Belief Aggregation with Automated Market Makers*

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Abstract

We consider the properties of a cost function based automated market maker aggregating the beliefs of risk-averse traders with finite budgets. Individuals can interact with the market maker an arbitrary number of times before the state of the world is revealed. We show that the resulting sequence of prices offered by the market maker is convergent under general conditions, and explore the properties of the limiting price and trader portfolios. The limiting price cannot be expressed as a function of trader beliefs, since it is sensitive to the market maker's cost function as well as the order in which traders interact with the market. For a range of trader preferences, however, we show numerically that the limiting price provides a good approximation to a weighted average of beliefs, inclusive of the market designer's prior belief as reflected in the initial contract price. This average is computed by weighting trader beliefs by their respective budgets, and weighting the initial contract price by the market maker's worst-case loss, implicit in the cost function. Since cost function parameters are chosen by the market designer, this allows for an inference regarding the budget-weighted average of trader beliefs.

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1 Introduction

It has long been recognized that markets are mechanisms that accomplish both resource allocation and belief aggregation, and that these two functions are inextricably linked.[1] In many instances where belief aggregation is desirable, however, spontaneous markets do not exist. This is the case within organizations, where mechanisms such as meetings and internal correspondence are highly imperfect vehicles for the transmission of information and opinion.[2]

The need for belief aggregation and the inefficiency of traditional mechanisms for securing it has led a number of organizations to experiment with internal "prediction markets" that involve the purchase and sale of securities with state-contingent payoffs. Among the earliest adopters were Hewlett-Packard, using real money contracts, and Google, which created an internal currency convertible into raffle tickets and prizes (Chen and Plott, 2002; Cowgill et al., 2009). Several other organizations have since followed suit, including non-profits and government agencies.[3] The Penn-Berkeley Good Judgment Project, twice winners of a forecasting competition sponsored by IARPA (the U.S. Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity), has also made extensive use of prediction markets (Ungar et al., 2012).

The earliest prediction markets, including those used by HP and Google, were web-based double auctions for the trading of binary securities. Their design was based on the pioneering Iowa Electronic Markets, which has listed contracts on such events as the outcomes of presidential and congressional elections for over two decades (Berg et al., 2008). This is a peer-to-peer market in which the exchange itself bears no risk, and traders are required to have enough cash margin to cover their worst case loss at all times. Such markets can work well if there is active participation by a large number of traders and sufficient liquidity to maintain interest. But since all liquidity is endogenously generated by the market participants, there may be situations in which bid-ask spreads remain wide and trading is intermittent for long stretches of time. Furthermore, prices across different contracts may be inconsistent in the sense that opportunities for arbitrage remain unexploited.[4]

An alternative approach to prediction market construction entails the use of an automated

[1] See, especially, Hayek (1945), who drew attention to the importance of the latter role.

[2] Chen and Plott (2002) make this point as follows: "Gathering the bits and pieces by traditional means, such as business meetings, is highly inefficient because of a host of practical problems related to location, incentives, the insignificant amounts of information in any one place, and even the absence of a methodology for gathering it. Furthermore, business practices such a quotas and budget settings create incentives for individuals not to reveal their information."

[3] Among corporations, the list includes Microsoft, Intel, Eli Lily, GE, Siemens, and many others (Charette, 2007; Broughton, 2013). Providers of software for the implementation of prediction markets include Inkling, Consensus Point, and Lumenogic.

[4] Chen and Plott (2002), for instance, report that the sum of the market prices of a set of binary securities on mutually exclusive and exhaustive events exceeded the amount that the single winning security would pay off in all 12 experiments in the HP market.

market maker that stands ready to buy and sell an indefinite amount of any contract, but adjusts prices in response to its net position. The most commonly studied class of such markets is that of market scoring rules, of which the logarithmic market scoring rule is an example (Hanson, 2003, 2007; Chen and Pennock, 2007). These market makers, which are based on proper scoring rules, maintain a bid-ask spread that is identically zero at all times, but only an infinitesimal amount can be purchased or sold at the currently quoted price. The average price at which an order trades depends on order size in accordance with a specified potential function referred to as the cost function. Market scoring rules satisfy several nice properties. Arbitrage opportunities are prevented from arising, so that no trader may ever make a single purchase or sale in a way that guarantees a positive net payoff regardless of the state of the world. Additionally and crucially, the overall exposure to loss faced by the market maker is kept bounded.[5] The prediction market platforms offered by Consensus Point and Inkling are based on automated market makers of this kind.

In this paper we focus on the properties of an algorithmic prediction market in which binary securities are traded by myopic, risk-averse individuals with heterogeneous prior beliefs and finite budgets. Traders interact repeatedly with a market maker rather than directly with each other, and can buy and sell unlimited amounts (subject to budget and collateral constraints) at prices determined by the market maker's cost function. A sequence of prices is generated by the behavior of traders, who can adjust their portfolios each time they face the market. We show that this price sequence is convergent under very general conditions. Convergence does not follow from feasibility alone, even in a market with a single trader, since any such trader can move the price back and forth between two points without ever exhausting her budget. Hence convergence relies on the optimality of trader behavior.

Given convergence, we turn to the question of how the limiting price and trader portfolios should be interpreted. The beliefs of individual traders cannot be inferred from their respective limiting portfolios even in an ordinal sense. For instance, it is is possible for a trader with more pessimistic beliefs about the likelihood of an event to end up with larger asset position than one with the same initial budget and more optimistic beliefs. This can happen, for instance, because the former faced lower prices on average when accessing the market in early periods. Hence the ranking of trader beliefs need not correspond to the ranking of asset positions even if all initial budgets are identical.[6] Given the limiting price, however, the set of traders with positive limiting asset positions must be more optimistic about the likelihood of the event than the belief implicit in this price, while those with negative limiting asset positions must be more pessimistic.

[5] Abernethy et al. (2011, 2013) have generalized the idea of a market scoring rule to settings in which the state space is exponentially large compared with the set of offered securities, and fully characterized the class of automated market makers that guarantee no arbitrage, bounded market maker loss, and other desirable properties. Chen et al. (2013) have extended these results to cover markets over continuous state spaces.

[6] This is a common feature in markets where out-of-equilibrium trading can occur; see, for instance, Hahn and Negishi (1962) and Foley (1994).

This limiting price clearly cannot be expressed as a function of trader beliefs, since it is sensitive to the market maker cost function as well as the order in which traders interact with the market. We show that for a range of beliefs and trader preferences, the limiting price provides a good approximation to a weighted average of beliefs, where trader beliefs are weighted by their budgets, the price faced by the initial trader is interpreted as the market maker's belief, and this belief is weighted by the market maker's maximum loss implicit in the cost function. Since the cost function parameters are chosen by the market designer, this approximation allows for an inference regarding the budget-weighted average of trader beliefs. Furthermore, in markets with internal currencies, the budgets themselves can be chosen to be equal if one wants to estimate a simple average of trader beliefs. Alternatively, budgets can be allowed to vary endogenously by allowing the same currency to be used in a sequence of markets, so that traders with strong forecasting performance come to carry greater weight over time.

There are two strands of literature to which our work is directly connected. Pennock (1999), Manski (2006), Gjerstad (2004), and Wolfers and Zitzewitz (2006) have previously considered prediction markets with heterogeneous priors and finite budgets, but rather than a market maker allowing for a sequence of trades, they considered a single equilibrium price determined by a market clearing condition. Manski showed that with risk-neutral traders the equilibrium price corresponds to the corresponding quantile of the belief distribution, and can therefore be quite distant from the average belief. When traders are risk averse with log utility, however, the equilibrium price is precisely equal to the budget-weighted average of trader beliefs (Pennock, 1999). This connection becomes approximate if one allows for departures from log utility while maintaining risk aversion (Gjerstad, 2004; Wolfers and Zitzewitz, 2006).

A second strand of literature examines market scoring rules with a common prior but heterogeneous information. Ostrovsky (2012) finds that with risk-neutral traders in this setting, prices converge to the common belief that would arise if all information were pooled and applied to the common prior. Chen et al. (2012) showed how this idea can be used to design sets of securities to aggregate information relevant to a particular event of interest. Full information aggregation and a common posterior belief also occur with risk-averse traders under a weak smoothness condition (Iyer et al., 2010). These results reflect the fact that with a common prior, posterior beliefs must be identical if they are public information (Aumann, 1976), and repeated belief announcements generically leads to belief convergence (Geanakopolos and Polemarchakis, 1982). With heterogeneous priors, of course, posterior beliefs may differ even if all information is aggregated. More importantly, all information may not be aggregated if the priors themselves are unobservable (Sethi and Yildiz, 2012). In order to focus on the role of heterogeneous priors, we abstract here from differences in information, effectively assuming that all information is public at the start of the trading process. The market therefore serves to aggregate opinions based on the differential interpretation of public information, rather than to aggregate information held by otherwise identical individuals with a common prior.

Also related to our work is that of Othman and Sandholm (2010), who examine the prices that emerge when a set of risk neutral traders with heterogeneous priors face an automated marker maker in sequence, with each trader interacting with the market just once. They establish that the last price in the resulting finite sequence is heavily dependent on the order in which traders arrive, but that the price is relatively stable when the number of traders is large and their order is chosen uniformly at random. In contrast, the set of traders in our model each face the market repeatedly, resulting in an infinite sequence of prices and portfolios with a well defined limit. It is the properties of this limit with which we are concerned.

2 The Model

We explore a setting in which a finite set of traders with heterogeneous prior beliefs and common information interact repeatedly with an electronic market maker. When given an opportunity to trade, each individual adjusts his market position in order to maximize expected utility conditional on his subjective belief. This shifts the market state and determines the price faced by the next trader, and so on, in sequence, for an indefinite number of periods.

Formally, let $N = \{1, ..., n\}$ denote the set of traders. The true state of the world is denoted $\omega \in \{0, 1\}$, to be revealed after the trading process has run its course.[7] The subjective belief of trader i that $\omega = 1$ is denoted p_i, and each trader is endowed at the start of the process with a cash endowment y_i. Traders may have heterogeneous initial cash holdings as well as heterogeneous beliefs.

Traders participate in a cost function based market operated by an automated market maker. The market maker offers only a single security that may be redeemed for \$1 if $\omega = 1$ and \$0 otherwise. Traders may buy or (short) sell this security, and are allowed to buy/sell arbitrary fractions of securities. They interact with the market one at a time, repeatedly, in arbitrary order. Specifically, let $k : \mathbb{N} \to N$ denote the trading order, where $k(t)$ is the trader who accesses the market in period t. We assume that each trader can access the market an infinite number of times:

Assumption 1. *For each $i \in N$, the set $\{t \,|\, k(t) = i\}$ is infinite.*

A special case of this arises if traders access the market in the same order repeatedly, so that $k(1), ..., k(n)$ are all distinct and $k(t) = k(t - n)$ for all $t > n$.

At the end of any given period $t \in \mathbb{N}$, each trader has a cash position $y_{i,t}$ and a (possibly negative) asset position $z_{i,t}$. Traders are constrained to take positions that leave them with non-negative wealth in all states:

[7] To accommodate an unbounded number of trades one could assume, as in Ostrovsky (2012), that the sth trade occurs at time $1 - 1/s$ and that the state is revealed at time 1. In practice, convergence to a limiting price is quite rapid and requires just a few rounds of trading.

Assumption 2. *For each i and t, $y_{i,t} \geq 0$ and $y_{i,t} + z_{i,t} \geq 0$.*

For traders with positive asset positions this means only that their cash cannot be negative. For traders with short positions, it means that they must have enough cash collateral to meet their obligations if $\omega = 1$ occurs. Initially all asset positions are zero and cash positions are strictly positive: $z_{i,0} = 0$ and $y_{i,0} = y_i > 0$ for all i.

The behavior of the market maker is fully specified by a potential function C, referred to as the cost function. Let q_t denote the (possibly negative) number of securities that have been purchased from the market at the end of period t, and set $q_0 = 0$. If trader $k(t)$ purchases r_t units of the security in period t, he is charged $C(q_t) - C(q_{t-1})$, where $q_t = q_{t-1} + r_t$. Specifically, if r_t is the (possibly negative) quantity of the security purchased by the trader $j = k(t)$ in period t, then

$$z_{j,t} = z_{j,t-1} + r_t$$

and

$$y_{j,t} = y_{j,t-1} - C(q_t) + C(q_{t-1}).$$

The use of a cost function implies that the market is path independent in the sense that the cost of purchasing r units of the security and then immediately purchasing r' units is the same as the cost of purchasing $r + r'$ units together in a single purchase. The cost function C satisfies the following standard properties (Abernethy et al., 2011, 2013).

Assumption 3. *$C : \mathbb{R} \to \mathbb{R}$ is smooth, increasing, convex, and satisfies bounded loss.*

The bounded loss condition requires that regardless of trader budgets, behavior and the realized state, there is a finite bound on the loss that the market maker can suffer. Specifically, the quantity

$$\max_{q \in \mathbb{R}} \{\max \{q - C(q), -C(q)\}\}$$

is assumed to be upper bounded.

At the end of period t the instantaneous price π_t of the security, that is, the price per unit security of an infinitesimally small fraction of a security, is simply $C'(q_t)$, the derivative of C evaluated at $q = q_t$. The bounded loss condition implies that for any $\pi \in (0, 1)$, there exists some $q \in \mathbb{R}$ such that $C'(q) = \pi$ (Abernethy et al., 2011, 2013). Let $p_0 = C'(0)$ denote the initial price, before the onset of trading. This may be interpreted as the prior belief of the market maker.

When given the opportunity to trade, traders myopically maximize the expected value of a utility function $u(w)$, where w is the wealth remaining after the true state has been revealed.[8] We assume the following.

[8] For simplicity we assume that all traders share the same utility function, but all of our theoretical results carry over easily to the setting in which each trader i has a distinct utility function u_i satisfying the criteria in Assumption 4.

Assumption 4. $u : \mathbb{R}_+ \to \mathbb{R}$ *is smooth, increasing and strictly concave, with* $\lim_{w\to 0} u'(w) = \infty$.

Hence trader $j = k(t)$ chooses $r_t \in \mathbb{R}$ to maximize

$$p_j u(z_{j,t} + y_{j,t}) + (1 - p_j)u(y_{j,t}). \tag{1}$$

Since u is increasing and concave, and C is convex, this quantity is concave in r_t and it suffices to find a local maximum.

After the period t transaction, the state is updated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
y_{j,t} &\leftarrow y_{j,t-1} - C(q_{t-1} + r_t) + C(q_{t-1}) \\
z_{j,t} &\leftarrow z_{j,t-1} + r_t \\
y_{i,t} &\leftarrow y_{i,t-1} \ \forall i \neq j \\
z_{i,t} &\leftarrow z_{i,t-1} \ \forall i \neq j \\
q_t &\leftarrow q_{t-1} + r_t \\
\pi_t &\leftarrow C'(q_t)
\end{aligned}$$

The next trader to face the market, $k(t+1)$, then encounters the market state q_t, and so on. This generates sequences of prices $\{\pi_t\}$, market maker positions $\{q_t\}$, and trader portfolios $\{y_{i,t}, z_{i,t}\}$. We show below that these sequences necessarily converge, and use bars to denote the limiting values of all variables. Hence $\overline{\pi}$ denotes the limiting price, $\overline{q}$ the limiting market state, and $(\overline{y}_i, \overline{z}_i)$ the limiting portfolio of each trader i.

3 Examples

The model may be illustrated with some simple examples. Suppose that the trader preferences belong to the following class:

$$u(w) = \frac{w^{1-\rho}}{1-\rho} \tag{2}$$

where $\rho \geq 0$ is a parameter. This class of CRRA (Constant Relative Risk Aversion) preferences includes risk neutrality and log utility as special cases.[9]

Prices are set by the market maker in accordance with a Logarithmic Market Scoring Rule (LMSR), based on the cost function

$$C(q) = b \log(e^{q/b} + a) \tag{3}$$

[9] Specifically, risk neutrality corresponds to $\rho = 0$ and log utility to the limit as $\rho \to 1$. Risk neutrality falls outside of our model as Assumption 4 is violated.

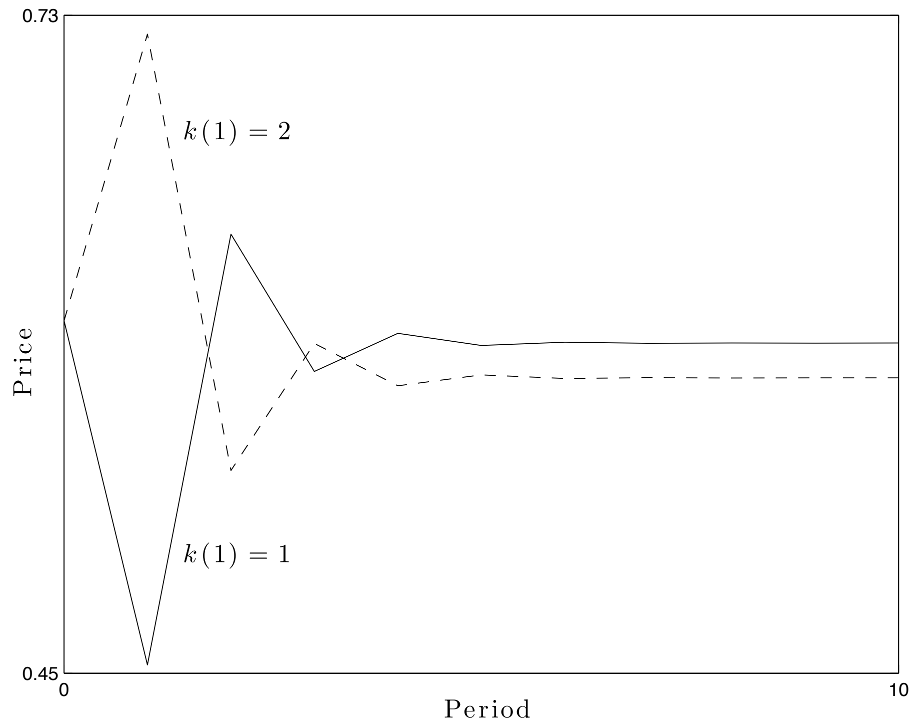

Figure 1: Price Dynamics for Different Trading Orders

where $b > 0$ is a parameter reflecting the sensitivity of prices to orders, and a is a parameter that determines the initial price. Specifically, the price at market state q is

$$\pi(q) = C'(q) = \frac{e^{q/b}}{e^{q/b} + a}.$$

If the market maker's initial belief about the likelihood that $\omega = 1$ is denoted $p_0 = \pi(0)$, then

$$a = \frac{1 - p_0}{p_0}.$$

This is the specification we use for our numerical simulations below, and is mathematically equivalent to running a 2-state LMSR in which the initial holding for outcome 0 is set to $b \log((1-p_0)/(p_0))$, resulting in an initial instantaneous price of p_0 for the security.

Within this class of preference and cost function specifications, we illustrate the model with some examples. First consider the case $n = 2$. The order in which the two traders interact with the market is irrelevant after the first trade has occurred; whenever a trader faces the market in two successive periods, there is no trade in the latter period. Hence we may consider without loss of generality the case in which traders alternate in interacting with the market. The following example considers a case in which the initial price lies in between the beliefs of the two traders.

Example 1. *Suppose* $n = 2$, $(p_1, p_2) = (0.2, 0.9)$, $y_1 = y_2 = 10$, $\rho = 2$, $p_0 = 0.6$, *and* $b = 10$. *Then limiting outcomes depend on the trading order as follows:*

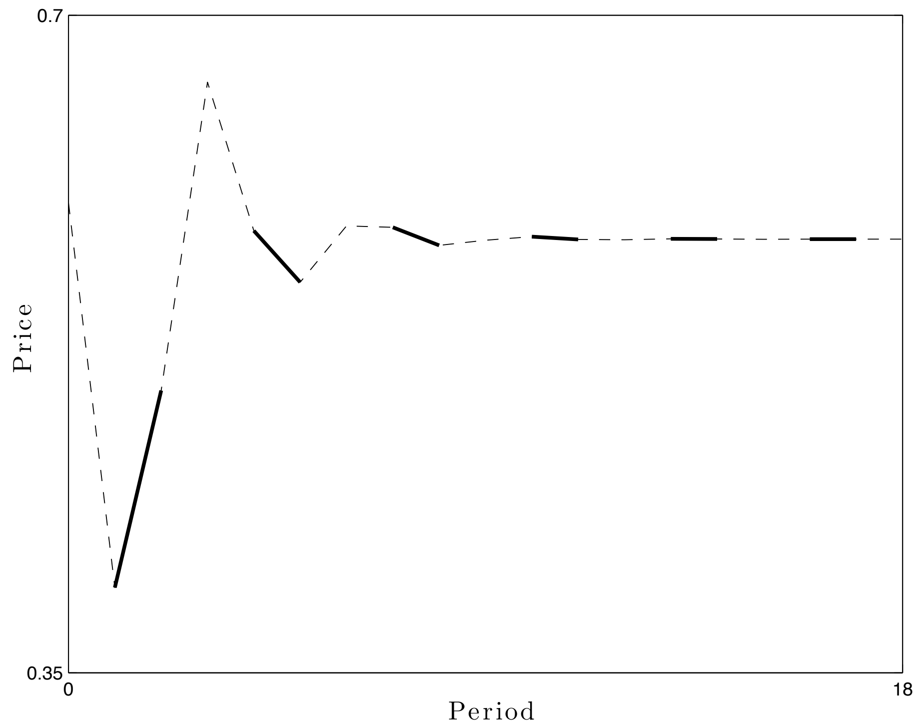

Figure 2: Rebalancing by Trader 2 (transactions in bold)

$k(1)$	$\overline{\pi}$	$\overline{q}$	$(\overline{y}_1, \overline{y}_2)$	$(\overline{z}_1, \overline{z}_2)$
1	0.59	0.39	$(14.75, 5.48)$	$(-8.61, 8.22)$
2	0.58	1.00	$(15.58, 5.01)$	$(-8.89, 7.89)$

The price paths for the two cases are shown in Figure 1. Note that the order of trading affects the limiting outcomes. This order dependence of the limiting price does not generally arise in information-based models with a common prior, as in Ostrovsky (2012).

In Example 1, regardless of the trading order, traders always trade in the direction of their beliefs, buying when the price is below their subjective belief and selling when it is above. But this need not always be the case, as the following example shows.

Example 2. *Suppose* $n = 3$*,* $(p_1, p_2, p_3) = (0.1, 0.7, 0.9)$*,* $y_1 = y_2 = y_3 = 10$*,* $k(t) = t$ *for* $t \leq 3$ *and* $k(t) = k(t-3)$ *thereafter. All other specifications are as in Example 1. Then the sequence of prices converges to* $\overline{\pi} = 0.58$*, with limiting market maker position* $\overline{q} = 0.79$*. Limiting holdings of cash are* $(\overline{y}_1, \overline{y}_2, \overline{y}_3) = (16.21, 9.00, 5.26)$ *and limiting holdings of the security are* $(\overline{z}_1, \overline{z}_2, \overline{z}_3) = (-11.62, 2.68, 8.14)$*. Trader 2 buys at time* $t = 2$ *and sells at time* $t = 5$*, although* $\pi_t < p_2$ *for all* t*.*

Figure 2 illustrates the dynamics of prices and trades for the first 18 periods. Each of the three participants trades six times in sequence. The initial price equals the initial market maker belief. As can be seen from the figure, the second trader buys at $t = 2$ but sells at $t = 5$, even though the

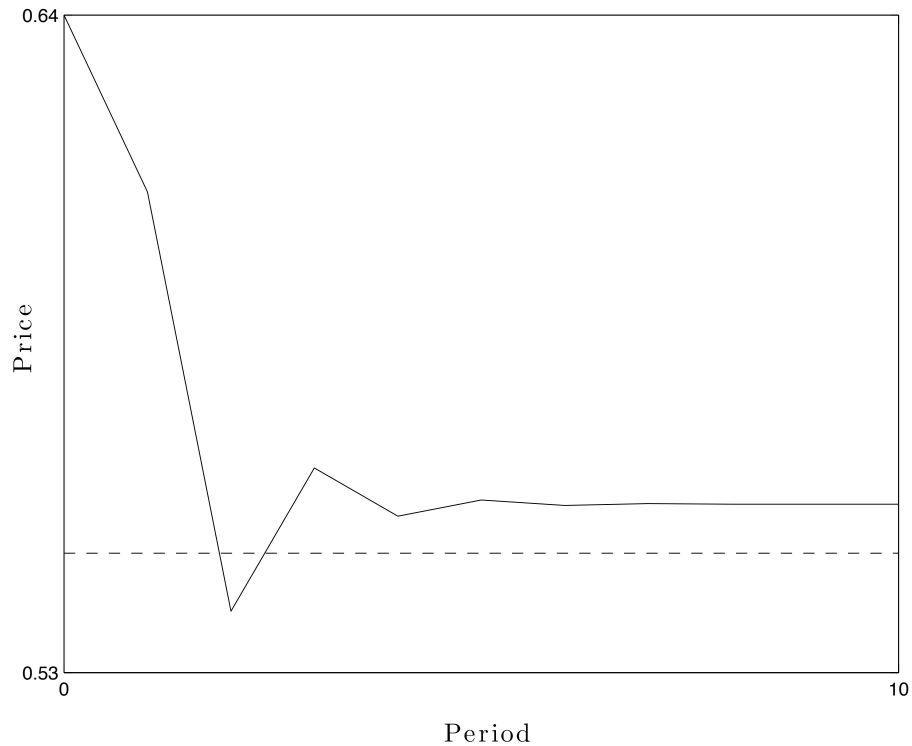

Figure 3: Limiting Price Lies Outside Belief Bounds

price is below her subjective belief on both occasions. The reason for this is that this trader builds up a significant positive inventory of the security at $t = 2$, when the price has been pushed very low by the pessimistic trader 1. When trader 2 accesses the market for a second time at $t = 5$, she unloads some of this accumulated inventory at a more favorable price, and thus rebalances her portfolio. This occurs despite the fact that traders are behaving myopically, and the higher price at $t = 5$ is not previously anticipated.

The fact that traders sometimes shift prices away from their beliefs raises the possibility that the limiting price may lie outside the interval defined by the lowest and highest beliefs, even if the price temporarily falls inside this interval. The following example illustrates.

Example 3. *Suppose* $n = 2$, $k(1) = 1$, $(p_1, p_2) = (0.55, 0.40)$, $y_1 = y_2 = 10$, *and* $p_0 = 0.64$, *with all other specifications as in Example 1. Then the sequence of prices converges to* $\overline{\pi} = 0.5582 > \max\{p_1, p_2\}$, *even though* $\pi_2 = 0.5403 < p_1$.

The price dynamics for this example are shown in Figure 3. The market maker prior (and initial price) lies above the belief of the most optimistic trader, who is the first to interact with the market. This trader sell and the price declines but remains above the higher of the two trader beliefs. The second trader then also sells and drives the price below the belief of the first trader, so it now falls within the interval defined by the beliefs. In the third period, the more optimistic trader now covers some of his short position, to an extent that the price is again driven above his belief. After this point the price never falls back below the highest belief.

We show below that this phenomenon cannot occur if the market maker belief (and hence initial price) itself lies within the interval defined by the trader beliefs. That is, if the initial price is in the interval, then all subsequent prices also lie in this interval.

4 Price Bounds

We know that traders may trade against their beliefs: an optimist may sell at a price that is below his expectation or a pessimist may buy at a price above his expectation. But not all such trades are possible. The following result states that a trader will trade against his belief only if this involves a reduction in risk, by selling from a long position or buying to cover a short position in the asset. This is intuitive, since trading against one's belief involves a reduction in expected payoff and can only be motivated by a reduction in risk.[10]

Lemma 1. *Let* $i = k(t)$*.*

1. *If* $p_i \leq \pi_{t-1}$ *and* $z_{i,t-1} \geq 0$*, then* $\pi_t \leq \pi_{t-1}$*.*
2. *If* $p_i \geq \pi_{t-1}$ *and* $z_{i,t-1} \leq 0$*, then* $\pi_t \geq \pi_{t-1}$*.*

Next we show that a trader with a positive asset position, facing a price that is below his belief, will not buy so much of the asset that the price rises above his belief. Similarly, a trader who holds a short position and faces a price above his belief will not sell additional units to such a degree that the price falls below his belief.

Lemma 2. *Let* $i = k(t)$*.*

1. *If* $p_i \geq \pi_{t-1}$ *and* $z_{i,t-1} \geq 0$*, then* $\pi_t \leq p_i$*.*
2. *If* $p_i \leq \pi_{t-1}$ *and* $z_{i,t-1} \leq 0$*, then* $\pi_t \geq p_i$*.*

These results allow us to place bounds on the sequence of prices. We can still show that the price remains within the interval defined by the lowest and highest belief, as long as the initial price lies in this interval. Define $I = [p_{\min}, p_{\max}]$, where $p_{\min}$ and $p_{\max}$ are the lowest and highest elements in the set $\{p_0, \ldots, p_n\}$. Notice that this set includes the initial market price p_0, which can be interpreted as the belief of the market maker. We then have:

Proposition 1. *For all* $t \geq 0$*,* $\pi_t \in I$*.*

[10] Proofs of all formal claims are in the Appendix.

Proposition 1 establishes that prices remain within the interval defined by trader beliefs as long as the initial price, reflecting the market designer's prior belief, also lies in this interval and, more generally, that the price sequence must lie in the interval defined by the entire set of beliefs, inclusive of the market maker's prior. An immediate implication of this is that prices are always bounded away from the extremes of 0 and 1. We show next that the price sequence is not just bounded in this manner but also convergent.

5 Convergence

Given that $i = k(t)$ is the trader facing the market in period t, let $s(t)$ denote the last period in which this trader interacted with the market, and set $s = 0$ is there is no such period (that is, if i has not traded prior to period t). If $s(t) > 0$, then the trader's position $(y_{i,t-1}, z_{i,t-1})$ at the start of period t must have been optimal at the price $\pi_{s(t)}$ at which this trader last left the market. The following result states that this trader's period t transaction results in a price π_t that is a weighted average of the price at which the trader last left the market, and the price at which he now finds it.

Lemma 3. *For each t such that $s(t) > 0$, there exists $\alpha_t \in [0, 1)$ such that $\pi_t = \alpha_t \pi_{s(t)} + (1-\alpha_t)\pi_{t-1}$.*

If the prices π_{t-1} and $\pi_{s(t)}$ are identical, then Lemma 3 holds for any $\alpha \in [0, 1)$. If not, then the following result establishes that there is an upper bound $\overline{\alpha} < 1$ such that $\alpha_t < \overline{\alpha}$ for all t provided that the prices π_s and π_{t-1} are separated by some number $\eta > 0$.

Lemma 4. *For any $\eta > 0$, there exists $\overline{\alpha}(\eta) < 1$ such that, for all t with $s(t) > 0$ and $|\pi_s - \pi_{t-1}| \geq \eta$, $\alpha_t < \overline{\alpha}$.*

We are now in a position to establish convergence. We do so for the special case in which traders interact with the market in the same fixed sequence with $k(t) = k(t-n)$ for all $t > n$, although the proof may be generalized to cover arbitrary trading orders.

For $t > n$ define $\overline{\pi}_t$ and $\underline{\pi}_t$ as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \overline{\pi}_t &= \max\{\pi_{t-s} \,|\, s = 0, ..., n-1\}, \\ \underline{\pi}_t &= \min\{\pi_{t-s} \,|\, s = 0, ..., n-1\} \end{aligned}$$

These are the highest and lowest prices observed over the past n periods, once the period t transaction has been completed. Then from Lemma 3 we have:

Lemma 5. *The sequences $\{\overline{\pi}_t\}$ and $\{\underline{\pi}_t\}$ are non-increasing and non-decreasing respectively.*

An immediate consequence is that both sequences are convergent; let $\overline{\pi}$ and $\underline{\pi}$ denote their respective limits. We therefore have

$$\limsup \pi_t = \overline{\pi} \geq \underline{\pi} = \liminf \pi_t.$$

The sequence of prices is convergent if and only if the above holds with strict equality. The following is a key step in establishing convergence.

Lemma 6. *For any $\gamma > 0$, there exists $\delta \in (0, \gamma)$ and $t' \in \mathbb{N}$ such that, for all $t > t'$, $\pi_t > \overline{\pi} - \delta$ implies $\pi_{t-1} > \overline{\pi} - \gamma$.*

This result can be used to construct a sequence of n consecutive prices all of which are arbitrarily close to $\overline{\pi}$, and hence all greater than $\underline{\pi}$ if $\underline{\pi} < \overline{\pi}$. But every sequence of n consecutive prices must include at least one that is no greater than $\underline{\pi}$, which is enough to prove convergence:

Theorem 1. *The sequence $\{\pi_t\}$ is convergent.*

We now turn to the question of how the limiting price and portfolios may be interpreted, having established that these limits are well-defined.

6 Limiting Portfolios

Recall that $\overline{\pi}$ denotes the limiting price. For any trader i with belief p_i and limiting portfolio $(\overline{y}_i, \overline{z}_i)$, the following must hold:

Proposition 2. *For each trader i, $\overline{z}_i > 0$ (resp. $\overline{z}_i < 0$) if and only if $p_i > \overline{\pi}$ (resp. $p_i < \overline{\pi}$).*

This result is very intuitive. If a trader with belief higher than the terminal price holds a short position, such a trader could reduce risk and increase expected return by buying a small quantity of the asset. If, instead, he holds a zero position he could increase utility despite increasing risk by buying a small amount of the asset. Hence such a trader must hold a positive position. The case of traders with negative positions is analogous. Note that the result does not imply that positions are monotonic in beliefs: this need not be the case even if all budgets are equal.

Proposition 2 implies that, given the limiting price, the set of traders may be partitioned into two groups, such that all members of one group hold positive limiting asset positions and assign greater likelihood to the occurrence of the event than the limiting price, while all those in the other group hold short limiting positions in the asset and assign lower likelihood to the occurrence of the even than the limiting price. One cannot, however, rank the beliefs of individuals who belong to the same group based on their limiting portfolios. That is, a trader with a larger limiting asset position may place lower likelihood on the occurrence of the event than a trader with a smaller asset position, even if both begin with the same cash position. This is a common feature of markets in which out-of-equilibrium trading is permitted, since the prices faced by individual traders depend on the beliefs of their predecessors in the trading order.

We now show that under certain conditions, the limiting price may be used to make inferences about a weighted average of trader beliefs.

7 Limiting Prices

We have proved that prices converge in markets operated by cost function based automated market makers when traders are risk averse with heterogeneous beliefs. In this section, we investigate the value to which they converge. We have already shown that this value depends on the order in which traders interact with the market, so it cannot be any deterministic function of traders' beliefs and budgets. However, we will see that under a wide range of conditions, this value is very close to a deterministic quantity. In particular, it is close to a weighted average of the beliefs of the traders and the initial market price (which can be interpreted as the market maker's prior belief), with traders' beliefs weighted by their budgets and the initial market price weighted by the market maker's worst case loss. Specifically, we use numerical methods to explore the conjecture that

$$\overline{\pi} \approx \frac{1}{\overline{y}} \sum_{i=0}^{n} y_i p_i, \tag{4}$$

where p_0 is the initial price, y_0 is the maximum loss implicit in the cost function, and

$$\overline{y} = \sum_{i=0}^{n} y_i$$

as before. Since the initial price and the cost function are both chosen by the designer, it is possible to infer the budget-weighted average of trader beliefs if the above approximation is close. For instance, with a Logarithmic Market Scoring Rule (LMSR) market maker (as in Equation 3), the maximum loss is

$$y_0 = b \log \frac{1}{\min\{p_0, 1 - p_0\}}.$$

Since p_0 and b are chosen by design, if the sum of trader budgets is also known then the approximation (4) may be used to deduce

$$\frac{1}{\overline{y} - y_0} \sum_{i=1}^{n} y_i p_i,$$

which is the budget weighted average of trader beliefs. The budgets may themselves be chosen by design in the case of internal currencies, or simply carried over from one market to the next, in order to place increasing weight on the forecasts of successful forecasters over time.

In the simulations below we explore the degree to which this approximation is reasonable, restricting attention to the LMSR market maker (as in Equation 3) and traders with CRRA utility (as in Equation 2).

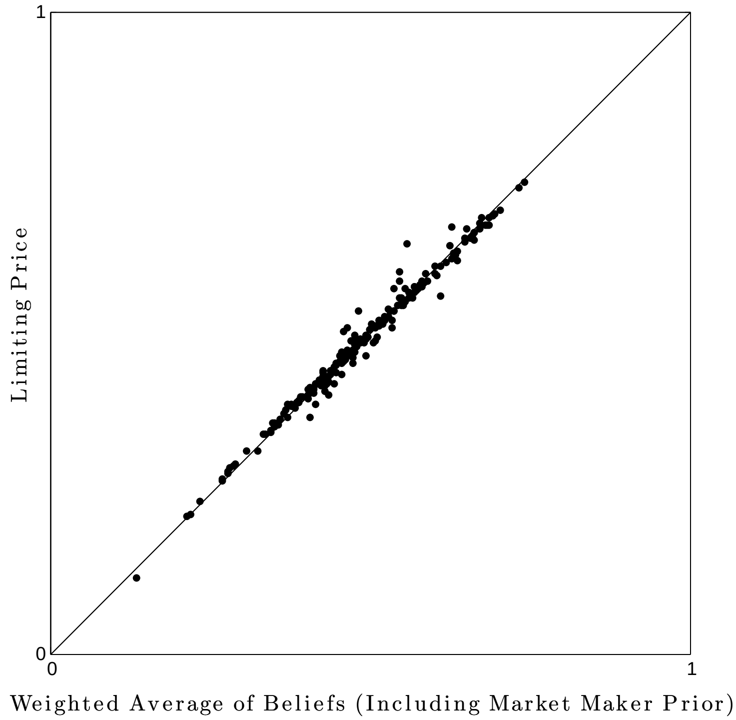

Figure 4: Correlation between the market's final prices and the weighted average of traders' beliefs and the initial price when traders' beliefs are drawn uniformly in $[0, 1]$.

7.1 Log Utility

We begin by describing a set of simulations for traders with log utility. In each of these simulations, in each round, a trader chosen uniformly at random is given the opportunity to trade, and chooses the purchase or sale that myopically maximizes his expected utility. This is repeated until there is no trader who wishes to make a non-negligible purchase or sale (which in this case means trading more than 0.001 units of the security) at which point we say the market has converged.[11]

In the first set of simulations, the number of traders is fixed at 5. An LMSR market maker is used with an initial price of 0.5 and the liquidity parameter $b = 20$, giving the market maker a worst case loss of $20 \log 2 \approx 13.86$. The market is simulated 100 times. Each time, each trader i's belief p_i is sampled independently and uniformly in $[0, 1]$ and his initial budget y_i is sampled independently and uniformly in $[10, 20]$.

Figure 4 illustrates the high correlation between the market's final prices and the weighted average of the traders' beliefs and initial price. Each dot represents one run of the simulation, with the x-axis showing the weighted average of all beliefs (inclusive of p_0) in accordance with the right side of (4), and the y-axis showing the final market price. Over the 100 runs, the average

[11]We experimented with smaller convergence tolerances; the results change only negligibly.

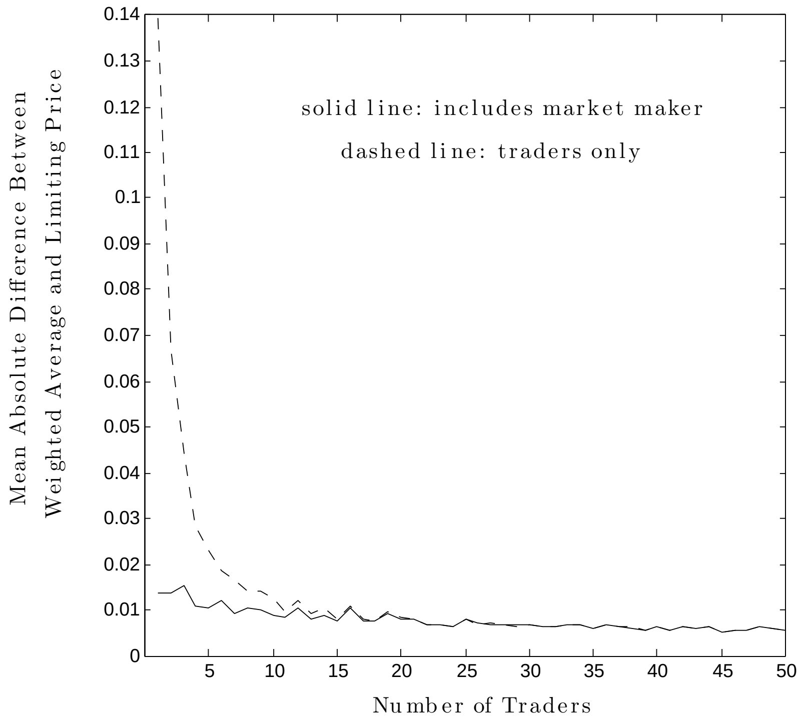

Figure 5: Mean absolute difference between the weighted average of beliefs and the initial market price and the final market price as the number of traders grows.

absolute difference between the weighted average and final price is 0.0086, and the average squared difference 0.00018. The correlation is 0.9932.

We next examine the effect of varying the number of traders n. Variants of the first simulation are run with n taking on every value between 1 and 50. The results are summarized in Figure 5. The x-axis is the number of traders n. The y-axis is the absolute difference between the market's final price and the weighted average of beliefs (including the market maker for the solid line, without the market maker for the dashed line), averaged over 100 runs at that value of n. Two phenomena can be observed as n grows large. First, the weighted averages become more accurate. Second, the effect of the initial price on the weighted average becomes negligible. As such, a weighted average of traders' beliefs without the initial price is a good estimate of the final price.

One potential criticism of sampling trader beliefs uniformly in $[0, 1]$ is that the average belief tends to be close to 0.5, especially when the number of traders is large. To remove this effect, we ran a variation of the first simulation above (with $n = 5$) with trader beliefs drawn according to Beta distributions. For each run of the market, a new Beta distribution was chosen at random by first selecting a mean μ uniformly at random in a range (μ_L, μ_H), and then setting the Beta

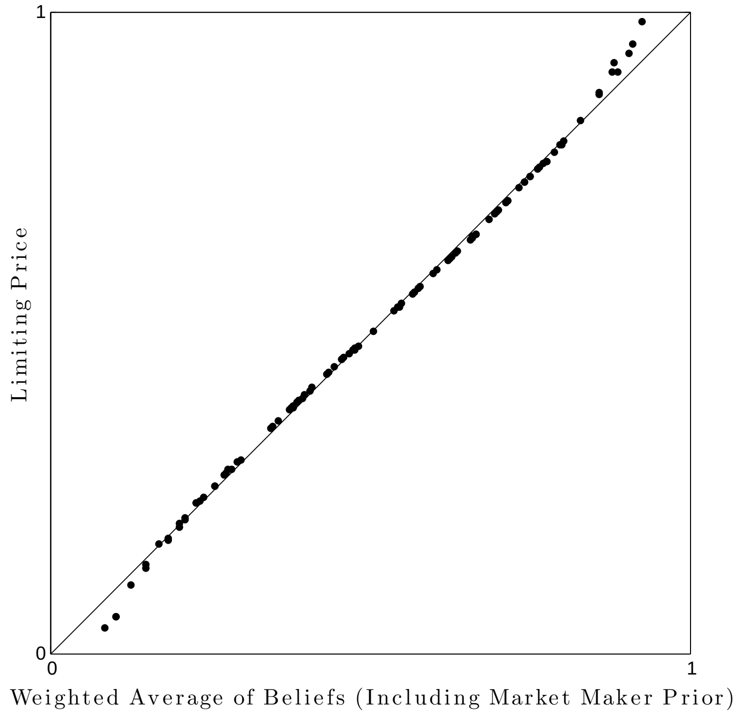

Figure 6: Correlation between the market's final prices and the weighted average of traders' beliefs and the initial price when traders' beliefs are drawn from Beta distributions with $\sigma^2 = 0.01$.

parameters α and β using

$$\alpha = \frac{\mu^2 - \mu^3}{\sigma^2} - \mu$$
$$\beta = \left(\frac{1}{\mu} - 1\right)\alpha$$

where $\sigma^2 = 0.01$ and μ_L and μ_H were chosen to ensure that either $\alpha > 1$ or $\beta > 1$. The resulting Beta distribution has mean μ and variance $\sigma^2 = 0.01$. The belief of each trader was then drawn from this distribution.

In Figure 6, each dot again represents one run of the simulation, with the x-axis showing the weighted average of beliefs and the y-axis showing the final market price. The correlation is extremely high. However, notice that the limiting price tends to be higher than the weighted average when the average belief is very high, and lower than the weighted average when the average belief is very low. This suggests that for events that are very likely or unlikely to occur, any inference regarding trader beliefs using (4) will be biased towards the extremes. If one wants to infer trader beliefs this would require an adjustment towards a belief of 0.5. However, as reported by Ungar et al. (2012), even teams of top forecasters tend to have beliefs that are biased *away* from the extremes, and the success of the Penn-Berkeley Good Judgment project stems in part from the fact that they push the mean forecast of their top teams away from 0.5 before submission to

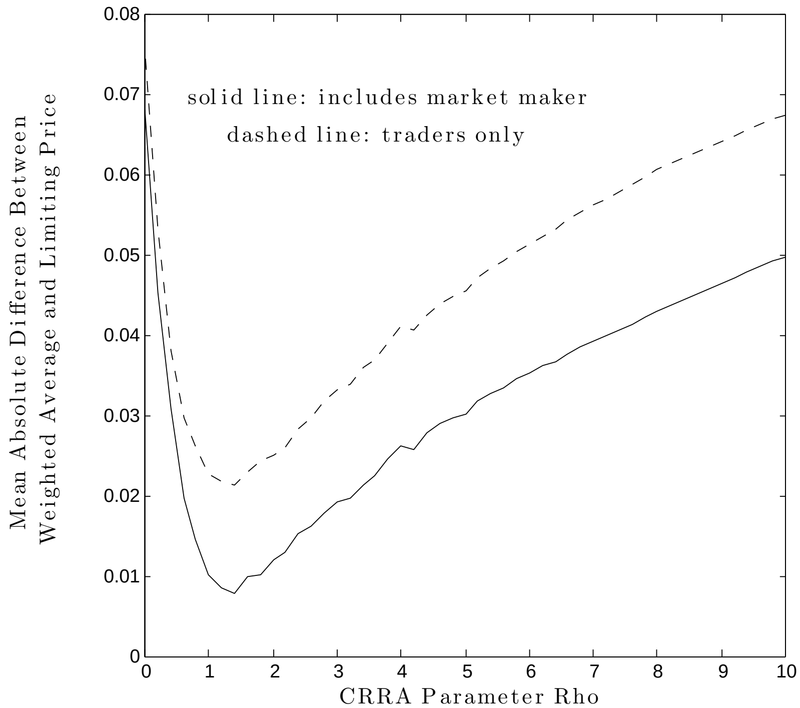

Figure 7: Mean absolute difference between the weighted average of trader beliefs and the initial market price and the final market price as the CRRA utility parameter ρ is varied.

IARPA. Figure 6 reveals that algorithmic prediction markets produce this effect automatically, and this might explain why prediction markets outperform the *unadjusted* mean forecasts of their top teams.

This effect arises because the bounded loss requirement causes prices to be adjusted very sharply upwards if traders as a group accumulate a large long position, and very sharply downwards if they are heavily short. The result is an inversion of the usual favorite-longshot bias found in peer-to-peer markets and sports betting (Wolfers and Zitzewitz, 2006).

7.2 Varying Risk Aversion

We also examined the effect of varying the CRRA utility parameter ρ which controls the extent to which the traders are risk averse. We repeated the first simulation above with ρ taking on every multiple of 0.2 between 0 and 10. In the extreme case when $\rho = 0$, traders are risk neutral and therefore our theory does not apply. In all other cases, traders are risk averse to different degrees.

The results are shown in Figure 7. While the approximation is reasonable throughout this range, it is especially close when preferences are close to the log utility case. Values of ρ in the range $(1, 2)$ yield excellent approximations, reflecting levels of risk aversion slightly higher than in the log utility case.

Since the market designer chooses the cost function, Equation (4) can be used to infer the weighted average of trader beliefs from the limiting price. Our results show that this inference will be most precise if the coefficient of relative risk aversion ρ lies in a particular range. But even if this is not the case, (4) still provides a method for adjusting the limiting price in order to obtain a better estimate of trader beliefs by taking into account the properties of the cost function. This is superior in all cases to a naive interpretation of the market price that neglects the properties of the algorithm being used to elicit beliefs.

8 Conclusions

Prediction markets based on automated market makers have become a fixture of the forecasting landscape in a broad range of organizations, although little is understood about how market prices should be interpreted in terms of trader beliefs and the attributes of cost functions. In this paper we have taken a step towards filling this gap, by exploring the properties of limiting prices and portfolios when risk averse traders interact repeatedly in arbitrary order with the market. Although exact interpretations of the price in terms of trader beliefs is not possible in this environment, good approximations can be obtained if traders are risk-averse and their beliefs are not distributed in a manner that is too extreme.

There are at least two natural extensions of this work. First, one could allow for the possibility that traders may deviate from myopic optimization if they believe that a more favorable price will be available when they next have an opportunity to trade. This would require traders to hold beliefs about the beliefs and trading strategies of others, as well as beliefs about the order of trading. Given the complexity of the problem, it is likely that traders will use heuristics rather than full-scale optimization in any departure from myopic behavior. It seems worth exploring variations of our model with the incorporation of plausible heuristics.

Second, one could allow for both heterogeneous priors and differences in information. Clearly the priors themselves cannot be common knowledge, since discovery of these is part of the rationale for constructing the market. Hence traders would need to update not only beliefs about the state, but also their beliefs about the beliefs of others as the process unfolds. In a model of sequential and truthful belief announcements, Sethi and Yildiz (2012) show that information need not be fully aggregated when priors are independently distributed and unobservable. Whether or not this is also the case when information is revealed by trades rather than by belief announcements remains an open question worthy of attention.

Appendix

Proof of Lemma 1. To prove the first case, assume that $p_i \leq \pi_{t-1}$ and $z_{i,t-1} \geq 0$. By the convexity of C, showing that $\pi_t \leq \pi_{t-1}$ is equivalent to showing that trader i does not select $r_t > 0$. For this, it suffices to show that he prefers $r_t = 0$ to any $r_t > 0$.

Consider some $r > 0$. By the convexity of C, the cost of purchasing r at time t is at least $\pi_{t-1}r$ which is at least $p_i r$ by our assumption that $p_i \leq \pi_{t-1}$. The expected utility of trader i after making this purchase is therefore upper bounded by the function

$$v(r) = p_i u(y_{i,t-1} + z_{i,t-1} - p_i r + r) + (1 - p_i)u(y_{i,t-1} - p_i r).$$

Taking the derivative of this function with respect to r yields

$$v'(r) = p_i(1 - p_i)\left(u'(y_{i,t-1} + z_{i,t-1} - p_i r + r) - u'(y_{i,t-1} - p_i r)\right).$$

Since u is concave (and so u' is decreasing) and $z_{i,t-1} \geq 0$, $v'(r)$ is decreasing for $r > 0$. Since $v(0)$ is exactly the expected utility of trader i with $r = 0$ and $v(r)$ is an upper bound on his utility when $r > 0$, this implies that trader i prefers $r_t = 0$ to any value $r_t > 0$, as desired.

The proof of the second case is analogous to the proof of the first. □

Proof of Lemma 2. To prove the first case, assume that $p_i \geq \pi_{t-1}$ and $z_{i,t-1} \geq 0$. We must show that trader i does not select a bundle that would result in a price of $\pi_t > p_i$. For this, it suffices to show that he would prefer to move the price to exactly p_i rather than to any higher price.

Since any cost function based market is path independent, moving the price from π_{t-1} to π_t costs the same as moving the price from π_{t-1} to p_i and then from p_i to π_t. Therefore, it suffices to show that if trader i first moves the price to p_i, he prefers to keep it there rather than subsequently moving it to a higher value.

By the convexity of C, the price can be increased from π_{t-1} to p_i only by purchasing a non-negative number of shares. Let $\hat{z} \geq z_{i,t-1} \geq 0$ be the asset position of trader i after this move. Since his asset position is still non-negative, and the market price is now exactly equal to his beliefs, we can apply Lemma 1 to immediately show that he prefers to keep the price at p_i or decrease it rather than increase it, which completes the proof.

The proof of the second case is analogous to the proof of the first, relying on the second case in Lemma 1. □

Proof of Proposition 1. Since $\pi_0 = p_0$ and $p_0 \in I$ by definition, it is clear that $\pi_0 \in I$. Suppose, by way of contradiction, that there exists $t \geq 1$ such that $\pi_s \in I$ for all $s < t$ and $\pi_t \notin I$. We consider the case $\pi_t > p_{\max}$ (the case $\pi_t < p_{\min}$ may be proved analogously).

Let $i = k(t)$, and suppose first that $z_{i,t-1} = 0$. If $p_i \leq \pi_{t-1}$ then $\pi_t \leq \pi_{t-1} \leq p_{\max}$ from Lemma 1 and the fact that $\pi_{t-1} \in I$, a contradiction. And if $p_i \geq \pi_{t-1}$ then $\pi_t \leq p_i \leq p_{\max}$ from Lemma 2 and the fact that $p_i \in I$, a contradiction.

Now suppose that $z_{i,t} \neq 0$. Then there exists $s < t$ such that $k(s) = i$ and $k(t') \neq i$ for all $t' \in \{s+1, ..., t-1\}$. We know that $(y_{i,t-1}, z_{i,t-1})$ is an optimal portfolio for i at market state q_s, when the market price is $\pi_s \leq p_{\max}$. If $\pi_{t-1} = \pi_s$ then i will not change his portfolio in period t, so $\pi_t = \pi_{t-1} \leq p_{\max}$, a contradiction. If $\pi_{t-1} > \pi_s$ then i will sell in period t, so $\pi_t < \pi_{t-1} \leq p_{\max}$, a contradiction.

Finally, if $\pi_{t-1} < \pi_s$, then i will buy in period t. Any such transaction may be viewed as taking two steps in sequence: buy until the price reaches π_s, and then buy or sell to reach the new optimum. After the first stage the market state will be q_s and the endowment will be (y, z) where $y < y_{i,t-1}$ and $z > z_{i,t-1}$. Since i did not want to buy or sell at this market state with portfolio $(y_{i,t-1}, z_{i,t-1})$, he will want to sell with portfolio (y, z). Hence $\pi_t < \pi_{t-1} \leq p_{\max}$, a contradiction. □

Proof of Lemma 3. Suppose that trader i with endowment (y, z) is considering purchasing r units of the asset at some market state q, and let $c_q(r) = C(q + r) - C(q)$ denote the cost of this transaction. If $r < 0$, this is a sale and the cost is negative. The expected utility of trader i after this transaction is given by

$$p_i u(y - c_q(r) + z + r) + (1 - p_i)u(y - c_q(r)).$$

Taking the derivative with respect to r gives

$$p_i(1 - c'_q(r))u'(y - c_q(r) + z + r) - (1 - p_i)c'_q(r)u'(y - c_q(r)). \tag{5}$$

Consider any t such that $s(t) > 0$ and let $i = k(t)$. For notational simplicity, we will write s in place of $s(t)$. We know that trader i would not want to buy or sell at endowment $(y_{i,s}, z_{i,s})$ and market state q such that $C'(q) = c'_q(0) = \pi_s$; otherwise, the path independence of the cost function implies that trader i would not have left the price in this state at time s. From Equation 5, this tells us that

$$p_i(1 - \pi_s)u'(y_{i,s} + z_{i,s}) - (1 - p_i)\pi_s u'(y_{i,s}) = 0 \tag{6}$$

Now consider the decision of trader i at time t. Since the endowment of trader i at the start of period t is precisely $(y_{i,s}, z_{i,s})$ and the current price is π_{t-1}, Equation 5 tells us that trader i would want to buy a positive quantity of the asset if and only if

$$p_i(1 - \pi_{t-1})u'(y_{i,s} + z_{i,s}) - (1 - p_i)\pi_{t-1}u'(y_{i,s}) > 0.$$

From Equation 6, this holds if and only if $\pi_{t-1} < \pi_s$. Similarly, trader i would want to sell a positive quantity (or buy a negative quantity) if and only if $\pi_{t-1} > \pi_s$.

First consider the case in which $\pi_{t-1} < \pi_s$, so the trader wants to buy. Suppose that i submits an order that restores the market to the state q such that $C'(q) = c_q(0) = \pi_s$. Let (y', z') denote the resulting endowment, and note that $y' < y_{i,s}$ and $y' + z' > y_{i,s} + z_{i,s}$. We shall show that at this endowment and price, the trader now wishes to sell. To see this, consider a purchase (possibly negative) of r units starting from the endowment (y', z') at market state q. As before, the expected utility is given by

$$p_i u(y' - c_q(r) + z' + r) + (1 - p_i)u(y' - c_q(r)),$$

and its derivative at $r = 0$ is

$$p_i(1 - \pi_s)u'(y' + z') - (1 - p_i)\pi_s u'(y').$$

This must be less than 0 by Equation 6, the concavity of u, and the fact that $y' < y$ and $y' + z' > y + z$. By path independence of the cost function, this implies that while i would like to buy at price π_{t-1}, he would not buy enough to push the price back to π_s, yielding the result.

The proof for the case in which $\pi_{t-1} > \pi_s$ is analogous. □

Proof of Lemma 4. Define

$$\Gamma = \{(y, z) \,|\, y > 0, y + z > 0\},$$

and define the function $\psi : \Gamma \to (0, 1)$ as

$$\psi(y, z) = \frac{p_i u'(y + z)}{p_i u'(y + z) + (1 - p_i)u'(y)}.$$

From (6), the endowment $(y, z) \in \Gamma$ is optimal for trader i at price $\psi(y, z)$ in the sense that a trader with portfolio (y, z) would not want to buy or sell if the current price were $\psi(y, z)$. Note that ψ is continuous since u is smooth, so the inverse image $\psi^{-1}(E)$ of any closed set $E \subset (0, 1)$ is closed. In particular, $\psi^{-1}(\{\pi\})$ is closed for any $\pi \in I = [p_{\min}, p_{\max}]$.

Consider any t such that $s(t) > 0$, and let $s = s(t)$ and $i = k(t)$. Since $\pi_s \in I$ and $\lim_{w\to 0} u'(w) = \infty$, optimal portfolios will satisfy the non-negative wealth constraints with strict inequality in all periods. That is, $(y_{i,s}, z_{i,s}) \in \Gamma$. By Lemma 3, the choice problem faced by trader i in period t with budget $y = y_{i,s}$ and assets $z = z_{i,s}$ may be expressed as follows: choose $\alpha \in [0, 1)$ to maximize

$$p_i u(y - c_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\alpha) + z + r_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\alpha)) + (1 - p_i)u(y - c_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\alpha)),$$

where $r_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\alpha)$ is the (positive or negative) quantity of assets that trader i would need to purchase to bring the market price to $\pi_t = \alpha\pi_s + (1 - \alpha)\pi_{t-1}$, and $c_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\alpha)$ is the cost of this purchase. The bounded loss of C implies that these quantities must exist since it must be possible to move the market price to anything in $(0, 1)$ (Abernethy et al., 2011, 2013). Furthermore, one can easily verify that for any given values of π_s and π_{t-1}, $r_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\alpha)$ and $c_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\alpha)$ are both continuous since the cost function C is smooth and convex. The necessary and sufficient condition for a maximum is

$$p_i(r'_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\alpha) - c'_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\alpha))u'(y - c_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\alpha) + z + r_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\alpha)) \\ -(1-p_i)c'_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\alpha)u'(y - c_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\alpha)) = 0.$$

For any given tuple (y, z, π_s, π_{t-1}) with $\pi_s \neq \pi_{t-1}$, this condition implies a unique solution $\alpha(y, z, \pi_s, \pi_{t-1})$ by Lemma 3. By the continuity of $u(\cdot)$, $r_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\cdot)$, and $c_{\pi_s,\pi_{t-1}}(\cdot)$, $\alpha(\cdot)$ is also continuous where it is defined.

Note that for any $\eta > 0$, $\alpha(\cdot)$ is well-defined on the domain

$$\Delta = \left\{(y, z, \pi_s, \pi_{t-1}) \in \mathbb{R}^4 \,|\, (\pi_s, \pi_{t-1}) \in [p_{\min}, p_{\max}]^2,\ (y, z) \in \psi^{-1}(\{\pi_s\}),\ |\pi_s - \pi_{t-1}| \geq \eta\right\}.$$

Since $\psi^{-1}(\{\pi_s\})$ is closed and bounded, Δ is compact. Since compactness is preserved by continuous functions, α must also have a compact range, which excludes $\alpha = 1$ by Lemma 3; although some states in Δ may not be reachable in the market, the proof of Lemma 3 holds for all states in this set. Hence the range of α over domain Δ must have a maximum element $\overline{\alpha}(\eta) < 1$. □

Proof of Lemma 6. Note that for any $\eta > 0$, there exist $\varepsilon > 0$ and $\delta > 0$ such that

$$\eta > \varepsilon + \frac{\delta + \overline{\alpha}(\eta)\varepsilon}{1 - \overline{\alpha}(\eta)}, \tag{7}$$

since $\overline{\alpha}(\eta) < 1$ from Lemma 4. Let $\eta > 0$ be given and consider any positive ε and δ consistent with (7). By definition of $\overline{\pi}$, there exists t' such that, for all $t > t' - n$, $\pi_t < \overline{\pi} + \varepsilon$. Consider any $\tau > t'$ such that $\pi_\tau > \overline{\pi} - \delta$. Clearly $\pi_{\tau-n} < \overline{\pi} + \varepsilon$. By Lemma 3 we have

$$\pi_\tau = \alpha_\tau \pi_{\tau-n} + (1 - \alpha_\tau)\pi_{\tau-1}. \tag{8}$$

This implies

$$(1 - \alpha_\tau)\pi_{\tau-1} = \pi_\tau - \alpha_\tau \pi_{\tau-n} > \overline{\pi} - \delta - \alpha_\tau(\overline{\pi} + \varepsilon).$$

Hence

$$\pi_{\tau-1} > \overline{\pi} - \frac{\delta + \alpha_\tau \varepsilon}{1 - \alpha_\tau} > \pi_\tau - \left(\varepsilon + \frac{\delta + \alpha_\tau \varepsilon}{1 - \alpha_\tau}\right) \tag{9}$$

where the last inequality follows from the fact that $\pi_\tau < \overline{\pi} + \varepsilon$.

We claim that

$$\pi_{\tau-1} > \pi_\tau - \eta.$$

Suppose not. Then $\pi_\tau - \pi_{\tau-1} \geq \eta$, which by (8) implies that $\pi_{\tau-n} - \pi_{\tau-1} \geq \eta$, and $\alpha_\tau \leq \overline{\alpha}(\eta)$. Hence from (9), we obtain

$$\pi_{\tau-1} > \pi_\tau - \left(\varepsilon + \frac{\delta + \overline{\alpha}(\eta)\varepsilon}{1 - \overline{\alpha}(\eta)}\right),$$

which implies $\pi_{\tau-1} > \pi_\tau - \eta$ from (7), a contradiction. Hence $\pi_{\tau-1} > \pi_\tau - \eta$. Note that $\delta < \eta$ from (7), so

$$\pi_{\tau-1} > \overline{\pi} - \delta - \eta > \overline{\pi} - 2\eta.$$

Setting $\eta = \gamma/2$ yields the desired result. □

Proof of Theorem 1. From Lemma 6, for any $\gamma > 0$, there exists $t' \in \mathbb{N}$ and a sequence of positive numbers $\delta_1, ..., \delta_n$ such that

$$\gamma = \delta_1 > \delta_2 > ... > \delta_n > 0$$

and, for all $t > t'$ and $i = 2, ..., n$,

$$\pi_{t+i} > \overline{\pi} - \delta_i \implies \pi_{t+i-1} > \overline{\pi} - \delta_{i-1}.$$

Furthermore, there exists $t > t'$ such that $\pi_{t+n} \geq \overline{\pi} > \overline{\pi} - \delta_n$. Suppose that $\overline{\pi} > \underline{\pi}$ and set $\gamma = \overline{\pi} - \underline{\pi}$. Then there exists a sequence of n consecutive prices $\pi_{t+1}, ..., \pi_{t+n}$ all of which exceed $\underline{\pi}$. Hence $\underline{\pi}_{t+n} > \underline{\pi}$, a contradiction. □

Proof of Proposition 2. Consider a trader with belief p, portfolio (y, z), facing price π. From the first order condition for optimality, this trader will choose to remain at this portfolio if and only if

$$p(1 - \pi)u'(y + z) = \pi(1 - p)u'(y),$$

or

$$\pi = \frac{pu'(y + z)}{pu'(y + z) + (1 - p)u'(y)}.$$

Concavity of u implies that

$$\pi = \frac{pu'(y + z)}{pu'(y + z) + (1 - p)u'(y)} < p$$

if and only if $z > 0$. Similarly, $\pi > p$ if and only if $z < 0$. Since the terminal portfolio is optimal given the terminal price, the result follows. □

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