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Spouses' Influence Strategies in Purchase Decisions as Dependent on Conflict  
Type and Relationship Characteristics

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Abstract

This study investigates spouses' influence tactics in purchase situations. A taxonomy of influence tactics is presented, deriving from phenomenological analysis and deduced from previous empirical research. The study aims to detect situational characteristics affecting the choice of a specific strategy. A total of 35 couples were presented with six vignettes, representing a value conflict, a probability task and an allocation problem. The spouses were asked to indicate what they would do to get the partner's agreement to fulfill their individual desire for the product presented in the vignettes. In addition, a questionnaire was also presented, assessing marital quality, power patterns and relating to several demographic characteristics. As this was a pilot study, the results need to be considered with caution. They seem to show that the taxonomy of influence tactics thus present is useful in research on joint purchasing strategies, and that the type of conflict has a major impact on the choice of a specific strategy. On the other hand, gender, marital happiness, and power patterns are of minor importance.

## 1. Introduction

Investigations of family purchase decisions have focused largely on the outcomes of the decision process. While a mass of information has been collected about the balance of actual influence within couples, the intricacies of the decision making process have been relatively neglected.

Partners often do not have corresponding desires in purchase decisions. Spiro (1983) found that 88 % of the couples she contacted had had disagreed over a recent purchase of a major durable. If an explicit or implicit conflict occurs, the spouses need to resolve it by pursuing their own goals and at the same time dealing with the partner's desires. Spouses' strategic argumentation and step by step modification of each others' desires leads to resolution of purchasing conflicts.

Literature on conflict management strategies in intimate relationships has been largely non-empirical. The majority of authors present typologies of conflict tactics which are derived deductively. There are numerous problems with deductive lists. As Nelson (1988) points out in her review, one of the most severe shortcomings is that the lists are untested, with no conception of underlying structure. Also, inductive classifications of influence strategies leave many questions unanswered. In sum, we still lack a satisfactory taxonomy of influence strategies within couples, and the circumstances under which a specific tactic is chosen are likewise unclear.

### *1.1. Taxonomies of influence tactics*

Howard, Blumstein and Schwartz (1986) asked 235 couples about the tactics they use when their partner wants them to do something they do not want to do. The researchers presented 24 influence tactics and found six underlying factors which they called (1) manipulation, such as dropping hints, flattering, seductive behavior, reminding of a past favor; (2) bullying, that is, threatening, insulting the other, violent behavior and ridiculing; (3) disengagement, i. e., sulking, making the other feel guilty, leaving the scene; (4) supplication, i. e., pleading, crying, acting helpless or ill; (5) autocracy, that is, insisting, claiming knowledge, asserting authority; and (6) bargaining, which includes reason, compromises and offers of trade-offs.

Falbo and Peplau (1980) present a different but overlapping list of strategies: (1) making requests, (2) bargaining, (3) laissez-faire, i. e., taking independent actions, (4) negative affect, (5) persistence, (6) persuasion, (7)

positive affect, (8) reasoning, (9) stating importance, (10) suggesting, (11) talking and discussing, (12) stating the desired outcome, and (13) withdrawal. Analysis of a similarity scaling of these strategies generated two latent dimensions, labeled directness and bilaterality. The directness dimension has, at the one end, strategies such as talking to and asking the partner about the desired goal, and, at the other end, strategies such as hinting and putting the other in a good mood; the bilaterality dimension varies from strategies such as persuasion to doing what one wants anyway.

Spiro (1983) distinguishes between influence strategies deriving from different power bases: (1) expert influence, (2) legitimate influence, (3) bargaining, (4) reward influence, (5) emotional influence, and (6) impression management.

While the above lists of influence tactics resulted from research addressing conflict situations in marital conflict in general, Nelson (1988) focused specifically on purchase decisions. She presented a questionnaire containing 38 patterns of behavior to individuals who estimated the likelihood that they had shown these behaviors in past purchase disagreements. Analysis revealed four factors, the first factor representing the use of punishments, threats, authority and negative emotion; the second factor representing positive emotions and subtle manipulation, i. e., behaviors which put the partner in a receptive mood; the third factor showed withdrawal and egocentrism, and the last factor involved the use of persuasion and reason.

In an attempt to summarize and classify the influence strategies found in previous empirical research, Kirchler (1989) constructed the list of tactics presented in Table 1.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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### *1.2. Type of conflict as a determinant of influence tactics*

It is assumed that certain influence tactics are more likely to be used under specific circumstances, and are less used under other conditions. Davis (1976), for instance, assumes that the use of different strategies depends on the type of purchasing tasks. He classified husband and wife decision making into "consensus behavior", wherein spouses agree about the goal of the pur-

chase, and "accommodative behavior", wherein spouses disagree about the goals of the purchase. According to Davis, role structure and problem solving strategies, such as reason, are used in the consensus mode, whereas spouses would rely on persuasion, such as showing emotions, acting ill and helpless, and bargaining tactics in the accommodative mode. Madden (1982) tried to refine and test Davis' model empirically. He distinguishes between purchase situations with both spouses unaware of conflict, with one spouse aware and the other unaware of conflict, and with both spouses aware of conflict. The strategies used in the three situations are problem solving, persuasion, and bargaining, respectively.

The classification of joint purchase situations resembles Brandstätter and Schuler's (1982) classification of conflict situations. The authors propose three types of tasks or conflicts: (1) Tasks giving prominence to the probability of events are labeled probability tasks; (2) tasks giving prominence to the values of events are called value tasks; and (3) tasks giving prominence to the allocation of resources among group members are called distributional tasks. A probability conflict occurs if, for instance, in a purchase situation spouses agree about the value of and need for a product but disagree about the quality of various product alternatives. If spouses disagree, for instance, about the ethical acceptability of a product, a value conflict occurs. If the central controversy in a purchase decisions concerns the allocation of resources between the spouses, a distributional conflict is involved.

While probability conflicts have much in common with Davis' consensus situations and Madden's purchase decisions with both spouses unaware of a conflict, value conflicts and distributional conflicts resemble accommodative situations and purchases with at least one spouse being aware of a conflict.

From a phenomenological analysis of family purchase decisions, it appears that probability conflicts are most often managed by reasoning. Since both spouses agree to buy the best alternative, the most convincing arguments count most. Also, role structure may be a tactic for solving (or, more appropriately, avoiding) probability conflicts. If the spouses have established a set of mutually agreed upon rules, such as segregation of competence and responsibility between them, then the more expert spouse, or the spouse accorded more competence, takes the decision.

Value conflicts, in general, lack a verifiable best solution. Such conflicts may be managed by persuasion. Normative pressure, exerted by emotional tactics, helplessness or violence, offers of benefits and punishments, merely insisting or leaving the scene, may be useful.

If spouses discuss the allocation of resources they may rely on bargaining tactics, such as offers of trade-offs, reminding of past favors or "utility debts" (Pollay, 1968), and integrative bargaining (Pruitt, 1983).

### *1.3. Sex and relationship characteristics as determinants of influence tactics*

The use of strategies not only depends on the type of conflict but also on the partner's sex and on relationship characteristics.

Traditionally, wives were hypothesized as using weak strategies, whereas husbands use stronger influence strategies. Nowadays, women's liberation has led to "tough negotiation strategies" being used also by women (Scanzoni and Szinovacz, 1980). If traditional norms are still present, wives more than husbands should use emotional strategies, acting helpless or leaving the scene. Also forming coalitions or discussing a purchase in the presence of others may be considered to be weak influence strategies used especially by wives.

Marital relationships can be described by patterns of dominance and harmony. In previous research on family purchase decisions, relationship characteristics has been almost completely neglected. Recent research on friendship and intimate relationships shows, however, a strong correlation between marital happiness, power patterns and style of interaction (for a review see Kirchler, 1989). For instance, Kirchler (1988) reports that happy spouses, in contrast to dissatisfied partners, try to avoid heated disputes by weighting each other's instrumental arguments more than emotionally loaded arguments. Moreover, happy spouses are more willing to yield if the other claims a strong desire for or interest in a product.

Here it is assumed that, in contrast to unhappy spouses, happy partners will be more likely to use cool strategies, such as reason, and less likely to use emotional tactics, acting aggressively or helpless, offering rewards, punishing the other, insisting, leaving the scene, or distorting information. In egalitarian relationships, spouses should decide by role segregation less often than in patriarchal ones. The dominant spouse in patriarchal relationships may rely on influence tactics such as offers of resources or

punishments. Weak spouses, on the other hand, may pursue their goals by acting helpless or ill, and by building coalitions with children or acquaintances. In egalitarian marriages, both spouses are expected to insist on having their individual choices fulfilled; as compared to spouses in patriarchal marriages they may, therefore, more often report insisting without offers to compromise.

#### *1.4. Overview*

A pilot study was conducted to explore the assumptions deriving from the theoretical explications: It investigated whether the type of conflict determines the strategies spouses use in purchase situations, wives use weak strategies more often than husbands, happy spouses avoid heated disputes by using instrumental tactics and spouses in egalitarian relationships pursue their goals by using other strategies than spouses in patriarchal relationships.

Spouses were presented with vignettes of purchase decision situations varying in type of conflict (probability, value, and distributional conflicts). Then they were interviewed about how they would try to influence the partner if a similar disagreement situation occurred in their marriage. Raters analyzed the content of the responses with regard to the influence tactics listed in Table 1. To examine the assumptions, the frequencies of tactics mentioned were analyzed as depending on task type, gender of the spouse, marital harmony, and power patterns. It should be emphasized that the study is exploratory rather than testing specific hypotheses. Thus, the results need to be considered with caution.

## 2. Method

### *2.1. Subjects*

The participants were 35 married couples from Upper Austria. The mean age of husbands was 42.5 years (standard deviation - 12.73); wives' were 39.8 years old (standard deviation - 12.93). In the average, the couples had been married since 17.6 years (standard deviation - 11.12), had 1 (n - 11) or more children (2 to 3 children, n - 20); 4 couples were childless. In 13 cases both spouses were employed, in 19 cases only the husband and in one case only the wife was employed. Two couples were unemployed. While almost all husbands (n - 32) had a paid job, 14 of the women were employed. Three husbands and

two wives held an university degree, 8 husbands and 13 wives took A-level, the remaining 24 husbands and 20 wives had had primary or secondary school education.

## 2.2. Material

*Questionnaires:* The questionnaire used in this study consisted of three parts. In the first part, demographic characteristics were surveyed (age, length of marriage, number of children, education level, occupation status).

The second part of the questionnaire included the following 6 items on marital power: (1) As compared to me, my spouse is more dominant vs submissive, (2) ... stronger vs weaker, (3) ... more resisting vs more ready to yield (7-point scales). (4) I decide vs my spouse decides about the most important affairs in our relationship (5-point scale). (5) If we cannot reach mutual agreement in important decisions, we mostly do what I say vs my partner says (dichotomous scale). (6) Generally, the power relationship between us is inclined more to my partner's favor, is more or less balanced, is inclined more to my own favor (3-point scale). These 6 questions were analyzed in a pretest with 230 husbands and wives as respondents. A principal component analysis revealed one latent factor which explained 49 % of the variance; the reliability amounted to  $\alpha = .76$ . The answers to the six items were added to give a marital power score. Since husbands' and wives' responses correlated satisfactorily ( $r = .72$ ), the answers of both spouses were averaged; then a median split was used to divide the sample into two sub-samples, one described as egalitarian ( $n = 17$ ) and the other as patriarchal ( $n = 18$  couples).

The last part of the questionnaire included Norton's (1983) marital satisfaction scale, with the following 6 items: (1) We have a good marriage. (2) My relationship with my partner is very stable. (3) Our marriage is strong. (4) My relationship with my partner makes me happy. (5) I really feel like part of a team with my partner (5-point scales). (6) Everything considered, our marriage is dissatisfying vs satisfying (7-point scale). A principal component analysis of the data of a pretest with 230 respondents revealed one factor explaining 57 % of the variance; the reliability amounted to  $\alpha = .84$ . The answers to the items were added to give a marital satisfaction score. Again, husbands' and wives' answers ( $r = .65$ ) were averaged and then the sample was divided at the median into satisfied ( $n = 17$ ) and dissatisfied ( $n = 18$ ) sub-samples.



*Purchasing conflicts and interview:* The interviews about conflict tactics were based on six vignettes presenting two value conflicts, two distributional conflicts, and two probability conflicts. Subjects were presented the vignettes and then asked to talk about how they would try to convince the partner to agree with their preference if a similar conflict occurred in their marriage:

The probability conflicts read as follows: (1) "Imagine you and your partner want to buy a new car. Both of you will use the car and you have already decided that the car should be of medium size and not too expensive. You need to choose between two alternatives, car A and car B. While you prefer car A your partner wants car B." After a short description of the cars the spouses were individually asked to imagine as vividly as possible such a conflict situation and to indicate how they would try to convince the other to yield.

(2) "Imagine you are planning to buy new furniture for your living room. You and your partner had already reached an agreement about the amount of money you want to spend, the material and the color of the furniture. Since you lack the time to go and collect information about furniture together, each one of you goes separately. At home you and your spouse talk about two different kinds of furniture. Both alternatives fulfill the criteria you established at the outset of the purchase decision."

The value conflicts read as follows: (3) "Imagine you and your spouse are planning your next vacation. While one of you would like to spend two weeks at the sea relaxing and lying in the sun, the other would rather go to the mountains. Although your preferences differ, you both want to spend the vacation together."

(4) "Imagine you and your spouses are discussing whether to rent an apartment in the center of the city or in the suburbs. While one of you prefers to have a garden and a quiet neighborhood, the other would like to be in the city center, close to cinemas, theaters and cafés."

The following vignettes represented distributional conflicts: (5) "Imagine you and your partner have won some money in a lottery. Each of you would like to spend the money on an item he or she has wanted for a long time (e. g., stereo, clothes). If the amount of money allowed is for one item only, how would you try to convince the partner to agree to your preferences?"

(6) "Imagine you have saved some money and decided to spend it now. One of you wants to buy some rather expensive stereo equipment, while the other wants jewellery"

In a pretest, these six conflict vignettes were presented to 10 experts who, in general, classified them correctly into the three conflict categories (90 % concordant classifications).

### *2.3. Procedure*

The sample was a convenience sample. Couples were approached by one of four researchers when both husband and wife were at home. After a short explanation of the aims of the investigation, the husband or the wife was given the questionnaire while the other was interviewed. After interviewing the first spouse, the researcher asked him or her to complete the questionnaire, and interviewed the other spouse. Overall, data collection took about 60 to 80 minutes per couple.

## 3. Results

The answers of the respondents were read by three raters, who divided them into discrete influence strategies. Strategies were defined as acts which are instrumental in reaching the respondent's goal. In most cases (85 % out of 6 vignettes by 70 respondents - 420 cases) the respondents indicated only one influence strategy. In 15 % of the cases two or three strategies were identified in responses to a vignette. The total of 543 tactics was classified into 18 different categories of influence strategies (Table 1). Interrater correspondence was 79 %. Where the raters disagreed, they discussed the classification until they reached agreement. All strategies fitted into the categories presented in Table 1.

The frequencies of use of the 18 strategies were analyzed for dependence on sex (husband vs wife), task type (probability, distributional, value conflict), marital quality (happy vs unhappy couples), and marital power pattern (egalitarian vs patriarchal). The resulting design was a 2 by 3 by 2 by 2 factorial. With 18 conflict types, the expected frequency of mentioning each tactic in each condition is less than 2. In order to avoid small numbers of observed strategies per condition, a maximum of two independent variables were considered at each step of the analysis. Although the frequencies are not independent, chi-square tests were conducted. Table

2 presents frequencies of influence strategies broken down by sex, conflict type, marital quality, and power structure. Underlined numbers in the Table indicate an observed frequency being significantly higher or lower than the expected frequency ( $p < .05$ ).

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Insert Table 2 about here

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The frequencies of use of different influence tactics vary considerably (Chi-square (17) = 660.21;  $p < .001$ ). The strategies most often mentioned were reason, integrative bargaining, offers of trade-offs, and role segregation. In addition, leaving the scene and insisting were frequently mentioned by the respondents.

Table 2 shows that wives reported dominating a decision according to role segregation less often than the husbands did. No other tactics are used differentially by the two sexes.

As compared to spouses in patriarchal relationships, egalitarian couples seem to use punishment and direct coalition making less often; they more often resist the other's desires.

The only difference observed between happy and unhappy couples regards indirect coalitions: Happy spouses referred more often to the needs of other family members when they tried to pursue their goals.

Few interaction effects were found. Role segregation tactics were found to depend on sex and marital power patterns. In patriarchal relationships, wives less often ( $n = 6$ ) than husbands ( $n = 19$ ) indicated that the issue would be decided by role segregation; no sex difference was found in egalitarian relationships ( $n = 12$  and  $13$ , respectively). Another interaction concerns marital happiness and dominance. In patriarchal and harmonious relationships, both husbands and wives more often mentioned buying autonomously, without having a discussion with the partner ( $n = 7$ ), than spouses in egalitarian and harmonious relationships ( $n = 1$ ). No such effect was observed in disharmonious relationships ( $n = 3$  and  $2$ , respectively).

While the use of influence tactics is relatively independent of sex, marital happiness and dominance patterns, it depends strongly on the type of conflict involved. In probability conflicts, the strategies most often used are role segregation, autonomous purchases without consulting the other, and reason. Bargaining strategies, resistance, and claiming one's desire for the

product seem to be inappropriate strategies in probability conflicts. Value conflicts are settled most often by offers of trade-offs and integrative bargaining strategies. Spouses also pursue their goals by claiming their interest in the product at stake. Integrative bargaining and offers of trade-offs are also the relevant strategies in distributional conflicts. If spouses disagree on the distribution of resources they also reason, build indirect coalitions, and try to reach their goals by insisting. Role segregation and autonomous purchases without the other's consent are seldom applied to resolve distributional disagreements.

A more concise analysis of frequencies of influence strategies and the respective independent variables can be obtained through correspondence analysis which, basing on chi-square tests, allows to factorize qualitative data (Benzecri, et coll., 1976). A first correspondence analysis, including sex, marital harmony, power patterns, and task type, revealed two factors, explaining 66.4 % and 17.6 %, respectively, of the variance. No independent variable but type of conflict contributed considerably to explaining the resulting pattern. Therefore, a second correspondence analysis was carried out, including only conflict types as independent variable. The resulting first factor, explaining 81.9 % of the variance, differentiates between strategies used in probability conflicts and tactics used in allocation and value conflicts. The second factor, explaining 18.1 % of the variance, differentiates between value conflicts and allocation tasks. As figure 1 shows, in probability conflicts the partner having the control over the respective products due to role segregation takes the decision; spouses often autonomously decide. Value conflicts are settled by either offering trade-offs, stating one's interest in the purchase and need for the product at stake, and also by emotional tactics. If the conflicts becomes "too hot", the spouses may also demonstratively leave the scene. Bargaining and coalition strategies are applied if distributional conflicts need to be resolved. Also, spouses try to get their part by merely insisting on their mind. Finally, reasoning was often mentioned as a tactic especially useful in allocation and probability conflicts.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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#### 4. Discussion

Spouses use a variety of influence strategies to manage disagreements. This pilot study shows that some strategies are used more often than others. Sex and characteristics of the spousal relationship have some effect on whether certain strategies are employed. Moreover, particular strategies are likely to be employed in response to particular types of conflict.

It is hard to make an absolute distinction between different influence strategies. In addition, there is often uncertainty concerning the number of tactics used in disagreement situations. The results of the study show, however, that the list of 18 influence tactics in Table 1 includes the tactics most often used by spouses to manage disagreements concerning economic decisions. Each tactic was mentioned at least twice by the respondents and the raters were able to assign all responses to one of the 18 categories.

The most commonly mentioned tactics are reason (19 % of the cases) and bargaining strategies (trade-offs: 14 %; integrative bargaining: 19 %). Spouses also avoided a large number of conflicts by relying on role segregation: If disagreements arise, a spouse either takes the decision because he or she is perceived as responsible for the topic at stake (7 %), or he or she yields spontaneously because the topic concerns the other's domain (9 %). It is often impossible to settle disputes in an encounter. In modern relationships, with husband and wife jointly responsible for the family's everyday affairs, the spouses may often stop a heated dispute by leaving the scene and coming back to the topic at another time (8 %); or, as "tough discussion partners", they may insist on their desires and try to exhaust the other (8 %). Interestingly, few of the strategies usually summarized as persuasive were mentioned often: Emotional tactics (positive and negative emotions, such as manipulation, laughing, crying), helplessness and violent behavior, punishments and rewards, but also distorting information and claiming one's need for the product, were rarely mentioned (only 9 % of all cases). This may, in part, be due to a social desirability bias, but the results may also indicate that married couples do not rely heavily on persuasive tactics. Older couples (the average length of marriage was 17 years) may become less and less susceptible to the other's persuasive behavior, so that persuasive strategies become ineffectual. Surprisingly, strategies which get the other in a "good frame of mind" also seem to become relatively unimportant within marriage. While Duck (1986) reports liking, i. e., acting

friendly and helpful, as the most commonly used strategy in friendship, in this study positive emotions were mentioned in 1 % of the cases only. Also, making coalitions was rarely mentioned (3 %). This finding might, however, be related to the type of vignettes presented here. In general, they present purchasing situations which in previous research were found to be controlled by the spouses but not by the children, who are the most relevant coalition partners in other situations (Kirchler, 1989).

It was hypothesized that the choice of the specific influence strategy varies in regard to the characteristics of the conflict, on sex, and relationship characteristics. While the type of conflict was significantly related to the influence tactics the spouses rely upon, sex, marital quality, and power patterns accounted for little variance.

Contrary to common views expecting women to use emotional and indirect strategies, with men favoring rational, direct tactics (Szinovacz, 1987), in this study wives (8 %) relied on persuasive techniques (these are emotional tactics, helplessness, aggression, rewards, punishments, distorting information) about as often as husbands (5 %). There was also no sex difference in the use of weak and strong tactics. Considering persuasive attempts and insisting, leaving the scene and coalition making as weak strategies, and bargaining and reason as strong strategies, the respective percentages for wives (30 % and 53 % for weak and strong strategies, respectively) and husbands (27 % and 52 %) were about equal. The only difference observed in this study concerns role segregation. Husbands reported dominating a decision by role segregation more often (12 %) than wives (7 %). This result is in line with the traditional view attributing the husband more power than the wife.

It was hypothesized that spouses in egalitarian relationships would be tougher discussion partners than spouses in patriarchal relationships. Thus, egalitarian spouses would oppose the partner by insisting on their opinion more often than spouses in patriarchal relationships; who, in turn, would rely more on persuasive techniques and, (for the weak partner) on emotional techniques and coalitions. In general, this hypothesis is supported by the data. Egalitarian spouses mentioned insisting in 10 % of the cases and persuasive tactics and coalition making in 11 % of the cases; the corresponding percentages for spouses in patriarchal marriages were 6 % and 15 %. Not surprisingly, it was also found that husbands in patriarchal relationships dominated by referring to their role more often (13 % of the

cases) than wives (4 %), whereas in egalitarian relationships this difference was not observed (10 % versus 9 %). Unlike patriarchal relationships, egalitarian marriages were characterized by less role segregation and more joint decision making. Consequently, partners in egalitarian relationships should rely less on the tactics labeled autonomous decisions without consulting the other. This hypothesis was supported for harmonious relationships only: while spouses in egalitarian relationships (2 % of the cases) and spouses in unhappy and patriarchal marriages (1 %) rarely mentioned autonomous purchases, spouses in harmonious and patriarchal relationships mentioned them relatively often (7 %).

Previous findings have suggested that marital quality does not depend on the frequency of conflict but is significantly related to the dynamics leading to agreements (Norton, 1988). These trends are not mirrored by the present results. It should, however, be emphasized that in this study couples were only moderately unhappy and not severely distressed. Contrary to expectation, happy couples tended to rely on almost the same influence tactics as unhappy couples. Happy and unhappy spouses were inclined to apply persuasive tactics equally often (9 %). Happy spouses reported leaving the scene or insisting on their opinions just as often (14 %) as unhappy spouses (17 %); role segregation was equally important (17 % and 16 %, respectively); bargaining strategies (31 % and 25 %), and reason (21 % and 18 %) were mentioned equally as often in both sub-samples. The only significant difference concerned the tactics summarized as indirect coalitions. Happy spouses seem to be more family oriented. They pursued their goals more often by considering the impact the decision outcome would have on their children (5 %), while unhappy spouses were found to be more self oriented (2 %).

This study presents evidence that the choice of a specific strategy depends mainly on the type of conflict. In contrast to other conflicts, probability disagreements are either avoided by the implementation of role segregation strategies (42 %) or resolved by reason (22 %). Relative to other conflicts (1 %), in probability disagreements spouses more often decide without the other's consent (6 %). Insisting on one's opinion, claiming a strong desire for the product, coalitions and bargaining strategies are considered inappropriate in probability conflicts. In contrast, if value conflicts arise, persuasive strategies may be used. Whereas in 16 % of the cases of probability conflicts, spouses mentioned the use of a persuasive

technique, in value conflicts the corresponding percentage was 33 %. In addition, offers of trade offs (23 %) and integrative bargaining (27 %) were considered to be appropriate techniques for resolving a value dispute. Bargaining strategies were the most common strategies in allocation tasks (39 %), although reason (22 %), insisting (11 %) and coalition making (8 %) were also apparently considered acceptable tactics. As compared to value and probability tasks, allocation problems are not resolvable by simply claiming one's need or by buying without the other's consent, or by role segregation. In sum, these results show that, if spouses have not already implemented a conflict avoidance strategy, such as role segregation, probability conflicts are settled by reason, value conflicts are managed by bargaining and persuasive techniques, and allocation problems are settled by bargaining strategies and reason, or by exhausting the other by insisting on one's own opinion.

In summary, it should be reemphasized that this is a pilot study showing results basing on the answers of 70 subjects. Although the sample size does not allow us to draw strong conclusions, the results do seem to demonstrate that the 18 influence strategies presented here are a comprehensive list of strategies in spousal purchase decisions. The choice of the specific strategy depends strongly on the type of conflict at stake. This seems to be true for both husbands and wives, happy and unhappy couples, and for egalitarian or patriarchal relationships. These results indicate that research on family purchase decisions should focus more on the type of conflict spouses need to settle rather than considering specific commodities, such as the car, furniture, or the summer vacation.

Finally, it should be emphasized that this is an exploratory study. While the vignettes presented here may to some extent be artificial and limit the validity of the results, the freedom in responding with what one would do to get the spouse's agreement in the presented situations, is clearly an advantage. The participants were not confronted with categories of tactics provided by the researchers.

While this study hopefully takes us a step further in the research of family purchases, it only touches on the dynamics of purchase deliberations. In future studies the complexity of decision processes in the family should be considered in full: In the family, purchase decisions are embedded in quite humdrum everyday life affairs. Spouses discuss purchases when they are tired, early in the morning or late in the evening; talk about product



alternatives, leave the scene to deal with other problems, and come back to the purchase decision later. Moreover, when one strategy proves ineffective, spouses may try another before giving up. Purchase decisions are not isolated events, there is no single strategy which is used in every conflict but a variety of strategies which may be applied. These obvious facts were not considered here and remain for future research.

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Table 1: Influence strategies

strategy content	strategy label	definition and examples
emotion	positive emotion	manipulation, humor, seductive behavior
	negative emotion	threats, violence, cynicism, ridicule
physical force	helplessness aggression	acting helpless or ill, crying, constraints, hurt, aggression, violence
resources	rewards	offering services and other resources
	punishments	withdrawing resources, such as financial support
presence	insisting	insist, discussing until the other yields, exhaust the other
	leaving the scene	resigning, yielding, talking about other topics, leaving the scene
information	overt information	talking openly about one's interest, claiming need for a product
	distorted information	lying, presenting distorted information, withholding information
persons	indirect coalition	reminding of needs of children, referring to neighbours
	direct coalition	talking in presence of others
fact	buying autonomously	buying the desired product without the buy the desired product without the other's consent
roles	yielding according to role segregation deciding according to role segregation	yielding because the other is responsible for the products at stake reminding of role segregation within the relationship, reminding of family norms
bargaining	trade-offs	offers of trade-offs, bookkeeping, reminding of past favors
	integrative bargaining	searching for an optimal solution which satisfies both partners
reason	reason	talking in an emotionally neutral way about product alternatives, logical argumentation

Table 2. Frequencies of influence strategies used (1) by husbands vs wives, (2) by spouses in different conflict situations, (3) by spouses in egalitarian vs patriarchal relationships, and (4) by spouses in happy vs unhappy relationships.

strategy label	(1) sex male female	(2) conflict type pro- bability value distri- bution	(3) power egali- patri- tarian archal	(4) harmony un- happy happy	total fre- quency
positive emotion	3 4	0 4 3	3 4	3 4	7
negative emotion	3 9	3 6 3	8 4	6 6	12
helplessness	0 2	1 0 1	2 0	1 1	2
aggression	2 1	0 0 3	1 2	2 1	3
rewards	2 2	2 1 1	1 3	2 2	4
punishment	2 2	0 2 2	0 4	2 2	4
insisting	19 24	<u>8 13 22</u>	<u>26 17</u>	26 17	43
leaving the scene	22 22	13 19 12	23 21	27 17	44
overt information	7 7	1 10 3	5 9	11 3	14
distorted information	2 1	1 1 1	0 3	1 2	3
indirect coalitions	9 7	4 1 11	8 8	<u>5 11</u>	16
direct coalitions	2 3	0 0 5	0 5	2 3	5
autonomous purchase	6 7	11 2 0	4 9	5 8	13
deciding according to roles	19 19	33 1 4	13 25	21 17	38
yielding according to roles	<u>32 18</u>	<u>40 4 6</u>	25 25	27 23	50
offers of trade-offs	40 35	10 39 26	31 44	52 23	75
bargaining	48 57	<u>8 47 50</u>	51 54	54 51	105
reason	52 53	39 22 44	52 53	54 51	105
	270 273	174 172 197	253 290	301 242	543

Note. The underlined observed frequencies are significantly ( $p < .05$ ) higher or lower than expected frequencies.

Figure 1: Results of the correspondence analysis

Note. The underlined strategies' absolute contributions to explaining the resulting pattern is equal or greater 6 %.

