### Evaluating internal and external dissonance of belief dynamics in social systems

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#### Extended Abstract

Belief dynamics are central to human society. Individuals depend on accurate beliefs to engage in appropriate behaviors (Hemmer et al., 2022; Yon et al., 2020), such as deciding which college or which job position to apply for. Additionally, beliefs are inherently social — successful coordination and cooperation are founded on shared beliefs, and people form groups based on deep-seated beliefs (Van Prooijen & Douglas, 2018; White et al., 2021). However, beliefs were traditionally often studied in isolation; psychological studies typically focused on a single belief of independent individuals. However, this approach is increasingly challenged. On the one hand, the network perspective of individual belief systems suggests that beliefs should be considered interconnected systems — a change in one belief is constrained by surrounding beliefs and leads to changes in other beliefs (Brandt, 2022; Dalege et al., 2016; Powell et al., 2023). On the other hand, a social network approach suggests groups can be viewed as a social network of beliefs held by individuals (Lüders et al., 2024; Sîrbu et al., 2017). Therefore, it is proposed that belief dynamics should increasingly be understood as a "network within a network," where the within-person belief network is embedded within between-person social networks (Galesic et al., 2021; Vlasceanu et al., 2023).

A fundamental force driving belief dynamics is the human endeavor to resolve inconsistencies within both individual and social networks (Dalege et al., 2016; Galesic et al., 2021). This concept is supported by classic psychological theories, such as cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) and Heider's balance theory (Heider, 1958). However, the nature of the trade-offs between internal dissonance and social imbalance remains unclear. Existing models often presume that individuals have a fixed preference for resolving internal dissonance over addressing social imbalance (Galesic et al., 2021), but the validity of this assumption is debatable. In reality, individuals may navigate these inconsistencies in a more dynamic and context-dependent manner. Humans are capable of synthesizing advice and personal experience, typically leaning towards more reliable sources (Biele et al., 2009; Vélez & Gweon, 2019). For instance, if an individual encounters conflicting beliefs about a particular issue but the social consensus on that issue is clear, they may choose to align with the social norm. Conversely, if the social consensus

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