

## Look for the answers to these questions:

- What outcomes are possible under oligopoly?
- Why is it difficult for oligopoly firms to cooperate?
- How are antitrust laws used to foster competition?
- Concentration ratio
- Percentage of total output in the market
supplied by the four largest firms
- The higher the concentration ratio, the
less competition
- This chapter focuses on oligopoly, a
market structure with high concentration
ratios.

| Concentration Ratios in Selected U.S. Industries |  |
| :--- | :--- |
| Industry | Concentration ratio |
|  | $100 \%$ |
| Video game consoles | $100 \%$ |
| Tennis balls | $99 \%$ |
| Credit cards | $94 \%$ |
| Batteries | $94 \%$ |
| Soft drinks | $92 \%$ |
| Web search engines | $92 \%$ |
| Breakfast cereal | $89 \%$ |
| Cigarettes | $88 \%$ |
| Greeting cards | $85 \%$ |
| Beer | $82 \%$ |
| Cell phone service | $79 \%$ |
| Autos |  |



EXAMPLE: Gasoline Duopoly in Smalltown

| P | Q | - Daiwan, not to be confused with |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| \$0 | 140 |  |
| 5 | 130 | - The "good": Gasoline, fuel to power |
| 10 | 120 | hicles for personal transportat |
| 15 | 110 | - Daiwan's demand schedule |
| 20 | 0 |  |
| 25 | 90 | - Two firms: T-CPC and FPC |
| 30 | 80 | (duopoly. an oligopoly with two firms) |
| 35 | 70 | - Each firm's costs: FC = \$0, MC = \$10 |
| 40 | 60 |  |
| 45 | 50 |  |

EXAMPLE: Gasoline Duopoly in Daiwan

| $\boldsymbol{P}$ | $\boldsymbol{Q}$ | Revenue | Cost | Profit |
| ---: | :---: | ---: | ---: | ---: |
| $\$ 0$ | 140 | $\$ 0$ | $\$ 1,400$ | $-1,400$ |
| 5 | 130 | 650 | 1,300 | -650 |
| 10 | 120 | 1,200 | 1,200 | 0 |
| 15 | 110 | 1,650 | 1,100 | 550 |
| 20 | 100 | 2,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| 25 | 90 | 2,250 | 900 | 1,350 |
| 30 | 80 | 2,400 | 800 | 1,600 |
| 35 | 70 | 2,450 | 700 | 1,750 |
| 40 | 60 | 2,400 | 600 | 1,800 |
| 45 | 50 | 2,250 | 500 | 1,750 |

Competitive outcome:
$P=M C=\$ 10$ $\boldsymbol{Q}=120$
Profit $=\$ 0$

Monopoly outcome: $P=\$ 40$
Q = 60
Profit $=\$ 1,800$

Active Learning 1 Collusion vs. self-interest

| $\boldsymbol{P}$ | $\boldsymbol{Q}$ |
| ---: | ---: |
| $\$ 0$ | 140 |
| 5 | 130 |
| 10 | 120 |
| 15 | 110 |
| 20 | 100 |
| 25 | 90 |
| 30 | 80 |
| 35 | 70 |
| 40 | 60 |
| 45 | 50 |

Duopoly outcome with collusion: Each firm agrees to produce $\mathrm{Q}=30$, earns profit $=\$ 900$.

1. If T-CPC reneges on the agreement and produces $Q=40$, what happens to the market price? T-CPC's profits?
2. Is it in T-CPC's interest to renege on the agreement?
3. If both firms renege and produce $Q=$ 40 , determine each firm's profits.

## Gasoline Duopoly in Smalltown

- One possible duopoly outcome: collusion
- Collusion:
-Agreement among firms in a market about quantities to produce or prices to charge
-T-CPC and FPC could agree to each produce half of the monopoly output:
- For each firm: $Q=30, P=\$ 40$, profits $=\$ 900$
- Cartel:
-A group of firms acting in unison



Active Learning 2 The oligopoly equilibrium

| $\boldsymbol{P}$ | $\boldsymbol{Q}$ |
| ---: | ---: |
| $\$ 0$ | 140 |
| 5 | 130 |
| 10 | 120 |
| 15 | 110 |
| 20 | 100 |
| 25 | 90 |
| 30 | 80 |
| 35 | 70 |
| 40 | 60 |
| 45 | 50 | If each firm produces $Q=40$, market quantity $=80, P=\$ 30$, each firm's profit $=\$ 800$

- Is it in T-CPC's interest to increase its output further, to $\mathrm{Q}=50$ ?
- Is it in FPC's interest to increase its output to $Q=50$ ?


## Active Learning 2

Answers

| $\boldsymbol{P}$ | $\boldsymbol{Q}$ |
| ---: | ---: |
| $\$ 0$ | 140 |
| 5 | 130 |
| 10 | 120 |
| 15 | 110 |
| 20 | 100 |
| 25 | 90 |
| 30 | 80 |
| 35 | 70 |
| 40 | 60 |
| 45 | 50 |

- If each firm produces $Q=40$, then each firm's profit $=\$ 800$.
- If T-CPC increases output to $Q=50$ :
- Market quantity $=90, \mathrm{P}=\$ 25$
- T-CPC's profit $=50 \times(\$ 25-10)=$ \$750
- T-CPC's profits are higher at $\mathrm{Q}=$ 40 than at $\mathrm{Q}=50$.
- The same is true for FPC.

Equilibrium for an Oligopoly
- When firms in an oligopoly individually
choose production to maximize profit
- Produce Q
• Greater than monopoly Q
• Less than competitive Q
- The price is
•Less than the monopoly P
• Greater than the competitive P = MC
The Size of the Oligopoly
- As the number of sellers in an oligopoly
increases:
- The price effect becomes smaller
- The oligopoly looks more and more like a
competitive market
-P approaches MC
- The market quantity approaches the
socially efficient quantity
- Another benefit of international trade
A

Equilibrium for an Oligopoly

- Nash equilibrium
-Economic actors interacting with one another, each choose their best strategy
-Given the strategies that all the other actors have chosen
- Duopoly example has a Nash equilibrium
- Given that FPC produces $Q=40$, T-CPC's best move is to produce $\mathrm{Q}=40$
- Given that T-CPC produces $\mathrm{Q}=40$, FPC's best move is to produce $Q=40$
- Increasing output has two effects on a firm's profits:
-Output effect:
If $P>M C$, increasing output raises profits -Price effect:

Raising output increases market quantity, which reduces price and reduces profit on all units sold

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## ASK THE EXPERTS

## Nash Equilibrium

"Behavior in many complex and seemingly intractable strategic settings can be understood more clearly by working out what each party in the game will choose to do if they realize that the other parties will be solving the same problem. This insight has helped us understand behavior as diverse as military conflicts, price setting by competing firms and penalty kicking in soccer."


## -

- The prisoners' dilemma
-Particular "game" between two captured prisoners
- Illustrates why cooperation is difficult to maintain even when it is mutually beneficial
- Dominant strategy
-Strategy that is best for a player in a game
-Regardless of the strategies chosen by the other players

Prisoners' Dilemma Example
The police have caught Bonnie and Clyde, two suspected bank robbers, but only have enough evidence to imprison each for 1 year.

- The police question each in separate rooms, offer each the following deal:
- If you confess and implicate your partner, you go free.
- If you do not confess but your partner implicates you, you get 20 years in prison.
- If you both confess, each gets 8 years in prison.



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## Oligopolies as a Prisoners' Dilemma

- When oligopolies form a cartel
-In hopes of reaching the monopoly outcome, they become players in a prisoners' dilemma.
- Our earlier duopoly example:
- T-CPC and FPC are duopolists in Daiwan
-The cartel outcome maximizes profits:
-Each firm agrees to serve $\mathrm{Q}=30$ customers.
- Outcome: Bonnie and Clyde both confess, each gets 8 years in prison.
-Both would have been better off if both remained silent.
-But even if Bonnie and Clyde had agreed before being caught to remain silent, the logic of self-interest takes over and leads them to confess.


## Prisoners' Dilemma Example

## Active Learning $3 \quad$ The fare wars game

The players: China Airlines and EVA Air
The choice: cut fares by $50 \%$ or leave fares alone

- If both airlines cut fares, each airline's profit = $\$ 400$ million
- If neither airline cuts fares, each airline's profit = $\$ 600$ million
- If only one airline cuts its fares, its profit $=\$ 800$ million; the other airline's profits $=\$ 200$ million
- Draw the payoff matrix, find the Nash equilibrium



## Other Examples of the Prisoners' Dilemma

- Arms race between military superpowers
-Each country would be better off if both disarm, but each has a dominant strategy of arming.


## - Common resources

- All would be better off if everyone conserved common resources, but each person's dominant strategy is overusing the resources.


## - Public goods contribution

- Everyone would be better off if we all contributed to the pool, but it's a dominant strategy to free ride.


| Another Example: Negative Campaign Ads |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Each candidate dominant strat run attack ads | s $\quad$ Hsiao-Ying's decision |  |
|  | ds. <br> Do not run attack ads (cooperate) | Run attack ads (defect) |
| Do not run attack ads (cooperate) | no votes lost or gained | Hsiao-Ying <br> gains 1 m <br> votesKorean Fish |
| Korean Fish's decision |  | loses 3m votes |
|  | Hsiao-Ying loses $3 m$ votes | iao-Ying |
| Run attack ads (defect) | Korean Fish gains 1 m votes | loses 2 m <br> Korean Fish <br> votes   <br> loses 2 m votes   |
|  |  |  |


| -When the game is repeated many times, |
| :--- |
| cooperation may be possible |
| - Two strategies may lead to cooperation: |
| - "Grim-Trigger" |
| If your rival reneges in one round, you |
| renege in all subsequent rounds. |
| -"Tit-for-tat" |
| Whatever your rival does in one round |
| (whether renege or cooperate), you do in |
| the following round. |

## Public Policy Toward Oligopolies

- Antitrust laws
-The Sherman Antitrust Act, 1890
- Elevated agreements among oligopolists from an unenforceable contract to a criminal conspiracy
-The Clayton Act, 1914
- Further strengthened the antitrust laws
-Used to prevent mergers
-Used to prevent oligopolists from colluding


## Another Example:

 Negative Campaign Ads- Nash equilibrium
-Both candidates run attack ads.
- Effects on election outcome: NONE
-Each side's ads cancel out the effects of the other side's ads.
- Effects on society: NEGATIVE
-Lower voter turnout, higher apathy about politics, less voter scrutiny of elected officials' actions.



## 4 <br> Public Policy Toward Oligopolies

## - Governments

-Can sometimes improve market outcomes

- Policymakers
-Try to induce firms in an oligopoly to compete rather than cooperate
-Move the allocation of resources closer to the social optimum
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## Controversies Over Antitrust Policy

-Most people agree that price-fixing agreements among competitors should be illegal.
-Some economists are concerned that policymakers go too far when using antitrust laws to stifle business practices that are not necessarily harmful, and may have legitimate objectives.

- We consider three such practices...

|  | ("Fair Trade") |
| :---: | :---: |
| - A manufacturer imposes lower limits on the prices retailers can charge |  |
| - Often opposed because it appears to reduce competition at the retail level |  |
| - Yet, any market power the manufacturer has is at the wholesale level |  |
| - No gains from restricting competition at the retail level |  |
| - Legitimate objective: preventing discount retailers from free-riding on the services provided by full-service retailers |  |
|  |  |



## 2. Predatory Pricing

- A firm cuts prices to prevent entry or drive a competitor out of the market
- So that it can charge monopoly prices later
- Illegal under antitrust laws
- Difficult: when a price cut is predatory and when it is competitive \& beneficial to consumers?
- Many economists doubt that predatory pricing is a rational strategy:
- It involves selling at a loss (costly for the firm)
- It can backfire



## Summary

- Oligopolists can maximize profits if they form a cartel and act like a monopolist.
- Yet, self-interest leads each oligopolist to a higher quantity and lower price than under the monopoly outcome.
- The larger the number of firms, the closer will be the quantity and price to the levels that would prevail under competition.
- Firms may use tying for price discrimination
- Sometimes increases economic efficiency



## Summary

- The prisoners' dilemma shows that selfinterest can prevent people from cooperating, even when cooperation is in their mutual interest. The logic of the prisoners' dilemma applies in many situations.
- Policymakers use the antitrust laws to prevent oligopolies from engaging in anticompetitive behavior such as price-fixing. But the application of these laws is sometimes controversial.


## Chapter 17: Oligopoly

- When there are only a few firms
- Firms care about each other's actions
- Game Theory; Nash Equilibrium
- Dominant Strategy; P.D.
- Collusion (Monopoly) vs. Self-Interest
- Policy: Increase competition; Antitrust Laws
- Homework: Mankiw, Ch.17: 1-3, 6, 8-9

Challenge Questions (Past Finals)

- 2007 - Part 1
- 2008 - Essay B
- 2010 - Essay C, D
- 2012 - Part III 10-14
- 2013 - Part IV
- 2014 - Essay A5-10
- 2015 - Essay C, D
- 2016 - Essay A, B, C
- 2017 - Essay B1-B5, C, D4
- 2018 - Essay B1-3, C1, 3-4

