

Abstract Submitted
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Choice Shift in Opinion Network Dynamics¹ MICHAEL GABBAY,
University of Washington — Choice shift is a phenomenon associated with small group dynamics whereby group discussion causes group members to shift their opinions in a more extreme direction so that the mean post-discussion opinion exceeds the mean pre-discussion opinion. Also known as group polarization, choice shift is a robust experimental phenomenon and has been well-studied within social psychology. In opinion network models, shifts toward extremism are typically produced by the presence of stubborn agents at the extremes of the opinion axis, whose opinions are much more resistant to change than moderate agents. However, we present a model in which choice shift can arise without the assumption of stubborn agents; the model evolves member opinions and uncertainties using coupled nonlinear differential equations. In addition, we briefly describe the results of a recent experiment conducted involving online group discussion concerning the outcome of National Football League games are described. The model predictions concerning the effects of network structure, disagreement level, and team choice (favorite or underdog) are in accord with the experimental results.

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