Unregulable Defenses and the Perils of Shareholder Choice

Jennifer Arlen
jennifer.arlen@nyu.edu

Eric L. Talley
Columbia Law School, etalley@law.columbia.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship

Part of the Business Organizations Law Commons

Recommended Citation
Jennifer Arlen & Eric L. Talley, Unregulable Defenses and the Perils of Shareholder Choice, USC LAW, OLIN RESEARCH PAPER 03-7; USC CLEO RESEARCH PAPER C03-7; NYU, CTR FOR LAW & BUS RESEARCH PAPER 03-05; NYU PUBLIC LAW RESEARCH PAPER 60 (2003).
Available at: https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/1286

This Working Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Publications at Scholarship Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of Scholarship Archive. For more information, please contact cls2184@columbia.edu.
Unregulable Defenses and the Perils of Shareholder Choice

Jennifer Arlen and Eric Talley

This paper can be downloaded without charge from the Social Science Research Network Electronic Paper Collection at:
http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=398600
Unregulable Defenses and the Perils of Shareholder Choice*

Jennifer Arlen† and Eric Talley‡
Abstract

A number of corporate law scholars have recently proposed granting shareholders an enhanced right to oversee the use of takeover defenses. While these ‘shareholder choice’ proposals vary somewhat in their content, they generally agree that shareholder oversight is justified if and only if shareholders hold a bona fide advantage over managers in evaluating and responding to hostile bids. This article challenges that basic premise, arguing that even if shareholders enjoy a comparative advantage over management in reacting to hostile bids, it does not follow that a shareholder choice regime is value enhancing, because it would give managers an incentive to search for ways to thwart prospective oversight, perhaps even through value-destroying managerial choices that render the firm an unattractive takeover target. We demonstrate (a) that a number of such thwarting defenses exist, (b) that managerial threats to use them are credible, and (c) that their utilization would be difficult or impossible for courts to regulate. We also find empirical support for these hypotheses. Consequently, an immutable, one-size-fits-all shareholder choice rule is likely to be an imprudent policy choice for courts.
1 Introduction

In the years since the infamous takeover wave of the 1980s, managers of public corporations have developed increasingly innovative strategies for fending off unwanted tender offers. Although defensive strategies (including poison pills, classified and staggered boards, dual class stock capitalization, and the like) initially induced great suspicion among judges, over time courts adopted a significantly more deferential tone. Managers of Delaware corporations—while generally prohibited from playing favorites among bidders once a control change of the company has become inevitable—face few obstacles in erecting defenses that deter unwanted acquisitions. Moreover, evidence suggests that corporate boards have used this power effectively to deter hostile acquirers while encouraging only friendly bids.

The perceived widespread use of defensive tactics has motivated some corporate law scholars to advocate transferring discretion over such measures from managers to shareholders. Their argument is relatively straightforward, consisting of two interlocking parts: First, when facing a hostile offer, managers are likely motivated less by a desire to serve the interests of the corporation than by a desire to preserve their own positions, since hostile acquisitions frequently portend managerial turnover. And second, the moment of a hostile offer is one where shareholders possess uncharacteristic incentives and abilities to become informed about the fair value of the company. Accordingly, some corporate scholars propose, the context of a takeover bid is one where shareholders’ judgment is ultimately more reliable than that of professional managers.

The universe of “shareholder choice” proposals is relatively varied, depending on the scope and contours of those defensive measures that would fall within shareholders’ discretion. Under some variations, shareholders would have the authority to overturn defenses adopted after a

---

1 While Delaware is but a single state, it accounted for nearly three fifths of all publicly listed companies in 2002.
5 See infra Section 2 (discussing the current literature).
hostile bid becomes imminent (what we hereinafter call “post-bid defenses”), regardless of whether such a defense also served other legitimate purposes.\textsuperscript{6} Other variations focus on tailoring rather than timing, granting shareholders the authority to override either pre- or post-bid defenses whose only effect is to deter hostile bids (what we hereinafter call “pure defenses”).\textsuperscript{7}

Nevertheless, despite this heterogeneity, shareholder choice proposals generally share a common prescriptive feature: that shareholders should be granted authority over defenses \textit{if}, but only to the extent that, they enjoy bona fide advantage over managers in evaluating and responding to a hostile bid (given managers’ agency costs). The most aggressive shareholder choice proposals, therefore, generally limit shareholder authority to over-turn post-bid and pure defenses; they fall short of short of extending shareholder authority that extends even to ordinary business decisions. In ordinary business decisions made outside of the takeover context,\textsuperscript{8} shareholders have little incentive or ability to become adequately aware of the underlying issues at stake (indeed, that is why the shareholders hire a manager to begin with). Moreover, in such routine, workaday settings, self-preservation is less likely to motivate managers’ actions, and accordingly managerial authority is optimal.\textsuperscript{9}

In this article, we argue that the case for shareholder choice is not as ineluctable as its proponents suggest. In particular, we show that \textit{even if} shareholders enjoy a comparative advantage over managers in assessing and reacting to hostile bids, giving shareholders control over defensive tactics may nonetheless work against their own interests. The intuition behind our argument lies in recognizing that the allocation of control rights over defensive tactics not only affects the firm after a tender offer is announced, but also may affect how managers manage the firm ex ante.\textsuperscript{10} Subjecting managers to a shareholder choice regime would not remove their desire to deter hostile bids; if anything, managers

\textsuperscript{6}Examples of such post-bid defenses that may also serve legitimate purposes include a friendly merger or post-bid restructuring.

\textsuperscript{7}See infra Section 2 (discussing the current literature).

\textsuperscript{8}Indeed, even when a ordinary decision entails a conflict of interest, corporate scholars generally prefer to vest authority over the decision in outside directors. E.g., Frank Easterbrook & Daniel Fischel, The Economic Structure of Corporate Law Chap. (1991). By contrast, in the case of tender offers, many corporate scholars advocate shareholder authority even when the firm has a majority of outside directors. See infra Section 2.

\textsuperscript{9}See infra Section 2 (discussing the current literature).

under such a rule would have a stronger incentive to deter acquisitions activity, since an effective shareholder choice regime\(^{11}\) maximizes the probability that the firm receives a hostile rather than a friendly offer. Consequently, managers would have an incentive to search for effective defenses that are not regulated by the rule.

As we demonstrate below, a wide range of such defenses appears to exist. Even under the strongest shareholder choice regime, managers will almost certainly have access to unregulated (and unregulable) defenses.\(^ {12}\) For example, if managers were precluded from pursuing either pure defenses or post-bid defenses (as defined above), it would still be possible to “embed” defenses into a host of seemingly ordinary business transactions, with the effect of deterring subsequent bids. A notable example of such embedded defenses is the inclusion of “change of control” provisions in everyday business contracts (such as lease, joint ventures, licenses, employment contracts and debt instruments) that imposes costs on the firm in the event of a change of control.\(^ {13}\) These provisions, particularly when employed in a variety of the firm’s contracts, can be sufficient to deter most (if not all) bids. A strong shareholder choice rule, when it encourages this form of substitute defense, may have the unintended effect of reducing firm value not only by deterring takeovers (both friendly and hostile) but also by inefficiently altering the very operating profile of the firm.\(^ {14}\)

There a number of reasons to believe that embedded defenses (such as those described above) would pose a bona fide threat under a shareholder choice regime. First, as even proponents of shareholder choice concede, courts are poorly positioned to regulate day-to-day managerial decisions made outside of the context of a tender offer, and which likely have legitimate business justifications. This very difficulty in second-guessing managerial decisions lies at the core of the business judgment rule, which is itself a cornerstone of American corporate law.

Second, managers would almost certainly have the strong incentive to employ (indeed invent) unregulated embedded defenses under a share-

---

\(^{11}\)In this article, we focus on the strongest shareholder choice regimes that grant shareholders ultimate authority to determine the fate of all pure and post-bid defenses. E.g., Lucian Bebchuk, The Case Against Board Veto in Corporate Takeovers, 69 Univ. Chi. L. Rev. 973 (2002).

\(^{12}\)See infra text accompanying notes ___-_- (discussing why these defenses would be so difficult to regulate).

\(^{13}\)See infra Section III (discussing the availability of pre-bid embedded defenses).

\(^{14}\)While others have noted the possibility of defense substitution, they have not examined either the breadth of available substitutes or whether managers can be expected to adopt these substitutes, even if doing so could decrease the probability of friendly deals. See infra note ___ (discussing other articles that recognize the possibility of defense substitution).
holder choice regime. From management’ perspective, a shareholder choice regime would effectively transform all acquisitions into hostile ones, as acquirers would no longer need to bid for managerial support of a takeover bid, thereby eliminating most of the private benefits managers might reap from friendly acquisitions. This transformation would increase the benefit to managers of deterring acquisitions because hostile acquisitions present a real threat of termination. It also would reduce the cost to managers of using blanket defenses, as managers now would gain little from permitting acquisitions.

Consequently, while shareholder choice proponents are correct to point out that limiting managerial control would increase the gain to shareholders of those takeovers that do occur, we show that it also would provide managers with increased incentives to employ substitute embedded defenses, including blanket defenses that deter hostile and friendly deals alike. While the former would increase shareholder value, the latter would reduce it. The case for shareholder choice, therefore, depends on which of the above two effects is likely to predominate at the firm level. This question is difficult to answer on a priori grounds.

Accordingly, we contend that it is not possible to make a general case for the superiority of shareholder choice over rules granting boards considerable veto power over hostile tender offers. In those situations where managers have little ability to use strategic embedded defenses, shareholder choice has much to commend it. However, in situations where managers can (and would) employ embedded defenses to deter bids, the imposition of shareholder choice could prove counter-productive. We therefore doubt that an immutable, one-size-fits-all rule is appropriate in such heterogeneous contexts. Rather, courts may wish to give increased deference to the choices shareholders themselves have made to grant managers power over takeovers whenever such choices appear to be clear.15

Before commencing with our argument, four caveats deserve specific mention. First, it is important to note that under the prevailing legal regime, pre-bid, embedded defenses (as we have described them) are probably not a particularly pervasive practice. This observation, however, does not detract from the legitimacy of our argument that such

---

15Thus, we are more cautious than others about whether courts can confidently invalidate antitakeover provisions that shareholders consented to (either at the IPO stage or through a shareholder vote). Compare with Ronald Gilson, The Case Against Shark Repellent Amendments: Structural Limitations on the Enabling Concept, 34 Stan. L. Rev. 775 (1981-1982) (suggesting that courts invalidate certain pre-bid pure defenses notwithstanding shareholder approval). For a different argument favoring respect of shareholders’ ex ante decisions to grant managers authority over takeovers see Kahan & Rock, supra note [corp constitutionalism].
embedded defenses are a potential threat. Indeed, the relative paucity of such defenses is in large part due to the fact that the current regime consciously permits managers to deter hostile bids through more targeted means. If courts adopted proposals to alter this regime to give shareholders greater voice over defensive measures, however, managers would have a strong incentive to adjust their own behavior towards such embedded defenses.

Second, a discussion of how managers may respond to enhanced shareholder choice should also take into consideration that shareholders too may anticipate this managerial response and alter their own conduct accordingly. In particular, shareholders might respond to the specter of embedded defenses by promulgating incentive schemes that tie managers’ welfare more closely to that of the firm. Shareholders could be expected, for example, to increase managers’ incentive compensation (stock ownership, options etc). Our analysis takes this possibility into account, and it demonstrates why such shareholder responses would not fully cure the problem. First, because such incentives must come from shareholders, there may be cases in which shareholders simply decline (or are unable) to make sufficient incentive payments to induce the efficient decisions. Second, we show that even when shareholders do offer managers appropriate incentive compensation, the amounts awarded are must be so large that non-managerial shareholders would be better off under a regime that simply granted managers the power to deter hostile bids.

Third, although we animate our arguments by comparing a strong shareholder choice regime to a polar opposite regime of strong managerial choice, this does not imply that the optimal default rule for a firm must be one of these extreme points. While the strongest shareholder choice regimes provide managers with excessive incentives

---

16Indeed, the arguments for shareholder choice are predicated on the idea that executive incentive compensation does not adequately ameliorate agency cost problems. See Ehud Kamer, (discussing the effect of executive compensation in more detail). Compare Kahan & Rock, supra note [chiLRev] (discussing adaptive mechanisms shareholders can use to mute the agency costs associated with a managerial veto regime) with Jennifer Arlen, Designing Mechanisms to Govern Takeover Defenses: Private Contracting, Legal Intervention, and Unforeseen Contingencies, 69 Univ. Chi. L. Rev. 917 (2002) (discussing the limits of adaptive solutions).

17See Jennifer Arlen, Designing Mechanisms to Govern Takeover Defenses: Private Contracting, Legal Intervention, and Unforeseen Contingencies, 69 Univ. Chi. L. Rev. 917 (2002) (discussing that courts have the capacity to adopt some controls that shareholders cannot replicate by contract); see also Luca Anderlini, Leonardo Felli, & Andrew Postlewaite, Courts of Law and Unforeseen Contingencies, Pennsylvania Institute of Economic Research Working Paper No. 01-010 (making this point generally).
to adopt value-reducing defenses, unalloyed managerial veto rules may not adequately discipline managers’ efforts to misappropriate private benefits. In most general settings, the optimal rule is likely to be an intermediate one, disallowing certain value-reducing defenses, but nevertheless granting managers some latitude to favor friendly bidders over hostile ones.\(^{18}\)

Finally, while our central argument is based on intuitive arguments and economic theory, it is nonetheless important to assess its “fit” by situating our analysis within existing empirical knowledge about corporate governance. As we demonstrate below, many of our arguments may provide a useful explanation of a number of quandaries within corporate scholarship. Some recent studies, for example, have found that the inclusion or preclusion of anti-takeover protections in an initial charter does not appear to be “priced out” in the form of a discount at the IPO stage.\(^ {19}\) While some have interpreted these findings as evidence of irrationality — or at least inattentiveness — within capital markets, our analysis suggests a possible more systematic explanation: That market participants accurately priced both the costs of antitakeover protections (realized at the takeover stage) and their benefits (realized further upstream, at the embedded defense stage). Under this view, the net effect of such measures may be both indeterminate and empirically insignificant. Additionally, our findings may help shed light on other studies that find executive incentive compensation to be negatively related to takeover impediments.\(^ {20}\)

This remainder of this article proceeds as follows. Section 2 examines the existing debate over shareholder choice and determines the limits of shareholder choice. It then reveals a previously unexamined zone of unregulable pre-bid embedded defenses.\(^ {21}\) Section 3 establishes the existence of a wide variety of existing pre-bid embedded defenses that managers would employ to deter bids, free from effective court oversight. Section 4 summarizes our findings that shareholder choice would induce managers to adopt value-reducing pre-bid embedded defenses that they would not otherwise adopt. Section 5 presents a more formal analysis of shareholder choice. Section 6 discusses the benefits of employing a

\(^{18}\)This paper does not determine the optimal scope of such a rule. Its central contribution is to introduce an additional consideration that must be taken into account in the design of an optimal shareholder choice rule.

\(^{19}\)Daines & Klausner; Klausner (Penn Symposium Piece).


\(^{21}\)See infra note.
hybrid regime. Section 7 provides some empirical support in support of out findings. Section 8 concludes.

2 Defining the Limits of Shareholder Choice

This section examines more specifically the arguments favoring shareholder choice. While the various incarnations of this approach are far from homogeneous, we argue that there are nonetheless at least a few guiding principles that limit the domain of authority that shareholders can justifiably claim over takeover decisions. For instance, we argue that even the strongest proponents of shareholder choice would likely stop short of advocating shareholder scrutiny in decisions pertaining to ordinary course of business (i.e., long before a bid is imminent) that may nonetheless have the effect of deterring certain types of takeovers. Yet to the extent this zone remains unregulated, adoption of shareholder choice may simply cause managers to switch from existing defenses into these unregulated defenses. This could have adverse consequences for firms.  

2.1 Managerial Control versus Shareholder Choice

Corporate law scholars generally subscribe to the proposition that professional management of corporations is usually superior to shareholder management of everyday business decisions. In the case of everyday business transactions, disaggregated shareholders have neither the incentives to acquire — nor the capacity to analyze — the information needed to make good business decisions. Moreover, even when shareholders are in possession of all relevant information, a host of related

\[\text{Indeed, both U.S. proposals and European law both fall short of regulating most pre-bid defenses. Although the U.K.’s City Code tightly restricts managers’ ability to implement “defensive measures” once a takeover bid is imminent, it does not regulate managers’ adoption of “protective measures” implements well in advance of a takeover. In response, many European, especially Continental companies, adopted strong protective devices that significantly impede takeovers. Eddy Wymeersch, Problems of the Regulation of Takeover Bids in Western Europe: A Comparative Study, in European Takeovers: Law and Practice, 95, 122 (Klaus Hopt & Eddy Wymeersch, eds.) (1992); see infra note \_\_ [discussing Golden Share arrangements]. Moreover, Europe’s experience with the 13th Directive reveals some of the difficulties associated with pre-bid defenses. Germany’s veto of the proposed 13th Directive in December, 2001 was in part based on the claim that it was not a good idea to regulate post-bid defenses if pre-bid defenses remained unregulated. Subsequent efforts to address this issue by the High Level Group of Company Law Experts appointed by the European Commission would somewhat reduce the problem of pre-bid defenses, while leaving untouched the main group of pre-bid defenses identified in this paper.}\]
coordination and collective action problems conspire to plague collective decision making.24

While few corporate law scholars would contest this general proposition, there is considerably more debate about the degree to which it applies to managers’ adoption of takeover defenses. Proponents managerial control over takeovers argue that the same concerns are equally applicable in the takeover context. Shareholders are not sufficiently well informed about the future value of the firm to evaluate a takeover bid, and do not have the requisite incentives to obtain the necessary information, they argue. Moreover, even if shareholders are informed, they likely lack the capacity and business acumen to evaluate it properly. Consequently, proponents contend, shareholders are far better off vesting authority over tender offers in the hands of expert managers (just as they do with other decisions).25

By contrast, shareholder choice proponents concede the desirability of professional management in ordinary business transactions,26 but contend that in the context of a tender offer the costs of professional management exceed its benefits. In particular, because hostile acquisitions frequently presage managerial turnover,27 managers can become con-


25See, e.g., Martin Lipton, Takeover Bids in the Target’s Boardroom, 35 Bus. Law. 101 (1970); Martin Lipton, Pills, Polls, and Professors Redux, 69 Univ. Chi. L. Rev. 1037 (2002); see also Kahan & Rock, supra note 1, at ___ [around note 30] (discussing the view of “Hamiltonian” corporate scholars who assert that managerial decisionmaking is better because they have private information about future value than cannot optimally or effectively be shared with shareholders); Bernard Black & Reinier Kraakman, Delaware’s Takeover Law: The Uncertain Search for Hidden Value, 96 Nw. Univ. L. Rev 521 (2002) (hidden value justifies some managerial power to defend).

Some scholars present arguments for board control for reasons other than relative shareholder incompetence at evaluating takeover bids. E.g., Marcel Kahan & Edward Rock, Corporate Constitutionalism: Antitakeover Charter Provisions As Pre-Commitment, U. Penn. L. Rev. (2003) (shareholders may precommit to granting boards control over tender offers because boards are better able to implement a selling strategy); Lynn Stout, [this issue] (commitment to board veto power may promote team production) [To ed: can I see the most recent version of this article?]; see also Roberta Romano, The Political Economy of Takeover Statutes, 73 Va. L. Rev. 111 (1987) (certain antitakeover provisions may benefit small shareholders).

26For example, Lucian Bebchuk, who probably takes the most expansive view of the proper scope of shareholder authority nevertheless accepts the importance of professional managerial control over general business operations (as opposed to charter amendments and mergers). See Lucian Bebchuk, Empowering Shareholders (unpublished 2003).

sumed with self-preservation, either resisting hostile deals altogether or favoring ‘friendly’ acquisitions that provide managers with either continued job security or an attractive buyout (at shareholders’ expense). This not only can reduce shareholder welfare ex post, it also reduces it ex ante by muting the disciplining effect of the market for corporate control. Accordingly, they argue, control over the corporate decision making regarding tender offers should devolve to shareholders if, and to the extent that, shareholders can be relied upon to make informed judgments concerning tender offers, proponents of shareholder choice argue.

Scholars seeking to define the limits of shareholder choice generally agree that shareholder choice should not supplant managerial control unless shareholders can be expected to be sufficiently well informed to make the requisite business decisions. Thus, in this view, the proper contours of shareholder choice depends on shareholders’ incentives to obtain and capacity to evaluate the information necessary to choose between the hostile tender offer and the option presented by management’s defenses (e.g., leaving the target as is). As takeover defenses vary in their complexity, and shareholder choice proponents differ in their faith in shareholder decision making capacity, shareholder choice proposals also vary in their view as to when shareholders should be permitted to invalidate managers’ defenses in order to accept a hostile offer.

2.2 The Scope of Shareholder Choice

To assess shareholder decision making capacity, it is useful to distinguish takeover defenses based on two criteria: (1) whether the defense is a pure

---


defense (that only affects the likely success of a hostile offer) or is an embedded defense that is incorporated into a business transaction that might be in the firm’s best interests notwithstanding the tender offer; and (2) whether the defense is adopted in the course of an ordinary business transaction (with no imminent or existing bid) or in response to an actual or imminent bid. This permits us to represent the defenses that managers may employ a two-by-two matrix, pictured in Table 1 below. In the matrix, the effect of the defense is represented on the vertical axis while the timing of the defense is on the horizontal axis:

![Table 1: A Simple Taxonomy of Defenses](image)

Moving from left to right along the horizontal axis – i.e., from pre-bid defenses taken in the “ordinary course of business” to post-bid defenses – likely correlates to a move towards greater shareholder information. Indeed, shareholder choice proponents themselves generally base their claims for shareholder authority over post-bid defenses in part on the grounds that shareholders’ incentives and ability to obtain and evaluate information increase dramatically once a bid has emerged.31 A takeover bid occurs rarely in the life of a firm and has enormous potential consequences for shareholders. These high stakes provide shareholders with adequate incentives to become informed. Moreover, shareholders’ costs of obtaining information are likely lower post-bid than in the course of ordinary business transactions because the heat of a tender offer results in scrutiny by arbitrageurs, investors, research analysts and the press. Moreover, shareholders’ decision making capacity may be greater because firms subject to tender offers often end up with proportionately

---

31E.g., Bebchuk, supra note [chi l rev]; see Gilson, supra note .
more informed investors, such as arbitrageurs, investment banks and institutional investors. Thus, while shareholders generally cannot make business decisions in the ordinary course of business, they can do so in the heated crucible of the post-bid environment.32

A move from bottom to top along the vertical axis – from embedded defenses to pure defenses – also represents a move towards a decision shareholders have greater capacity to make. A "pure defense" is a measure whose only purpose and effect is to deter hostile bids. Thus, an effective pure defense has the equivalent effect on firm value of granting managers a similarly effective veto right over tender offers. A classic example of such a measure is the poison pill, which has no effect on firm value except to the extent that it discourages hostile acquisitions.33 The second type of defense is an embedded (or mixed-motive) defense. Embedded defenses are actions the board purports to take for legitimate (non-defensive) business reasons that also have the effect of deterring tender offers (either hostile bids or generally). The decision by a board to spin-off a subsidiary, or to merge with a firm other than the hostile bidder, are examples of embedded defenses. These measures do affect firm value independent of any effect on the hostile bid.34 The effect, moreover, may be positive or negative.

Shareholders’ capacity to assert authority over a tender offer is lower when the firm has an embedded defense than when it has a pure defense because the decision to overturn an embedded defense imposes far greater informational demands on shareholders. To select between a tender offer and maintenance of a pure defense, shareholders need only compare the merits of the acquirer’s bid against their best estimate of the value of the status quo. In such situations, when management is seeking to maintain status quo against a raider, shareholders can obtain relatively good information about company value by analyzing the existing prospects that firm enjoys. Furthermore, even in the case of pre-bid pure defenses, shareholders can wait to evaluate the defense until after a tender offer has materialized, since, by definition, the pure defense neither imposes legitimate reliance interests in third parties, nor

---

32 E.g., Bebchuk, supra note 31 (chicago piece)
33 The poison pill discourages acquisitions by causing the firm to disgorge value to non-acquirer holders of the firm’s securities when an acquiring firm crosses a pre-specified threshold level of ownership. Poison pills are designed to discourage acquiror from obtaining the triggering ownership amount, and thus are not triggered. Cf. William Carney & Leonard Silverstein, The Illusory Protections of the Poison Pill (unpublished manuscript) (questioning whether acquirors should be so wary of triggering pills).
34 This includes that such defenses may deter both hostile and friendly deals alike. See infra Section 3.
does it impose irreversible sunk costs on the company. Accordingly, shareholders can evaluate pure defenses in the informationally-rich context subsequent to a bid. By contrast, to evaluate the merits of an embedded defense, shareholders must compare the value of a tender offer bid against the value of the firm as altered (indeed restructured) by the embedded defense. This comparison imposes far greater requirements on shareholders, forcing them to anticipate not only the future trajectory of the firm (which may change after the embedded defense is installed). Moreover, the informational demands are amplified further when the embedded defense is adopted at a pre-bid stage, as it would force shareholders to forecast the probability, timing and value of some future tender offer under the status quo.

The matrix above can be used to delineate the debate among shareholder choice proposals as to the proper scope of shareholder choice. Most choice advocates agree that the case for shareholder choice is strongest when managers seek to employ pure defenses. Indeed, most choice proponents would agree that given managerial agency costs on the one hand, and shareholders’ strong incentives and capacity to obtain good information on the other, managers should not be permitted to maintain such pure defenses to thwart a hostile offer. Perhaps the only circumstances under which managers should be allowed to maintain a pure defense, advocates argue, are when it is used to as bargaining leverage negotiate a better deal for shareholders. Once the raider has made its tender offer, proponents contend, management should be required to submit the decision to shareholders and should be forced to remove all pure defenses if shareholders vote to approve the deal.

35 E.g., Bebchuk, supra note 33. But see Kahan & Rock, supra note 30 (discussing the view of “Hamiltonian” corporate scholars who assert that managerial decisionmaking is better because they have private information about future value than cannot optimally or effectively be shared with shareholders); Bernard Black & Reinier Kraakman, Delaware’s Takeover Law: The Uncertain Search for Hidden Value, 96 Nw. Univ. L. Rev 521 (2002) (hidden value justifies some managerial power to defend).

36 In the case of the poison pill, there is no distinction between pre-bid and post-bid pure defenses because even if the pill is adopted pre-bid, the board must decide whether to redeem the pill post-bid.

37 E.g., Bebchuk, supra note 33. A debate within shareholder choice concerns whether shareholders should decide the fate of a raider’s offer by tendering their shareholders or by a shareholder vote. Compare Ronald Gilson & Alan Schwartz, Sales and Elections as Methods for Transferring Corporate Control, 2 Theo. Inq. in L. 783, 790-92 (2001) (straight tender offer is preferable to requiring shareholder voting on tender offers), with Bebchuk, supra note [chi] (shareholder voting on tenders offers is preferable to deciding through the tender offer process). One milder proposal that favors shareholder voting holds that boards should be permitted to use a poison pill to “Just Say Not Now,” but not to “Just Say No.
Embedded defenses, on the other hand, present a more difficult issue for shareholder choice advocates. Indeed, advocates are largely divided on whether shareholders should be given authority to invalidate embedded defenses even when adopted after a hostile bid is imminent. Post-bid, embedded defenses are actions that the board arguably could adopt, within its business judgment, even were there no hostile bid, such as a post-bid corporate restructuring or defensive mergers with another firm. In other words, they may serve legitimate non-defensive business purposes, in addition to deterring a hostile bid. These decisions place greater demand on shareholder decision making capacity because they require shareholders to choose between the tender offer bid and remaining with a firm that will be altered by the embedded defense. In other words, shareholders must evaluate the future prospects of a firm which has no controlling history – only aspirations and expectations.38

Notwithstanding these added informational problems, at least some commentators advocate granting shareholders veto power to defeat such defenses. Those who take this position conclude that managers are so infected by self interest once a bid has occurred that they cannot be left in control of those business decisions that can be used to defeat a hostile offer. Moreover, as noted above, shareholders likely have a greater capacity to make such business decisions at the post-bid stage than in the course of ordinary business.39 Accordingly, these scholars conclude that once a hostile bid is imminent, shareholders, not the board, should have the ultimate authority to decide the fate of post-bid embedded defenses.40

Never.” Under this proposal, the board could maintain the pill in the face of a hostile offer unless, and until, the raider mounts, and wins, a proxy contest. If the raider wins the proxy contest, then the board should be forced to remove the pill, even if the raider did not gain control of the entire board because the board is staggered. See Bernard Black & Reinier Kraakman, Delaware’s Takeover Law: The Uncertain Search for Hidden Value, 96 NW. Univ. L. Rev. 521 (2002).

38The greater the impact of the embedded defense, the more difficult it will be for shareholders to compare the merits of the firm with defense to the value offered in the bid. For defenses that do little to alter the existing firm, shareholders may be similarly situated to shareholders facing a pure defense. For those firms considering a real change, like a merger with a similarly-sized or larger firm, it is considerably more difficult for shareholders to evaluate the future of the target in the new world ocassioned by the defense.

39See supra text accompanying notes __ [para. on pre-bid vs post-bid]

40This is can be made operational through several means. For example, boards contemplating a business decision that would defeat the hostile bid could submit the decision to shareholders as to whether to accept the bid or proceed with management new business plan. In doing so, managers can provide shareholders with information and arguments supporting their preferred course of action. See, e.g., Bebchuk, supra note ; Gilson, supra note . But see Black & Kraakman, supra note (discussing the
2.3 The Unexamined Fourth Quadrant

Existing scholarship promoting shareholder choice generally has assumed that if shareholders have sufficient capacity to evaluate the relative merits of a tender offer bid and a defense, shareholders should be granted authority to make this decision. This focus on shareholder capacity has led those with the greatest faith in shareholder decision making to favor a particularly strong form of shareholder choice which grants shareholders authority to determine the fate of all pure defenses and (less commonly) all post-bid embedded defenses. Yet, in focusing on these defenses, shareholder choice proponents have paid little attention to the southwest – or fourth – quadrant in Table 1: the pre-bid embedded defense. Even problem of hidden value and proposing a more moderate rule).

41 See Bebchuk, supra note [chi article]

42 A few scholars have observed that the shareholder choice might induce managers to employ substitute defenses, but they generally have not explore the degree to which this possibility does indeed undermine the case for shareholder choice. E.g., Jennifer Arlen, Designing Mechanisms to Govern Takeover Defenses: Private Contracting, Legal Intervention, and Unforeseen Contingencies, 69 Univ. of Chicago L. Rev. 917, 920, 928 (2002); Marcel Kahan & Edward Rock, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Low the Pill: Adaptive Responses to Takeover Law, 69 Univ. of Chicago L. Rev. 871, 903 (2002) (“as long as board retain the power to manage the company...a unilateral board-opposed governance measure is likely to induce a strategic response by the board.”) see also Atreya Chakraborty & Richard Arnott, Takeover Defenses and Dilution: A Welfare Analysis, 36 J. Fin. & Quan. Analysis 311 (2001) (suggesting hostiles may provide less disciplining effect than theory suggests in that the primary gain from hostile tender offers may be to undue the effects of value-reducing defenses that managers would not adopt if not subject to the threat of hostile offers); cf. Ronald Gilson, Evaluating Dual Class Common Stock: The Relevance of Substitutes, 73 Va. L. Rev. 807 (1987)(concluding that examination of dual class common stock requires consideration of substitutes that accomplish the same result); Ronald Gilson, The Claim Against Shark Repellent Amendments: Structural Limitations on the Enabling Concept, 34 Stan. L. Rev. 775 (1981-1982)(recognizing the impact of unregulated pre-bid shark repellents on the merits of regulating post-bid defenses, but not considering the impact of pre-bid embedded defenses on the merits of pre-bid regulating shark repellents). Previous analyzes have not examined the breadth of available pre-bid embedded defenses nor whether managers can be expected to adopt these substitutes, even if doing so could decrease the probability of friendly deals.

Concern that managers subject to extensive regulation of pure defenses and post-bid defenses simply induce managers to substitute into pre-bid defenses (otherwise known as preventive measures) has dominated much of the European debate over takeover law. E.g., Paul Davies & Klaus Hopt, Chap. 7, Control Transactions, in The Anatomy of Corporate Law: A Comparative and Functional Approach (2002) (A weakness of existing EU shareholder choice proposals is that they regulate post-bid defenses, yet management can act effectively against potential offers in advance of any particular offer materializing. "However, to apply a pre-bid requirement of shareholder approval... would be too great an interference with the operation of centralised management."). To our knowledge, these analyses have not examined
under the strongest shareholder choice proposals, managers’ authority to employ most pre-bid embedded defenses remains unchallenged.43

In many respects, the scholarly neglect of the fourth quadrant is perfectly understandable, for at least two reasons. First, the use of pre-bid, embedded defenses is not particularly common under existing law. As noted above, Delaware law currently grants managers enormous discretion to fashion much more tailored takeover defenses: managers who are not selling control of the firm, for example, can employ defenses in any of the four quadrants to “Just Say No” to an acquirer.44 Given this discretion to employ defenses in any quadrant of the matrix, managers can be expected to favor those defenses that deter an unwanted bid at minimal cost. This suggests that managers should favor pure defenses. These defenses are effective against hostile bids45 and yet preserve managers’ ability to enter into friendly deals, with their associated gains to management. Moreover, pure defenses – especially those with targeted effects (such as the poison pill) – deter hostile bids without otherwise negatively affecting company structure or operations.46 By contrast, at present embedded defenses are more costly because, by definition, they alter the firm’s operations or structures in ways management would not agree to but for the fear of a hostile takeover. Thus they are potentially

---

43 E.g., Bebchuk, supra note [chi]; see supra note ___ (discussing Europe).

Although choice proponents have not examined pre-bid embedded defenses general, some scholars have particular individual pre-bid embedded defenses. E.g., Jeff Gordon, Ties That Bond: Dual Class Common Stock and the Problem of Shareholder Choice, Colum. L. Rev. [get full cite][chk]; Joel Seligman, Equal Protection in Shareholder Voting Rights: The One Common Share, One Vote Controversy, 54 Geo. Wash. L. Rev. 687, 724 (1986) (dual class structures should be prohibited for companies registered under Section 12(g) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934); see also Kahan & Klausner, supra note (questioning the legitimacy of debt covenants with change of control puts triggered only by a hostile offer).

44 See Time/Warner; QVC; Unitrin. This is not to say that they can employ whatever defense they choose within each quadrant. Limits do exist. See, e.g., Quickturn. But managers have available to them valid defenses in each of the quadrants.

45 See Bebchuk, Coates & Subramanian, supra note .

46 Indeed, the poison pill has several advantages over other defenses in this quadrant (such as defensive share redemptions or greenmail). First, the poison pill – particularly when combined with a classified and/or staggered board – is a very effective defense. A hostile raider faces little chance of overcoming this combined defense. Second, the pill is targeted in purpose and effect. The pill is targeted in purpose in that the pill is redeemable by the board and thus can be targeted to hostile bids without affecting friendly deals. The pill is targeted in effect in that has no operating effect, aside from deterring a hostile bid (assuming it is never triggered). Thus the pill deters hostile raiders without requiring an expenditure by the firm. This makes it superior to share redemptions, green mail, and other such measures.
more destructive of firm value. Moreover, some embedded defenses may deter not only hostile bids but also friendly deals as well.47 This lowers managers’ welfare as managers generally can expect to profit from a friendly deal. Accordingly, under existing law, managers generally should avoid embedded defenses except as a last resort. Moreover, when they do employ embedded defenses, they can be expected to favor post-bid embedded defenses which they can implement only when a takeover is imminent. Given their existing authority, managers have little reason to favor strong pre-bid embedded defenses that may be more destructive of firm value (including the ability to do friendly deals) than is the poison pill.48

Nevertheless, the fact that managers currently do not rely regularly on pre-bid embedded defenses does not mean that their existence can be ignored when evaluating the merits of shareholder choice. Indeed, the normative case for shareholder choice may turn crucially on the viability of this fourth quadrant, and specifically on whether managers would respond to greater shareholder interference by simply substituting into pre-bid embedded defenses.49

This is a potentially serious concern, for shareholder choice proposals do not remove managers’ incentives to entrench themselves or ensure managerial passivity. All they do is regulate certain forms of managerial entrenchment: the use of pure and post-bid defenses. Managers would retain other methods of entrenchment, under proposed shareholder choice regimes: pre-bid embedded defenses. Moreover, managers could be expected to employ these unregulated defenses to protect their tenure. Thus, rather than simply ceding their discretion, we argue, managers subject to shareholder choice may simply relocate their retrenchment activities further upstream, embedding defenses in pre-bid

47 See infra Section 3 (discussing blanket defenses).
48 Nevertheless, even under current law managers may employ pre-bid embedded defenses that are truly targetted only at hostile deals. See Marcel Kahan & Michael Klausner, Antitakeover Provisions in Bonds: Bondholder Protection or Management Entrenchment, 40 UCLA L. Rev. 931 (1993) (discussing managers’ defensive use of penalty change of control provisions in bond covenants triggered only by a hostile offer in the years before the RJR-Nabisco deal). Nevertheless, the pill coupled with the effective classified board generally will be more effective than such measures, and appears to have supplanted them. See Id. (discussing the decreased use of such targetted defenses post RJR-Nabisco); Bebchuk, Coates & Subramanian, supra note (discussing the rise of, and effectiveness of, the poison pill coupled with an effective classified board).
49 In other words, we argue that shareholder capacity to make the decisions required to override NE, NW and SE quadrant defenses is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition to establish that shareholder authority in those quadrants is value enhancing.
decisions that arguably have non-retrenchment justifications.\textsuperscript{50}

The possibility of board substitution into pre-bid embedded defenses significantly affects the merits of shareholder choice proposals because these defenses cannot simply be regulated away by expanding the scope of shareholder choice. The possibility of substitution is particularly troubling because many pre-bid embedded defenses are likely to be more costly for the firm than are pure defenses. Thus shareholder choice might only increase the cost to firms of entrenchment measures without significantly reducing their effectiveness.

Pre-bid embedded defenses are extraordinarily difficult to regulate because (1) they are adopted within the abstract, information-poor context of everyday business, often far before a tender offer might ever emerge; and (2) they ostensibly serve legitimate business interests and may confer benefits on the firm that exceed any negative effects associated with their effect on takeovers. Courts, therefore, cannot blithely prohibit such measures, nor can they easily evaluate them on a case-by-case basis. In order to preserve the value of these measures to the firm, courts (or shareholders) would need to assess their validity at the time they were adopted (or establish rules that enable shareholders to predict their validity at the moment of contracting).\textsuperscript{51} Yet neither shareholders nor courts are particularly good at rendering such judgments. Indeed, in order to evaluate such defenses one would need to compare the ex-
pected benefits of the embedded defense against their expected costs in terms of deterring future bids at the time the defense was adopted. This inquiry is fraught with speculation, possible error, and complexity even for the business executives who made the decision. Shareholders and courts are likely to be even worse at performing such comparisons. Thus, arguments favoring professional management and the Business Judgment Rule more generally would operate with particular force to counsel against aggressive shareholder or court oversight of most pre-bid embedded defenses.52

3 Availability of Pre-Bid Embedded Defenses

The case for shareholder choice accordingly depends in part on whether managers could be expected to respond to a shareholder choice regime by employing pre-bid embedded defenses, all else equal. It is therefore important to establish that such actions are both available and plausible as a practical matter. This section examines existing corporate practices to determine whether potent pre-bid embedded defenses are practically available to managers. We find a cornucopia of alternative pre-bid embedded measures that managers could employ either to retain control or deter acquisitions should they be prevented from employing pure defenses or post-bid defenses.53 Moreover, this section reveals that courts could not prohibit – or invalidate – these measures without potentially reducing many firms’ value because many of these defenses serve legitimate non-defensive business goals for some firms, providing these firms benefits that justify their costs.54

52Even the strongest proponent of shareholder authority accept that shareholders should not be vested with the authority to determine everyday business transactions, such as third party contracts. See Lucian Bebchuk, Empowering Shareholders, Harvard Working Paper (2003).

53Such as the one proposed by Bebchuk, supra note .

Board efforts to retain control need not be limited to rearranging internal corporate affairs. Managers can be expected to respond to any effort by the Delaware Court to implement shareholder choice by seeking antitakeover protection from legislators. This could take the form of lobbying the Delaware legislature for stronger antitakeover protections. Alternatively, it could take the form of remaining in, or opting into, other states with stronger antitakeover protections. Cf. Guhan Subramanian, The Influence of Antitakeover Statutes on Incorporation Choice: Evidence on the “Race” Debate and Antitakeover Overreaching, Harvard NOM Research Paper No. 01-10 (December 2001) (evidence suggests that managers migrate to, and avoid migrating away from, states with stronger – though not super strong – antitakeover protections).

54Nor can shareholders rely on non-legal restraints on managers’ behavior – such as the threat of a proxy contest or outside directors – to deter managers from adopting such value-reducing measures. The case for shareholder choice itself is predicated on the idea that neither the proxy process nor outside directors place sufficient constraints on managers to deter them from taking actions that benefit themselves at the
3.1 Targeted Versus Blanket Embedded Defenses

To evaluate the risk of managerial substitution into pre-bid embedded defenses it is necessary to distinguish these defenses based on their deterrent effect, the cost to the firm of their adoption, and the ease with which courts or shareholders could regulate their use. Viewed from this perspective, it is helpful to distinguish between two different types of pre-bid embedded defenses. The first are "targeted" embedded defenses, that effectively give the managers control over which bid succeeds without imposing any costs on friendly deals. Targeted embedded defenses thus only deter hostile tender offers, leaving the firm’s ability to enter into a friendly transaction unchanged. A debt covenant with a change of control put triggered only by a hostile acquisition is an example of a targeted pre-bid embedded defense. The second category are "blanket" embedded defenses. These are measures that could deter any corporate combination. A blanket embedded defense include debt covenants with a change of control put triggered by any corporate combination, friendly or hostile.

Managers subject to shareholder choice would find targeted defenses particularly attractive as they would enable them to deter hostile offers while maintaining their ability to enter into friendly deals. Of course, these defenses also are the least likely to serve bona fide non-defensive interests, and thus are the most vulnerable to court regulation. Nevertheless, this section will show that many targeted defenses would be difficult for courts to regulate. To the extent managers are able to employ these defenses, shareholder choice would do little to achieve increased shareholder control over hostile acquisitions.

The second type of defense, blanket defenses, increases the costs of all acquisitions. Such defenses thus potentially deter hostile and friendly deals alike, and therefore impose greater costs on both managers and shareholders than targeted pure defenses, such as the poison pill, that
impede hostile deals alone. This section will show that although blanket defenses are more costly, they generally also would be more difficult for courts to regulate. Managers are better able to assert that blanket defenses serve a legitimate non-defensive business purpose because, while there are few legitimate non-defensive reasons to condition a transaction on whether a tender offer is hostile, there are many legitimate reasons to condition a corporate transaction on a change of control generally. Managers’ claim that such provisions serve a legitimate purpose is enhanced by the price managers pay for adopting blanket defenses: blanket defenses also deter friendly deals. Accordingly, even under the strongest shareholder choice regime, courts should be reluctant to invalidate these measures ex ante, for fear that many companies would be hurt — precluded from entering into value-enhancing arrangements to preserve shareholder control of a tender offer that might never arise. Nor should courts simply reserve judgment until after a bid has materialized. Ex post decision making by courts would undermine the value of many of these arrangements by leaving their validity uncertain. Finally, the problem of pre-bid defenses — and in particular blanket pre-bid defenses — cannot be resolved by requiring ex ante shareholder vote on all pre-bid embedded defenses. Shareholders would have to evaluate these transactions in the cool climate of ordinary business, when shareholders have neither sufficient incentive nor capacity to make the complex business decisions entailed in determining whether the benefits associated with a pre-bid defense exceed the expected costs of deterring a potential takeover.

55 See supra note __ [prior note].
56 The problem with ex post evaluation of pre-bid defenses is worse than those surrounding ex post analysis of post-bid embedded defenses under the existing regime. First, at present, managers can employ a wide variety of post-bid embedded defenses quite certain of how the court will rule. Second, many post-bid embedded defenses only affect parties to the takeover contest. Thus, any uncertainty surrounding post-bid defenses only affects contracting behavior during a takeover contest. By contrast, pre-bid defenses are embedded in many everyday business transactions. Thus, uncertainty regarding the validity of pre-bid defenses would affect a wide range of transactions. Finally, the duration of the uncertainty and the possibility of managers possessing private information is less in the case of post-bid defenses, because post-bid it is clear that a bid has happened and that the court will evaluate the transaction. Defenses adopted pre-bid may not be evaluated for years; moreover, managers may have private information on the likelihood of an acquisition, which further complicates contracting over such clauses when their validity is uncertain.
57 The business decisions associated with many of the blanket pre-bid defenses we discuss — such as change of control provisions — are likely to be even more complex than those associated with shareholder approval of many shark repellents (such as fair price provisions) to the extent that the benefits of the former are entail more firm specific considerations. Corporate scholars have suggested that ordinary share-
The next two parts discuss examples of pre-bid embedded defenses that managers might be able to use to entrench themselves. In discussing specific examples of managers’ use of these defenses, we are not claiming that managers in these cases employed embedded defenses primarily to entrench themselves at the expense of their firms. Just the opposite. In the case of many of the pre-bid embedded defenses we discuss we expect that managers employed these defenses in situations where they benefitted the firm. This is particularly likely in the case of blanket defenses. After all, under current law, managers seeking takeover defenses need not resort to expensive blanket measures to entrench themselves; they can entrench themselves effectively at lower cost by adopting a pure defenses, such as the poison pill and effective classified board.58 Yet while managers in the cases we discussed likely employed such defenses to the net benefit of their firms, managers could employ the embedded defenses catalogued here to entrench themselves at their firms’ expense, if precluded from using other lower cost defenses. Thus, the examples we discuss illustrate that (1) potent embedded defenses exist; (2) legitimate business reasons do exist for many of these defenses such that regulating them could hurt many firms and (3) managers who want to use these measures to entrench themselves can do so under circumstances where the costs may exceed the benefits. Moreover, while under existing law managers can be expected to design pre-bid embedded defenses in ways that minimize their adverse consequences for friendly tender offers, managers subject to shareholder choice would have good reason to modify standard pre-bid embedded defenses to increase their deterrent effect.59 If this occurs, shareholder choice could reduce firm value by causing managers to employ defenses that impose greater costs than do existing holders may not have sufficient incentive and capacity to make even the more simply decisions associated with shark repellent amendments, and institutional shareholders tend not to intervene on issues that are corporation-specific, as compared corporate governance issues where a given rule outcome likely applies to most firms. Cf. Gilson, supra note [shark repellent] (discussing problems associated with vesting control over shark repellent amendments in shareholders).

58 Pure defenses are lower cost because they defend managers from a hostile bid without distorting firm value. Moreover, in contrast with ”blanket” embedded defenses (which deter all deals), pure defenses are targeted only at hostile deals. Post-bid embedded defenses are lower cost than similar pre-bid defenses because the firm only bears the cost of the defensive measure if a bid occurs. Also, in contrast with ”blanket” pre-bid embedded defenses, post-bid embedded defenses can be targeted to only hostile deals.

59 While we focus on existing defenses, it is important to remember that these would not be the board’s only options. The history of takeover defenses is one characterized by continual innovation in the face of necessity as boards endeavour to devise mechanisms for retaining control over takeovers in the face of periodic efforts by the courts to regulate board control.
defenses. To frame our discussion, we shall refer back to Table 2, below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Defenses</th>
<th>Embedded Defenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Super-Majority Votes for Corporate Combination</td>
<td>Blank-Check Preferred (w/ Change of Control Puts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sweetheart” Preferred</td>
<td>Change of Control Triggers in 3rd Party Contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrated Power / Info. In Management</td>
<td>Generous Golden Parachutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spin Off with Shares in Voting Trust</td>
<td>Idiosyncratic “Corporate Culture”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Examples of Pre-Bid Defenses

3.2 Targeted Defenses

Managers subject to a shareholder choice regime that eliminates their ability to deter hostile bids through pure defenses or post-bid embedded defenses potentially could employ a variety of pre-bid embedded defenses that enable them to retain control of the tender offer process. Through these defenses, managers thus could deter hostile bids and yet permit the friendly acquisitions which often yield considerable managerial profit. As previously discussed, courts could readily invalidate many pre-bid targeted defenses without concern that they are interfering with otherwise legitimate business arrangements. Yet managers would retain the authority to employ others that courts could not so easily invalidate. This part discusses some of these arrangements.

Managers can alter how the corporation is structured and financed in ways that enable them to retain considerable control over which, if any, takeovers succeed. Moreover, because shareholders often explicitly approve the power granted to boards to employ these mechanisms, courts could not easily invalidate them.\(^{60}\)

Boards can retain control over the takeover process through the use of different classes of stock. For example, management can issue two

\(^{60}\) Some of the arrangements we discuss – such as dual class common stock or sweetheart preferred – arguably are pure defenses. We discuss them here because managers can offer legitimate nondefensive justifications for most corporate financing arrangements. Moreover, these arrangements are particularly difficult for courts to regulate because most defenses embedded in capital structure are done with shareholder approval.
types of common stock, one of which is publicly traded, and the other of which is in the hands of management (or confederates thereof); this latter class would be a strong deterrent to a hostile offer to the extent that consent of a majority of the shares of this class is required for any corporate combination.61

Alternatively, managers can (and do) obtain shareholder approval for “blank check preferred” charter provisions. Blank check preferred stock contains open terms can be specified by the board when it is issued. The vast majority of publicly held firms currently have such charter provisions.62 Boards with this power can issue preferred stock with terms that deter bids. Although under a strong shareholder choice regime courts would likely invalidate the use of blank check preferred stock issued post-bid, managers subject to such a regime could issue the preferred stock well before a bid.

Managers can employ preferred stock to retain control over tender offers by issuing preferred stock that has veto rights over any corporate combination, and then placing a significant amount in friendly hands (“sweet heart preferred”).63 This defense would be particularly effective if Delaware’s anti-takeover statute survives the adoption of shareholder choice.64 Under Delaware § 203, a hostile raider that is unable to obtain 85% of the shares cannot effect a corporate combination for three years following its purchase of 15% of the target’s stock without getting board approval.65 Thus, management can significantly increase

---

61 [E.g., Ford’s Class B stock, comprising around 6% of outstanding equity, but accounting for roughly 40% of voting rights]. Coca Cola and General Motors also have dual class stock.

In Europe, firms have employed dual class stock to deter hostile offers by foreign bidders by selling special "golden shares" to the government. For example, until recently UK government has “golden shares” of at least 26 companies. Local city governments (e.g., London) and other European governments also have had "golden shares" in important firms. Paul Hofheinz, EU Seems Set for a Takeover Makeover, Wall Street Journal, A11 (June 6, 2002). Recently, the European Court of Judges issued a series of decisions that restricts companies’ ability to employ golden shares. Managers retain the ability to adopt a wide variety of protective devices – adopted before a bid is imminent – to thwart takeovers. Johannes Adolf, Turn of the Tide: The "Golden Share" Judgement and the Liberalization of the European Capital Markets, 3 GLJ No. 8 (August 2002), http: www.germanlawjournal.com/print.php?id=170.

62 In 2000, for example, over 90% of publicly listed firms had some form of blank check preferred stock. Source: Investor Responsibility Research Center database, at wrds.wharton.upenn.edu.


64 See Del. Gen. Corp. Law § 203 (2003). Even without Delaware 203, management can a similar power to use sweet heart through charter provisions requiring super-majority consent for any corporate combination. See infra (next para).

65 Specifically, under Delaware 203 a raider who acquires 15% of the stock cannot do
the cost of a hostile deal by placing even 10-12% of the voting power in friendly hands. With this much power in friendly hands, managers can be confident that a hostile raider will be unable to obtain the 85% necessary to permit a corporate combination following a hostile acquisition. For example, in an effort to defend against a hostile bid from Shamrock, Polaroid sold two special series of preferred stock representing approximately 10% of all votes to Corporate Partners, an investment fund managed by Lazard Freres. Corporate Partners advertised itself as providing insulation from hostile deals, thereby bonding itself to management through its desire to preserve this reputation. Management further ensured Corporate Partners’ loyalty by retaining the right to call the stock and by giving Corporate Partners the right to sell the stock back to the firm for an annual return of 28-30% should Polaroid be acquired by any one other than Shamrock. Faced with voting stock in management-friendly hands, Shamrock abandoned its hostile bid. Similarly, Salmon, Gillette, US Air, and Champion International have each defended against hostile acquisitions by granting significant (8-12%) voting power to Warren Buffett through the sale of preferred stock (apparently at a discount). While courts might be able to regulate the issuance of post-bid sweet heart preferred, they could not easily regulate the issuance of sweetheart preferred issued during the course of ordinary business, as this would entail a determination that certain shareholders (e.g., Buffet) should be prohibited from certain types of preferred stock.

a corporate combination within three years of the acquisitions unless (1) the board of the target approved the deal prior to the raider acquiring 15%; (2) the raider acquirers 85% of the vote in the transaction that causes it to acquire more than 15% or (3) subsequent to acquiring 15% the raider get the corporate combination approved by the target’s board and the vote of 66 2/3% of outstanding disinterested shares.

66 Id. at 1001.
67 Managers can reduce the risk of a toehold proxy contest through the use of a staggered board.
69 As in these cases, managers can ensure the loyalty of its ”sweet heart” through a variety of means: selling to an investor with a well-developed (and profitable) reputation for being friendly to management; inserting contractual provisions that limit defection; retaining the option to call the investor’s position; or profitable side contracts (e.g., consulting deals) which could be lost in an acquisition. Id at 1004-1005.

Alternatively, preferred stock can be issued with change of control puts, enabling (for example) the holder to redeem the stock at a considerable premium upon the acquisition by any shareholder of some threshold ownership amount, or a change in control of the board following a proxy contest. Such a redemption premium would
Even without sweetheart preferred, managers can considerably strengthen their control over tender offers through charter provisions requiring super-majority consent for any corporate combination. Fair price amendments requiring, for example, approval of the voting power of 85% of the stock for any combination can significantly increase the costs of an acquisition.\textsuperscript{70} Moreover, such provisions also increase managers’ power to control the tender offer process to the extent that shareholders are inclined to defer to management’s recommendations. Most importantly, such provisions can enable managers to block a deal if managers have a sufficient stake that managerial approval is also needed to obtain the 85%.

The discussion above only lists a few of the mechanisms managers could use to retain considerable control to defeat hostile acquisitions.\textsuperscript{71} Courts would likely be reluctant to interfere with many of these mechanisms as they generally entail shareholder consent, and shareholders may have legitimate reasons for granting managers power to adopt these measures. Nevertheless, while courts should be wary of interfering with measures shareholders have approved, the fact that these measures garnered ex ante shareholder approval is not sufficient to ensure that they will only be used to when they improve firm value. Managers may be able to get authority to employ such measures even when doing so is welfare reducing. This is a particular concern because often managers obtain the requisite approval for such defenses when the firm initially goes public. To the extent that the IPO market is not efficient, managers may obtain authority to adopt such defenses even when they are inefficient.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{70}While less common than blank-check preferred super-majority and fair price provisions are present in between 15 and 20 percent of publicly traded firms. See IRRC, supra note ___.

\textsuperscript{71}BAE Systems and Rolls-Royce have employed the opposite approach to thwart a hostile tender offer: they limit any single shareholder to owning 15% of the company. In addition, BAE requires that half the board, the chairman and the chief executive be British. Paul Hofheinz, EU Seems Set for a Takeover Makeover, Wall St. J. A11 (June 6, 2002).

\textsuperscript{72}See, e.g, Bebchuk; Klausner [Penn Eds: Can we see the most recent version of Bebchuk and Klausner’s contributions to this symposium to be sure they still make
Moreover, even post-IPO, corporate contracting may not be efficient, resulting in shareholder approval of inefficient terms. Yet even so, courts should be wary of attempting to override the results of shareholder voting, as they probably do not possess adequate information to determine what course of action shareholders should have taken.

Managers also can retain considerable control through mechanisms that do not require shareholder approval. Shareholders have no say over the structure of deals such as spin-offs, or strategic acquisitions that may make a subsequent tender offer more difficult. For example, a company can deter bids by placing the firm’s most valuable operating assets (or “crown jewels”) in a spin-off subsidiary governed by a voting trust. In this case, even if the board of the subsidiary changes, identity of those in the voting trust does not. While many of these measures would be invalid if adopted post-bid, courts would face great difficulty assessing their validity if adopted in the course of ordinary business. In addition, managers can discourage hostile bidders by refusing to share private information (or to do so only grudgingly). Private information is particularly important for companies with numerous off balance sheet arrangements and for companies whose value depends to a considerable degree on the results of new initiatives (for example, new drugs).

Management also may be able to structure their own contracts to impose significant costs on hostile raiders, for example, by incorporating change of control provisions in their employment contracts that permit managers to leave immediately upon a change of control with substantive severance packages. Augmenting this threat is the fact that managers may be able to make decisions that accentuate their idiosyncratic value to the firm. For example, managers may be able to set up

---

73See Lucian Bebchuk, [arguing that shareholders may approve provisions granting boards control over takeovers that are not efficient]

74This is particularly the case to the extent that shareholders may conclude that firm value is higher when managers have control over tender offers (both for the reasons given in this paper and for other reasons). See, e.g., Kahan & Rock, supra note [penn article].

75Cf. Thompson v. Enstar Corp., 1984 WL 8240 (Del Ch. 1984) (Enstar locks up a deal with Unimar by giving Unimar voting control of its most valuable asset, Enstar Indonesia, through use of a voting trust even if deal not consumated; court did not invalidate).

76At present, many executive severance arrangements give the executive a right to leave – and collect a hefty severance – some period after the change of control (for example, six months to one year).

77Thus, for example, an acquirer considering an acquisition of Donna Karen Inter-
organizational structures, establish internal lines of communication and implement corporate cultures that depend critically on centralized managerial skills. By making themselves more valuable to the firm, managers may be able to influence which acquisitions succeed by agreeing to work for some acquirers post-acquisitions and refusing to work for others. Management also can reap private benefits through their compensation arrangements with whichever bidder succeeds. Managers’ power to influence bids could be particularly strong if they act in concert, threatening a hostile bidder with a mass exodus (the so-called “Jonestown defense”). A bidder faced with a mass exodus of management might be reluctant to proceed with a hostile bid even if it had planned to fire management eventually because acquirers often need to use existing management to train new management. The threat of mass exit, moreover, could significantly influence shareholder voting on tender offers particularly if these clauses define change of control to include a turnover of a majority of the board within a year. These clauses would raise the costs to shareholders of accepting a hostile offer because shareholders would know that should the merger be approved and yet fail to be completed they would be left with a severely weakened firm. This would reduce the expected value to shareholders of any hostile bid, providing management the ability to discourage hostile bidders and favor friendly ones.

A bidder would be unlikely to attempt a hostile acquisition given that Donna Karen’s own employment contract is terminable upon a change of control.

78 Although it is difficult to garner hard evidence about the degree to which firms engage in such practices, a recent study of employee involvement in Fortune 1000 firms is suggestive. See Lawler et al., Organizing for High Performance (Center for Effective Organizations 2001). From 1987 and 1996, while overall hostile acquisition activity was ebbing in the wake of Delaware’s anti-takeover statute, firms became increasingly likely to involve their employees in quasi-managerial power and information sharing practices. Such programs include Job Enrichment or Redesign programs, Self-management teams, Minibusiness unites, and Employee Policy Committees. Id. [Add descriptive statistics]. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, however, just as hostile bid activity began to approach its pre-1987 levels, such employee management initiatives fell from favor, decreasing in frequency to their pre-statute levels. One interpretation of this trend (though certainly one of many) is that the credible threat of hostile acquisitions gives managers an incentive to centralize information management and decision-making authority, in order to make themselves indispensable.

79 The risk of nonconsummation of hostile deals is significant. We can get a sense of the magnitude of the risk of noncompletion of hostile deals under a shareholder choice regime by considering the data on noncompletion of friendly deals where there is no lock-up or break-up fee. A study of negotiated mergers between 1988-1999 found that 24 percent of these deals were not completed if there was no lock-up or break-up fee. Even with both a lock-up and break-up fee, 5 percent were not completed. See John C. Coates IV and Guhan Subramanian, A Buy-Side Model of M&A Lockups: Theory and Evidence, 53 Stan. L. Rev. 307, 347 (2000).

80 Hostile bidders could, of course, reduce managers’ incentives to employ this de-
3.3 Blanket Defenses

Outside the context of targeted, pre-bid defenses, managers could alternatively employ pre-bid embedded blanket defenses. These arrangements deter costs on all acquisitions, friendly and otherwise, usually by imposing substantial costs on the firm in the event of a change of control.

While currently managers rarely make aggressive use of blanket defenses because they want to preserve the possibility of a friendly deal, managers could use blanket defenses much more aggressively than they do now if precluded from using more targeted defenses. Indeed, in the next section we will show that regulation of targeted defenses could induce managers to adopt blanket defenses that they otherwise would eschew.

3.3.1 Change of Control Provisions in Third Party Agreements

Managers can use the firm’s contractual arrangements with third parties to deter bids by including change of control provisions in generic commercial arrangements. Blanket change of control provisions either terminate the contract or impose costs on the target in the event of a change of control or corporate combination, either friendly or otherwise. The simplest terminate the contract on a change of control. Others effectively impose a penalty on the firm (for the benefit of the defense by offering appropriate incentives for managers to remain. Yet this does not eliminate the problem created by the threat of managerial exodus. First, in those circumstances where shareholders are choosing between a hostile bid and a friendly one, the hostile bidder would in effect have to offer management the equivalent of the value of their jobs under the friendly deal in order to induce them to abandon the Jonestown defense. Second, even where there is no other bidder, the amount management is able to extract from a hostile raider will reduce hostile bidders incentives to bid – and will enable managers to appropriate as private benefits some of the gains from the deal.

Change of control provisions vary as to how they define the triggering event. Managers can draft them to ensure they cover any transaction a hostile raider might wish to accomplish.

In this part, we focus on blanket change of control provisions. Nevertheless, many firms have employed change of control provisions targeted at only hostile takeovers, primarily in their debt covenants. Indeed, analysis of bond covenants employed in the late 1980s and early 1990s reveals that many often were designed both to protect bondholders and to entrench managers. Indeed, almost all the bonds issues prior to the RJR Nabisco leveraged buyout contained covenants which encumbered only hostile takeovers and proxy contests, usually without regard to their effect on bond values. After the RJR Nabisco deal, covenants continued to protect management, while providing more protection for bondholders. Marcel Kahan & Michael Klausner, Antitakeover Provisions in Bonds: Bondholder Protection or Management Entrenchment: 40 UCLA L. Rev. 931 (1993). We focus on blanket change of control provisions as these would be the most difficult for courts to regulate, as these clearly serve legitimate third party interests.
third party) in the event it experiences a change of control. These contracts would be particularly difficult for courts to regulate because they generally are adopted well in advance of a tender offer, and they serve the legitimate goal of protecting third party interests (in addition to possibly entrenching management).\footnote{The latter makes them more difficult to invalidate than say lock-ups, whose primary purpose is to favor one bidder over another. To the extent one accepts shareholder primacy post-bid, shareholders should determine which bidder to favor. Shareholders cannot assess the merits of change of control provisions in pre-bid contracts, however – at least not if the presumptions underlying Dela 141(a) and the Business Judgment Rule are correct.}

Change of control provisions can be – and currently are – incorporated into a variety of contracts, including intellectual property licenses, leases, joint ventures, union contracts, Employee Stock Option Plans, debt financing and equity financing.\footnote{See supra note \_ [discussing change of control puts in preferred stock]. Although there is not, to our knowledge, a reliable database detailing all variations on change of control provisions, in 2000 nearly two thirds of all publicly traded firms had some sort of provision in their employment contracts or collective bargaining agreements. See IRRC database, supra note \_.} These provisions generally either terminate the contract or impose a penalty on the target in the event of a change of control.

Change of control provisions are difficult to regulate because they serve important, legitimate, non-defensive purpose of protecting third party interests. Third parties contracting with firms often have good reasons for insisting on change of control provisions. Many contracts are long-term and thus necessarily incomplete. In such cases, the value of the contract depends critically on the trustworthiness and reliability of the contracting party. A party to such a contract may seek to protect itself through a change of control provision that lets it terminate the contract should the other party’s management change; the other side thus may grant such a provision to lower the costs to it of the contract. Alternatively, a party granting a license might seek to protect its own market position by seeking to control the identity of those who use its license. For example, it could want to ensure that a competitor did not obtain the license.

At present, managers generally attempt to avoid incorporating strong blanket change of control provisions into corporate contracts. As managers benefit from friendly deals, they eschew strong blanket provisions that could deter friendly deals. They employ such measures only when the third party insists, and the price of not doing so exceeds the expected cost of the provision. Managers who accept such terms often limit the effect of such provisions through narrowing the definition of "change of
control," or attempting to ensure that the impact of such a change is not too onerous.

Managers could be expected to adopt a very different approach to blanket change of control provisions if precluded by a shareholder choice regime from using pure defenses, post-bid embedded defenses and targeted pre-bid embedded defenses. In this case, blanket defenses may become an attractive last resort. Should managers reach this conclusion, a review of existing change of control provisions suggests that managers could indeed effectively use these provisions to deter takeovers. They could employ them in a variety of contracts and could increase their strength. As third parties currently seek such protections, third parties would happily accept these expanded protections – and even agree to insist on them.

**Termination Clauses** The simplest change of control provisions give the third party the right to terminate the contract upon a change of control. For example, many intellectual property licenses, joint venture agreements and leases have change of control provisions that terminate the license on change of control.\(^8^5\) Other change of control provisions impose a penalty on the target in the event of a change of control.

Termination clauses are a particularly effective deterrent in those circumstances where the target can rely on the third party not to assign the contract to the acquirer at the original price.\(^8^6\) The risk of non-assignment is significant in at least three situations. The first is where the value of the license is substantially higher now than it was when originally issued. This is particularly likely when long-term license was issued at an early stage in the product development – for example of a drug – before the true value was known. In this case, the licensor may well view the change of control as an opportunity to appropriate the rents associated with the successful development of the product which otherwise would have gone to the licensor. In this situation, the change of control provision may ensure that the firm is more valuable unacquired than acquired.

Second, a termination clause may operate as an effective deterrent where the contract is material and the licensor is unlikely to assign the license because it competes with the other potential acquirers.\(^8^7\)

---

\(^8^5\)Indeed, even without a change of control provision, many licenses are presumed to terminate in the event of a merger where the acquirer is the surviving firm. Elaine Ziff, The Effect of Corporate Acquisitions on the Target Company’s License Rights, 57 Bus. Lawyer 767 (2002).

\(^8^6\)By contrast, termination clauses are not a significant deterrent to a takeover if the third party would willingly assign the contract to the acquiror.

\(^8^7\)Similarly, companies can use joint ventures with other firms in the same industry.
Indeed, examples currently exist where such provisions have impacted takeovers. For example, efforts to acquire Hershey were hindered in part by a change of control provision in Hershey’s license from Nestles S.A. granting it the right to manufacture and sell Kit Kat – one of the most popular chocolate bars in the world. Nestles has not looked favorably on attempts to acquire Hersheys that might improve Hershey’s competitive position, and has threatened to terminate the license in the event Hersheys experiences a change of control. Moreover, it appears that some foreign firms have employed such provisions for defensive aims. Labatt Ltd., Canada’s second largest beer manufacturer, apparently fended off a hostile offer by Onex in part through the use of partially-disclosed third party contracts and licenses terminable upon a change of control for Labatt. These third party agreements included the Canadian Budweiser license and the license for the Mexican brewer, Femsa Cerveza SA.

Finally, founding shareholders or managers of certain firms can use their own licensing agreements with the firm to ensure their continued ability to determine to whom the firm is sold, even if the founding share-

to impose similar impediments to acquisitions. Parties to a joint venture also can to deter bids by including noncompete agreements in the joint venture, that pro-
hibit either the company or an affiliate from competing without termination of that company’s rights under the venture. This would deter acquisition of the firm by companies in the same industry as the venture.

88 Change of control termination clauses do not always deter acquisitions. For ex-
ample, British American Tobacco Group (BAT) acquired Rothman’s International notwithstanding the risk that this deal would trigger the change-of-control termina-
tion clause in Rothman’s license with Phillip Morris, granting Rothmans the right to market Marlboro cigarettes and other Phillip Morris brands in the United Kingdom. It is unclear whether BAT would have purchased the subsidiary if it had been sure the deal would trigger the clause. BAT and Rothmans tried to structure the deal to avoid triggering the clause. Phillip Morris claimed the deal did trigger the clause, in large part because Phillip Morris and BAT are world-wide competitors, being the largest and second largest companies in the world. See Phillip Morris v. Rothmans International Enterprises, Ltd., Chancery Division, (July 19, 2000). Phillip Morris prevailed in the British courts and dissolved the joint venture with Rothmans. Phillip Morris later awarded the license to another company. Rosie Murray-West, City-Imperial Land Marlboro Delivery Deal, The Daily Telegraph (Aug. 15, 2001).


The Nestle’s deal has not been the only impediment to the sale of Hersheys. The sale also has been impeded by the political objectives of Hershey Trust Company, the major Hersheys shareholders. See Robert Frank & Sarah Ellison, Meltdown in Chocolatetown, Wall Street Journal B1 (Sept. 19, 2002).

holder no longer owns a majority of the shares. For example, rather than
grant valuable intellectual property to the firm outright, the founding
shareholder can license the property to the firm, with a contract that
provides for termination of the license upon change of control. An ex-
ample of a firm that has employed this type of defensive measure is
Donna Karen. When Donna Karan International went public in 1996,
Ms. Karan and her husband retained control of the trademarks for
most of the product lines – including "Donna Karan," "Donna Karan
New York," "DKNY" and "DK" – under a wholly owned corporation,
Gabrielle Studies. Gabrielle then licensed the trademarks to Donna
Karan Corporation, but subject to a provision terminating the license in
the event of a change of control of Donna Karan Corp. The employee
contract with Donna Karan herself also terminates upon change of
control. Thus, a hostile acquirer could by the physical assets of the firm, but
much of the firm’s goodwill evaporates upon a change of control, absent
Ms. Karan’s explicit consent. Similarly, FAO Schwartz licenses the
right to the use the name FAO Schwartz from the Schwartz brothers
through a contract that terminates the license should the brothers be
removed from management.

**Penalty Provisions** While termination clauses operate as effective
deterrents only in particular circumstances, managers need not restrict
themselves to change of control provisions with termination clauses. In-
stead, managers can employ change of control provisions that impose
grant the third party the ability of obtain substantial financial benefits
from the target in the event of a change of control – in effect imposing
a change of control “penalty” on the target. These penalties, if large
enough, can operate to deter acquisitions. Moreover, they are much
more resistant to renegotiation, since the acquirer must be willing to
compensate the rights holder for the lost chance of receiving the penalty.

An examination of existing “penalty” change of control provisions
reveals their potential defensive power, should managers ever need to
exploit them more aggressively for this purpose. For example, non-
investment grade debt often contain a change of control put that gives

91 In this case, a change of control was defined as the purchase by a third party of
30% of the stock of Donna Karan Corporation.
92 Wendy Bounds, Donna Karan International Finds Its Slip Is Showing, Wall Street
70, 76.
93 [get cite; To eds: we just learned about this and need to get the cite and the
exact language].
94 Indeed, the poison pill is one form of penalty change of control provision. Other
contracts could incorporate penalty provisions of a similar magnitude should courts
preclude managers from using the pill.
the creditor the right to put their bonds back to the issuer at a premium upon a change of control. Firms could employ these, and other similar provisions, to substantially increase the costs of acquisitions.95

Moreover, firms can, and do, incorporate penalty change of control provisions into other contracts, including leases, licenses, union agreements and joint ventures. Joint venture agreement change of control provisions often grant to one party the right to buy the other’s interest in the venture for less than its fair market value upon a change of control by the latter.96 Thus, change of control can result in a loss to the target of the value of the joint venture. If the penalty is large enough, these provisions can deter an acquirer. Even where it does not deter the acquisition, they can reduce the value of the deal for the target’s shareholders. For example, in the shadow of speculation that Schering-Plough was ripe for a hostile bid, Schering-Plough entered into a joint venture with Merck & co. to cooperate in the developing and marketing of a new anti-cholesterol drug, Zetia – a drug many concluded was Schering-Plough’s best hope for future profits. This agreement provides that if a third company buys Schering-Plough, Merck can purchase Schering-Plough’s interest in the joint venture, at a price unlikely to reflect its actual value.97 Given that Zetia is Schering-Plough’s best hope for a profitable future, this joint venture agreement effectively discourages bids. Similarly, the joint ventures between Wackenhut and SERCO grants the latter the right to buy out Wackenhut’s interest in a joint venture between them for less than its fair market value in the event of a change of control of Wackenhut. Penalty joint venture clauses also impacted Guiness’s merger with GrandMet. LVMH claimed that the merger triggered change of control clauses in its joint ventures with Guiness. These change of control provisions allowed LVMH to buy back Guiness’ stake in their 17 joint ventures at asset value if Guiness experiences a change of control; they also entitled LVMH to buy Guiness’s

95 Analysis of bond covenants employed in the late 1980s and early 1990s reveals that many often were designed both to protect bondholders and to entrench managers. Indeed, almost all the bonds issues prior to the RJR Nabisco leveraged buyout contained covenants which encumbered only hostile takeovers and proxy contests, usually without regard to their effect on bond values. After the RJR Nabisco deal, covenants continued to protect management, while providing more protection for bondholders.

96 Examples of joint ventures that have (or had) such clauses include the joint ventures between Guinness and LVMH; General Mills and Nestles to market Haagen-Daz in the US; Heineken and Quisa to brew and distribute Heineken beer in Argentina; Texaco and Shell to market refine and market gas in the U.S.; PacDun and Goodyear; and Phillip Morris and British American Tobacco to market tobacco in Great Britain.

97 Peter Landers, Merck Sacrificed Right to Make Buyout Offer to Schering-Plough, Wall Street Journal B3 (October 22, 2002).
34 percent stake in Moet Hennessy at a discount of up to 15 percent.98 In return for a payment from Guinness of 250 million, LVMH eventually agreed to withdraw its effort to block the merger. Had LVMH pursued its claim in arbitration, the firm stood to gain as much as 1 billion pounds had it prevailed.99

Boards could make greater use of all such penalty change of control provisions were courts to adopt shareholder choice. If the board adopted blanket provisions that apply to friendly and hostile deals alike, this could have the effect of reducing the number of acquisitions.100

100 Moreover, managers need not necessarily employ only blanket change of control provisions. Change of control provisions can be easily drafted to provide that the change of control penalty is imposed only in the event of a hostile change of control: for example an acquisition not preceded by board consent or a change in the majority of the board in a single year. Such a provision would, in effect, replicate the effects of the poison pill. Indeed, such hostile-trigger change of control provisions were prevalent in debt contracts in the 1980s. Many debt covenants in the 1980s included change of control provisions that provided that the change of control provision was triggered only by a hostile deal: defined as either the acquisition of a large block of a corporation’s shares or the replacement of a majority of the board through a proxy challenge. See Kahan & Klausner, supra note, at 947, 970. While management subsequently reduced their use in the late 1980s, one would expect adoption of shareholder choice to cause managers to reconsider the need for hostile-trigger debt covenants that impose penalties on the firm in the event of a change of control.

Moreover, under a shareholder choice regime such provisions could effectively grant the board greater power to deter hostile bids than would the poison pill. Courts can regulate the board’s use of a redeemable poison pill by requiring boards to submit all bids to the shareholders for a vote. The pill would not alter the outcome of that vote. The same cannot be said for hostile-trigger change of control provisions, however. Hostile-trigger change of control provisions enable managers to impose costs on the target firm in the event of a change of control even if shareholders approve the deal. Classic hostile-trigger change of control provisions are drafted so that the provision is triggered if there is either a change in the composition of the board or an acquisition without board approval. Under such terms, the board can guarantee that the provision is triggered simply by resisting the deal, even if the board does not interfere with shareholders’ ability to replace them through a proxy contest. Such a provision would thus increase the costs of the deal. Moreover, it significantly increases the costs to shareholders of supporting a proxy contest. Even the best deals have associated with them a risk of noncompletion. Hostile-trigger covenants decrease the expected gains to shareholders of a hostile acquisition by raising the costs to shareholders of deal non-completion. Hostile-trigger change of control provisions are a particularly powerful deterrent to hostile deals because they are triggered by the outcome of the proxy contest, not the completion of the deal. Thus, if the board resists a hostile deal as not in the firm’s best interests – thereby requiring a proxy contest in order to get the deal approved – shareholders evaluating
Moreover, managers could employ stronger provisions than those used at present, justifying it by a greater need to protect third parties. They also include increase their deterrent effect by inserting such provisions into many separate types of contracts. Change of control provisions in a variety of firm contracts would be particularly troublesome for a bidder, as the bidder might know some such provisions exist but the precise terms would not necessarily be subject to disclosure requirements — a danger that dramatically increases the uncertainty and cost accompanying a hostile bid.101

**Limits of Court Capacity to Regulate** Courts could not confidently prohibit the use of change of control provisions without imposing significant costs on the firm. Courts cannot simply invalidate these clauses because they often increase firm value by protecting legitimate interests on contracting parties, thereby lowering the firms’ costs of entering into various arrangements.102 Indeed, courts should be particularly wary of prohibiting such penalty change of control provisions because even in the current legal environment — numerous existing contracts employ penalty change of control provisions. The use of such provisions, notwithstanding management’s access to low cost defenses such as the poison pill and classified board, lends credence to the claim that these provisions serve legitimate goals: why would management use these more

101 The board need not disclose the terms of nonmaterial contracts. Managers thus can create a secret impediment to hostile bidders by including change of control provisions in each of their third party contracts — where each individual contract is not material in and of itself, even though the collective effect of all these contracts might be quite material indeed. Managers could deter bids by both imposing costs and increasing potential acquirors’ uncertainty by letting it be known that such terms exist while not disclosing their terms.

expensive measures when the lower cost poison pill is available? Nor can courts reliably separate legitimate from illegitimate (defensive) termination clauses because courts are not well positioned to measure the relative ex ante benefit and cost to the company of granting the third party such protection. Courts also could not separate legitimate from illegitimate change of control provisions by requiring shareholder consent to such contracts. These contracts are adopted as part of everyday business operations – outside the glare and heightened scrutiny associated with tender offers. Assuming that the basic premise of the separation of ownership and control is correct, shareholders are not sufficiently informed to oversee reliably the terms of these contracts. Thus, under shareholder choice courts would have to accept the defensive use of such clauses or risk excessive regulate of legitimate business transactions.

3.3.2 Managerial Relationships

Boards subject to shareholder choice also might attempt to both deter bids and increase their own private benefits from a bid by through the design of change of control provisions in executive compensation agreements (Golden Parachutes).

Typical executive compensation arrangements provide that on a change of control senior management gets severance pay equal to 3 years salary, bonuses and options. In additions, the change of control often vests the executives stock options. These severance payments – particularly when coupled with executive stock options and Employee Stock Option Plans that accelerate vesting upon change of control – can significantly raise the cost of a tender offer. Taken together, these provisions enti-

---

103 For a possible explanation of why board’s might not employ optimal takeover defenses see John Coates IV, Lawyers...

104 See note _ supra [note on proxies]. Change of control provisions not only are difficult for courts to regulate, but are particularly bad candidates for regulation through the shareholder proxy process. Shareholders may be unwilling to respond to such provisions by replacing management for two reasons. First, depending on how the change of control provisions are written, a successful proxy contest itself may trigger the change of control provision. See Kahan & Klausner, supra note (describing debt covenants with this feature). Second, shareholders have little to gain from such a proxy contest since, unlike in the case of redeemable poison pills, shareholders of firms with strong change of control provisions may not be able to make the firm more takeover friendly by changing management. These change of control provisions effectively cede control over these arrangements to the third party. Thus, managements adoption of such provisions will not necessarily provide shareholders with an incentive to replace management.

105 The cost of these payments may be greater than other executive compensation if the cash amount exceeds IRS limitations on cash compensation, resulting in the firm being unable to deduct these amounts. See Nomad Acquisition Corp v Damon, 1988 Del. Ch. Lexis 133 (Del. Ch. 1988).
tle executives to reap considerable private benefits from a takeover. These provisions also impose an additional cost on the bidder not otherwise borne by the firm. This substantial transaction cost of a tender offer can give managers considerable latitude to pursue private benefits without fear of a hostile offer.

Moreover, while currently executive severance packages are not sufficiently large to deter deals, there is no reason to assume they would remain at current levels. Executives sheltered by the pill and the ECB have had little reason to use these mechanisms primarily as a serious takeover defense, and have every reason not to discourage friendly deals. Yet there is little reason to believe the structure of such plans would remain fixed following implementation of shareholder choice. Executives facing a greater risk of termination could legitimately insist on larger severance packages. If high enough, these packages could deter acquisitions at the margin. In addition, even if they did not deter acquisitions, such arrangements would grant to executives ex ante the disproportionate share of the takeover premium that proponents of shareholder choice seek to wrest from them in favoring shareholder over managerial control over tender offers.

3.4 Implications for Shareholder Choice

The preceding discussion demonstrates a wide variety of corporate arrangements that managers could employ to thwart tender offers if managers are precluded from using pure defenses and post-bid embedded defenses by shareholder choice. At present, managers employ most of these measures (if at all) primarily for legitimate non-defensive purposes. The evidence of legitimate use of these measures suggests that they serve important value enhancing goals, and cannot simply be prohibited. Yet, examination of these measures reveals their potential to thwart tender offers – either hostile or friendly.

Should a mandatory shareholder choice regime induce managers to

---

106 Employee stock option plans (ESOPs) also are employed to deter bidders. These plans grant stock options to employees with vesting periods that may be as long as __ years. ESOPs commonly have change of control provisions which accelerate the vesting of these stock options. This imposes a significant additional cost on an acquiror, who buy out all these additional shares at the bid price.

107 Courts would likely invalidate compensation that is completely unreasonable. Moreover, courts might be particularly likely to invalidate Golden Parachutes that subject the firm to tax penalties imposed on excessive severance packages.

108 See infra text accompanying notes __ (explaining why shareholder choice may reduce shareholders’ welfare even if shareholders employ incentive compensation to deter managers from adopting pre-bid embedded defenses).

109 Moreover, managers seeking to use these measures to thwart tender offers could easily increase their effectiveness in a variety of ways.
employ pre-bid embedded measures — particularly blanket embedded measures — this could reduce firm value by reducing the probability of both hostile and friendly acquisitions. Moreover, courts would not be capable of meeting the threat of manager substitution into these defenses. While courts might detect the most egregious tactics, courts could not broadly regulate these measures without the risk of negatively impacting firm value through court interference with the management of the firm.

Accordingly, having determined that managers could employ pre-bid embedded defenses, it remains to be seen whether a managerial threat to do so would be credible or not. It is to this question that we now turn.

4 The Incentive to Employ Embedded Defenses

This section evaluates whether a serious risk exists that managers would indeed employ embedded defenses at the pre-bid stage if subject to a shareholder choice regime. In order to consider this question, we consider the strongest version of shareholder choice under which managers cannot employ either pure defenses or post-bid defenses to retain control over tender offers.\footnote{We are focusing on the proposal of Lucian Bebchuk who argues in favor of requiring boards to submit all tender offers to shareholders for a vote, and forbidding boards from implementing any post-bid defensive measures without shareholder approval. See Bebchuk supra note [chicago].} Indeed, because managers would have no reason not to substitute into targeted pre-bid embedded defenses if permitted to do so, we focus on the more difficult question: if subject to a strong shareholder choice regime that removed all other defenses except pre-bid embedded blanket defenses, would managers be willing to adopt these defenses, even at the obvious cost to themselves of decreasing the probability of a friendly deal?

Of course, an affirmative answer to this question would not imply that shareholder choice is value reducing. Many of these pre-bid embedded defenses may themselves be value-enhancing. In other words, managers entering into such contracts may be taking actions that they would take anyway, even absent shareholder choice. For example, certain joint ventures may be sufficiently attractive to a firm to justify its acquiescence to a punitive change of control provision, even they deter acquisitions. Thus, the critical issue for evaluating managerial responses to shareholder choice is not to ask whether managers would ever adopt pre-bid mixed motive defenses (since many would anyway), but rather whether managers might do so in instances where such defenses are value reducing (all things considered) from shareholders’ perspective.

We now consider whether shareholder choice might result in man-
agers adopting value-reducing pre-bid embedded blanket defenses, assuming they were precluded from adopting any targeted or post-bid defenses. At first it might appear that managers would not adopt such defenses because, notwithstanding the obvious benefit to them of deterring hostile acquisitions, blanket defenses can only be used at the cost of reducing the likelihood of a friendly deal. Managers might be loathe to deter friendly deals because management benefits from friendly deals, both because acquirors often grant managers’ private benefits and because, to the extent that managers have incentive packages (through stock compensation, for example), managers benefit pro rata qua shareholders from acquisitions. The credibility of a manager’s threat to implement embedded defenses when they are value-reducing thus turns on whether the manager’s private gain from doing so would justify her private costs. This determination in turn depends on both the nature of the pre-bid defenses available to management, and how (and whether) shareholders can respond to the threat by altering the manager’s compensation package.

Consider now whether managers would employ a blanket defense, if precluded from using targeted defenses.111 The next section of this article employs a formal model to consider the question of whether managers subject to shareholder choice would resort to embedded blanket defenses at the pre-bid stage if precluded from employing those targeted to hostile bids alone. While we leave the formal analysis for the next section, a nontechnical analysis of managers’ incentives under shareholder choice suggests that there exists a serious threat that, while managers would have little reason to adopt blanket defenses under managerial choice, under shareholder choice they could credibly threaten to adopt

---

111 As previously discussed, management potentially has available to it a host of pre-bid mixed motive defenses which currently are not regulated by the courts. A number of these defenses enable managers to impose costs on bidders only in the event of a hostile acquisition. Should courts implementing shareholder choice still permit such “hostile-only” defenses, managers would certainly implement them. Indeed, by so doing the manager could protect her private benefits from a hostile deal, while simultaneously preserving her rights under friendly deals. In this instance, a shareholder choice regime would do little more than replace one type of poison pill with another – with no resulting increase in shareholder control over tender offers. Thus, if shareholder choice proposals are to have any effect whatsoever, it would require that courts could comfortably prohibit all hostile-only defenses, even those that ostensibly were requested by third parties. As previously discussed, we conclude that managers may retain the ability to employ targeted defenses (see supra text accompanying notes __—__). This undermines the value of shareholder choice. This section shows that even if courts can effectively regulate targeted defenses, shareholder choice will not improve shareholder welfare if managers can employ blanket defenses.
such blanket defenses, even when doing so reduces firm value.

Under a managerial veto rule, management has no reason to adopt a blanket defense that deters hostile and friendly deals alike. Management can use targeted defenses to deter hostile deals alone, and has no reason to deter friendly deals because management a friendly deal can only make management better off than otherwise (or else the managers would not approve the deal). Thus, management subject to managerial choice will eschew blanket defenses because they would be unwilling to pay the price, in terms of the decreased expected private benefits from a friendly deal.

By contrast, management would be willing to adopt blanket pre-bid defenses under shareholder choice (if precluded from employing hostile-only defenses); moreover, managers might well implement such defenses even if such actions were value reducing for the firm. Shareholder choice dramatically increases the benefits of such defenses and reduces their costs. Under an effective shareholder choice regime that precludes all targeted, pure, and post-bid defenses, acquirers would compete with each other to win shareholder’s favor, not that of the board. This means that acquirers would effectively structure deals as hostile deals, in that they would pay all the gains to shareholders. Managers thus would view all prospective acquisitions as hostile acquisitions, in the sense that managers would not be compensated for their foregone private benefits. Thus, managers would view acquisitions as imposing a cost – in terms of decreased private benefits – with little upside, except to the extent managers themselves own shares. Therefore, managers would fear acquisitions more than under shareholder choice, because acquisitions generally would be hostile. And they would have less to lose from deterring ostensibly friendly deals, because managers would no longer reap substantial private benefits from these deals. Therefore, managers would have considerably more to gain – and much less to lose – from adopting blanket defenses than they would under managerial choice. More important, because such defenses would increase manager’s ability to retain private benefits, managers would be willing to adopt pre-bid blanket defenses to deter acquisitions even when doing so is value reducing. In this case, shareholder choice could reduce firm value below that available under managerial choice.

Nor can shareholders avoid the "substitution effect" costs of shareholder choice by employing incentive compensation to deter managers from adopting blanket defenses. In the next section, we show that shareholders can grant managers a sufficient stake in the firm to deter them from adopting blanket defenses. To do so, however, shareholders may need to grant managers such a large stake in the firm that shareholders
gain less from the firm than they would under managerial veto.\footnote{See infra text accompanying notes \_\_ \_ (demonstrating the conditions where this obtains).}

Accordingly, shareholder choice does not necessarily increase shareholder welfare. While shareholder choice would increase the probability that any tender offer that is made succeeds, it may reduce shareholder welfare by reducing either (1) reduce the total number of acquisitions or (2) the amount that acquirers would be willing to pay even in successful acquisitions, or both. Alternatively, the fear of these repercussions might induce shareholders to gross up the incentive pay of the manager to deter her from selecting the embedded defense. But even here, it may be necessary to increase the manager’s pay so much that shareholders are made worse off. In any event, the bottom line effect of a shareholder choice regime would be, ironically, to reduce shareholder value.

Thus, shareholders’ apparent disinterest in campaigning aggressively for shareholder choice may not be a product of collective action problems, lack of information, or failures of the IPO markets. Rather, shareholders may fail to insist on shareholder choice because they recognize that it is not actually available to them — not at least, under a regime of professional managerial control of day-to-day business decisions. Shareholders could block certain defenses, but not all defenses. As the defenses shareholders can block are, in the end, less destructive of firm value than other blanket defenses managers might employ, shareholders may live with these defenses (and ”Just Say No”) for fear the alternative would be worse.

Shareholders also have other means to regulate managers, for example the proxy contest. In theory, even under a strong shareholder choice regime, the threat of a proxy contest among existing shareholders may deter managers from systematically pursuing value-reducing projects for self preservation purposes. Yet shareholders also have the ability to deter managers from employing post-bid defenses with the threat of a proxy contest should they choose to do so. This threat has not detered managers from using pure or post-bid defenses at shareholders’ expense. Moreover, shareholders would be particularly unlikely to use the proxy contest to deter pre-bid embedded defenses because the most salient difficulty with pre-bid embedded blanket defenses is that shareholders are not sufficiently informed or motivated to assess the overall costs and benefits that stem from such a defense. Consequently, shareholders would not know whether to challenge any given blanket measure. It is difficult to understand how this same shareholder might become enlightened when the decision at issue moved from challenging a transaction to removing a director. Indeed, it is this same difficulty that underlies the numerous prohibitions provisions in state and federal law that prohibit shareholders from using the proxy system to alter ordinary business decisions. See DGCL § 141(A); Securities Rule 14a-8 (cite subrules).
5  Formal Analysis

In this section, we turn to a more formal demonstration of our claim that the imposition of shareholder choice may give managers an enhanced incentive to adopt pre-bid blanket embedded defenses, even if such actions reduce firm value. As noted above, such defenses may impose greater costs on the firm than existing targeted defenses, such as the poison pill, since they deter both hostile and friendly deals alike. As we demonstrate below, the unabated ability to “just say no” at a tender offer stage can certainly deter some tender offers (as shareholder choice advocates claim). But at the same time, a managerial choice regime does not give managers a perverse incentive to pursue value-reducing projects solely in the interests of preserving their positions. In such situations, the move to a shareholder choice regime can be value reducing.

In order to focus our inquiry, we will employ a stylized, theoretical model of firm management in a takeover setting. As with any model, our analysis will present a simplified portrait of the world, but one that reflects a minimal set of characteristics that we believe to be critical to the institutional context of takeover defenses. In particular, we want to capture the following details of the acquisitions market that — given our discussion above — appear to be the most salient:

- First, managers of corporations should be able to derive private benefits from control, which in turn give them a strong incentive to either preserve their positions (in the case of a hostile bid) or demand compensation from an acquirer (in the case of a friendly bid);

- Second, our model should allow for there to be an active market for corporate control, so that some component of firm value comes from the prospect of a future takeover (hostile or friendly);

- Third, we should operate under the provisional assumption that shareholders are sufficiently sophisticated and coordinated to make payoff maximizing decisions about whether to sell their shares to a bidder (indeed, if they were not, it would constitute an independent argument against shareholder choice);

- Fourth, managers should matter – that is, they should be in a position to affect dramatically the investment choices and activities that a firm conducts long before any takeover attempt is imminent, and that these decisions can affect the costs of an acquisition;

- And finally, our model should presume that neither shareholders nor courts are sufficiently informed to determine which pre-bid em-
bedded defenses are value increasing and which are not (otherwise there would be little justification for either professional management or the Business Judgement Rule).

5.1 Framework

Consider a business enterprise (or "firm") that exists for two periods and is (at least initially) owned by a homogenous group of shareholders. We assume that all of the firm’s share holdings are initially vested in either a single entity, or if dispersed, that shareholders suffer from no collective action problems that would disable them from acting in a coordinated fashion, and thus can be treated as a homogenous entity. The ex post value of the firm has a random component, and is realized only at the end of the second period. Explicitly, the value of the firm could be either “high” (and equal to \( V_H \)) or “low” (and equal to \( V_L < V_H \)), with probabilities and values specified below.

The shareholders of the firm are unable to manage the firm themselves, and they therefore hire a liquidity constrained, risk neutral manager (denoted by M) to manage the firm. The manager has a specific quality characteristic, denoted as \( q \in [0, 1] \), which we equate with the probability that the firm has a high value rather than a low value. Thus, the firm’s expected gross payoff is \( qV_H + (1 - q)V_L \). This quality characteristic is assumed to be uniformly distributed and not known initially, but it is realized and observed by both the shareholders and manager just prior to a bid being made.

In managing the firm, the manager is in a position to make an important investment decision on behalf of the company. In particular, she must decide between pursuing one of two projects. Project 1 represents the “status quo” – that is, an activity that does not materially change the existing profile of the company. If the firm pursues this project, we normalize the firm’s ex post value to be either \( V_H = 1 \) or \( V_L = 0 \). Project 2, in contrast, represents a blanket embedded defense that affects both firm value and also the probability/terms of a tender offer. As to the for-

\(^{113}\)This assumption enables us to examine shareholder choice the light most favorable to its success. If shareholders were subject to large collective action problems, it would constitute an independent argument in favor of managerial control.

\(^{114}\)It is possible to alter this assumption and suppose that shareholders never learn the manager’s quality. But once again, such an assumption would stack the deck against a shareholder choice regime, as the manager would have strictly better information about the merits of an outside tender offer.

In addition, it would be possible to alter the model to allow the manager to know her quality ex ante, and have the shareholders learn it later. In the interests of simplification (and to avoid analysis of a number of signalling considerations that are not germane to our inquiry), we have opted for a simpler framework.
mer, we assume that Project 2 can potentially be either value increasing or decreasing. Specifically, under the second project, the firm’s ex post values are either $V_H = \Delta$ or $V_L = 0$. We allow $\Delta$ to be any non-negative value, and in particular, $\Delta$ could be greater than or less than 1. The expected value of the project under current management is therefore equal to $q$ for P1 and $\Delta q$ for P2. Thus, so long as the firm remains under current management, it is value maximizing for M to choose P2 if $\Delta \geq 1$ but not if $\Delta < 1$.

Beyond the difference in payoff, however, P2 differs from P1 another important respect: what happens in the event of a takeover. In particular, under the status quo Project 1, we shall presume that an acquirer who purchases controlling interest in the firm can appropriate the entire post-acquisition value of the firm. By contrast, under Project 2, the acquirer (friendly or hostile) is only able to appropriate some fraction $c < 1$ of firm value upon the successful acquisition. In other words, the $(1 - c)$ fraction of the firm value that the acquirer cannot appropriate represents an extra cost of the acquisition.

In practical terms, P2 could represent any of a variety of actions that managers can take to drive a wedge between their own costs of managing the firm and those of an outsider. These include the various blanket embedded defenses discussed in the previous sections, including preferred stock with change-of-control penalty puts, third party contracts with change of control provisions, managerial contracts with severance clauses, idiosyncratic organizational structures, and the like. As noted above, some of these actions might be perfectly justifiable from an organizational perspective (in that they have a sufficiently large $\Delta$ that the associated benefits exceed the costs); others, however, have little value and impose net costs on the firm. As such, we shall assume that, in the ex ante period where project selection occurs, neither shareholders nor courts can effectively regulate the manager’s project choice (or otherwise regulate the choice of P2).

In addition to making the organizational choices noted above, M is assumed to be in a position to divert a fraction of firm value, denoted by $\beta$, for her personal gain. This diversion is wasteful, however, in that the manager actually receives only $(\beta - \frac{1}{2}\beta^2)$, which is less than the amount

---

\[115\] Interestingly, as will become clear below, it might also be inefficient to choose P2 even when $\Delta > 1$, since the adoption of project 2 would also deter some future takeovers.

\[116\] In what follows, we shall equate controlling interest with outright ownership of the firm. This is done solely for the sake of simplifying the analysis.

\[117\] In technical terms, then, we assume that project choice is not contractable. (We shall elaborate more on B’s available strategies and constraints later).
of value diverted. Consequently, non-managerial shareholders (and society) will possibly be interested in giving the manager some incentives to prevents such value diversion. Indeed, without such incentives, M will choose to divert the entire value of the firm.

In what follows, we shall analyze the features of a contract with the manager containing two possible terms. The first component of the contract is a simple salary, denoted by \( w \). The second term is an incentive component of the contract: a fractional ownership share of the company, denoted by \( \sigma \), representing restricted stock, stock options, and so forth. Clearly, once this incentive compensation is paid, the non-managerial shareholders retain only a \((1 - \sigma)\) ownership share of the firm’s net value.

To simplify things, we normalize the best payoff that the manager could get working outside the company to be zero, and assume that the manager has no existing wealth. This means that the values of \( w \) and \( \sigma \) can never be negative (which accords with reality).

Finally, in order to compare the takeover effects of a shareholder choice regime against a managerial choice regime, it will also be necessary to introduce a market for corporate control. Consequently, in later subsections we shall also allow a third party, denoted by \( B \), to make a bid for the entire corporation. Depending on the underlying legal regime, \( B \)'s bid must be acceptable to both managers and shareholders (under a managerial choice regime), or only to shareholders (under a shareholder choice regime). We shall elaborate more on \( B \)'s preferences and strategies below. Summarizing, then, the sequence of the game is as follows:

---

\(^{118}\)This assumption captures the idea that private benefits may be more than just a transfer payment – imposing no efficiency losses – but may indeed be value reducing.

This expression can be generalized in many ways without loss of generality. For example, Bebchuk (2002) uses a similar expression, where the manager’s private benefits are given by \( \left( \beta - \frac{1}{2\gamma} \beta^2 \right) \). The parameter \( \gamma \) captures the efficiency with which M can siphon off value; when \( \gamma \) is relatively large, M is an efficient appropriator of value; conversely when \( \gamma \) is relatively small, M does not especially benefit from appropriating value (either because she is not terribly good at it, or because she feels remorse at doing so, and so forth). Nevertheless, note that marginal benefit to the manager of value appropriation is \( \left( 1 - \frac{\beta}{\gamma} \right) < 1 \). M is presumed to set \( \beta \) after project type selected and any control transactions are decided, but before final realization of the project value. We have chosen a simpler form to focus on other conceptual details.

\(^{119}\)To see this, note that the marginal value of taking private benefits is equal to \( (1 - \beta) \). This is positive for all \( \beta < 1 \), and thus without any countervailing incentive, M will appropriate the whole value of the firm.
5.2 No Market for Corporate Control

As a baseline for later comparison, it is useful to begin by considering a special case in which no takeover market exists. Note that in the absence of a takeover market, P1 and P2 differ only through their effect on $V_H$, since no acquirer will ever have to confront the additional costs imposed by P2. (As such, P1 can be thought of as a special case of P2, in which $\Delta = 1$; we shall therefore concentrate on the more general case of P2 in what follows.)

First consider the parties’ respective payoffs. Given her quality parameter $q$ and level of benefit extraction $\beta$, the total value of the firm $(\pi_F(q, \beta))$ consists of the expected value of the project less the fixed component of the wage paid to the manager:

$$\pi_F(q, \beta) = (1 - \beta) \cdot \Delta q - w$$

This value will generally correspond to the total capitalized stock value of the company. Of this value, nonmanagerial shareholders enjoy a $(1 - \sigma)$ share, while M receives a $\sigma$ share. But in addition to her pro rata ownership share, M receives additional private benefits and her flat wage. Thus, the expected payoff of M is as follows:

$$\pi_M(q, \beta) = \sigma \cdot ((1 - \beta) \cdot \Delta q - w) + \left(\beta - \frac{1}{2} \beta^2\right) \cdot \Delta q + w$$

$$= \left(\sigma \cdot (1 - \beta) + \beta - \frac{1}{2} \beta^2\right) \cdot \Delta q + (1 - \sigma) \cdot w$$
The manager will therefore set $\beta$ to maximize her expected payoff, which yields an optimal level of value diversion of $\beta^* = (1 - \sigma)$. Note that this optimal choice is independent of either the expected value of the project chosen ($\Delta q$) or on the manager’s fixed wage ($w$).

Substituting this value into the parties various payoffs yields the following Table. The columns of the Table correspond to the project chosen by the manager (i.e., $P_1$ or $P_2$). The rows of the Table correspond to different slices of the total payoff created from the selected project. The first row reflects the manager’s expected payoff (which includes her private benefits, wages, and her pro rata earnings as a shareholder). The second row reflects the expected payoff of non-managerial shareholders. The third row reflects the total capitalized value of the company (that is, the sum of all the parties share values). And finally, the fourth row reflects sum of the managers, and non-managerial expected payoffs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expected payoff under $P_1$</th>
<th>Expected payoff under $P_2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>$(\frac{1+\sigma^2}{2})q + (1 - \sigma)w$</td>
<td>$(\frac{1+\sigma^2}{2})\Delta q + (1 - \sigma)w$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-M SHs</td>
<td>$(1 - \sigma)\sigma q - (1 - \sigma)w$</td>
<td>$(1 - \sigma)\sigma \cdot \Delta q - (1 - \sigma)w$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firm Value</td>
<td>$\sigma q - w$</td>
<td>$\sigma \Delta q - w$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Value</td>
<td>$(\sigma + \frac{1-\sigma^2}{2})q$</td>
<td>$(\sigma + \frac{1-\sigma^2}{2})\Delta q$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

In the discussion below, we will frequently use the term $\mu_0$ as a shorthand for the term $\left(\sigma + \frac{1-\sigma^2}{2}\right)$. Note that $\mu_0 \geq \sigma$ and $\mu_0 \geq \frac{1}{2}$.

The optimal compensation package for $M$ is one that attempts to maximize the non-managerial shareholder’s payoff subject to participation and incentive constraints of $M$. Analyzing this problem yields the following proposition (which is proved in the appendix).

**Proposition 1** In the absence of a market for corporate control, the optimal incentive compatible, individually rational contract is given by $w^N = 0$ and $\sigma^N = \frac{1}{2}$. Under this contract, the manager sets $\beta^N = \frac{1}{2}$, and chooses the project $P_1$ ($P_2$) if and only if $\Delta < 1$ ($\Delta \geq 1$).

A few details bear note about Proposition 1. First, the optimal incentive contract compensates $M$ through share ownership, and selects the minimum feasible wage level $w = 0$ needed to induce participation by $M$. (This will turn out to be true for the remainder of the discussion, and thus without any loss of generality, we suppress the analysis of a
flat wage and simply impose the condition \( w = 0 \). This result follows naturally from the assumptions that the shareholder-manager contract is infected by a moral hazard problem and that M is risk neutral. On the other hand, the manager has relatively significant incentive compensation. In particular, the optimal contract pays a manager one half of the firm’s shareholdings in order to incentivize her away from taking private benefits.\(^{120}\)

Second, and perhaps most importantly, Proposition 1 reveals that, in the absence of takeovers, shareholders can perfectly align the managers incentives with their own. In this case, the manager always chooses the highest value project from the shareholders’ perspective, and does not select project P2 when it is inefficient (from the non-managerial shareholders’ perspective) to do so. Indeed, without any takeover market to worry about, the manager evaluates project P2 solely based on its ability to increase firm value (over which she has a fractional claim).

5.3 Market for Corporate Control

Consider now M’s incentives when faced with the possibility of a takeover. As noted above, we assume that after M makes a project choice, a single bidder (denoted by B) emerges as a potential acquirer. Similar to M, player B has some ability to run the firm, and is thus is assumed to draw her own quality parameter \( \theta \) from a \( U[0,1] \) distribution, which is independent of M’s. Thus, the bidder may be better than the incumbent, but is not so. The buyer must decide on her bid without knowing the manager’s quality – although she does know the distribution of \( q \). She bids on control of entire firm, then, making conjecture about existing managerial quality.\(^{121}\)

This subsection will analyze and then compare two alternative rules for regulating takeovers. Under the first, the manager has the right to veto a tender offer before other shareholders are allowed to vote on it. This rule effectively requires that a takeover offer be a friendly offer which compensate both the manager and the shareholders for their reservation values. Such a rule would correspond to permitting man-

\(^{120}\)Although this level of compensation may seem a bit unrealistic, with added complexity it is possible to generalize M’s private benefit function to get different results. For instance, if M’s private benefits were equal to \( \beta - \frac{1}{\gamma^2} \), the optimal incentive scheme would pay M a share component of \( \sigma = \max\{0, 1 - \frac{1}{\gamma^2}\} \). Thus, for small values of \( \gamma \), the manager receives very little incentive compensation because he is not sufficiently talented at diverting value.

Second, as we shall see below, the introduction of a market for corporate control will tend to reduce the optimal share compensation below this level.

\(^{121}\)Note that since M has chosen the project prior to the realization of \( q \), the observed project choice signals nothing to B about the manager’s quality.
agers to “Just Say No.” Under the second, shareholders alone have the right to approve or disapprove a tender offer. This rule, therefore, effectively allows either friendly or hostile bids (though in our framework all such bids will be hostile). In order to give the shareholder choice rule a fair hearing, we shall assume that shareholders can make an informed choice about whether to sell, and thus that the shareholders learn about the incumbent manager’s quality before voting on a tender offer under either rule.

5.3.1 Managerial Choice Regime

Consider first the impact of the takeover market on firm value—and in particular on the manager’s choice between P1 and P2—under a managerial choice regime. Under such a rule, both M and the non-managerial shareholders must approve a tender offer in order for B to succeed in acquiring the firm. Thus, the acquirer must compensate both the manager and the shareholders to gain their approval. Consequently, then, under a managerial choice (or alternatively, managerial “veto”) rule, all tender offers must by definition be friendly ones. In this case B will offer two prices in making her bid: one for the purchase of all outstanding shares (denoted as $p_S$), and the other functioning as an additional “side payment” that goes to incumbent management to purchase their approval (denoted as $p_M$).\footnote{The amount paid to managers could take the form of a lucrative post-acquisition employment contract. Note that by virtue of her share ownership, M also stands to gain a $\sigma$–fraction of the price paid to shareholders.}

For B’s tender offer to be successful, then it must be sufficiently high to satisfy both the incumbent shareholders’ and the incumbent manager’s expected payoffs under the status quo. In particular, managers must reap gains from the deal equal to those she would have received from continuing with the firm. Similarly, shareholders must be as well off under the acquisition as they would be otherwise. Consequently, necessary and sufficient conditions for a successful bid are that:

- The total bid, $(p_S + p_M)$, must be equal or exceed the total social value under the chosen project (i.e., the sum of the shareholders’ and M’s combined expected payoffs), or $\mu_0 \cdot \Delta q$ from Table 3.

- Of this total bid, the fraction directed to shareholders $\frac{p_S}{p_S + p_M}$ must be set equal to $\frac{\Delta q}{\mu_0}$, where recall that $\frac{\Delta q}{\mu_0}$ represents the fraction of firm value to social value under the chosen project.\footnote{To see this, note from Table 3 that the ratio of firm value to total social value is precisely equal to $\frac{\Delta q}{\mu_0}$. If price ratio offered by B were not set at this level, B could get a more successful acceptance rate at no additional cost by setting the price ratio accordingly.}
As previously noted, the total value of the project is $q\Delta$ if managed by incumbent manager $M$, where $\Delta = c = 1$ if the manager has selected $P_1$. Should $B$ acquire the firm, however, the expected value of the firm is $\theta \Delta c \leq \theta \Delta$ (since by assumption, $c \leq 1$).

The bidder will therefore set its bid $b$ so as to maximize expected profits, where these are given by the probability that the bidder offers a bid sufficiently high to induce both the manager and shareholders to accept the bid, multiplied by the expected returns to the bidder of the acquisition$^{124}$:

$$\pi_B (b; \theta) = \min \left\{ \frac{b}{\mu_0 \Delta} , 1 \right\} \cdot (\theta \Delta c - b)$$

Analysis of this problem implies that the profit maximizing bid$^{125}$ for $B$ is $b^* = \frac{\theta \Delta c}{2}$. In other words, the bidder will offer an amount equal to half the expected value of the firm under $B$’s management.

Now consider the probability that a takeover occurs when $B$ follows this bidding strategy. The prospects of a takeover clearly depend on the value $q$, the incumbent manager’s quality. The greater the incumbent’s quality, the lower the likelihood that the bidder will be able to increase the value of the firm beyond that of current management, and thus the lower the likelihood that the bidder will be able to make a successful bid. By contrast, the lower the quality of the incumbent manager, the greater the probability that the bidder will be able to find a bid that will induce both managers and shareholders to accept the deal. Mathematically, the probability of a takeover for a given $q$ is:

$$\Pr \{ \text{Takeover} | q \} = \max \left\{ \left( 1 - \frac{2\mu_0}{c} q \right) , 0 \right\}$$

$^{124}$To see this, note that

$$\pi_B (b; \theta) = \Pr \{ b \geq \mu_0 \cdot q \cdot \Delta \} \cdot (\theta \Delta c - b)$$

$$= \Pr \left\{ q \leq \frac{b}{\mu_0 \Delta} \right\} \cdot (\theta \Delta c - b)$$

$$= \max \left\{ \frac{b}{\mu_0 \Delta} , 1 \right\} \cdot (\theta \Delta c - b)$$

$^{125}$Explicitly, the first order conditions yield the following:

$$b^* = \begin{cases} \frac{\theta \Delta c}{2} & \text{if } \theta \leq \frac{2\mu_0}{c} \\ \frac{\mu_0 \Delta}{c} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

But because $\mu_0 \geq \frac{1}{2} > \frac{c}{2}$, we know that $\theta \leq 1 \leq \frac{2\mu_0}{c}$, and thus the optimal bid is always interior, and is that given in the text.
A couple of points are worth some brief mention at this juncture. First, as noted above, if $q$ is sufficiently high, there is no chance that a takeover will occur, and thus the bidder cost parameter $c$ never is at issue. Thus, for these situations at least, it is clear that M's incentives relatively better aligned with those of the shareholders. In particular, these managers are in effect in a "no takeover" regime, and thus such a high quality manager would never select a project solely to ensure a lower chance of a takeover. By contrast, a lower quality managers (i.e., those for which $q \leq \frac{c^2}{2\mu_0}$) does face a risk of a tender offer and thus we must consider whether such a manager might select project P2, even when it is not efficient, in order to deter tender offers. Brief consideration, and analysis below, suggests that she will not do so under managerial choice because managerial choice ensures that a tender offer can never make her worse off than otherwise.

Given the likelihood of a takeover discussed above, we are now in a position to characterize the total payoffs (that is, shareholders and M’s expected payoffs) that could be expected under a managerial choice rule. Given that shareholders and the manager are guaranteed their total non-acquisition gains under a managerial choice rule, the expected total payoffs to the shareholders and to a managers are the non-acquisition value of the firm plus the expected premium arising from a friendly deal. Taking expectations yields the following expected total payoff\textsuperscript{126}:

$$Total \ Social \ Value = \left( \frac{\mu_0}{2} + \frac{c^2}{24\mu_0} \right) \Delta$$

Of this sum, recall that shareholders as a group receive a $\frac{\sigma}{\mu_0}$ portion of the total payoff, while M’s private benefits constitute the remaining $\left(1 - \frac{\sigma}{\mu_0}\right)$ portion. Dividing these up after accounting for the manager’s shareholdings in the firm, the manager’s and non-managerial shareholders’ expected payoffs under each respective project are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Payoff under P1</th>
<th>Payoff under P2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>$\left( \frac{\mu_0}{2} + \frac{1}{24\mu_0} \right)$</td>
<td>$\left( \frac{\mu_0}{2} + \frac{\sigma^2}{24\mu_0} \right) \Delta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-M SHs</td>
<td>$\frac{\sigma}{\mu_0} \left(1 - \sigma\right) \left( \frac{\mu_0}{2} + \frac{1}{24\mu_0} \right)$</td>
<td>$\frac{\sigma}{\mu_0} \left(1 - \sigma\right) \left( \frac{\mu_0}{2} + \frac{\sigma^2}{24\mu_0} \right) \Delta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firm Value</td>
<td>$\frac{\sigma}{\mu_0} \left( \frac{\mu_0}{2} + \frac{1}{24\mu_0} \right)$</td>
<td>$\frac{\sigma}{\mu_0} \left( \frac{\mu_0}{2} + \frac{\sigma^2}{24\mu_0} \right) \Delta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Value</td>
<td>$\left( \frac{\mu_0}{2} + \frac{c^2}{24\mu_0} \right)$</td>
<td>$\left( \frac{\mu_0}{2} + \frac{c^2}{24\mu_0} \right) \Delta$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{126}This is derived by noting that the total expected payoff is equal to $E_q \left[ \mu_0 g \Delta + E_\theta \left[ \max \left\{ 0, \frac{q \Delta c}{2} - \mu_0 g \Delta \right\} \right] \right]$.  

Table 4

53
Analysis of this table leads to the following proposition (whose proof can be found in the appendix).

**Proposition 2** Consider a market for corporate control subject a managerial choice rule. Regardless of the terms of the contract, M’s choice of project coincides precisely with that favored by the shareholders. The optimal contract \((w^V, \sigma^V)\) sets \(w^V = 0\), and \(\sigma^V < \frac{1}{2}\).

The intuition behind Proposition 2 is straightforward but important. The first part of it essentially states that when tender offers are governed by a managerial choice regime, managers will select the “right” project for the firm. In other words, allowing a managerial control over tender offers ensures that the manager’s incentives over project choice are exactly aligned with those of shareholders, regardless of the manager’s incentive compensation. This result is fairly easy to understand: because the prospective acquirer must ensure that both the manager and the shareholders favor the acquisition, the bid must ensure that the manager obtains her private benefits of control. While this certainly may chill some takeover bids (by making them more expensive), it removes the manager’s incentive to choose P2 solely to chill takeover activity. In effect, the choice rule perfectly insures her against such an outcome. As we shall see below, this aligning of incentives does not necessarily occur under a shareholder choice rule.\(^{127}\)

The second part of Proposition 2 characterizes the optimal contract for the manager. Like before, the optimal fixed wage for the manager is zero. The optimal share compensation, \(\sigma^V\), on the other hand, is positive but smaller than it would be in the absence of a market for corporate control. The reason for this is a bit less obvious, but also straightforward: unlike the case where no takeover market exists, in this case shareholders know that at least with some probability their payoff will come in the form of a buyout rather than through M’s management. Consequently, shareholders would like to increase the share of any takeover premium that they (as opposed to M) receive. By decreasing \(\sigma\) (and thereby increasing their own share of firm value), non-managerial shareholders can claim a larger fraction of the buyout price when it occurs. On the other hand, decreasing \(\sigma\) causes M to behave more wastefully in situations where a takeover doesn’t occur, and could even reduce the purchase price when a buyout occurs. Hence, shareholders will decrease \(\sigma\) up until the point where the marginal benefit of claiming a larger share

\(^{127}\)Because it is technically tedious, we put off discussion the precise terms of an optimal contract for the this case until the example discussed in a later section. Nor is such a discussion necessary here, since Proposition 2 applies to all incentive compatible contracts, and not just the optimal one.
of the buyout surplus is exactly offset by the marginal cost of weakening the manager’s incentives.

5.3.2 Shareholder Choice Regime

We now transition to consider an alternative legal regime, in which the success of tender offers hinges solely on shareholder approval, with no managerial veto rights. In particular, consider an alternative rule in which a takeover bid requires the approval solely of the non-managerial shareholders, who hold a \((1 - \sigma)\) fraction of the firm.\(^{128}\) Assume, moreover, that managers cannot take any post-bid actions to affect the probability that the shareholders approve the deal. The strategic effect of this regime is to induce all takeovers to be "hostile" ones, in that the buyer need not give the manager any special treatment in making a bid because the manager is no longer needed for approval. Thus \(p_M\) is equal to zero. (Recall, however, that the manager may still benefit from a takeover to the extent that she owns a \(\sigma\) fraction of the firm).\(^{129}\)

As before, we shall consider how such a scenario would play out for project P2 (noting that P1 is a special case where \(c = \Delta = 1\). Recall from above that, ignoring any value diversion, the expected value of the firm’s project is \(q\Delta\) if managed by M, and \(\theta\Delta c\) if by the bidder. Once private benefits are accounted for, the total shareholder value of the company under P2 is \(\sigma q\Delta\). Accordingly, under a shareholder choice regime, B will set its bid \(b\) to maximize expected profits:

\[
\pi_B (b; \theta) = \min \left\{ \frac{b}{\sigma \Delta}, 1 \right\} \cdot (\theta \Delta c - b)
\]

Analysis of this problem yields the profit maximizing bid for B of \(^{130}\)

\[b^* = \begin{cases} 
\theta \cdot \frac{\sigma \Delta}{2} & \text{if } \theta \leq \frac{2\sigma}{c} \\
\frac{\theta \Delta c}{\sigma \Delta} & \text{otherwise}
\end{cases}
\]

Only if \(\sigma \leq \frac{\theta}{2}\) would B’s optimal bid exhibit a kink at \(\theta = \frac{2\sigma}{c}\).
$b^* = \min \left\{ \frac{\theta c}{2} \Delta, \sigma \Delta \right\}$. The probability of a takeover, in turn, depends on the relative values of $\sigma$ and $c$. Following the analysis from the previous section, the probability that a takeover will occur is given by:

$$\Pr \{ \text{Takeover} | q \} = \max \left\{ \left( 1 - \frac{2\sigma}{c} q \right), 0 \right\}$$

Note that the probability of a takeover is decreasing in $c$; and thus, as intuition would suggest, the greater the negative impact of $P2$ on the gains to a bidder the lower the probability of a takeover. Note also, however, that the probability of a takeover is invariant to $\Delta$, however. Because the benefits of $P2$ are a common value, they would be fully realized by both bidder and incumbent symmetrically. As such, only the costs of $P2$ are reflected in the above expression through $c$. Comparing this probability to its analog from the managerial choice section generates the following proposition:

**Proposition 3** The choice of $P2$ over $P1$ strictly decreases the probability of a takeover under either shareholder choice or managerial choice. Moreover, holding compensation terms and choice of project constant, whenever there is a positive probability of a takeover, it is larger under a shareholder choice regime than it is under a managerial choice regime.

Proposition 3 reveals that if managers select the same projects under shareholder choice as under managerial choice, then shareholder choice will indeed increase the probability of a serious tender offer. We understand this argument to constitute a principal claim for most proponents of shareholder choice. Indeed, so long as the underlying regime does not affect the upstream managerial decisions that $M$ makes at the firm, shareholder choice allows incumbent shareholders to claim the sole share of the takeover premium, thereby facilitating the incidence of a takeover bid.

Yet Proposition 3 also reveals why shareholder choice need not necessarily increase the probability of a serious tender offer: shareholder choice reduces the probability of a tender offer in those circumstances where the manager selects $P2$ under shareholder choice rule but would have selected $P1$ under a managerial choice rule, because $P1$ maximizes overall firm value. In this circumstance, shareholder choice rule potentially reduces both the probability of a takeover and the takeover value of the company. Consequently, in order to evaluate the impact of shareholder choice we need to determine whether managers would select...
project P2, even if doing so does not improve firm value (and thus they would not select P2 under managerial veto).

Now consider the expected value of the firm (or equivalently, total share value) under the shareholder choice rule. Suppressing some tedious algebra, the ex ante expected value of the firm under shareholder choice is:

\[
Firm\ Value = \begin{cases} 
\Delta \sigma \left(1 - \frac{2\sigma}{3c}\right) & \text{if } \sigma \leq \frac{c}{2} \\
\Delta \sigma \left(\frac{1}{2} + \frac{c^2}{24\sigma^2}\right) & \text{if } \sigma > \frac{c}{2}
\end{cases}
\] (4)

Note that this expression is increasing in both \(\Delta\) and \(c\). This is intuitively sensible, since increases in \(\Delta\) mean a higher overall project payoff, while increases in \(c\) mean a more viable market for corporate control. Either of these is good news for the firm’s shareholders. Non-managerial shareholders, therefore, reap a \((1 - \sigma)\) fraction of the above payoff. M, on the other hand, enjoys her pro-rata payoff as a shareholder (i.e., a \(\sigma\)– share of the sum calculated above) plus her private benefits should no takeover occur. Once again suppressing some algebra, the following tables represent the parties respective payoffs depending on project choice.

When the contract is such that \(\sigma \leq \frac{c}{2}\):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payoff under P1</th>
<th>Payoff under P2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manager</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\sigma^2 \left(1 - \frac{2\sigma}{3}\right) + \sigma \left(1 - \sigma^2\right)\frac{1}{3})</td>
<td>(\sigma^2 \left(1 - \frac{2\sigma}{3c}\right) + \sigma \left(1 - \sigma^2\right)\frac{1}{3c}) (\Delta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-M SHs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\sigma \left(1 - \sigma\right) \left(1 - \frac{2\sigma}{3}\right))</td>
<td>(\sigma \left(1 - \sigma\right) \left(1 - \frac{2\sigma}{3c}\right)) (\Delta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Firm Value</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\sigma \left(1 - \frac{2\sigma}{3} + \frac{1 - \sigma^2}{3}\right))</td>
<td>(\sigma \left(1 - \frac{2\sigma}{3c} + \frac{1 - \sigma^2}{3c}\right)) (\Delta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Value</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\sigma \left(1 - \frac{2\sigma}{3} + \frac{1 - \sigma^2}{3}\right))</td>
<td>(\sigma \left(1 - \frac{2\sigma}{3c} + \frac{1 - \sigma^2}{3c}\right)) (\Delta)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the contract is such that \(\sigma > \frac{c}{2}\):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payoff under P1</th>
<th>Payoff under P2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manager</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\left(\frac{1}{4} - \frac{1}{48\sigma^2}\right) + \sigma^2 \left(\frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{16\sigma^2}\right))</td>
<td>(\left(\frac{1}{4} - \frac{c^2}{48\sigma^2}\right) + \sigma^2 \left(\frac{1}{4} + \frac{c^2}{16\sigma^2}\right)) (\Delta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-M SHs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\sigma \left(1 - \sigma\right) \left(\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{24\sigma^2}\right))</td>
<td>(\sigma \left(1 - \sigma\right) \left(\frac{1}{2} + \frac{c^2}{24\sigma^2}\right)) (\Delta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Firm Value</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\sigma \left(\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{24\sigma^2}\right))</td>
<td>(\sigma \left(\frac{1}{2} + \frac{c^2}{24\sigma^2}\right)) (\Delta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Value</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\sigma \left(1 - \frac{2\sigma}{3} + \frac{1 - \sigma^2}{3}\right))</td>
<td>(\sigma \left(1 - \frac{2\sigma}{3c} + \frac{1 - \sigma^2}{3c}\right)) (\Delta)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing M’s payoff with the non-managerial shareholders’ payoff in the two tables above, one is immediately struck by the fact that unlike in the managerial choice case, the manager’s and the non-managerial shareholders’ payoffs are no longer strictly proportionate to one another.
Indeed, because a shareholder choice regime gives shareholders a unique advantage over M when a takeover bid occurs, the manager has less to lose by choosing P2 over P1, and may have something significant to gain: the preservation of her private benefits of control. Consequently, M has a greater incentive to choose P2 in situations where other shareholders would strictly prefer P1. This observation leads to the following proposition:

**Proposition 4** Consider a market for corporate control subject a shareholder choice rule. For any contract \((w, \sigma)\), \(M\) will choose to pursue project P2 in strictly more circumstances than the shareholders would prefer. In other words, the manager may select P2 even when doing so reduces total shareholder value.

The intuition behind this result is relatively simple to understand. Under a shareholder choice regime, managers with relatively low quality fear the loss of their private benefits of control. Because such managers are not able to exercise a veto right at the time of the tender offer, they use the one tool available to them for avoiding a tender offer: the choice of project P2 over P1. Even if such a project does not yield significant gains to the firm, the fact that it imposes costs on acquirers makes it valuable to the manager in a shareholder choice regime, though not necessarily good for overall firm value.

Recognizing this added agency cost imposed by a shareholder choice regime, shareholders can choose to compensate in one of two ways. First, shareholders could simply live with the manager’s wasteful attraction to P2, and simply set M’s assuming that she will choose that project. Alternatively, shareholders could attempt to increase M’s incentive compensation to induce her to select the optimal project from the shareholders’ perspective. By inspection of the above expressions, however, it is clear that the only way to fully align M’s incentives with that of shareholders for every possible combination of \(c\) and \(\Delta\) is to set \(\sigma = 1\), effectively giving the firm to the manager. Thus, depending on the characteristics of P2, shareholders might opt for one of these strategies over the other. Nevertheless, regardless of which strategy shareholders take, there are range of situations in which a shareholder choice regime makes non-managerial shareholders worse off than they would be under a managerial choice regime. More formally, this argument is as follows:

**Proposition 5** Consider a market for corporate control subject a shareholder choice regime, and an optimal incentive compatible contract \((w^{SC}, \sigma^{SC})\). When the costs imposed on the acquirer by project P2 are sufficiently large (that is, \(c\) is sufficiently small), there
exists a range non-empty interval \((\Delta^c_L, \Delta^c_H)\) such that whenever \(\Delta^c_L < \Delta < \Delta^c_H\), non-managerial shareholders would do better under a managerial choice rule.

The above proposition formalizes our central argument in this paper. Even if one assumes that shareholders are fully equipped and coordinated to evaluate and act upon a tender offer, a shareholder choice regime need not make shareholders better off (and may make them worse off) after controlling for the up-front managerial decisions that M makes and optimal compensation packages. On the one hand, shareholder choice allows existing shareholders to capture the entire value of the premium paid by an acquirer, without being forced to split it with incumbent management. On the other hand, a shareholder choice rule can tempt M to select projects that specifically prevent takeover bids from materializing, particularly when the value of \(c\) is relatively small (and the divide between managerial and shareholder incentives is the greatest). To be sure, shareholders could attempt to stem this added incentive problem by increasing M’s share compensation (\(\sigma\)). But so doing requires shareholders to surrender value to M regardless of whether a takeover ever occurs. Such a loss can easily eclipse any speculative gain shareholders would enjoy in the more remote circumstance of a takeover bid.

It should be noted, of course, that Proposition 5 does not suggest that shareholder choice is systematically worse than managerial choice. To the contrary, either regime may be optimal, depending on the relative values of \(c\) and \(\Delta\). That observation, however, is precisely our point: while some firms may flourish ex ante under a shareholder choice regime, others would be better off under a managerial choice rule. The likely heterogeneity of circumstances firms face thus renders questionable any proposition that a blanket rule of shareholder choice (or, for that matter, managerial choice) is a prudent or efficient policy to pursue.

5.4 A Numerical Example

Perhaps one of the best ways to understand the analysis above is to examine a concrete example. Thus, consider a specific case drawn from the above model in which \(V_H = \$1\) million, \(\Delta = 1\) and \(c = 0\). Note that because \(\Delta = 1\), P1 is always the optimal choice for this example, since selecting P2 gives a benefit only to the manager of the firm who is better able to stave off a takeover. In fact, in this example, the choice of P2 is particularly severe, and it is able to deter all takeovers (an admittedly extreme case, but one that underscores our point).

The table below presents the basic structure of the optimal contract and the parties behavior in each case. Under a managerial choice rule,
M always picks the efficient project. Under shareholder choice, however, this need not be so, as demonstrated above. In this case, however, the negative repercussions of choosing P2 are so severe that the shareholders find it worthwhile to incentivize M to choose the efficient project (P1). So doing, however, requires that M be paid a greater number of shares in his compensation package. Indeed, under shareholder choice, M receives 58% of the firm in incentive pay, while under managerial choice, she receives only 48%. While this gives the firm a higher total share value under shareholder choice ($360,700 to $266,700), a much smaller fraction of this goes to the non-managerial shareholders. Indeed, the non-managerial shareholders have to compensate M so heavily in a shareholder choice environment that they are left with a smaller amount ($134,300) than they would have in a managerial choice world ($134,300 under a lower power incentive contract). Moreover, in this example, managerial choice is pareto superior to shareholder choice, in that the manager as well prefers managerial choice, notwithstanding the fact that she receives more incentive compensation under shareholder choice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mgr. Choice</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>$480,600</td>
<td>$266,700</td>
<td>$138,700</td>
<td>$341,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH Choice</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>$467,500</td>
<td>$360,700</td>
<td>$134,300</td>
<td>$333,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Numerical Simulation

Finally, an interesting feature of the table above worth noting is that notwithstanding the pareto superiority of managerial choice, shareholder choice gives rise to a higher total share value for the company ($360,700) than does managerial choice ($266,700). This observations provides a cautionary note for those who would assess the efficiency of any legal regime based on share value alone. In this case, the increase in share value under shareholder choice is largely diverted to the manager, leaving non-managerial stakeholders worse off.

To be sure, this example is a particularly stark one, chosen to highlight our arguments in this paper. But nevertheless, this section has demonstrated more formally the possibility (and a reasonable one at that) that shareholder choice proposals often have unintended effects when one considers distortions to ex ante behavior.

6 Hybrid Regimes

In order to illustrate our points, the previous two sections have focused particular attention on two polar legal regimes: (1) Managerial Choice,
in which managers enjoy unmitigated freedom to choose among which (if any) potential acquirers the firm will consider; and (2) Shareholder Choice, in which shareholders hold the ultimate authority to accept (or reject) any post-bid or targeted defense. While this comparison is probably the most intuitive, it does not specifically address the possibility that some intermediate hybrid regime might be preferable to either of these extremes. This subsection briefly considers such a possibility, focusing on three types of hybrid regime.

First, some commentators have proposed a hybrid regime that turns on how managers deter hostile offers; under such ontological regimes, courts could invalidate only certain defensive measures, leaving managers the discretion to use others that may appear to be less harmful to non-managerial shareholders. While such approaches may hold some promise, their effectiveness hinges crucially on the ease with which managers can substitute between equivalent defenses. When such substitution is possible, such a hybrid regime will do little either to reduce board control over tender offers or reduce board power. Consider, for example, a rule under which courts invalidated pure defenses and those managers undertake after a bid has been made. This limited rule would not induce managers to adopt blanket defenses, because managers could instead employ substitute pre-bid embedded targeted defenses. Yet such a rule would do little to facilitate hostile acquisitions, since managers could simply shift to using pre-bid targeted defenses as a deterrent device. Alternatively, might could give shareholders the ability to overrule post-bid any pure or targeted defense the board erects, regardless of when it is adopted.132 To the extent shareholders credibly use this power to overrule defenses for any tender offer that maximizes shareholder value, this regime would effectively replicate the same shareholder choice rule studied above, providing managers with an incentive to implement pre-bid blanket embedded defenses. We are therefore rather pessimistic that such an ontological hybrid regime would prove effective.

Alternatively, courts might focus instead on pre-bid blanket embedded defenses, prohibiting them as a categorical rule. Although courts likely cannot determine ex ante whether day-to-day managerial decisions are likely to increase firm value, courts might still be able to isolate only those blanket defenses that imposes sufficient costs on potential acquirors to deter bids. In terms of the previous subsection’s model, this would mean allowing courts (or shareholders) to invalidate any defensive measure for which the value of $c$ is sufficiently low. Prudently executed, such a regime might well be able to stem some of the moral hazard problems that we identified above, and thereby facilitate the efficient

---

132 Cite Black & Kraakman, Gilson. fisch
implementation of a more thorough-going shareholder choice regime. At the same time, however, it is far from clear that either shareholders or courts would be any better at assessing costs (in the form of $c$) than they would be at assessing firm-specific benefits of an embedded defense (in the form of $\Delta$). Indeed, both assessments require one to consider abstract, prospective effects of a particular business plan. This calculus would be particularly difficult—and the negative affects on contracting parties particularly great—if managers respond to oversight by including defenses in a variety of contracts, which impose small costs individually but large costs in totality.\footnote{Regulating such contracts would be particularly likely to decrease firm value because third parties could not tell, simply by looking at their own contracts, the likelihood that the court would invalidate the potentially defensive term.}

Moreover, it is difficult to determine whether regulating such “high cost” arrangements would be value increasing without having a much better sense of the value of firms of entering into such deals. Without significant knowledge about the likely distribution of benefits from pre-bid embedded defenses, courts would have little hope of formulating and executing a prudent policy.

Perhaps ironically, the best hope for shareholder choice may come from a retreat from the doctrinal certainty that many choice proponents (and legal scholars more generally) have long sought. Consider, for example, a regime in which the court indicates that it will invalidate some, but not all, managerial defenses but deliberately obscures which types of defenses are challengable. While such legal indeterminacy and opacity may seem unwise on first blush, it may give courts a way to award shareholders a partial ability to restrain managerial resistance. Indeed, if managers are uncertain whether a specific defense will ultimately be upheld, they may be willing to allow bids that do not fully compensate them for their lost private benefits. Moreover, so long as managers had at least some confidence that a defense might be upheld, they might also be willing to make value maximizing project choices notwithstanding the legal uncertainty.\footnote{For another analysis of how legal uncertainty can augment allocational efficiency through bargaining, see Ian Ayres & Eric Talley, Solomonic Bargaining: Dividing a Legal Entitlement to Facilitate Coasean Trade, 104 Yale L. J. 1017 (1994).}

To see this, consider a version of the example from the previous subsection in which there is some uncertainty about whether the ultimate rule will be one favoring managerial choice or shareholder choice. In particular, suppose that there is a 75% chance that a court will allow managers to veto a bid, versus a 25% chance that shareholders will ultimately be allowed to accept a bid. Note that because the manager is still much more likely than not to be given freedom to select among bidders,
she is not tempted (as she would be under shareholder choice) to select (inefficient) Project 2. Consequently, the optimal contract would award the manager with a 47% share of the firm (down from 48% under a managerial veto and 58% under a shareholder choice regime). More importantly, non-managerial shareholders would expect a payoff of $149,540 under this hybrid regime, up from $138,700 under the managerial choice rule. Managers, on the other hand would lose slightly, expecting a payoff of $340,700 (down from $341,900). Yet on the whole, this type of hybrid regime would increase total social welfare above that of either extreme rule. Consequently, while our analysis points out an important cost of shareholder choice that is worth appreciating, in many circumstances an optimal policy may lay somewhere between the two extremes studied above.135

7 Empirical Fit

Before concluding, it is perhaps prudent to situate our conceptual argument within the growing empirical literature on corporate governance. So doing will allow us to gauge the “fit” of our claims as a practical matter. As it turns out, many of the points we have made above have some support in the empirical data, and may even offer alternative explanations for phenomena that legal and finance scholars have found curious.

Perhaps most directly, our results may help to explain investors’ rather tepid response to shareholder choice proposals. If strong-form shareholder choice proponents are correct, one would expect shareholders of many, if not most, firms to support such proposals. Such support would be manifest in many ways, such as wide-spread resistance to tender offer defenses in IPO charters; support for charter provisions restricting board’s ability to adopt the poison pill (or requiring boards to redeem the pill if shareholders support a deal); and support for shareholder proposals seeking to declassify boards of existing firms. Moreover, one would expect the percentage of firms that limit board power over tender offers to have increased over time, with the rise of institutional investors.

The existing evidence does not demonstrate consistent, growing, pressure for shareholder choice. Indeed, much of the existing evidence has found exactly the opposite. For example, study by Robert Daines and

---

135 Thus, empirical evidence that very strong forms of managerial veto lower firm value relative to that under Delaware law is not inconsistent with our analysis. See Daines (data on Mass). We argue that strong shareholder choice may reduce firm value relative to a hybrid regime; yet in turn, strong managerial veto also may reduce shareholder value relative to a hybrid regime.
Michael Klausner of over 300 initial public offerings between 1994 and 1997 found that a majority explicitly included anti-takeover provisions in their charters.\textsuperscript{136} Indeed, over 60% of the IPO firms had charters that explicitly strengthened the poison pill by either establishing a staggered board or by making it difficult for shareholders to replace the board between annual meetings.\textsuperscript{137} No firm included a provision to either limit board authority to adopt anti-takeover provisions in the future, or to prohibit or limit the use of poison pills.\textsuperscript{138} Moreover, the proportion of firms going public with staggered boards appears to have increased over time. A study by John Coates found that the percentage of firms going public with staggered boards increased from 34% in the early 1990s to 82% in 1999.\textsuperscript{139} Moreover, this increased use of staggered board occurred over the very period in which shareholders have come to understand the tremendous power of the staggered board as a defensive mechanisms.\textsuperscript{140}

Nor have shareholders of existing firms actively campaigned for shareholder choice. Notwithstanding the rise of institutional investors, shareholders of existing publicly held firms have not campaigned vigorously to either limit power control over tender offer defenses or to restrict


\textsuperscript{137}Kahan & Rock, supra note 885 (discussing a study by Robert Daines and Michael Klausner and subsequent analysis of their data).

\textsuperscript{138}Daines & Klausner, supra note , at 95. This results are consistent with those obtained by John Coates, [lawyer paper], at 1353, 1376; Field & Karpoff, supra note


\textsuperscript{140}See, e.g., Kahan & Rock, supra note ; Lynn Stout, Do Antitakeover Defenses Decrease Shareholder Wealth? The Ex Post/Ex Ante Valuation Problem, 55 Stan. L. Rev. 845, 854 (2002); see also Bebchuk, Coates & Subramanian, supra note , (showing the significant effect of staggered boards on the expected success of a hostile acquisition).

Similarly, new firms appear more willing to incorporate in states with relatively strong anti-takeover laws than in those with weak anti-takeover laws. Incorporators of such firms would not be expected pursue such protections if they expected to be penalized by the IPO market. Guhan Subramanian, The Influence of Antitakeover Statutes on Incorporation Choice in the 1990s: Evidence on the "Race" Debate and Antitakeover Overreachings, 151 U. Pa. L. Rev. 1795 (2002); see Lucian Bebchuk & Alma Cohen, Firms' Decisions Where to Incorporate, John M. Olin Working Paper No. 352 (2002). Shareholders' willingness to accept antitakeover restrictions is not unlimited, however. While new firms' are more likely to incorporate in states with moderate anti-takeover protections, they are less likely to incorporate in jurisdictions with "severe" antitakeover laws. Subramanian, supra, at 1844.
boards’ use of the pill. Despite early interest in precatory shareholder resolutions seeking to control board use of the pill, since 1996 the number of such resolutions has declined to an average of less than 10-15 per year. Moreover, these resolutions generally fail (although they have garnered more shareholder votes than previously). Institutional shareholders – including state pension funds – also have not used their considerable political power to advocate for legislative adoption of shareholder choice regimes.

What is at the root of this lack of shareholder interest in maximizing their choice? There are many plausible explanations. One possibility is that the proponents of managerial control are right: post-bid shareholders gain more value from a bid when managers are in control of the bidding process. Another possible explanation may be found in deficiencies in the IPO market and in the process process. Our analysis present an additional explanation: shareholders recognize that “shareholder choice” would not, in fact, result in shareholders control over tender offers, because managers will respond to shareholder choice by implementing other defenses, not regulated by the shareholder choice regime. Thus, shareholders of many firms do not campaign against the pill and ECB because eliminating these defenses would not result in true shareholder choice, but would only induce managers to substitute into other defenses which are likely to impose greater costs on the firm than existing targeted pure defenses, such as the poison pill and ECB. In other words, shareholders might well rationally accept board con-

---

141 Kahan & Rock, supra note , at 885-86.

Shareholders of existing firms have started to attempt to limit the use of one defense – staggered boards – by resisting charter amendments to establish staggered boards and voting in increasing numbers for shareholder resolutions seeking to declassify existing classified boards. Kahan & Rock, supra note , at 886-887. But this is far from a general move to establish shareholder choice. Shareholders have not similarly moved to restrict boards’ ability to adopt poison pills. Moreover, these anti-staggered board efforts have not been part of a general movement, but have been targeted at particular firms. Id. Moreover, they have either failed or have prevailed only in a precatory form. Id.

142 E.g., Kahan & Rock, supra note .

143 Recently, Lucian Bebchuk has offered an alternative potential explanation for shareholders’ apparent disinterest in voluntarily adopting shareholder choice. He shows that when managers have private information about firm value, and when private benefits to managers are positively correlated with firm value, then firms going public might not offer a charter provision restricting defenses even though such a provision would be optimal. See Lucian Arye Bebchuk, Asummetric Information and the Choice of Corporate Governance Arrangements (October 2002). This result turns on the firms being unable to signal firm value through mechanisms other than the charter provision of takeovers, and on the assumption that private benefits are positively correlated with firm value.
trol because they recognize that they cannot, in fact, preclude the use of defensive measures, and given this would prefer to accept the costs associated with targeted measures such as the poison pill and ECB in order to avoid the greater evil of the alternative defenses managers would employ.

Additional evidence exists to support our claim. Our previous analysis reveals that greater shareholder control over tender offers could potentially lead to one of two phenomenon, if managers can implement substitute value-reducing defenses: (1) managers could adopt these defenses or (2) shareholders could deter them from doing so by increasing managers’ ownership share in the firm. The conclusion that managers’ share ownership should be higher when there are few antitakeover devices is contrary to a more classic agency cost view. In this view, firms are more likely to employ incentive compensation when managers are insulated from the market for corporate control by anti-takeovers devices; firms are less likely to employ incentive pay when managers are subject to an active market for corporate control because the threat of a tender offer will help align managers’ incentives with those of shareholders.\textsuperscript{144}

Consistent with our analysis, empirical analysis suggests that managers’ incentive pay is higher the lower their ability to use traditional anti-takeover defenses. Consider, for example, the correlation matrix below, drawn from a data set pairing executive compensation data with corporate governance data of 1200 publicly traded firms in the year 2000. The variable in the first row (and column) represents the percentage of outstanding shares owned by the firms highest paid executive (usually the CEO), and represents a measure of incentive pay. The remaining variables designate the existence of (2) blank check preferred stock; (3) classified boards; (4) a poison pill provision in the firm’s bylaws; (5) the cross product of classified boards and poison pills; and (6) the existence of change of control provisions in executive stock options. Variables (2) through (6) are all measures of how resistant a corporation is to hostile

\textsuperscript{144}For example, Kahan & Rock, supra note [chicago], suggest that firms responded to the rise of takeover defenses by implementing adaptive defenses, such as executive compensation, to align managers incentives with those of shareholders.
Note that every antitakeover provision in the Table is positively correlated with every other one at least a 95 percent level, suggesting that such provisions are often complements rather than substitutes for one another. What is more surprising, however, the negative correlation that each of these variables has with executive share ownership. Indeed, every single antitakeover protection is negatively correlated with share percentage, and all but one are statistically significant. Moreover, the magnitudes of many these correlations are also moderately high.

Although this negative correlation between antitakeover protections seems, on first blush, to be counter-intuitive when measured against conventional logic, it is completely consistent with our arguments in this paper. Indeed, if one interprets the absence of antitakeover protection as a form of shareholder choice at the organizational level, then the trends identified in the Table mimic exactly those identified in the example from the previous section. In particular, shareholder choice creates an additional agency cost at the an ex ante stage, when managers select among projects that may include embedded blanket defenses. Grossing up the manager’s share compensation is one way to deter her from opting for a value-reducing project that insulates her position. Consistent with our finding, a recent study by Keith Harvey and Ronald Shrieves finds that incentive pay is both positively related to the presence of independent directors and inversely related to leverage financing. Both of these tendencies seem to cut against the conventional operational agency cost story, and towards our "tender offer defenses" agency cost story.

145Correlations done on a pair-wise basis; P-values in italics. Sources: Compustat Executive Compensation Data for 2000; IRRC Governance Data for 2000.
146Of course, any such analysis presents an issue of determining which way the causation runs. While the results above are consistent with our analysis, it is also the case that managers who own a lot of shares have less need to seek tender offer defenses. We plan to examine this relationship in more detail in future scholarship.
147See Harvey & Shrieves, supra note .
Although this is but a sampling of how our framework might be tested empirically, it nonetheless suggests that the analytical arguments presented above may help explain behavior in publicly traded companies.\footnote{Finally, a comparison of the percentage of hostile offers in the UK and the U.S. does not obviously support the proposition that shareholder choice significantly increases the percentage of hostile takeovers. Over the period 1980-1998, the U.S. and U.K. experienced approximately the same percentage of hostile offers (21-23%), notwithstanding that the UK places severe limits on managers’ ability to use the poison pill and other targeted and post-bid defenses. Andy Cosh & Paul Guest, The Long-Run Performance of Hostile Takeovers in the U.K.: Evidence (Sept 2001), p. 6 (defining hostile offer as an unsolicited bid that managers initially tell shareholders to reject). Moreover, the percentage of hostile bids declined in the UK in the 1990s, as it did in the U.S.; given the City Code, the decline in the UK cannot be attributable to the poison pill. Moreover, in 1995 (long after the Time-Warner decision), the percentage of hostile tender offers appears to have been higher in the U.S. than in the U.K., falling in both countries towards the end of 1995. Compare Cosh & Guest, supra, Figure 1, with G. William Schwert, Hostility in Takeovers: In The Eyes of the Beholder, J. of Finance (2001), Figure 1 (SDC definition of "hostile"). While during other periods the percentage of hostile offers is lower in the U.S. than in the U.K., the fact that it is the same or higher in the U.S. during some of the post-Time-Warner period does not obviously support that claim that moving towards the British system would increase hostile offers. Moreover, our analysis also reveals that one cannot assess the effects of shareholder choice without also examining the impact of the UK’s regime on the relative value of shares going to management and nonmanagement shareholders.}

8 Conclusion

Delaware’s embrace of a “Just Say No” defense grants managers considerable ability to insulate themselves from the disciplining effect of the market for corporate control. This deference almost certainly results in managers misappropriating far greater private benefits – and providing shareholders less value – than they would if subject to a well functioning takeover market.

Proponents of shareholder choice argue that the solution to this problem is for the courts to insist that shareholders be given ultimate authority to determine whether an acquisition should proceed. Such a measure would permit shareholders to approve the hostile acquisitions most likely to discipline management. These hostile acquisitions would themselves increase shareholder welfare. Shareholder welfare also would be increased to the extent that the increased threat of hostile acquisitions reduced managers’ incentives to misappropriate private benefits.

These arguments for shareholder choice have considerable merit. Yet they are not enough to win the day. The existing analysis generally presumes that managers subject to shareholder choice will remain passive.
in the face of a challenge to their historical discretion. There is no reason to expect that to be the case. Indeed, the history of acquisitions and tender offer defenses is one defined by managers continually adapting new defenses to meet new threats to their control.

Full analysis of shareholder choice thus requires that we consider the impact of this rule assuming that managers will act in their own self interests and seek ways to either deter hostile bids in particular, or friendly and hostile bids generally. In particular, consideration must be given to the availability of embedded defenses — adopted long before a tender offer — as these are the defenses courts would be least able to regulate without doing injury to the underlying premise that publicly held firms should be managed by professional managers, not shareholders (or courts).

An examination of existing pre-bid embedded defenses reveals a host of potentially legitimate arrangements that can be employed to deter takeovers. These include blank check preferred stock, management contracts, and change of control provisions in third party contracts. Moreover, these arrangements are sufficiently varied and flexible that one must assume that managers — if sufficiently motivated by a fear of hostile takeovers — could devise a variety of other pre-bid arrangements which could operate as a serious impediment to bids.

This article has considered the risk that managers would adopt such measures in response to shareholder choice. We conclude that although managers would not adopt blanket defenses — that deter all bids — under a managerial choice rule, managers could well respond to shareholder choice by adopting blanket defenses. Managers subject to shareholder choice would have much to gain from such defenses, as they would help block hostile deals; and they also would have less to lose as shareholder choice would squeeze out the friendly deals managers otherwise would seek to protect. Accordingly, in order to retain their private benefits, managers subject to shareholder choice would be more likely to either adopt blanket defenses that deter all acquisitions, or at least threaten to do so. In either case, shareholder choice can reduce the expected payoff of non-managerial shareholders.

Thus, shareholders’ apparent disinterest in campaigning aggressively for shareholder choice may not be a product of collective action problems, lack of information, or failures of the IPO markets. Rather shareholders may fail to insist on shareholder choice because they recognize that it is not available to them — not at least, under a regime of professional managerial control of day-to-day business decisions. Shareholders could block certain defenses, but not all defenses. As the defenses shareholders can block — such as the poison pill — are, in the end, less destructive of
firm value than other blanket defenses managers might employ, shareholders may live with the pill (and "Just Say No") for fear the alternative would be worse.

This is not to say that shareholder choice is invariably inferior to managerial choice. But the case for shareholder choice must depend on more than simply a partial equilibrium claim that shareholders may be better able to evaluate tender offers than managers. Rather, the case for shareholder choice must depend on a full comparison of the two regimes, as they would actually be implemented. In particular, we must consider shareholder choice recognizing that courts cannot regulate all defenses and that managers will adapt and seek out defenses in those zones beyond court regulation. Only if shareholder choice is superior under such circumstances should we be willing to embrace it.