

A Matter of Trust?

The Bond Market Benefits of Corporate Social Capital During the Financial Crisis

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Abstract

We investigate whether a firm's social capital, and the trust that it engenders, are viewed favorably by bondholders. Using the financial crisis as an exogenous shock to trust, and firms' corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities as a proxy for social capital, we show that high-CSR firms benefited from lower bond spreads in the secondary market during the financial crisis compared to low-CSR firms. These findings are more pronounced for firms that have more of an opportunity to engage in asset substitution. High-CSR firms were also able to raise more debt capital on the primary market during this period, and those high-CSR firms that raised more debt were able to do so at lower at-issue bond spreads, better initial credit ratings, and for longer maturities. Our results suggest that debt investors believe that high-CSR firms are less likely to engage in asset substitution that would be detrimental to stakeholders other than shareholders. These findings also indicate that the reciprocity benefits of CSR that accrued to shareholders during the financial crisis carry across to another important asset class, debt capital.

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1. Introduction

Financial contracts are the “ultimate trust-intensive” transactions: the capital provider exchanges a sum of capital today for a promise of a future payment (Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales (2004)). While the legal enforceability of a contract and the financier’s ability to monitor the financee’s actions are crucial in determining whether such an exchange can take place, trust is also an important factor. As the former U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich highlighted in the midst of the 2008 financial crisis, “Financial markets trade on promises. If investors stop trusting the promises, financial markets can’t function.”¹

Social capital, and the trust it engenders, can facilitate financial transactions by mitigating adverse selection and moral-hazard problems.² When trust prevails, counterparties in economic transactions need to spend less time, effort, and resources in protecting themselves from the risk of being exploited. In exchanges characterized by mutual trust, demand for formal written contracts is lower, and written contracts that do exist need not specify every possible contingency (e.g., Knack and Keefer (1997)). Extending this notion to agency relationships, principals may also engage in less stringent monitoring of agents (e.g., Chami and Fullenkamp (2002)). These factors lead to broad economic benefits such as increased stock market participation (Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales (2004, 2008)) and greater economic and financial development (e.g., Putnam (1993); Fukuyama (1995); Knack and Keefer (1997); La Porta Lopez-de-Silanes, Shleifer, and Vishny (1997)).

Recent evidence shows that the benefits of social capital and trust also accrue to individual firms. *Endowed trust* (i.e., externally “acquired” trust that a firm enjoys from being located in a

¹ R. Reich: Government needs to rebuild trust in markets. US News and World Report, 16 September 2008.

² Social capital is a multidimensional abstract concept. It can be defined in terms of generalized trust, civic norms, beliefs, and dispositions which affect agents’ propensity to cooperate (e.g., Putnam (1993, 2000); Knack and Keefer (1997); La Porta et al. (1997)). Alternatively, social capital can be defined as the cooperative networks that exist among agents (e.g., Coleman (1988, 1990); Lin (2001)).

high-trust society/environment) is associated with less-intensive formal contracting, better financial performance, higher stock valuations (Hilary and Huang (2016)), and moderately better terms in private loan deals (Hasan, Hoi, Wu, and Zhang (2017)). *Earned trust*, which a firm can generate internally through its own investment in social capital, also pays off: during crisis-of-trust periods, firms with higher earned trust obtain both stock market and real economic benefits (Lins, Servaes, and Tamayo (2017)). Studying the economic effects of earned trust is particularly interesting because it is discretionary in nature: endowed social capital is not something a firm can easily modify, whereas a firm can choose its own level of internally-generated social capital.

In this paper, we investigate the role of *earned trust* in a setting where moral hazard is of particular concern: public debt financing. Unlike private loan arrangements, the arm's length nature of public debt (corporate bond) contracts makes them more susceptible to agency frictions, largely due to structural differences between private and public debt in terms of lenders' monitoring ability, their information costs, and recontracting flexibility (Smith and Warner (1979), Diamond (1984)). In this setting, trust, defined as "the expectation that another person will perform actions that are beneficial, or at least not detrimental, to us regardless of our capacity to monitor those actions" (Gambetta (1988)), is likely to play a more pronounced role. However, since corporate bonds are typically held by financially savvy, informed institutional investors, the benefits of earned trust in the public debt market may be less pronounced than in a setting with greater heterogeneity in investor sophistication, such as the equity market.³

To capture an individual firm's social capital, we follow recent academic work in economics and finance ((Sacconi and Degli Antoni (2011), Lins et al. (2017), Servaes and Tamayo (2017)) and use a firm's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities as a proxy for its investment in social

³ Guiso et al. (2008) show that the effect of social capital on stock market participation is weaker for individuals with more education.

capital. The view that CSR activities generate social capital and earned trust is also widely held by practitioners and corporations.⁴ Our primary objective is to investigate whether, and to what extent, firms that are managed to take into account the interests of a broad set of stakeholders, i.e., high-CSR firms, reap financial benefits in public debt markets.

An individual firm's social capital, and the trust it cultivates, could affect the firm's public debt contracts through both a direct and an indirect channel. The direct channel is via a reduction in the agency costs of debt. Managers, acting in the interest of shareholders, have incentives to expropriate debtholders by investing in risky projects as a firm gets closer to default (Jensen and Meckling (1976)), even if these projects reduce firm value. Debtholders anticipate this potential for asset substitution and demand higher rents, thus raising the firm's cost of debt capital. In contrast, stakeholder-focused managers are likely less willing to jeopardize the firm's survival in order to make a risky bet on behalf of shareholders. Debtholders' confidence that managers are committed to safeguarding the economic interests of a broad set of constituents will reduce their demand for monitoring, alleviate moral hazard concerns, and ultimately reduce the agency costs of debt.

The indirect channel is a result of externalities: if a firm's social capital helps build stakeholder trust and cooperation (Putnam (2000)), stakeholders (such as employees, customers, suppliers, and the community at large) are more likely to "do whatever it takes" to help ensure that high-social-capital firms weather periods of crisis (Lins et al. (2017)).⁵ This is the so-called reciprocity concept often discussed in studies of social capital – "I will be good to you with the expectation that you will be good to me when I need it." Enhanced stakeholder cooperation can lead

⁴ Practitioners have long held the view that CSR helps build trust (Fitzgerald 2003) but, following the financial crisis, this view has become even more widespread (see PricewaterhouseCoopers (2013, 2014) for global surveys of CEOs.)

⁵ For example, employees may work harder (or at a lower cost) and more creatively to ensure that the firm weathers a crisis; suppliers may continue to supply on credit and customers may continue to buy the firm's products/services.

to higher cash flows and/or a reduction in risk, thereby lowering the likelihood of default and benefiting bondholders.

Of course, a competing argument to those noted above is that stakeholder-oriented firms are merely wasting the firm's resources by diverting current cash flows to invest in CSR activities that do not necessarily add value to the firm (e.g., Friedman (1970); Masulis and Reza (2015); Cheng, Hong, and Shue (2016)). If bondholders view CSR activities as wasteful, they will demand higher compensation to lend to high-CSR firms.

To test whether bondholders view high-CSR firms more favorably, we investigate both secondary market bond trades and primary market bond originations. Our main analyses are conducted using a large sample of publicly-traded, non-financial, U.S. domiciled firms with bond trade data available on the Trade Reporting and Compliance Engine (TRACE) database between 2005 and 2013.⁶ We also identify a sample of corporate bond issues covered in the Mergent Fixed Income Securities Database (FISD) that were offered on the primary market over the period 2007-2013

We first conduct preliminary tests in which we estimate regressions of secondary market bond spreads on firms' CSR ratings over the full sample period. While endogeneity concerns make it difficult to draw causal inferences from such an estimation, our preliminary test results are suggestive of a modest negative CSR-credit spread relation, consistent with Goss and Roberts (2011), who study private debt and conclude that "CSR is at most a second-order determinant of yield spreads" (p.1795). Furthermore, when we also control for time fixed effects, the modest

⁶ Our selection of 2005 as the starting point of the sample period is driven primarily by data availability on TRACE. The Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) is responsible for the collection and reporting of over-the-counter (OTC) bond trades. Before 2005, data on bond trades were disseminated in phases, beginning in July 2002 with Phase I requiring the reporting of investment-grade securities of \$1 billion in face value or greater. Over the course of Phases II and III in late 2004, trade reporting was expanded to cover approximately 99% of all OTC transactions. As of July 2005, FINRA requires all its members to report their trades within 15 minutes of the transaction.

relation between CSR and bond spreads disappears entirely. Thus, on average, there is no relation between corporate bond spreads and CSR.

The primary objective of our investigation is not to study the relation between bond spreads and CSR on average, however. Rather, in the same spirit as Lins et al. (2017), we hypothesize that CSR is likely to benefit bondholders more when the earned trust that a firm's social capital generates is more highly valued, such as during a crisis of trust. In a crisis, the agency costs of debt are more pronounced and the payoffs to risky bets increase as firm survival might be at stake. Bondholders of high-CSR firms, however, may be more confident that managers will not engage in risk-increasing asset substitution because this may harm stakeholders. Moreover, if a crisis is compounded with a loss of trust, the benefit to bondholders from CSR activities may be even larger in light of the reciprocity argument which suggests that stakeholders (employees, customers, suppliers, the community) of a trustworthy firm will help it weather the crisis.

We examine this conjecture by focusing on the financial crisis of 2007-2009. The financial crisis constituted an exogenous shock that eroded trust in financial markets and corporations and affected most firms. Following prior work (e.g., Duchin, Ozbas, and Sensoy (2010); Ivashina and Scharfstein (2010); Sapienza and Zingales (2012); Lins et al. (2017)), we identify two distinct periods: the credit crunch – the period of July 2007 through July 2008, when the supply of credit suffered a shock but general trust had not yet eroded; and the trust crisis – the period of August 2008 through March 2009, when a shock to trust occurred. The characterization of this period as one during which trust declined is also consistent with survey evidence provided by Edelman (the world's largest independent public relations firm). Edelman reports that trust in business in the U.S. declined from 58% in early 2008 to 38% in early 2009.

For empirical tests, we rely mainly on pre-crisis levels of CSR because it is unlikely that firms could have adjusted their CSR spending in anticipation of the financial crisis. By identifying the crisis as an exogenous event with respect to firms' CSR decisions, we can circumvent endogeneity concerns that arise in studies on the relation between firms' CSR and debt financing activities.

We conduct multiple difference-in-differences tests using the shock to trust as a quasi-experimental setting. Our results are unambiguous: during the crisis of trust, secondary market credit spreads of high-CSR firms did not rise as much as the spreads of low-CSR firms. These results are stronger for firms that have more of an opportunity to engage in asset substitution. High-CSR firms were also able to raise more capital on the primary bond market during this period, and those (high-CSR firms) that accessed the bond market benefited from lower at-issue spreads relative to treasuries, better initial credit ratings, and longer debt maturities. These effects are economically substantial as well. For example, a one-standard deviation increase in our measure of CSR is associated with at least 40 basis points lower credit spreads in both the primary and secondary markets during the financial crisis.

We conclude that firm-level social capital and the trust that it engenders affect bond contracting when they matter most: when there is a crisis of trust. In such periods, a firm's social capital acts as an insurance policy against excessive risk taking that can harm stakeholders and bondholders⁷ and also generates helpful stakeholder reciprocity efforts. Our results indicate that high-CSR firms are perceived as being more trustworthy and, hence, reap significant benefits in the bond markets.

⁷ The focus of our paper is on the role of social capital, as measured by CSR, in mitigating risk taking when there is an economy wide shock to trust. Other papers have examined the role of CSR in mitigating firm-specific risks. Using prosecutions of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, Hong and Liskovich (2015) report that more socially responsible firms pay \$2.3 million or 40 percent less than the median fine for bribery when caught. Jeffers (2015) finds that officials are more lenient with penalties for OSHA violations ascribed to high-CSR firms. Albuquerque, Durnev, and Koskinen (2015) model CSR as a product differentiation strategy allowing firms to benefit from higher profit margins which lessens systematic risk.

Our work complements the findings of Lins et al. (2017), who show that firms with higher pre-crisis CSR scores had higher crisis-period stock returns. Given that the benefits of investing in social capital accrued to stockholders and bondholders, our evidence suggests that the superior stock returns of high-CSR firms are not due to increased risk-shifting during the crisis – if that were the case, we would observe higher, not lower, bond spreads for high-CSR firms. Consistent with this view, we find that the effect of CSR on bond spreads during the crisis is stronger for firms with fewer tangible assets. These are firms that have more opportunity to engage in asset substitution (see Williamson (1988) and Johnson (2003)), and for which the implicit commitment not to do so, as captured by CSR investments, is most valuable. To demonstrate that the bond market benefits associated with CSR are incremental to the stock return findings of Lins et al. (2017), and hence, not driven entirely by reciprocity, we also show that the bond spread results persist after controlling for contemporaneous stock returns.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. In Section 2, we describe the sample and present summary statistics. Section 3 reports preliminary results for secondary market spreads while Section 4 presents the results using the financial crisis as an exogenous shock. In Section 5, we expand our analyses to the primary market. Section 6 concludes the paper.

2. Sample and summary statistics

2.1. Sample construction

To construct our sample of corporate bonds on the secondary market, we start with the universe of bonds covered in the TRACE database from 2005 to 2013. As in Dick-Nielsen, Feldhütter, and Lando (2012), we exclude variable- and zero-coupon, perpetual, foreign currency, preferred, and exchangeable issues as well as private placements and Yankee and Canadian bonds.

We further restrict our selection to include only corporate debentures and corporate medium-term notes with a time- to-maturity of more than one month and 30 years or less. We also exclude issuers from the financial sector (SIC codes 6000-6999) as these firms received government support during the 2008-2009 crisis, which could affect our inferences. To be included in our sample, we further require that data on relevant bond contract attributes (i.e., issue size, offering and maturity dates, coupon, collateral, and covenants) are available on Mergent FISD. Merging the two databases, we obtain a sample of bond trades comprising 2,212 bonds issued by 342 firms. To account for liquidity biases and erroneous entries in TRACE, we follow the method in Dick-Nielsen (2009).⁸ We further apply the price-based filters in Edwards et al. (2007) and Han and Zhou (2016) to remove outliers and observations with likely data errors.⁹ Applying these refinements reduces our sample to 2,177 bonds issued by 338 firms.

We merge this sample with CSR ratings data from the MSCI ESG Stats Database, which contains yearly environmental, social, and governance ratings of large, publicly-listed companies. This database has been used in a number of studies examining the effect of CSR on firm value and performance (e.g., Hong and Kostovetsky (2012); Deng, Kang, and Low (2013); Servaes and Tamayo (2013); Albuquerque et al. (2015); Lins et al. (2017)) and covers roughly the 3,000 largest U.S. companies. Finally, we obtain annual fundamentals and monthly stock market data from Compustat and CRSP, respectively.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Merging these databases yields a final sample of 1,989 corporate bonds issued by 296 firms with secondary market trade data from 2005 to 2013, as noted in Panel A of Table 1. Panel B

⁸ The procedure removes retail-sized non-institutional trades (i.e., those with a value below \$100,000), dirty prices that include dealer commissions, trades with missing execution time or date or missing trade size, genuine duplicates, trade reversals along with the original trade reports, trades with missing or negative yields, as well as same-day trade corrections and cancellations.

⁹ Specifically, we exclude trades with prices less than \$1 or greater than \$500, and trades with prices that are 20 percent away from the median of the reported price in the day or 20 percent away from the previous trading price.

outlines the industry composition, where manufacturing constitutes the largest proportion of bond issues (14.2%), while the other sectors have a fairly balanced representation in the overall sample.

2.2. *CSR variable construction and descriptive statistics*

Our main independent variable is the CSR index, which we construct following Servaes and Tamayo (2013). We concentrate on five of the 13 categories that ESG Stats uses to classify a firm's environmental, social, and governance performance: community, diversity, employment, environment and human rights. We do not consider the six ESG Stats categories that penalize firms' participation in controversial industries (alcohol, gaming, firearms, military, nuclear and tobacco), as there is nothing incremental that firms can do to change an industry membership concern, except change industries.¹⁰ We further exclude the ESG Stats product category because it contains a number of elements that we consider to be outside the scope of CSR, such as product quality and innovation. Finally, we leave out the ESG Stats corporate governance category because governance is usually considered to be outside a firm's CSR remit. However, since strong governance may also be beneficial to bondholders (e.g., Bhojraj and Sengupta (2003); Klock, Mansi, and Maxwell (2005); Bradley and Chen (2011, 2015)), we examine the role of governance separately as part of our robustness tests.

For each of the five categories we consider, ESG Stats compiles statistics on both strengths and concerns. To combine this information into one CSR metric, we follow Servaes and Tamayo (2013). We first divide the number of concerns and the number of strengths in each of the five categories by its possible maximum in a given year (as there is some time-series variation in the possible maximum), and subtract the resulting scaled concerns number from the scaled strengths number. This procedure yields an index for each of the five categories ranging from -1 to +1. Our

¹⁰In addition, in all of our estimations, we control for either industry or firm fixed effects.

CSR metric is the sum of the individual measures across the five categories. Thus, it ranges from -5 to +5.

Our main dependent variable is a bond's credit spread, estimated as the difference between the bond's yield to maturity from TRACE and the Treasury yield matched by maturity (e.g., Campbell and Taksler (2003); Chen, Desmond, and Wei (2007); Huang and Huang (2012)).¹¹ As in Becker and Ivashina (2015), we employ the median yield of all transactions taking place on the last active trading day of a given month to compute the spreads. We winsorize credit spreads to be no greater than 1000 basis points to alleviate the influence of substantially distressed firms.¹²

[Insert Table 2 here]

Table 2 provides summary statistics on the characteristics of the bonds in our sample, the CSR index, credit spreads, and other control variables.¹³ The Appendix contains detailed definitions of all the variables employed in our analyses. Panel A contains the bond characteristics that remain constant over the life of the bonds. As such, we count each bond once in the summary statistics. The mean issue size in our sample is \$578 million. About 42 percent of the sample bonds are offered concurrently in global and domestic markets while 90 percent of the issues include an option for early redemption. The security rank captures the seniority of the bond and ranges from 1 for junior subordinate bonds to 5 for senior secured bonds, with subordinate, senior subordinate, and senior as the intermediate categories. The mean security rank is just below 4, while its 25th, 50th and

¹¹ Maturity-matched risk-free yields are obtained by linearly interpolating benchmark Treasury yields contained in the Federal Reserve H-15 release for constant maturities.

¹² Our main results hold when we remove these bonds rather than winsorize them.

¹³ All continuous control variables are winsorized at the 99th percentile and also at the 1st percentile unless their lower bound is 0.

75th percentiles are all equal to 4, which indicates that the majority of issues in our sample are senior bonds. More than 50 percent of the bond indentures in our sample include at least six covenants.¹⁴

Panel B of Table 2 contains those bond characteristics that could potentially vary on a monthly basis. As such, we count each bond/month pair as a separate observation. The bonds in our sample have a mean time-to-maturity of just over 6.5 years (78.2 months). There is considerable cross-sectional variation in credit spreads, with an average of just under 200 basis points. Credit ratings are converted to numerical values, starting with 1 for AAA ratings through 21 for C ratings. The average credit rating of 8.5 indicates that the bonds in our sample are rated between BBB and BBB+, on average.¹⁵

Panel C of Table 2 contains the firm characteristics that vary annually, and we therefore include a firm each year it appears in the sample in these statistics. The firms in our sample are large (average market capitalization of \$18.5 billion) and profitable, with operating income to sales exceeding 22%. Finally, the median of our explanatory variable of interest, *CSR*, is -0.075, which indicates that more than half of the firms in our sample have more concerns than strengths, consistent with Deng et al. (2013), Servaes and Tamayo (2013), and Borisov, Goldman, and Gupta (2016).

3. The CSR-credit spread relation

Before analyzing the effect of CSR on bond spreads during the crisis, we examine whether there is a relation over the entire sample period. We conduct this analysis by regressing bond

¹⁴ To measure covenant intensity, we follow Bradley and Roberts (2015) and count the number of covenants in the five main categories (payout, investment, financing, accounting, and event-related restrictions) reported on Mergent FISD.

¹⁵ We obtain credit ratings issued by S&P, Moody's, and Fitch from Mergent FISD and Bloomberg. As in Ellul, Jotikasthira, Lundblad, and Wang (2015), to designate a representative rating when an issue is rated by multiple agencies, we first select the S&P rating; if missing, we use ratings from Moody's, and if both are missing, we use ratings from Fitch.

spreads in the secondary market on firm CSR ratings (and controls) over the period 2005 to 2013. As a firm's CSR policy is likely jointly determined with other firm characteristics, we are not able to draw any causal inferences from this analysis; our results should therefore be viewed as suggestive of correlations only.

We estimate the following pooled regression specification using monthly spread data:

$$Spread_{ijt} = \beta_1 CSR_{it-1} + \gamma' X_{ijt-1} + \delta' Z_{it-1} + FFE_i + \varepsilon_{ijt}, \quad (1)$$

where $Spread_{ijt}$ denotes the credit spread of firm i 's bond j during month t , and CSR_{it-1} is firm i 's total net CSR index measured at time $t-1$, our explanatory variable of interest. X_{ijt-1} is a $(K \times 1)$ vector of bond-level controls measured at time $t-1$ and Z_{it-1} is a $(L \times 1)$ vector of firm-level controls measured at time $t-1$. In addition, we include firm-fixed effects, FFE_i , to control for unobservable time-invariant credit risk factors. We double cluster the standard errors at the firm and time (monthly) levels to control for cross-sectional and time-series dependence, respectively (Petersen (2009)).

To control for bond characteristics, we include *Amount*, *Coupon*, *Time-to-maturity*, *Redeemable* (equal to one if the bond issue may be redeemed under conditions specified in the indenture agreements), *Fungible* (equal to one if the bond issue is, by virtue of its terms, equivalent, interchangeable, or substitutable), *Offering market* (equal to one if the bond offering is global), *Security* (i.e., collateral stringency), and *Covenant intensity*, following prior work on public debt markets (e.g., Datta, Iskandar-Datta, and Patel (1999); Miller and Puthenpurackal (2005); Nini, Smith, and Sufi (2012); Bradley and Roberts (2015)). We further control for contemporaneous bond liquidity using the Amihud (2002) illiquidity measure that captures the price impact of trades.

The issuer-level controls are similar to those employed in prior work on the cost of debt (e.g., Campbell and Taksler (2003); Chen, Desmond, and Wei (2007); Acharya, Davydenko, and

Strebulaev (2012)): (i) *Ln(Size)* (Log market equity), (ii) *Profitability*, (iii) *Short-term leverage*, (iv) *Long-term leverage*, (v) *Cash holdings*, (vi) *Tangibility*, (vii) *Coverage*, and (viii) *Idiosyncratic volatility*. We further add controls for *Capital expenditures* and *Beta* as Baghai, Servaes, and Tamayo (2014) document that these factors play an important part in explaining issuers' credit ratings. The accounting-based firm characteristics and CSR data are updated annually. To ensure that the accounting data are publicly available, we update these items three months after a firm's fiscal year-end. CSR is updated annually in April when the ratings for the previous year are released. *Beta* and *Volatility* are re-estimated each month based on the previous 60 months' data.

[Insert Table 3 here]

Our findings from estimating model (1) are reported in Table 3. In Panel A, we first present the results from a simple regression of credit spreads on CSR, controlling for firm fixed effects (column i). The coefficient on CSR is -0.215, suggesting that high-CSR firms have lower spreads. We sequentially control for bond-level attributes (column ii) and firm characteristics (column iii) and find that the coefficient on CSR is slightly lower at -0.133. As a gauge of economic significance, a one standard deviation increase in CSR of 0.644 (Table 2) is associated with a 8.6 basis points decline in average credit spreads. This effect is modest, at best. In Panel B of Table 3, we re-estimate these three models, but also control for credit ratings (see, e.g. Campbell and Taksler (2003)). Adding this control further has little or no effect on the coefficient on CSR and its economic significance.

The modest negative relation between CSR and credit spreads that we document in the first three models of Table 3 is consistent with prior work based on private (i.e., bank) loans (e.g., Goss and Roberts (2011); Hasan et al. (2017)). We next include time fixed effects (monthly dummies) in column (iv) of both Panels A and B of Table 3, and find that the coefficient on CSR becomes statistically (and economically) insignificant in this specification. This suggests that, on average,

there is no relation between CSR and bond credit spreads, and that it is important to control for overall time-series variation in spreads when estimating models of bond yields.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

The primary objective of our paper, however, is not to test for an overall relation between credit spreads and CSR; rather, our aim is to understand whether the bond market payoffs to firms' CSR activities are more pronounced when a firm's social capital becomes more valuable, such as during a crisis of trust. In Figure 1, we illustrate the time-series pattern of average credit spreads for high- and low-CSR firms, where high-CSR (low-CSR) is defined as those firms whose CSR scores are above (below) the median CSR value of the year. Firms are included in a high/low portfolio in April of each year, when new CSR scores are released, and they remain in this portfolio until April of the following year. The variation in the spread differential between high- and low-CSR firms over time is striking: up to August 2008 there is little difference between the spreads of high- and low-CSR firms. After August, the differential shoots up, and reaches its maximum level in November 2008. The differential remains high until March 2009, when the stock market hit its lowest point of the crisis; afterwards, there is still a marked difference between the spreads of high- and low-CSR firms, but the magnitude is notably smaller. The period of August 2008 to March 2009, when the difference becomes considerable, coincides with the crisis of trust described in Sapienza and Zingales (2012) and Lins et al. (2017), among others. This figure shows that CSR is related to bond spreads mainly when a firm's social capital is more highly valued, such as during the 2008-2009 crisis of trust. In the next section, we examine this relation more formally.¹⁶

¹⁶ The figure looks very similar if we divide firms into two groups based on their CSR scores for the year 2006 and make no subsequent changes to the composition of these groups. The advantage of this alternative approach is that it is unlikely that firms changed their CSR efforts in 2006 in anticipation of the potential benefits of CSR that would accrue during the 2008-2009 financial crisis, thereby addressing the concern that firms decided on CSR policies in anticipation of the crisis.

4. CSR and credit spreads: Evidence from an exogenous shock to trust

4.1. CSR and credit spreads during the financial crisis

In this section, we test our main hypothesis, which is that a firm's CSR efforts benefit bondholders more when social capital is more highly valued, i.e., when trust is low. To do so, we use the financial crisis of 2008-2009 as a quasi-experimental setting. The financial crisis constituted an exogenous shock to public trust in corporations, capital markets and institutions, and led to a decline in stock prices and increase in bond spreads for the vast majority of firms (Figure 1 illustrates the substantial increase in credit spreads during this period). The exogenous nature of this shock to trust also helps alleviate the endogeneity concerns associated with model (1).

Our sample period for this analysis begins in 2007, prior to the onset of the crisis, and ends in 2013, several years into the economic recovery. We adopt a quasi-difference-in-differences approach and examine whether firms that entered the crisis period with higher CSR scores enjoyed relatively lower spreads during the crisis. In particular, we estimate the following model: δ'

$$\begin{aligned} Spread_{ijt} = & \beta_1 CSR_{i2006} * Crisis_t + \beta_2 CSR_{i2006} * Post-crisis_t + \gamma X_{ijt-1} + \delta' Z_{it-1} \\ & + FFE_i + TFE_t + \varepsilon_{ijt} \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where, as before, $Spread_{ijt}$ denotes the spread of firm i 's bond j at time t , X_{ijt-1} is a $(K \times 1)$ vector of bond-level controls measured at time $t-1$, and Z_{it-1} is a $(L \times 1)$ vector of firm-level controls measured at time $t-1$. We include firm fixed effects, FFE_i , to control for unobservable time-invariant credit risk factors, and time-fixed effects, TFE_t , specified at the monthly level.¹⁷ We measure CSR as of year-end 2006, well before the onset of the financial crisis, to eliminate the concern that firms might

¹⁷ We also estimate this model without time fixed effects, but with dummies for the crisis and post-crisis periods. These indicator variables capture the change in spreads during and after the crisis for firms with a CSR score of zero. Our inferences remain unchanged when we employ this alternative specification.

have adjusted their CSR activities in anticipation of the crisis.¹⁸ $Crisis_t$ is an indicator variable that takes the value of 1 for the crisis of trust period, starting in August 2008 and ending in March 2009 (as in Lins, Volpin, and Wagner (2013) and Lins et al. (2017)), and $Post-crisis_t$ is an indicator variable that takes a value of 1 from April 2009 to December 2013. As before, we double cluster the standard errors at the firm and time (monthly) levels to control for cross-sectional and time-series dependence, respectively.

In model (2) the coefficient on the interaction term $CSR_{i2006} * Crisis_t$, β_1 , captures the difference between the effect of CSR on credit spreads in the crisis versus the pre-crisis period (the pre-crisis effect itself is captured by the time and firm fixed effects). The coefficient on the interaction variable $CSR_{i2006} * Post-crisis_t$, β_2 , captures the difference between the effect of CSR on credit spreads in the post-crisis versus the pre-crisis periods. This coefficient could also be negative given that generalized trust in companies, markets, and institutions continued to be low after the crisis for some time. However, in absolute terms, we expect β_1 to be larger than β_2 , given that the most pronounced erosion of trust happened during the crisis.

[Insert Table 4 here]

The results from estimating model (2) are reported in Panel A of Table 4. We first control for bond attributes in column (i) and then include firm characteristics in column (ii). Both models indicate that CSR has a statistically and economically significant impact on bond spreads during the crisis. Based on the regressions reported in model (ii), a one standard deviation increase in pre-crisis CSR is associated with 40 basis points lower spreads during the crisis period.¹⁹ The benefit accrued to high-CSR firms during the crisis disappears in the post-crisis period (the difference between β_1 and β_2 is statistically significant at the 1% level in both specifications).

¹⁸ Our 2006 CSR measure is static and is thus absorbed by the firm fixed effects. In untabulated tests, we confirm that our results hold when we use a time-varying, lagged measure of CSR.

¹⁹ The standard deviation of CSR for the 2007-2013 sub-period is 0.553, slightly smaller than the standard deviation of CSR for the whole period reported in Table 2.

Next, we also control for corporate governance. Prior research suggests that debt investors demand lower spreads for bonds of better-governed firms (e.g., Bradley and Chen (2015)) and that better-governed firms performed better during the crisis (Lins et al. (2013); Nguyen, Nguyen, and Yin (2015)). If governance is correlated with our CSR measure, we could be suffering from an omitted variable bias. To address this concern, we include the entrenchment index (E-index) as an additional control variable. This index, originally proposed by Bebchuk, Cohen, and Ferrell (2009), combines six provisions that capture managerial entrenchment and insulation from takeovers.²⁰ Thus a higher index implies worse governance. The data to construct the E-index are gathered from Institutional Shareholder Services.

We report the results of the spreads regression after inclusion of the E-index in column (iii) of Panel A of Table 4. The E-index is positively related to bond spreads (after controlling for numerous factors, including firm characteristics and firm fixed effects), indicating that bond investors demand higher spreads from firms with worse governance. More importantly, the coefficient on CSR remains virtually unchanged in this specification. Hence, the impact of CSR on spreads during the crisis cannot be attributed to better governance.²¹

In our last specification reported in column (iv), we also control for credit ratings. As expected, firms with better ratings (lower *crate*) have lower spreads, but the CSR variable remains significant in this model. In fact, its economic importance increases somewhat in this specification: a one standard deviation increase in CSR is associated with 43 basis points lower spreads.

²⁰ The E-index consists of the following six provisions: (i) a staggered board, (ii) limits to amend the charter, (iii) limits to amend bylaws, (iv) supermajority voting requirements, (v) golden parachutes for executives, and the presence of a poison pill.

²¹ We also construct an alternative governance measure from the governance information available on the ESG Stats database using the same approach as for the CSR elements. Specifically, for each firm, we divide the number of governance concerns by its possible maximum and subtract it from the number of governance strengths divided by its possible maximum. This approach yields a governance index that ranges from -1 to +1. We find a negative relation between this alternative governance measure and debt spreads. The inclusion of this governance index also has little effect on the magnitude or significance of the coefficient on CSR.

From these analyses, we conclude that the spreads of high-CSR firms' bonds increased less during the financial crisis relative to the spreads of low-CSR firms' bonds. This finding is consistent with bondholders valuing a firm's social capital and its "earned trust" more in periods when being trustworthy is particularly important, such as in a crisis of trust.

4.2. CSR and credit spreads during the credit crunch

Next, we conduct further analyses to corroborate that our results are indeed driven by a shock to market-wide trust rather than a shock to the supply of credit. In July 2007, LIBOR rates started to increase dramatically as the solvency of the banking sector weakened, which had a negative impact on the ability of firms to borrow (e.g., Duchin, et al (2010) and Ivashina and Scharfstein (2010)). This shock to the supply of credit persisted until at least March 2009, thereby overlapping partly with the period during which there was a shock to trust. If high-CSR firms were less affected by the credit crunch, the differential in the spreads that we document could be due to this phenomenon rather than a shock to trust. High-CSR firms may have been more able to borrow over the credit crunch given that the agency costs of debt argument that we describe can hold in any crisis in general. Our contention, however, is that if a firm's CSR investments engender trust, the effect of CSR on debt spreads should be particularly salient when trust is more valued. Furthermore, in a crisis of trust, the (perceived) reduction in the agency costs of debt for high-CSR firms is compounded with positive real effects derived from reciprocity.

Figure 1 suggests that the difference in spreads between high- and low-CSR firms only manifests itself starting in August 2008 and not earlier, but it is important to investigate debt spreads during the credit crunch more formally, after controlling for other factors. To do so, we augment model (2) with an interaction term between CSR and the "pure" credit crunch period, which we define as the period of July 2007 through July 2008. During this period, the shock to credit supply

had already happened, but the shock to trust had not yet occurred (Sapienza and Zingales (2012); Lins et al. (2017)). As in Panel A of Table 4, we estimate various specifications of this augmented regression, starting with a more parsimonious model and adding additional controls in subsequent specifications. The findings are reported in Panel B of Table 4. Across all models, the impact of CSR on debt spreads is never significant during the credit crunch, but it is always highly significant during the trust crisis, and only weakly significant in one specification in the post-crisis period. Moreover, the effect of CSR on bond spreads is significantly different between the crisis and the credit crunch and between the crisis and the post-crisis periods under all specifications. In terms of economic importance, the effect of CSR on spreads during the crisis increases relative to the models reported in Panel A. For example, based on model (iv), increasing CSR by one standard deviation reduces spreads by 50 basis points during the crisis. The magnitude of the post-crisis effect for the same change in CSR is a 15 basis point reduction in spreads.

Overall, the results reported in Panel B of Table 4 indicate that the effect of CSR on debt spreads that we uncover does not occur during the credit crunch, but only during the shock to trust.

4.3. Further evidence

To better understand the mechanisms behind our findings, we conduct two additional tests. First, we examine whether the effect of CSR on spreads during the crisis is more pronounced in firms with low asset tangibility. As argued by Williamson (1988) and Johnson (2003), these firms have more of an opportunity to engage in asset substitution when distress risk increases. If the spreads of high-CSR firms are lower during the crisis than those of low-CSR firms because bond investors expect less asset substitution from high-CSR firms, we would expect this effect to be more pronounced for firms that have more opportunities to shift risk.

We investigate this possibility by splitting the sample into two groups according to asset tangibility, defined as tangible property, plant, and equipment divided by assets. Firms are assigned to a group based on tangibility as of year-end 2006 and this grouping remains unchanged throughout the sample period. In model (i) of Table 5, we show the results of the spreads regression for firms with tangibility below the median (below 31.75%). The model includes all control variables, equivalent to model (iv) of Panel A of Table 4. For this group, CSR has a strong negative impact on spreads during the crisis period, but not afterwards. In terms of economic significance, increasing CSR by one standard deviation (which for this subset is 0.53), reduces spreads by 42 basis points. In model (ii), we report the results for the high tangibility group. The coefficient on the CSR*Crisis interaction for this subsample is less than half the coefficient of the low tangibility sample, and it is not statistically significant. The fact that our results are much stronger for the subgroup of firms that have more opportunities to engage in asset substitution supports our contention that bond investors believe that high CSR firms are less likely to take advantage of that opportunity.

[Insert Table 5 here]

One could argue that partitioning the sample based on the median tangibility of 31.75% still leaves a large number of firms that have room to increase firm risk in the high tangibility group. Therefore, we also change the low tangibility cutoff to the 75th percentile of the distribution (51.85%), and split the sample into two groups based this alternative cutoff. We then re-estimate the spreads regression for each subgroup (not reported in the table). CSR significantly affects crisis period spreads for all firms in the low tangibility group, which comprises the first three quartiles, while it is not significant for the top quartile. These results provide further support for the view that our results are partly due to a reduction in the perceived probability of asset substitution for high-CSR firms during the crisis.

[Insert Table 6 here]

Second, since Lins et al. (2017) find that high-CSR firms earned excess stock returns during the crisis compared to low CSR firms, we seek to determine whether the bond spread effect we document is incremental to the stock return effect or whether the bond performance is just a reflection of superior stock market performance. To do so, we control for the firm's contemporaneous stock returns in the base-line spreads regression of model (2). Moreover, we allow the effect of returns to vary during the crisis- and post-crisis periods. Specifically, we estimate the following augmented regression model:

$$\begin{aligned}
 Spread_{ijt} = & \beta_1 CSR_{i2006} * Crisis_t + \beta_2 CSR_{i2006} * Post-crisis_t + \beta_3 R_{it} + \beta_4 R_{it} * Crisis_t \\
 & + \beta_5 R_{it} * Post-crisis_t + \gamma X_{ijt-1} + \delta Z_{it-1} + FFE_i + TFE_t + \varepsilon_{ijt}
 \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

where R_{it} is firm i 's raw stock return during month t and all other explanatory variables follow earlier definitions. The findings from estimating this model are reported in Table 6. In model (i) the effect of contemporaneous stock returns is held fixed throughout the period, while in model (ii) we allow the stock return effect to vary across subperiods. Both models illustrate that the effect of CSR on bond spreads during the crisis is incremental to the stock price effect. Moreover, the magnitude of the CSR coefficient during the crisis changes little from the models that do not control for stock returns. As expected, firms with higher stock returns have lower bonds spreads, especially during the crisis, but because stock returns are very noisy, this effect is estimated imprecisely.

5. CSR, bond offerings, and contracting terms

Our results thus far show that high-CSR firms benefit from lower yields on their outstanding bonds during the crisis of trust that occurred in 2008-2009. In this section, we examine whether these benefits also carry over to the primary market. Specifically, we investigate whether high-CSR

firms were able to raise more debt on the bond market, and if so, whether those firms with higher CSR ratings attracted more favorable (price and non-price) terms.

5.1 CSR and bond offerings during the financial crisis

To investigate bond originations on the primary market during the financial crisis, we use sample selection criteria similar to those described in Section 2 for secondary market bond trades. From Mergent FISD we obtain the details of bonds that were issued between 2007 and 2013 by U.S. domiciled and incorporated publicly-listed non-financial firms, excluding bonds with uncommon features (e.g., perpetual, preferred, private placements, Yankee and Canadian bonds). This procedure yields 4,092 new issues by 1,424 firms. We require firms to have CSR ratings as of year-end 2006, reducing our sample to 2,117 bonds issued by 634 firm. After merging these data with annual fundamental and market data from Compustat and CRSP respectively, our resulting bond-issuance sample contains 1,693 corporate bonds issued by 482 firms over period from 2007 to 2013.

To examine whether high-CSR firms are able to raise more debt in the primary market during the crisis, we estimate the following regression for all issuing firms:

$$Issue_{ijt} = \beta_0 CSR_{i2006} + \beta_1 CSR_{i2006} * Crisis_t + \beta_2 CSR_{i2006} * Post-crisis_t + \delta' Z_{it-1} + IFE_i + TFE_t + \varepsilon_{ijt} \quad (4)$$

where, $Issue_{ijt}$ is defined as the offering amount scaled by total assets and Z_{it-1} is a $(L \times 1)$ vector of lagged firm-level controls that are typically used studies on new debt issuance (e.g., Leary and Roberts (2005); Badoer and James (2016)). Specifically, we control for: (i) $Ln(Size)$ (natural log of market capitalization), (ii) $Book-to-market$ (iii) $Profitability$, (iv) $Long-term debt$, (v) $Tangibility$, (vi) $Capital expenditure$, (vii) $R\&D intensity$, (viii) $Asset maturity$, (ix) $Dividend dummy$, and (x) $Investment-grade dummy$. As with earlier estimations, we update these items three months after a firm's fiscal year-end.

We are unable to include firm fixed effects in this specification because the frequency with which firms access the bond market is relatively low, and, as such, the addition of firm fixed effects would remove much of the variation in issuance. Instead, we include industry fixed effects, IFE_i , (defined based on two-digit SIC codes) to account for unobservable time-invariant industry-level factors associated with the demand for public debt. Similarly because the number of bonds issued on a monthly basis is low (17.65 on average) we include time fixed effects at the quarterly level instead of the monthly level. To be conservative, we also double cluster standard errors at the industry and quarterly level. Because the model does not include firm fixed effects, we also include the firm's CSR itself as an explanatory variable (since it will not be absorbed by the fixed effect).

[Insert Table 7 here]

We present summary statistics for the variables used in our bond offerings estimations in Panel A of Table 7. The average bond issue is 7.3% of assets with a median of 4% indicating that the increase in the firm's assets as a result of the bond issue is substantial.

Panel B of Table 7 contains the regression results. In model (i), we include crisis and post-crisis dummies, while model (ii) contains time dummies defined at the quarterly level. Both models indicate that outside of the crisis period, CSR has no influence on the relative size of a firm's bond issues. During the crisis, however, the amount raised by high-CSR firms relative to low-CSR firms increases significantly, as indicated by the significant coefficient on the interaction between CSR and the crisis dummy. In terms of economic significance, based on model (ii), increasing CSR by one standard deviation increases issuance by 6 basis points before the crisis but by 92 basis points during the crisis. The crisis effect is substantial, compared to the average issuance of 7.3% of assets over the entire sample period and 3.6% (not reported in the table) of assets during the crisis months.

In unreported models, we also study debt market access; we find no evidence that the likelihood of accessing the debt market is related to a firm's CSR score during any of the

subperiods. Thus, while the rate of access does not depend on CSR, the results reported in Panel Table 7 indicate that CSR has a significant impact on the amount raised during the crisis. These results also confirm the findings of Lins et al. (2017) that high CSR firms were able to raise more debt, in general, during the crisis.

5.2. CSR and contracting terms during the financial crisis

Given the role of CSR in explaining the amount of public debt that firms were able to raise during the crisis, we now turn to an examination of its effect on the pricing and contracting terms of new bond issues. We adopt a similar approach to the procedure adopted earlier in Sections 4 and 5. Due to the nature of our tests, however, we impose additional restrictions on the sample, requiring data availability for credit ratings as well as for covenants and security structures stipulated in the indenture agreements. Applying these requirements yields a sample of 1,483 bonds issued by 378 firms between 2007 and 2013. We then estimate the following specification:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Issue term}_{ijt} = & \beta_0 \text{CSR}_{i2006} + \beta_1 \text{CSR}_{i2006} * \text{Crisis}_t + \beta_2 \text{CSR}_{i2006} * \text{Post-crisis}_t + \gamma \mathbf{X}_{ijt-1} \\
 & + \delta' \mathbf{Z}_{it-1} + \text{IFE}_i + \text{TFE}_t + \varepsilon_{ijt}
 \end{aligned} \tag{5}$$

where *Issue term*_{ijt} is the dependent variable of interest: at-issue credit spreads, initial credit ratings, and time-to-maturity. All the explanatory variables, including the vector of controls in \mathbf{X}_{ijt-1} and \mathbf{Z}_{it-1} are as described for Model (2). As in model (4), we also control for industry fixed effects, *IFE*_i, to capture unobservable time-invariant industry-specific determinants of credit risk, and time effects, *TFE*_t, defined at the quarterly level. Standard errors are also double clustered at the industry and quarterly level. Because we have no firm fixed effects in the model, the firm's 2006 CSR level is also included as an explanatory variable.

[Insert Table 8 here]

We present bond-level descriptive statistics for bonds originated in the primary market over our test window in Table 8. The mean credit spread for new bond issues is 2.12%. As expected, there are large differences between the credit spreads of investment-grade and speculative-grade bonds (1.75% versus 4.30%). While 85 percent of the bonds are investment-grade issues (with ratings in the BBB category and above), a large fraction (44% of total issues) are concentrated in the bottom of the investment-grade credit rating category (BBB). The mean issue size is about \$678 million with an average time to maturity of just over 8 years (99 months).

In Panel A of Table 9 we report the results from estimating model (5) for debt spreads for the sample of bonds issued over the period 2007-2013. As before, we first control for bond-level variables (model (i)), and then add firm-level attributes (model (ii)), and governance controls (model (iii)). In all specifications, the effect of CSR on offering spreads is only negative and significant during the crisis period, while it is not significant in the surrounding periods. During the crisis, the effect is also economically important. For instance, based on the estimation results presented in model (iii), a one standard deviation increase in pre-crisis CSR is associated with 40 basis points lower spreads during the crisis period.²² Not surprisingly, there is a slight decline in this beneficial effect of CSR when we control for a bond's credit rating (model (iv)), but the effect remains substantial. Also note that the coefficient on CSR itself is positive, albeit statistically insignificant. We therefore also verify that the sum of the CSR coefficient and the CSR*crisis interaction is negative and significantly different from zero. This is indeed the case (not reported in the table). The effect of CSR on spreads during the post-crisis period is also negative, but not statistically significant, consistent with our findings for the secondary market spreads. The difference between the coefficients for the crisis and post-crisis periods is always statistically significant.

[Insert Table 9 here]

²²The standard deviation of CSR is 0.648 for the sample of bond issuers on the primary market.

As in the secondary market bond spread tests, we next verify that the documented effects are driven by a shock to market-wide trust rather than a shock to the supply of credit by augmenting model (5) with an interaction term between CSR and an indicator variable for the credit crunch period (July 2007–July 2008). Our findings persist, as illustrated in Panel B of Table 7: the negative effect of CSR on at-issue bond spreads is only present during the crisis-of-trust period.²³

We conduct two additional tests that assess the extent to which bond investors and rating agencies value the social capital built through CSR activities during a crisis of trust. First, we use initial credit ratings to capture the assessment of the rating agencies about the risk of the bond issues. Panel C of Table 7 shows that at-issue credit ratings are better (as evidence by a lower ratings number) for high-CSR issuers, but only during the crisis period; an increase in CSR by one standard deviation improves the bond’s rating by approximately one third of one notch during the crisis period. While this effect appears modest, it holds after controlling for bond and firm characteristics normally associated with bond ratings.

Second, we assess the relation between CSR and bond maturity. Maturity can be viewed as an extreme type of debt covenant given bondholders’ limited flexibility in recontracting due to unanimous consent requirements (Berger and Udell 1998). If CSR engenders trust, high-CSR firms may be able to secure financing over relatively longer time horizons when prevailing trust levels have been eroded. To assess the impact of CSR on bond maturity, we regress time-to-maturity, expressed in months, on bond- and firm-level controls as in model (5). The results from this estimation are reported in Panel D of Table 7 and show a significant positive relation between CSR and bond maturity during the crisis. According to model (iii), a one standard deviation increase in the pre-crisis level of CSR translates into a 9-month longer time-to-maturity (equivalent to

²³ Note that the effect of CSR during the crisis period becomes insignificant in model (iv) after controlling for the bond’s credit rating. This is not surprising since both the spread and the rating are measures of the bond’s default risk.

approximately 9 percent of the mean level of maturity in the sample) during the crisis compared to the pre-crisis period. We also verify that the sum of the coefficients on CSR and the CSR/Crisis interaction is positive and significant, and find that this is the case for models (ii) through (vi).

In sum, our primary bond market tests provide further evidence that bondholders value the trust earned from building social capital: during the crisis, high-CSR firms are able to raise more debt at more favorable interest rates, with better ratings, and for a longer period of time.

6. Conclusion

This paper investigates whether a firm's social capital, and the trust that it engenders, are viewed favorably by bondholders when the markets and the economy at large face a severe crisis of confidence, such as during the 2008-2009 financial crisis. We argue that an individual firm's social capital, built up through investments in CSR, reduces the agency costs of debt because stakeholder-oriented firms are less likely to take risky bets that primarily benefit shareholders, if successful, but damage other stakeholders if unsuccessful. In addition, stakeholder-oriented firms are also likely to benefit from reciprocity and, hence, accrue positive real effects (such as higher cash flows).

Using the financial crisis as an exogenous shock to trust, we show that high-CSR firms benefited from lower debt spreads in the secondary market during the financial crisis. These effects are more pronounced for firms with lower asset tangibility – these are exactly the firms that would have more of an opportunity to engage in asset substitution. Extending this analysis to the primary market, we further show that high-CSR firms were able to raise more debt capital on the public debt market during the crisis period. Among those firms that did access the market, high-CSR firms issued bonds with lower offering spreads, longer maturities, and better initial credit ratings, holding everything else constant.

Overall, our results are consistent with the notion that debt investors believe that high-CSR firms are less likely to engage in asset substitution that would be detrimental to creditors or other (non-shareholder) stakeholder groups in general. They also show that the benefits of CSR that accrued to shareholders during the financial crisis carry across to another important asset class, debt capital.

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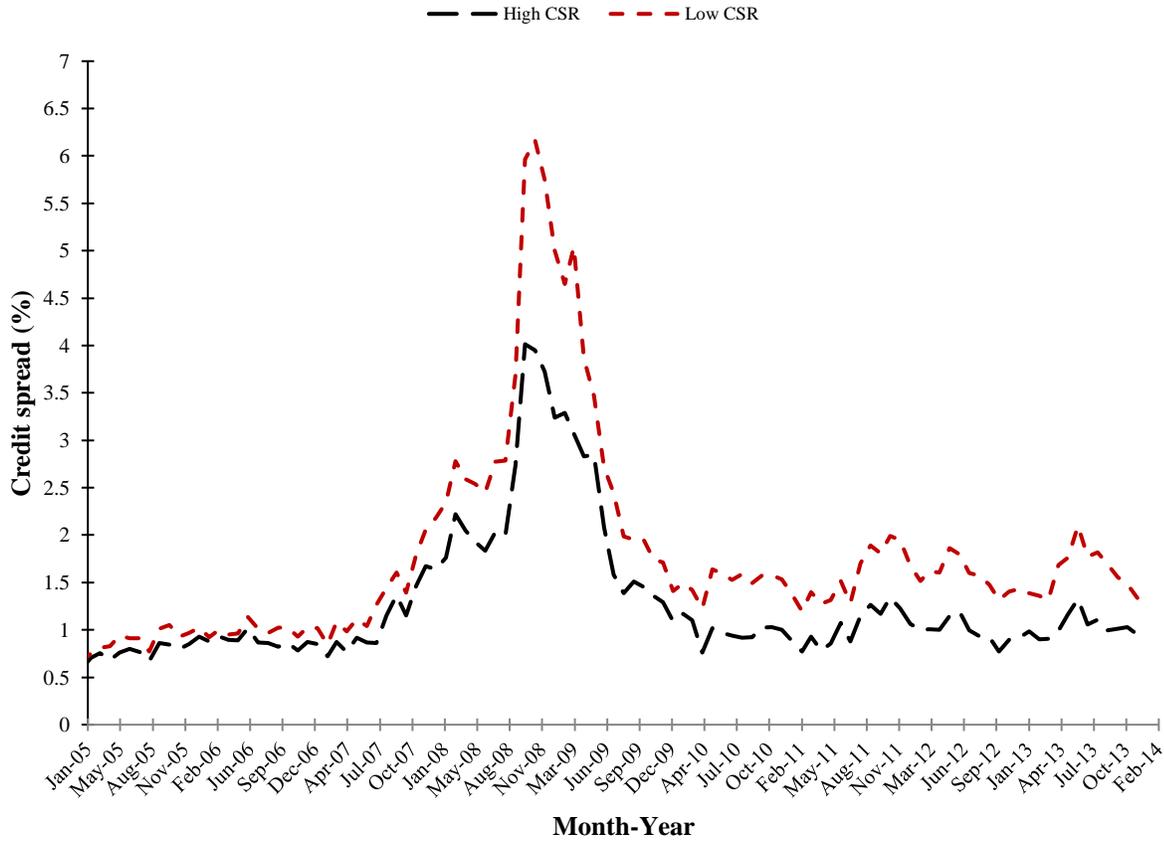
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Figure 1
Secondary market credit spreads (2005 - 2013)
High- versus low-CSR bond issuers



This figure plots the average credit spread of corporate bonds of high- and low-CSR firms over the 2005-2013 period. High-CSR (low-CSR) firms are defined as those firms with CSR scores above (below) the median CSR value of the year. For each portfolio, the spread is equally weighted across all the outstanding bonds. The period of August 2008 to March 2009 coincides with the crisis of trust described in Sapienza and Zingales (2008) and Lins, Servaes and Tamayo (2017).

Appendix: Variable Definitions

Bond Characteristics

<i>Amount</i>	=	Face (nominal) value of the bond issue.
<i>Issue</i>	=	Face (nominal) value of the bond issue scaled by total assets (AT).
<i>Coupon</i>	=	Applicable annual interest rate that the issuer is obligated to pay the bondholders.
<i>Redeemable</i>	=	Indicator variable, equal to 1 if the bond may be redeemed under certain conditions, and 0 otherwise.
<i>Fungible</i>	=	Indicator variable, equal to 1 if the bonds are, by virtue of their terms, equivalent, interchangeable, or substitutable, and 0 otherwise.
<i>Offering market</i>	=	Indicator variable, equal to 1 if the bond issue is offered globally and 0 if the offering is made to the domestic market only.
<i>Security</i>	=	Rank variable that takes the value of 1 to 5 for a junior subordinate, subordinate, senior subordinate, senior, and senior secured bonds.
<i>Covenant intensity</i>	=	Count of the number of covenants in the five main categories (payout, investment, financing, accounting, and event-related restrictions) reported on Mergent FISD.
<i>Credit spread</i>	=	Difference between the yield-to-maturity and the maturity-matched Treasury yield. Maturity-matched risk-free yields are obtained by linearly interpolating benchmark Treasury yields contained in the Federal Reserve H-15 release for constant maturities of 1/12, 3/12, 6/12, 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 20, and 30 years.
<i>Illiquidity</i>	=	Amihud (2002) measure of illiquidity that is defined based on the price impact of a secondary market bond trade per unit traded, implemented following the approach in Dick-Nielsen, et al. (2012).
<i>Time-to-maturity</i>	=	Time difference (in months) between a bond's issue date (in the case of new issues on the primary market) or trade date (in the case of outstanding issues on the secondary market) and its fixed maturity date.
<i>Credit rating</i>	=	Rank variable based on the conversion of alphabetical ratings to numerical values (e.g., AAA=1 ..., C=21). If an issue is rated by multiple credit rating agencies, the representative rating is from S&P. When this is not available, credit ratings are from Moody's and if this is not available, the rating is from Fitch.
<i>Investment-grade dummy</i>	=	Indicator variable, equal to 1 if the credit rating for the bond issue (issuer) is from (AAA=1) to (BBB-=10), and 0 otherwise.

Firm Characteristics and Equity Market Variables

<i>CSR</i>	=	Total net (strengths minus concerns) corporate social responsibility rating computed based on the sum of the net CSR indices for the following categories: environment, employees, human rights, community, and diversity, available from the MSCI ESG Stats database.
<i>Size</i>	=	Natural log of the market value of equity (CSHO multiplied by PRCC_F).
<i>Book-to-market</i>	=	Book value of equity (CEQ) divided by the market value of equity (CSHO multiplied by PRCC_F).
<i>Profitability</i>	=	Operating income before depreciation (OIBDP) divided by net sales (SALE).
<i>Short-term debt</i>	=	Debt in current liabilities (DLC) scaled by total assets (AT).
<i>Long-term debt</i>	=	Debt in long-term liabilities (DLTT) scaled by total assets (AT).
<i>Cash holdings</i>	=	Cash and short-term investments (CHE) scaled by total assets (AT).
<i>Tangibility</i>	=	Tangible property, plant and equipment (PPENT) scaled by total assets (AT).
<i>Capital expenditure</i>	=	Capital expenditures (CAPX) scaled by total assets (AT).
<i>Coverage ratio</i>	=	Interest cover ratio measured as operating income after depreciation (OIADP) plus interest expense (XINT) scaled by interest expense following the four categories in Blume et al. (1998).
<i>R&D intensity</i>	=	Research and development expense (XRD) scaled by net sales (SALE).
<i>Asset maturity</i>	=	Book-value-weighted average maturity of current assets and long-term assets following the methodology of Stohs and Mauer (1996). The maturity of current assets is measured as current assets (ACT) divided by costs of goods sold (COGS) and the maturity of long-term assets is measured as net property, plant, and equipment (PPENT) divided by depreciation expense (DP).
<i>Dividend dummy</i>	=	Indicator variable, equal to 1 if common dividends (DVC) is greater than zero, and 0 otherwise.
<i>Volatility</i>	=	Natural log of the standard deviation of daily stock returns from CRSP.
<i>Beta</i>	=	Dimson (1979) adjusted beta.
<i>E-index</i>	=	Entrenchment index from Bebchuk et al. (2009) and is the sum of six anti-takeover indicators from the Institutional Shareholder Service (ISS) including: (i) classified (staggered) board, (ii) poison pill, (iii) golden parachutes for executives, (iv) limited ability to amend charter, (v) limited ability to amend bylaws and (vi) supermajority voting requirements.

Table 1: Sample of Secondary Market Bond Trades

This table describes the sample selection criteria employed to arrive at the final sample of bonds used for the secondary market spreads analysis (Panel A), and its distribution across industries (Panel B).

Panel A: Sample selection

	Bonds	Issuers
Bonds with trade data on TRACE and issue data on FISD	2,212	342
Refinements for liquidity biases in TRACE	(35)	(4)
	2,177	338
Issuers not covered by MSCI ESG STATS	(182)	(41)
Issuers not covered by CRSP and Compustat	(6)	(1)
	1,989	296

Panel B: Industry composition

Industry	Bonds	Issuers
Consumer non-durables	189	24
Consumer durables	33	7
Manufacturing	282	46
Oil, gas, and coal extraction and products	250	41
Chemicals and allied products	156	19
Business equipment	171	20
Telephone and television transmission	141	16
Utilities	210	46
Wholesale, retail, and some services	119	15
Healthcare, medical equipment, and drugs	186	28
Other	252	34
	1,989	296

Table 2: Summary Statistics

Panel A presents the characteristics of the 1,989 bonds in our sample that remain unchanged over the life of the bond. Each bond is counted as one observation. Panel B contains monthly data on bond spreads and other characteristics that could potentially change on a monthly basis. Each bond/month is counted as one observation. Panel C contains annual data on firm characteristics. Each firm/year is counted as one observation. The sample comprises corporate debentures (CDEB) and corporate medium-term notes (CMTN) with a time-to-maturity over one month and less than 30 years. Detailed definitions of the variables are presented in the Appendix. All continuous firm-level variables are winsorized at the 1st and 99th percentiles, except for variables that cannot take on negative values, which are winsorized at the 99th percentile.

Panel A: Bond contract features						
	<i>N</i>	Mean	SD	25th pctl	50th pctl	75th pctl
<i>Amount</i> (USD bn)	1,989	0.578	0.543	0.275	0.450	0.750
<i>Coupon</i>	1,989	5.541	2.163	4.000	5.750	7.000
<i>Redeemable</i>	1,989	0.899	0.301	1	1	1
<i>Fungible</i>	1,989	0.762	0.426	1	1	1
<i>Offering market</i>	1,989	0.419	0.493	0	0	1
<i>Security</i>	1,989	3.992	0.235	4	4	4
<i>Covenant intensity</i>	1,945	6.757	3.154	5	6	8
Panel B: Bond secondary market attributes						
<i>Credit spread</i> (%)	72,638	1.921	1.736	0.769	1.326	2.463
<i>Illiquidity</i>	63,780	0.009	0.015	0.001	0.004	0.010
<i>Time-to-maturity</i> (months)	72,638	78.24	62.63	38.00	67.00	101.00
<i>Credit rating</i>	72,334	8.559	2.993	6	9	10
Panel C: Firm characteristics						
<i>CSR</i>	2,198	-0.015	0.644	-0.381	-0.075	0.226
<i>Size</i> (USD bn)	2,198	18.587	32.190	2.949	6.914	18.675
<i>Profitability</i>	2,197	0.223	0.158	0.122	0.187	0.293
<i>Short-term debt</i>	2,198	0.034	0.044	0.004	0.019	0.046
<i>Long-term debt</i>	2,198	0.265	0.136	0.169	0.251	0.329
<i>Cash holdings</i>	2,198	0.076	0.076	0.019	0.049	0.109
<i>Tangibility</i>	2,198	0.374	0.258	0.145	0.317	0.577
<i>Capital expenditure</i>	2,198	0.062	0.066	0.024	0.041	0.074
<i>Coverage 1</i>	2,198	4.271	1.234	3.786	5	5
<i>Coverage 2</i>	2,198	2.249	2.234	0	1.581	5
<i>Coverage 3</i>	2,198	1.849	3.396	0	0	1.928
<i>Coverage 4</i>	2,198	1.924	9.222	0	0	0
<i>Volatility</i>	2,172	-2.641	0.511	-3.013	-2.668	2.308
<i>Beta</i>	2,172	1.080	0.869	0.495	0.970	1.551
<i>E-index</i>	2,044	3.342	1.375	2	3	4

Table 3: CSR and Bond Pricing in the Secondary Market

This table reports regression models of secondary bond market credit spreads as a function of CSR and bond- and firm-level control variables. Panel A presents the test results using firm fixed effects with and without time (month) fixed effects. Panel B includes the credit rating as an additional control variable. Detailed definitions of the variables are presented in the Appendix. Numbers reported in parentheses are heteroskedasticity robust standard errors based on two-dimensional clustering at the firm- and month-level (significance at the 10, 5, and 1 percent level is indicated by *, **, and ***, respectively).

	Credit spread			
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
<i>CSR</i>	-0.215*** (0.061)	-0.138*** (0.050)	-0.133** (0.064)	0.001 (0.038)
<i>Illiquidity</i>		23.36*** (3.252)	20.72*** (3.199)	5.225*** (0.651)
<i>Amount</i>		0.074** (0.041)	0.021 (0.032)	0.016 (0.027)
<i>Coupon</i>		0.120*** (0.016)	0.107*** (0.018)	0.044*** (0.009)
<i>Time-to-maturity</i>		0.001*** (0.000)	0.002*** (0.000)	0.003*** (0.000)
<i>Redeemable</i>		0.177** (0.069)	0.131* (0.068)	-0.044 (0.059)
<i>Fungible</i>		0.066 (0.048)	0.015 (0.041)	-0.054* (0.033)
<i>Offering market</i>		0.108** (0.051)	0.019 (0.044)	0.004 (0.031)
<i>Security</i>		-0.470*** (0.590)	-0.347* (0.191)	-0.406** (0.187)
<i>Covenant intensity</i>		0.022** (0.010)	0.017 (0.011)	0.012* (0.007)
<i>Ln(Size)</i>			0.025 (0.225)	-0.359*** (0.111)
<i>Profitability</i>			-0.250 (0.522)	0.064 (0.328)
<i>Short-term debt</i>			0.134 (1.008)	-1.972*** (0.639)
<i>Long-term debt</i>			-1.018 (0.669)	0.055 (0.438)
<i>Cash holdings</i>			-0.966 (0.792)	0.226 (0.480)
<i>Tangibility</i>			-0.073 (0.955)	0.700 (0.505)
<i>Capital expenditure</i>			5.810*** (2.166)	-0.138 (0.977)

Table 3 (Continued)

Panel A continued

<i>Coverage 1</i>			-0.009 (0.070)	-0.077** (0.043)
<i>Coverage 2</i>			-0.335 (0.032)	-0.063*** (0.022)
<i>Coverage 3</i>			-0.016 (0.013)	0.005 (0.011)
<i>Coverage 4</i>			-0.002 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.002)
<i>Volatility</i>			0.554** (0.288)	0.130 (0.095)
<i>Beta</i>			-0.099 (0.087)	-0.027 (0.036)
<i>E-index</i>			0.165*** (0.052)	-0.054 (0.032)
Firm fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Time fixed effects	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	72,638	62,693	59,252	59,252
<i>R-squared</i>	0.48	0.54	0.54	0.81

Panel B: CSR and credit spreads – Sensitivity to default risk

	Credit spread			
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
<i>CSR</i>	-0.182*** (0.053)	-0.138*** (0.049)	-0.135*** (0.063)	0.006 (0.038)
<i>Credit rating</i>	0.092*** (0.027)	0.069** (0.032)	0.079** (0.032)	0.051*** (0.024)
Bond controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Governance controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Firm fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Time fixed effects	No	No	No	Yes
<i>R-squared</i>	0.54	0.55	0.55	0.81
Observations	63,525	62,438	59,018	59,018

Table 4: Economic Consequences of CSR in the Secondary Market during the Financial Crisis

This table presents the results from a regression of secondary market bond spreads as a function of CSR/time period interactions. *CSR* is measured at the end of 2006. Panel A reports regression estimates of credit spreads on *CSR* during the crisis and post-crisis periods. *Crisis* is an indicator variable that captures the time period from August 2008 to March 2009. *Post crisis* is an indicator variable that reflects the time period from April 2009 to December 2013. In Panel B, we re-estimate the models but report separate results on the role of *CSR* during the credit crunch. In this Panel, *Crunch* is an indicator variable that represents the time period from July 2007 to July 2008. Detailed definitions of the variables are presented in the Appendix. Numbers reported in parentheses are heteroskedasticity robust standard errors based on two-dimensional clustering at the firm- and month-level (significance at the 10, 5, and 1 percent level is indicated by *, **, and ***, respectively).

	Credit spread			
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
<i>CSR*Crisis</i>	-0.579** (0.259)	-0.629** (0.259)	-0.657*** (0.254)	-0.667*** (0.254)
<i>CSR* Post-crisis</i>	-0.033 (0.097)	-0.066 (0.084)	-0.089 (0.084)	-0.120 (0.086)
<i>Illiquidity</i>	5.394*** (0.656)	4.891*** (0.608)	4.794*** (0.608)	4.792*** (0.610)
<i>Amount</i>	0.037 (0.029)	0.045* (0.026)	0.042* (0.025)	0.042* (0.024)
<i>Coupon</i>	0.052*** (0.011)	0.042*** (0.010)	0.044*** (0.009)	0.041*** (0.009)
<i>Time-to-maturity</i>	0.002*** (0.000)	0.002*** (0.000)	0.002*** (0.000)	0.002*** (0.000)
<i>Redeemable</i>	-0.016 (0.064)	-0.039 (0.061)	-0.034 (0.062)	-0.042 (0.059)
<i>Fungible</i>	-0.124*** (0.033)	-0.109*** (0.032)	-0.094*** (0.031)	-0.092*** (0.032)
<i>Offering market</i>	0.049 (0.035)	0.038 (0.032)	0.028 (0.031)	0.026 (0.031)
<i>Security</i>	-0.653*** (0.160)	-0.631*** (0.172)	-0.549*** (0.214)	-0.479** (0.208)
<i>Covenant intensity</i>	0.012* (0.007)	0.009 (0.007)	0.013* (0.006)	0.008 (0.007)
<i>Credit rating</i>				0.069*** (0.028)
<i>Ln(Size)</i>		-0.479*** (0.123)	-0.477*** (0.126)	-0.440*** (0.125)
<i>Profitability</i>		0.292 (0.275)	0.254 (0.283)	0.142 (0.266)
<i>Short-term debt</i>		-1.688** (0.783)	-1.827** (0.810)	-1.706** (0.819)

Table 4 (Continued)

Panel A continued

<i>Long-term debt</i>		0.904*	0.924*	0.799
		(0.521)	(0.542)	(0.560)
<i>Cash holdings</i>		-0.203	-0.248	-0.271
		(0.487)	(0.499)	(0.501)
<i>Tangibility</i>		0.220	0.195	0.362
		(0.649)	(0.670)	(0.672)
<i>Capital expenditure</i>		-1.159	-0.858	-0.628
		(0.783)	(0.863)	(0.829)
<i>Coverage 1</i>		-0.034	-0.028	-0.012
		(0.042)	(0.047)	(0.045)
<i>Coverage 2</i>		-0.028	-0.029	-0.031
		(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.021)
<i>Coverage 3</i>		-0.002	-0.002	0.001
		(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.009)
<i>Coverage 4</i>		-0.002	-0.001	-0.002
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
<i>Volatility</i>		0.093	0.117	0.121
		(0.114)	(0.117)	(0.117)
<i>Beta</i>		-0.085*	-0.084*	-0.090**
		(0.045)	(0.047)	(0.047)
<i>E-index</i>			-0.066*	-0.062*
			(0.034)	(0.033)
<i>(Crisis – Post crisis)*CSR</i>	-0.546***	-0.563***	-0.568***	-0.547***
<i>(p-value)</i>	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Firm fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Time fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>R-squared</i>	0.82	0.83	0.83	0.83
Observations	50,600	50,270	48,089	47,959

Table 4 (Continued)

Panel B: CSR and credit spreads during the credit crunch and financial crisis				
	Credit spread			
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
<i>CSR*Crunch</i>	-0.065 (0.094)	-0.113 (0.096)	-0.144 (0.106)	-0.156 (0.104)
<i>CSR*Crisis</i>	-0.625** (0.311)	-0.708** (0.312)	-0.759*** (0.305)	-0.781*** (0.304)
<i>CSR*Post-crisis</i>	-0.078 (0.144)	-0.145 (0.128)	-0.191 (0.127)	-0.234* (0.126)
<i>Credit rating</i>				0.071*** (0.028)
<i>(Crunch – Crisis)*CSR</i>	-0.560*** (0.01)	-0.595*** (0.01)	-0.615*** (0.00)	-0.622*** (0.00)
<i>(Crisis – Post-crisis)*CSR</i>	-0.547*** (0.00)	-0.563*** (0.01)	-0.568*** (0.00)	-0.547*** (0.01)
<i>(Crunch – Post-crisis)*CSR</i>	-0.013** (0.02)	0.032 (0.66)	-0.047 (0.54)	-0.075 (0.36)
Bond controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Governance controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Firm fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Time fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>R-squared</i>	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.83
Observations	50,600	50,270	48,089	47,959

Table 5: CSR and Credit Spreads: Tangibility and Propensity for Asset Substitution

This table presents the results from a regression of secondary market bond spreads as a function of CSR/time period interactions, estimated separately for firms with tangibility below the median and firms with tangibility above the median. *CSR* is measured at the end of 2006. *Crisis* is an indicator variable that captures the time period from August 2008 to March 2009. *Post crisis* is an indicator variable that reflects the time period from April 2009 to December 2013. Detailed definitions of the variables are presented in the Appendix. Numbers reported in parentheses are heteroskedasticity robust standard errors based on two-dimensional clustering at the firm- and month-level (significance at the 10, 5, and 1 percent level is indicated by *, **, and ***, respectively).

	Low tangibility (i)	High tangibility (ii)
<i>CSR*Crisis</i>	-0.799** (0.361)	-0.337 (0.373)
<i>CSR*Post crisis</i>	-0.124 (0.108)	-0.086 (0.168)
<i>(Crisis – Post crisis)*CSR</i> <i>(p-value)</i>	-0.675** (0.04)	-0.251 (0.13)
Bond controls	Yes	Yes
Firm controls	Yes	Yes
Governance controls	Yes	Yes
Credit rating	Yes	Yes
Firm fixed effects	Yes	Yes
Time fixed effects	Yes	Yes
<i>R-squared</i>	0.81	0.84
Observations	21,924	21,725

Table 6: CSR, Credit Spreads, and Stock Returns during the Financial Crisis

This table presents the results from a regression of secondary market bond spreads as a function of pre-crisis CSR, CSR/time period interactions, contemporaneous stock returns, and stock return/time period interactions. CSR is measured at the end of 2006. Detailed definitions of the variables are presented in the Appendix. Numbers reported in parentheses are heteroskedasticity robust standard errors based on two-dimensional clustering at the firm- and month-level (significance at the 10, 5, and 1 percent level is indicated by *, **, and ***, respectively).

	(i)	(ii)
<i>CSR*Crisis</i>	-0.662*** (0.254)	-0.651*** (0.253)
<i>CSR*Post-crisis</i>	-0.121 (0.087)	-0.120 (0.087)
<i>Stock returns</i>	-0.346 (0.221)	-0.266 (0.284)
<i>Stock returns*Crisis</i>		-0.929 (0.913)
<i>Stock returns*Post crisis</i>		0.106 (0.369)
<i>(Crisis – Post crisis)*CSR</i> <i>(p-value)</i>	-0.541*** (0.01)	-0.531*** (0.01)
Bond controls	Yes	Yes
Firm controls	Yes	Yes
Governance controls	Yes	Yes
Credit rating	Yes	Yes
Firm fixed effects	Yes	Yes
Time fixed effects	Yes	Yes
<i>R-squared</i>	0.83	0.83
Observations	47,893	47,893

Table 7: CSR and Bond Offerings during the Financial Crisis

This table reports the results from regressions of the relative size of bond issues as a function of CSR, CSR/time period interactions, and control variables. The models are estimated from 2007 to 2013, and CSR is measured at the end of 2006. *Issue* is the dependent variable of interest and is defined as total offering amount scaled by total assets. Panel A reports the descriptive statistics for variables used in our estimations. Panel B presents the main results on the effects of CSR on raising public debt capital during the financial crisis and post-crisis periods. In Panel C, we expand the analysis to separately account for the role of CSR in accessing the primary bond market during the credit crunch period. In all estimations, the *Crunch*, *Crisis*, and *Post-crisis* time indicators follow our earlier definitions. Detailed definitions of the variables are presented in the Appendix. Figures reported in parentheses are the values of heteroskedasticity robust standard errors based on two-dimensional clustering at the industry- and quarter-level (significance at the 10, 5, and 1 percent level is indicated by *, **, and ***, respectively).

Panel A: Descriptive statistics						
	<i>N</i>	Mean	St. dev.	25th pctl	50th pctl	75th pctl
<i>CSR</i>	1,684	-0.056	0.575	-0.412	-0.075	0.258
<i>Issue</i>	1,684	0.073	0.116	0.019	0.040	0.086
<i>Size</i> (USD bn)	1,681	33.508	51.602	3.810	12.077	32.227
<i>Book-to-market</i>	1,681	0.453	0.333	0.248	0.389	0.598
<i>Profitability</i>	1,684	0.229	0.149	0.127	0.203	0.302
<i>Long-term debt</i>	1,684	0.268	0.153	0.162	0.249	0.354
<i>Tangibility</i>	1,684	0.344	0.258	0.125	0.275	0.563
<i>Capital expenditure</i>	1,684	0.059	0.062	0.021	0.041	0.072
<i>R&D intensity</i>	1,684	0.027	0.056	0	0	0.024
<i>Asset maturity</i>	1,621	6.085	5.671	2.217	3.993	7.889
<i>Dividend dummy</i>	1,684	0.779	0.414	1	1	1
<i>Investment-grade dummy</i>	1,684	0.755	0.430	1	1	1

Table 7 (continued)

	Issue	
	(i)	(ii)
<i>Crisis</i>	-0.002 (0.006)	
<i>Post crisis</i>	-0.001 (0.006)	
<i>CSR</i>	0.001 (0.007)	0.001 (0.008)
<i>CSR* Crisis</i>	0.015*** (0.004)	0.015*** (0.004)
<i>CSR* Post crisis</i>	-0.002 (0.007)	-0.004 (0.008)
<i>Ln(Size)</i>	-0.047*** (0.007)	-0.047*** (0.005)
<i>Book-to-market</i>	-0.082*** (0.026)	-0.075*** (0.024)
<i>Profitability</i>	0.035 (0.042)	0.020 (0.034)
<i>Long-term debt</i>	-0.089* (0.050)	-0.080** (0.048)
<i>Tangibility</i>	-0.027 (0.050)	-0.031* (0.035)
<i>Capital expenditure</i>	0.198* (0.105)	0.267** (0.109)
<i>R&D intensity</i>	-0.001 (0.054)	0.014 (0.057)
<i>Asset maturity</i>	-0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
<i>Dividend dummy</i>	-0.013 (0.013)	-0.013 (0.013)
<i>Investment-grade dummy</i>	-0.034** (0.015)	-0.031* (0.017)
<i>(Crisis – Post crisis)* CSR</i>	0.017***	0.018***
<i>(p-value)</i>	(0.00)	(0.00)
Industry fixed effects	Yes	Yes
Time fixed effects	No	Yes
R-squared	0.42	0.44
Observations	1,619	1,619

Table 8: Bond Issues on the Primary Market

This table reports the main attributes of 1,483 bonds issued from 2007 to 2013 by 381 U.S. domiciled and incorporated non-financial firms that are at the intersection of the CRSP, Compustat, MSCI ESG STATS, and Mergent FISD databases. The selection of bond issues is restricted to corporate debentures and corporate medium-term notes. All perpetual, foreign currency, preferred, exchangeable, puttable, convertible, private placement (Rule 144A), Yankee and Canadian bonds are excluded from the sample. Panel A presents the bond characteristics. Panel B reports the distribution of at-issue credit ratings. All variables are defined in the Appendix.

Panel A: Bond characteristics						
	N	Mean	St. dev.	25th pcntl	50th pcntl	75th pcntl
<i>Credit spread (%)</i> :						
Full sample	1,483	2.119	1.614	0.963	1.604	2.857
Investment-grade	1,270	1.753	1.294	0.866	1.424	2.193
Speculative-grade	213	4.302	1.611	3.166	4.094	5.353
<i>Amount (USD bn)</i>	1,483	0.678	0.598	0.350	0.500	0.850
<i>Time-to-maturity (months)</i>	1,483	98.97	46.23	60	120	120
<i>Redeemable</i>	1,483	0.979	0.143	1	1	1
<i>Fungible</i>	1,483	0.903	0.296	1	1	1
<i>Offering market</i>	1,483	0.701	0.458	0	1	1
<i>Security</i>	1,483	4.995	0.144	5	5	5
<i>Covenant intensity</i>	1,460	7.232	2.996	6	7	9

Panel B: At-issue credit ratings		
	Frequency	Percentage
AAA	31	2.09
AA	88	5.94
A	493	33.29
BBB	657	44.36
BB	144	9.72
B	65	4.39
CCC and below	3	0.20

Table 9: Economic and contracting consequences of CSR on primary market spreads, ratings, and maturity during the financial crisis

This table presents the results from regressions of spreads, credit ratings and maturity as a function of CSR, CSR/time period interactions, and control variables. The models are estimated from 2007 to 2013. *CSR* is measured at the end of 2006. Panel A reports regressions of at-issue credit spreads on *CSR* during the crisis and post-crisis periods. Panel B reports separate results on the role of *CSR* during the credit crunch. Panel C reports regressions of credit ratings. Panel D, we report regressions of time-to-maturity in months. In all estimations, the *Crunch*, *Crisis*, and *Post crisis* time indicators follow our earlier definitions. All variables employed are defined in the Appendix. Figures reported in parentheses are the values of heteroskedasticity robust standard errors based on two-dimensional clustering at the industry- and quarter-level (significance at the 10, 5, and 1 percent level is indicated by *, **, and ***, respectively).

	At-issue credit spread			
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
<i>CSR</i>	0.028 (0.158)	0.125 (0.141)	0.147 (0.140)	0.153 (0.151)
<i>CSR*Crunch</i>	-0.579*** (0.149)	-0.603** (0.242)	-0.620** (0.247)	-0.481* (0.269)
<i>CSR*Post crisis</i>	-0.164 (0.137)	-0.110 (0.093)	-0.115 (0.091)	-0.122 (-0.104)
<i>Amount</i>	-0.001 (0.001)	0.001*** (0.000)	0.001*** (0.000)	0.001*** (0.000)
<i>Time-to-maturity</i>	0.002** (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
<i>Redeemable</i>	0.159 (0.226)	-0.108 (0.114)	-0.083 (0.114)	-0.380** (0.146)
<i>Fungible</i>	0.036 (0.153)	-0.046 (0.108)	-0.049 (0.109)	-0.031 (0.135)
<i>Offering market</i>	-0.277* (0.152)	0.011 (0.084)	0.011 (0.092)	-0.031 (0.082)
<i>Security</i>	0.109 (0.449)	-0.238 (0.534)	-0.244 (0.529)	-0.033 (0.452)
<i>Covenant intensity</i>	0.228*** (0.027)	0.081*** (0.026)	0.071*** (0.026)	0.036 (0.025)
<i>Credit rating</i>				0.244*** (0.046)
<i>Size</i>		-0.507*** (0.053)	-0.529*** (0.059)	-0.255*** (0.057)
<i>Profitability</i>		0.373* (0.214)	0.574** (0.230)	0.222 (0.283)
<i>Short-term debt</i>		0.218 (0.495)	0.167 (0.472)	1.278** (0.587)
<i>Long-term debt</i>		0.865*** (0.322)	0.618 (0.375)	0.354 (0.416)

Table 9 (continued)

Panel A (continued)

<i>Cash holdings</i>		0.388 (0.366)	0.259 (0.329)	0.668* (0.386)
<i>Tangibility</i>		-0.534 (0.411)	-0.450 (0.415)	-0.251 (0.352)
<i>Capital expenditure</i>		2.531** (0.963)	1.912* (1.046)	1.311* (0.758)
<i>Coverage 1</i>		-0.233*** (0.078)	-0.229*** (0.065)	-0.156** (0.069)
<i>Coverage 2</i>		-0.101** (0.038)	-0.102*** (0.041)	-0.058* (0.035)
<i>Coverage 3</i>		0.028 (0.029)	0.024 (0.029)	0.034 (0.027)
<i>Coverage 4</i>		-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)
<i>Volatility</i>		0.376** (0.162)	0.352** (0.153)	0.233** (0.112)
<i>Beta</i>		-0.049 (0.062)	-0.053 (0.066)	-0.066 (0.069)
<i>E-index</i>			-0.059 (0.036)	-0.049* (0.029)
<i>(Crisis – Post crisis)*CSR</i>	-0.415***	-0.493**	-0.505**	-0.359*
<i>(p-value)</i>	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.07)
Industry fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Time fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>R-squared</i>	0.63	0.78	0.78	0.81
Observations	1,459	1,351	1,293	1,291

Table 9 (continued)

Panel B: CSR and at-issue credit spreads during the credit crunch and financial crisis				
	At-issue credit spread			
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
<i>CSR</i>	-0.095 (0.182)	0.094 (0.177)	0.132 (0.173)	0.149 (0.182)
<i>CSR*Crunch</i>	0.175 (0.123)	0.042 (0.099)	0.020 (0.110)	0.005 (0.093)
<i>CSR*Crisis</i>	-0.457** (0.205)	-0.571* (0.333)	-0.605* (0.341)	-0.477 (0.354)
<i>CSR*Post crisis</i>	-0.043 (0.179)	-0.079 (0.118)	-0.100 (0.113)	-0.118 (0.124)
<i>Credit rating</i>				0.244*** (0.047)
<i>(Crisis – Crunch)*CSR</i>	-0.632*** (0.00)	-0.613** (0.04)	-0.625** (0.03)	-0.482 (0.12)
<i>(p-value)</i>				
<i>(Crisis – Post crisis)*CSR</i>	-0.414*** (0.01)	-0.492** (0.04)	-0.505** (0.04)	-0.359 (0.14)
<i>(p-value)</i>				
<i>(Post crisis – Crunch)*CSR</i>	-0.218* (0.09)	-0.163** (0.04)	-0.120 (0.19)	-0.123 (0.26)
<i>(p-value)</i>				
Bond controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Governance controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Industry fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Time fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>R-squared</i>	0.63	0.78	0.78	0.81
Observations	1,459	1,351	1,293	1,291

Table 9 (continued)

Panel C: CSR and at-issue credit ratings during the financial crisis			
	At-issue credit rating		
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)
<i>CSR</i>	-0.321 (0.442)	-0.052 (0.259)	0.001 (0.276)
<i>CSR*Crisis</i>	-0.576*** (0.182)	-0.591*** (0.126)	-0.607*** (0.119)
<i>CSR*Post crisis</i>	-0.258 (0.239)	0.010 (0.142)	-0.010 (0.140)
<i>(Crisis – Post crisis)*CSR</i> <i>(p-value)</i>	-0.318 (0.33)	-0.601*** (0.01)	-0.617*** (0.01)
Bond controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm controls	No	Yes	Yes
Governance controls	No	No	Yes
Industry fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Time fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>R</i> -squared	0.61	0.83	0.81
Observations	1,457	1,349	1,291

Panel D: CSR and time-to-maturity of bond issues during the financial crisis				
	Time-to-maturity			
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
<i>CSR</i>	-8.292 (5.299)	-8.070 (6.142)	-5.598 (4.889)	-6.505 (3.902)
<i>CSR*Crisis</i>	7.959* (4.392)	14.786*** (3.793)	13.297*** (3.057)	11.784*** (3.352)
<i>CSR*Post crisis</i>	1.811 (5.798)	3.843 (6.570)	1.289 (6.521)	2.443 (6.009)
<i>Credit rating</i>				-3.966*** (1.443)
<i>(Crisis – Post crisis)*CSR</i> <i>(p-value)</i>	6.148* (0.09)	10.943** (0.05)	12.008** (0.05)	9.341* (0.08)
Bond controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Governance controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Industry fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Time fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>R</i> -squared	0.09	0.11	0.11	0.11
Observations	1,459	1,351	1,293	1,291