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Comment: Representing and Communicating Uncertainty

Robert L. Winkler

1. INTRODUCTION

We live in a world fraught with uncertainties, and these uncertainties are often communicated via qualitative expressions. Since such expressions are lacking in precision, it is helpful to know what different people might mean when they use specific expressions.

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Therefore, recent studies of quantitative interpretations of linguistic expressions of uncertainty are valuable to anyone who hears or uses such expressions. The paper by Mosteller and Youtz and its predecessors can help us understand how people represent uncertainty and how the process of representing and communicating uncertainty might be improved.

In these comments I focus on some issues that I view as important in the representation and communication of uncertainty. I discuss sources of variability in interpretations of qualitative expressions of uncertainty in Section 2, with emphasis on differences