by the KIDS study.

the latter study uses self-reported trust measure. For reasons discussed in the introduction, both of these measures are problematic, and neither is likely to have isolated the effects of trust and other norms per se.

## 5.2. Econometric Estimates of the Effects of Trust in South Africa

Following the poverty and living standards literature, we use per-capita household expenditures as a measure of livelihood and material well-being.<sup>28</sup> Table 5.1 displays OLS estimates of three alternative models of household living standards. The first of these regresses living standards on conventional, tangible economic assets of human capital, other productive capital (land, livestock, tools and equipment) as well as key demographic and geographic indicators. The second specification closely follows the Narayan and Pritchett (1998) and Maluccio et al. (1999) specifications by adding in a community level associational density measure of social capital.<sup>29</sup> Finally, the 'Social Norms Model' adds in our experimentally-derived measures of the median level of altruism ( $\frac{3}{4}^d$ ), trust ( $\pm^r$ ) and reciprocity ( $\pm^r$ ) in each community. Social capital and norm measures are interacted with a rural-urban locational variable on the grounds that entrepreneurial and other economic opportunities are likely to be stronger in urban areas.

The 'Tangible Assets' model yields no particular surprises as conventional assets have their expected positive returns. More interestingly, inclusion of the median community social capital index in the 'Associational Model' reveals that social capital has a positive and statistically significant impact on livelihood generation in rural areas. In urban areas, the effect is strongly negative. While the potential endogeneity of the associational measure may bias this estimate (i.e., higher incomes cause people to join more groups), we have tried to diminish this problem two ways. First, the measure is at the community, not the individual level. Second, we control also for average living standards in the community. Our estimates are in line with those obtained in prior studies, which have had data structures that permit more ambitious control for the endogeneity of associational

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<sup>28</sup>Expenditure-based measures are typically used in preference to current income measures on the ground that the former is both more accurately measured for low income households and because it should more closely approximate permanent income.

<sup>29</sup>John Maluccio graciously provided us with the social capital measure used in the Maluccio et al. (2000). This measure is a household level index formed by combining information on number of groups, gender heterogeneity of groups, quality of group performance. The index and is scaled to lie between 1 and 100. For the analysis here, we took the median of this measure for each community.

Table 5.1  
 OLS Estimates of the Economic Impact of Norms  
 Dependent Variable: Logarithm of Household Per Capita Expenditure

	Tangible Assets Model	Associational Model	Social Norms Model
Community Norms and Social Capital			
Urban-Social Capital		-0.25 (0.05)**	-0.52 (0.12)**
Rural-Social Capital		0.12 (0.04)**	0.01 (0.1)
Urban-Altruism (log), $\frac{3}{4}^d$			1.5 (0.42)**
Rural-Altruism (log), $\frac{3}{4}^d$			-1.1 (0.56)*
Urban-Trust (log), $\pm^t$			0.30 (0.17)*
Rural-Trust (log), $\pm^t$			-0.34 (0.12)**
Urban-Reciprocity (log), $\pm^r$			0.48 (0.17)**
Rural-Reciprocity (log), $\pm^r$			-0.04 (0.12)
Economic Assets			
Education of Household Head	0.25 (0.05)**	0.27 (0.04)**	0.25 (0.04)**
Productive Assets (log)	0.07 (0.01)**	0.05 (0.01)**	0.05 (0.01)**
Demographic Characteristics			
Household Size (log)	-0.71 (0.07)**	-0.70 (0.06)**	-0.70 (0.06)**
Gender of Household Head (male=1)	0.11 (0.07)	0.09 (0.07)	0.13 (0.06)**
Age of Household Head (log)	0.72 (0.1)**	0.69 (0.14)**	0.57 (0.14)**
Community Characteristics			
Avg Living Standards	0.42 (0.1)**	0.46 (0.10)**	0.21 (0.18)
Location (urban =1)	0.11 (0.1)	0.97 (0.20)**	6.9 (1.3)**
Constant	1.0 (0.8)	0.67 (0.77)	-0.78 (1.5)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.59	0.63	0.67

\* Signi...cant at the 10% level

\*\* Signi...cant at the 5% level

density measures of social capital.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, turning to the 'Social Norms Model,' we see several striking results. First, the norm measures appear largely to capture an influence on household living standards that is distinct from the influence of the associational density measure.<sup>31</sup> Second, the urban and rural impacts of norms are quite distinct. Altruism, trust and reciprocity norms have large and statistically significant positive impacts on urban livelihood generation. The estimated coefficients can be interpreted as elasticities, implying, for example, that a 10% increase in the reciprocity norm measure boosts the per-capita expenditure measure of permanent income by 4%. In contrast, altruism and trust are estimated to significantly reduce rural livelihood generation. While we might have expected the magnitude of these effects to differ between urban and rural areas based on the different opportunity sets available in these regions, this sign reversal is puzzling.

Two non-mutually exclusive explanations for these distinctive rural versus urban results present themselves. First, high levels of normative commitment may represent something different in rural areas. In many of the rural areas studied here, a hierarchical chieftancy structure dominates local affairs. The presence of strong norms in these areas may signal the strength of the customary forces of 'excess sharing' that Platteau suggests may suppress individual incentives, initiative and incomes. Second, the types of social capital and connections that can be accessed in urban areas may be fundamentally distinct from those in rural areas. In particular, strong norms of trust and reciprocity in urban areas may permit households to tap into what some social capital literature calls 'bridging social capital,' meaning relationships that extend across class and ethnic groups. In contrast, the only connections in rural areas that can be utilized via relationships of trust, etc. may be what this literature calls 'bounded social capital,' meaning highly localized ties based on family and other close relationships.

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<sup>30</sup>When included in the regression, the individual social capital measures are positive and statistically significant in both urban and rural areas. Results for the community level measures are not affected by the inclusion of the individual measures. This pattern of coefficients, including the negative impact of community social capital on urban livelihood generation, matches results reported in Maluccion et al. (2000).

<sup>31</sup>The bivariate correlations between associational social capital measure and our experimentally derived norm measures are weak.

## 6. Conclusions

Empirical analysis of the economic significance of trust and reciprocity has been hampered by the difficulty of measuring these norms. This paper has turned to experimental methods to solve this measurement problem. However, we have argued that to measure trust and reciprocity with experimental methods, we first need to know how much people intrinsically care for others. We have thus proposed a multi-stage experimental design that permits us to form intra-personal comparison measures that allow us to distinguish trust and reciprocity from altruistic caring for others. Application of this experimental design in a set of South African communities reveals that altruism, trust and reciprocity are distinguishable and that the proposed measures are sensible in that they reveal a normative consistency at both the level of individuals and communities.

In taking this design outside the laboratory, we have also probed the usefulness of experimental methods to inform ongoing debates about the ability of social capital and relations of trust to substitute for missing and otherwise imperfect inter-temporal markets in poor communities. Taking advantage of a recently conducted living standards survey conducted in the communities where we carried out our experiments, we were able to probe the impact of community norms of trust, reciprocity and altruism on the ability of households to generate livelihoods.

Several striking results emerge from this analysis. First, in contrast to the suggestion of Heinrich et al. (2001), we do not find that altruistic and trusting behavior increase monotonically with market integration and dependence. Second, we do find that these norms show large positive payoffs in urban environments where presumably opportunities are greater, or perhaps where norms of trust permits people to link up and bridge with others who can broker opportunities in other sectors of the economy. Third, we find, somewhat surprisingly, that high levels of altruism and trust depress livelihood generation in rural communities. This latter result is at least broadly consistent with Platteau's observation that the high levels of sharing expected and realized in some rural African communities may negatively impact on incentives and incomes. Finally, we find evidence that our experimentally derived measures of trust and norms are at best weakly related to the associational density measures of social capital that have often been used in the literature. This finding, together with the provocative findings on the economics of norms, motivates further use of experimental methods to explore questions of social capital. By learning to measure trust and related concepts more clearly, we can begin to make better progress on understanding the deter-

minants of trust and ultimately understand the factors that shape access to social capital.<sup>32</sup>

In closing, we should note that in taking experimental methods out of the lab and into the field presents a number of problems and limitations. Our measures of trust and reciprocity purged of altruism have depended on specific assumptions about the structure of utility functions. While this structure can in principle be estimated (as Andreoni and Miller, 2001, for example, neatly demonstrate), the challenge of experimentation in the field make this more difficult. We hope in future work to not only answer this challenge, but also to extend the range of real world behaviors that theory suggests may be shaped by the normative environment in which people act.

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<sup>32</sup>How well social capital, as a means to access finance and other resources, can substitute for well-functioning factor markets will depend on the rules of access to it. If access to the social capital of trust is stratified by class, linguistic group or ethnicity, then social capital may work poorly as an avenue of upward mobility in 'corelated societies' such as South Africa in which economic status and ethnic identity are strongly related (see Figueroa, 2001). In this case, what Stewart (2001) calls horizontal inequality (inequalities between culturally formed groups) will tend to perpetuate conventional economic (vertical) inequality.

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