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Unbelievable Similarity: Accuracy in Spouses' eports on their Partners' Tactics to Influence Joint Economic Decisions

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Les époux sont-ils capables de décrire fidèlement la stratégie que leur conjoint adopte dans les décisions économiques communes? On a demandé à chacun des partenaires d'imaginer une situation d'achat et de décrire leur propre stratégie et celle de leur conjoint en répondant aux 102 propositions d'un questionnaire. Les données produites par ces 286 couples montrent que la fidélité est généralement basse. les modèles de dominance, la durée du mariage, l'âge des époux, le sexe, le niveau culturel et le type de conflit ne sont pas corrélés avec la fidélité. Ce qui est par contre en partie le cas pour le bonheur conjugal: ce sont les époux les plus heureux qui présentent la plus forte probabilité de voir la description qu'ils donnent de la conduite de leur partenaire correspondre à l'autodescription du conjoint. La raison en est que la congruence comportementale est plus forte chez les couples heureux. La description du comportement du partenaire prend essentiellement appui sur l'autodescription: comme les époux heureux disent adopter des stratégies analogues à celles de leur conjoint, ils atteignent des scores de fidélité plus élevés que ceux des époux malheureux en décrivant leur propre comportement sans être pour autant capables de décrire plus fidèlement la conduite de l'autre.

This study addresses the question of whether spouses can accurately describe their partners' tactics in joint economic decisions. Husbands and wives were asked to describe their own and their partners' tactics by imagining a purchase situation and responding to 102 statements in a questionnaire. The results of the 286 couples indicate that accuracy is generally low. Neither dominance patterns, length of marriage, spouse's age, gender, education, nor type of conflict are correlated with accuracy. Marital happiness was found to determine accuracy to some extent. The happier spouses are with their relationship the more likely it is that their descriptions of their partners'

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behaviour correspond with their partners' self-descriptions. It was discovered that this finding was due to the fact that actual behaviour congruence is higher in happy rather than unhappy couples. As spouses' descriptions of their partners' behaviour were found to be based mainly on their own self-descriptions, and happy spouses report using tactics similar to their partners', happy spouses reach higher accuracy indices than unhappy spouses just by describing their own behaviour rather than their partners' behaviour, thus, without being able to more accurately describe the other's behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Making economic decisions within a private household is a complex process. A spouse's and child's necessities and desires for products and commodities are often not clearly expressed to the other family members, joint discussions about purchases are frequently interrupted by other activities and after having dealt "enough" with a problem a family member may buy or not buy a good without knowing exactly how a decision was reached.

Couples and families muddle through the process of making joint decisions. Because of strenuous demands on time, energy, and other resources, couples plod through decisions in a spontaneous and incremental fashion (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1963; Sillars & Kalbfiesch, 1989). Weick (1971) describes decision-making situations at home as being anything but problem-centred rational analyses of alternatives: whereas task groups in business organisations are formed basically for the purpose of problem solving and decision making, decisions within private households usually do not take place during a formal meeting. Decision tasks are neither isolated tasks explicitly put on the agenda nor treated by a group of experts. Partners in intimate relationships have to cope with a stream of tasks. They need to make decisions continuously and face problems simultaneously rather than one after the other in a sequential order. Problems are part of and embedded in the routine of everyday life. Couples and families address their problems early in the morning, when the partners are still sleepy, or after work, when they are already tired. The climate in close relationships is heavily emotional. Family decisions are embedded in the affairs of everyday life which are characterised by a backlog of unfinished business that was dealt with earlier but never brought to a successful resolution. Family members may focus on different tasks in different rooms when talking about the next major purchase. They communicate to each other while one may be cooking and the other watching TV; they send verbal and nonverbal cues to each other but do not receive them. While paying attention primarily

to something other than the question of whether to purchase an item or not, the spouses may discuss, rethink, and sometimes resolve the purchase decision.

Implicit rather than explicit decision making (Sillars & Kalbfiesch, 1989) is characterised by silent arrangements without verbal agreement. Spouses usually do not consciously view themselves as making decisions except after having chosen one out of the available options. Implicit decisions entail retrospective rather than prospective awareness. In particular, routine decisions are not perceived as being as the primary goal when they occur, but as a fact afterwards, when the decision has already been reached. Spouses' and other family members' reports on their decision-making processes often reflect the playing out of standards learned from reference groups or social stereotypes.

Couples have difficulties in planning decisions in a rational way and in maximising joint utilities. Park (1982) demonstrates, for instance, that even when such important decisions as the purchase of a house are at stake, spouses "walk step by step" through a disjointed decision-making process. In retrospect, when spouses are asked to describe a decision-making situation, they may construct a formal "script" specifying time and place of discussions, leadership and mutual influence, interaction strategies, etc. Intimate partners often wait for difficult situations to pass rather than resolving them. Afterwards they may rationalise the process, define their choices, attribute significance and meaning to them in the context of their everyday affairs, and believe that they had jointly decided to purchase an item of importance to them and likely the best alternative under the given circumstances.

Despite the complexity and unclear structure of purchase decisions, researchers continue to rely heavily on surveys. When one or both spouses report in mailed questionnaires, telephone or personal interviews that they exert a certain amount of influence in decisions on a variety of goods, average influence scores are usually interpreted as indicators of husband–wife dominance. Differences in the responses of husbands and wives are likely to be treated as negligible measurement error. Such research approaches take for granted that spouses know exactly what they themselves do and what their partner does.

After reviewing more than 20 studies on household decisions, Kirchler (1989) concluded that spouses' reports on their joint experiences differ considerably. On average, their responses differ in more than one third of the cases. Corfman (1988), for instance, found that correlations between husband/wife reports on various purchases range from $r = .34$ to $r = .87$. Davis, Hoch, and Ragsdale (1986) investigated husband/wife predictions of their own preferences and the preferences of their partners. Accuracy was found to be generally low. The respondents assumed that their partners'

preferences would be quite similar to their own. Subjects used an anchoring and adjustment strategy when making predictions about their partners' preferences. They appear to be largely unaware of their different reactions to goods and report their own preferences even when asked to report the partners' attitudes. According to Davis et al. (1986), causes for low accuracy are projection tendencies, stereotyping, and egocentric biases. People tend to ascribe their own attitudes to the person about whom they report. People use their perspective of themselves as a reference for judging other persons, even when they have prior experiences that would allow them to distinguish the other person's perceptions. People may also have implicit, socially shared images of male and female behaviour, and report such generalisations when they lack specific knowledge about an issue. Finally, perceptions of others are "filtered" through a person's concept about herself or himself.

Kirchler (1988, 1989) showed that not only reports on past experiences or predictions about future behaviour of the partners are inaccurate but also descriptions of the partner's actual emotional state. In a diary study, spouses were asked to indicate their own mood state, causes of mood, and their actual needs as well as the partner's mood, causes of mood, and needs. Although the partner was present while the other was recording these items and only the actual situation had to be reported on without a need to remember past experiences or to anticipate the future, the participants were unable to put themselves in the situation of the other. On average, only 59–69% of the evaluations of partners' emotional state were accurate.

The present study focuses on tactics that spouses apply to convince their partners to yield to their purchase desires. If a partner uses specific tactics, the other is constrained to respond if he or she wants to get his or her way. Tactics are supposed to elicit active goal-oriented reactions. Although spouses should remember vividly how they interact with each other, it is assumed here that reports on the others' tactics lack accuracy.

Inaccuracy may be due to spouses' filtered perceptions and misunderstandings of each other's messages. Noller (1984), Acitelli, Douvan, and Veroff (1993), and others found that misunderstandings are likely to occur in qualitatively low marriages. Happy spouses are more likely to be able to encode and decode messages accurately. As compared to unhappy spouses' reports on joint experiences, happy spouses' reports are more likely to correspond to their partners' reports.

Further determinants of accuracy are the spouses' dominance patterns, gender, length of marriage, and their education. Acitelli et al. (1993) argue that persons in a position of greater power have no great need to understand the person in the position of lesser power. In patriarchal relationships, the husband should be able to get his way regardless of whether he responds to his wife's tactics or not. If the wife, on the other hand, wants to realise her wishes and aims at persuading him, she needs to have exact knowledge about his actions and reactions, and must apply an effective tactic at the right moment. In marriages of this kind the wife should be more aware about what is going on and be better able to remember and report on her interactions with her husband.

Length of marriage is supposed to correlate with spouses' descriptive accuracy. According to Berger and Kellner (1964) differences in perceptions decrease over time. Spouses who accumulate joint experiences learn about each other's idiosyncracies and should know exactly what tactics the other uses whenever he or she wants to realise his or her goals.

Besides relationship variables, gender and education are also supposed to be covariant with descriptive accuracy. Commonsense holds that women are better able to understand other individuals and are more receptive of emotional messages (Noller, 1984). Women are also supposed to have more vivid memories about joint situations than men (Ross & Holmberg, 1992). When asked to recall past interactions, women's reports about their husbands should be more similar to husbands' self-descriptions than vice versa, i.e. than husbands' reports on their wives' tactics are similar to their wives' reports on themselves.

Finally, accuracy was found to be lower in conflict rather than in agreement situations (Kirchler, 1989; Noller, 1984). This leads to the assumption that purchase decisions characterised by strong disagreements between the spouses and a high risk of escalating into heated conflicts are remembered less accurately than relatively cool, problem-related disagreements. Spouses' reports should, thus, be less accurate on value conflicts or disagreements about the distribution of resources than on probability conflicts, which are characterised as disagreements about specific alternatives but joint goals.

Spouses were presented with one of six different purchase conflicts and asked to imagine what tactics they themselves and their partners would be likely to apply to convince the other to yield. The distinction of conflict types derives from Brandstätter (1987). According to him, probability conflicts occur if, for instance, spouses agree about the utility of a product and its value but disagree about the quality of various product alternatives. Value conflicts are present if spouses disagree about values, e.g. about the ethical acceptability of a product. Distributional conflicts occur if spouses disagree about the allocation of common resources and discuss whether to buy a commodity useful only to him or her. A questionnaire that was developed in previous studies (Kirchler, 1990, 1993a) and used to investigate spouses' influence tactics was slightly modified for the purposes of the present study.

METHOD

Subjects

Overall, 286 married and/or cohabiting, randomly selected couples took part. The couples were living in the Austrian regions of Vienna and Lower Austria. Demographic characteristics of the 572 participants are summarised in Table 1.

Materials

A tactics questionnaire consists of an introductory scenario which describes a purchasing conflict and statements concerning spouses' influence tactics (Kirchler, 1990, 1993a, b). The scenario describes one of six different purchasing conflicts: two representing a probability conflict, two a value conflict, and two an allocation problem. The conflict scenarios presented in this study concern a new car, furniture, the next vacation, a new home, or the distribution of money won in a lottery, and are described in full elsewhere (Kirchler, 1990).

TABLE 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (Means, Standard Deviations, and Percentages)

	Husband	*Wife*
n	286	286
Age (range = 19 to 77 years)	43.24 (13.23)	40.15 (12.71)
Years of cohabitation (range = 1 to 51 years)	16.96 (12.39)	16.86 (12.36)
n of children		
0	33.9%	33.9%
1	21.7%	20.3%
2	29.4%	30.1%
3	11.9%	12.2%
more than 3	3.1%	3.4%
Age of youngest child	15.82 (11.40)	16.05 (12.39)
Formal education		
compulsory education	37.3%	40.9%
secondary education	32.7%	43.7%
university education	29.9%	15.4%
Net household income per month		
up to AS 15,000	8.7%	9.5%
AS 15,001 to 25,000	29.4%	28.7%
AS 25,001 to 35,000	24.3%	25.8%
AS 35,001 and more	37.6%	36.0%
($1 = AS 12)		

In the original questionnaire 54 statements follow the episode, and concern actions to get one's way in joint purchase decisions (see Kirchler, 1993a for a discussion of the reliability of the questionnaire). Participants are asked to express their agreements with these statements (7-point scales; 1 = disagree strongly with applying the described tactic, 7 = agree strongly with applying the described tactic). The questionnaire is structured in such a way as to measure 18 tactics in sequential order: item 1 measures the use of positive emotions, item 2 measures the use of negative emotions, the items thereafter concern helplessness, aggression, rewards, punishments, insisting on the desire for a specific good, leaving the scene, overt information, distorted information, indirect and direct coalitions, buying autonomously, deciding or yielding according to roles, trade-offs, integrative bargaining, and reason. The next statements from items 19–36 and from items 37–54 measure the 18 tactics in the same sequential order. The following is an example of a statement aiming to assess the likelihood of using tactic 1, positive emotions: "I am charming towards my partner in order to persuade him or her". The statement reading "I try to get my way by acting helpless" assesses use of tactic 3, helplessness. Tactic 18, reason, was assessed, among others, by the statement: "I try to convince my partner by presenting logical arguments".

For the purposes of the present study, the original questionnaire was slightly modified. Participants were first asked to indicate the probability of their use of a specified tactic and then to indicate how likely it would be for their partner to use this tactic. Tactics 14 and 15, "deciding according to roles" and "yielding according to roles", were presented only once. "Yielding according to roles" was omitted in the part where participants had to describe their own influence tactics. When reporting on the partner's tactics, "yielding according to roles" was presented whereas "deciding according to roles" was omitted. Overall, participants reported on their own and their partner's use of 17 tactics. The questionnaire consisted of 102 statements (17 tactics × 3 items × 2 self-report/report on partner's behaviour).

In addition to the tactics-inventory, a set of 13 items was included to assess marital quality and 6 items were used to assess marital power (see Kirchler, 1990). Finally, demographic characteristics were measured (sex, age, formal education, length of cohabitation with the partner, number and age of children, net monthly income of the household).

Procedure

A student collaborator approached people randomly at their homes, in shopping centres, at evening courses and lectures at various public institutions and asked them to participate if they were married or

cohabiting. Approximately 500 couples from Vienna and Lower Austria were invited to participate; more than half of them filled the questionnaire out individually and sent it together with the questionnaire of their spouse anonymously to the University of Vienna or handed the questionnaires to the student collaborator.

Approximately 37% of the couples filled out a questionnaire referring to a probability conflict, 27% were asked to imagine a value conflict, and 36% were presented with a distributional conflict. Completing the questionnaire took 30 minutes.

Results and Discussion

Use of Influence Tactics

Before testing the accuracy of spouses' reports on their partners' behaviour, average incidence of agreement to using the 17 tactics was computed. Agreement to using a tactic was computed by averaging the responses to the respective three items measuring a specific tactic. As in two previous studies (Kirchler, 1993b; Zani & Kirchler, 1993), reported use of a tactic varied considerably across the set of 17 tactics. Four analyses of variance with 17 tactics as independent variables (repeated factor) and agreement to use them as dependent variables revealed significant effects for husbands' self-reports [$F(16,4560) = 297.66$; $P < .001$], wives' self-reports [$F(16,4560) = 292.61$; $P < .001$], and husbands' [$F(16,4560) = 240.74$; $P < .001$] and wives' [$F(16,4560) = 266.43$; $P < .001$] reports on their partners' behaviour. Table 2 shows husbands' and wives' self-reports and their reports on their partners' tactics.

The tactics most likely to be chosen are integrative bargaining, reason, overt information, and indirect coalitions. Punishments, helplessness, autonomous buying, negative emotions, and deciding according to roles were reported to be used relatively seldom. The structure of results in the male sample is highly correlated with the agreement indices in the female sample ($r = .99$; $P < .001$).

The present results are almost identical with the findings in a previous study which are also displayed in Table 2 (Kirchler, 1993b). The correlations between husbands' average agreement scores in the present and previous studies across the 17 tactics and between wives' scores in both studies reached $r(17) = .99$; $P < .001$.

Accuracy in Self/Partner Reports

Besides showing spouses' average agreement to applying the 17 tactics, Table 2 also summarises the average estimate of the partners' use of tactics. Both husbands' and wives' average for self and partner reports are highly correlated. Wives' reports about their husbands' tactics correlate $r = .99$ with husbands' self-reports. Husbands' reports about their wives' tactics also correlate $r = .99$ with wives' self-reports. On an aggregated level, spouses' reports about their partners' behaviour are highly reliable. The question, however, is whether congruence can also be observed on micro levels.

TABLE 2
Application of Influence Strategies by Husbands and Wives

Strategy Label	*Husband's Self-report*	*Husband's Report About Wife's Tactics*	*Wife's Self-Report*	*Wife's Report About Husband's Tactics*
Emotions				
1. Positive emotion	3.17 *(3.40)*	3.41	3.34 *(3.46)*	3.10
2. Negative emotion	2.31 *(2.19)*	2.33	2.35 *(2.17)*	2.37
Physical force				
3. Helplessness	1.87 *(1.84)*	2.17	2.11 *(2.09)*	1.82
4. Aggression	2.92 *(2.62)*	2.83	3.07 *(2.78)*	2.91
Resources				
5. Rewards	2.91 *(3.09)*	2.89	2.85 *(2.87)*	2.77
6. Punishments	1.65 *(1.74)*	1.77	1.75 *(1.72)*	1.82
Presence				
7. Insisting	3.09 *(2.98)*	3.31	3.30 *(3.06)*	3.37
8. Leaving the scene	3.66 *(3.60)*	3.52	3.93 *(3.88)*	3.69
Information				
9. Overt information	4.89 *(4.84)*	4.85	5.31 *(4.99)*	5.11
10. Distorted information	3.16 *(3.10)*	3.09	3.27 *(3.10)*	3.24
Persons				
11. Indirect coalition	4.18 *(4.26)*	4.15	4.31 *(4.25)*	4.05
12. Direct coalition	3.04 *(3.08)*	3.26	3.41 *(3.27)*	3.08
Facts				
13. Buying autonomously	2.45 *(2.36)*	2.45	2.27 *(1.92)*	2.56
Roles				
14. Deciding according to roles	2.30 *(2.42)*	2.22	2.22 *(1.94)*	2.46
Bargaining				
16. Trade-offs	2.82 *(2.86)*	2.95	3.00 *(3.10)*	2.80
17. Integrative bargaining	5.36 *(5.45)*	5.21	5.45 *(5.71)*	5.21
Reason				
18. Logical argumentation	5.56 *(5.50)*	5.08	5.37 *(5.33)*	5.53

(Self-reports and reports by the partner: 7-point scale ranging from 1 = tactic would not be applied at all; 7 = tactic would definitely be applied.
Numbers in parentheses represent mean incidence of agreement to using a specific strategy deriving from a previous study (Kirchler, 1993b).

Indices of similarity between spouses' behaviour (actual congruence), perceived congruence, and descriptive accuracy were obtained for each couple by correlating self-reports with descriptions of partners' behaviours. For example, comparing a husband's agreement to a tactic with his wife's agreement would yield a measure of actual congruence. Comparing a husband's agreement with his estimation of his wife's agreement would indicate the degree of perceived congruence, i.e. the degree to which he thought he and his wife agreed on the same thing. The correlation between a husband's agreement and his wife's estimation of her husband's agreement would yield an index of descriptive accuracy, indicating how much she understands and remembers his behaviour as described by himself. Note that actual behaviour does not mean that spouses' actions and reactions were observed; their behaviour refers to reported agreement to statements concerning influence tactics. Average correlations of the total sample of 286 coules are reported in Fig. 1.

The results clearly show that spouses' actual behaviour congruence, their perceived congruence, and the accuracy of their descriptions are much lower if computed at an individual rather than aggregated level. Interestingly, in both the male and female samples, scores for perceived congruence are higher than accuracy of their descriptions. Spouses

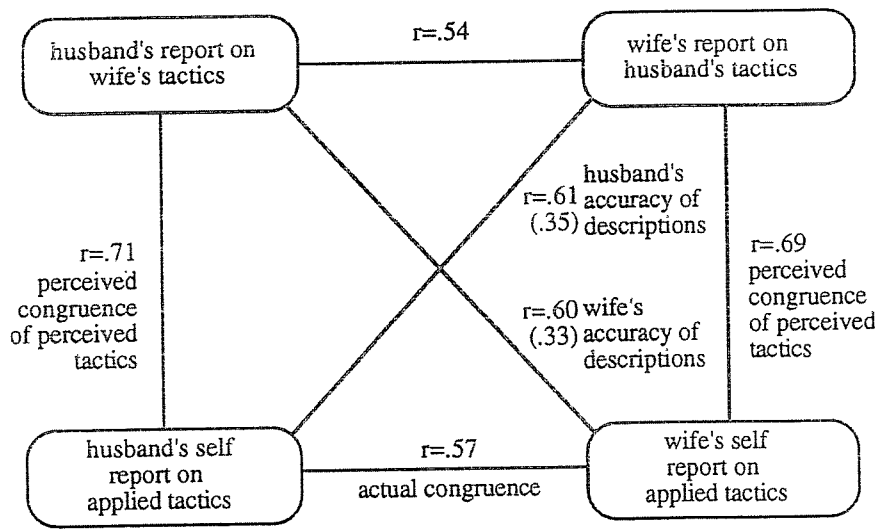

FIG. 1. Correlations between spouses' self-reports on their applied influence tactics and their descriptions of their partners' tactics. Correlation indices differs significantly if absolute difference between two indices is greater than or equal .03 (Friedman and Wilcoxon tests; $P < .01$). Correlation indices in parentheses indicate partial correlations with self-reports taken as a constant.

perceive their partners as similar to themselves even though they experience the other's personal characteristics daily. This result demonstrates that spouses perceive the other through the "filter" of their own self-image. They seem to evaluate the behaviour of the partner on the basis of their own behaviour. Evidence for this interpretation stems from partial correlations. If self-reports are taken as a constant, the correlation between estimated tactics of the partner and the partner's self-report decreases drastically from $r = .61$ for husbands and $r = .60$ for wives, respectively, to $r = .35$ and .33, respectively. In short, if spouses' self-descriptions are partialled out from the accuracy of their partners' behavioural descriptions, then partner descriptions are rather unreliable. A spouse's description of his or her partner's behaviour explains only about 12% of the variance of the partner's own self-description.

A higher index for perceived congruence than accuracy was found to be a stable result. It was obtained in samples of happy and relatively unhappy couples, patriarchal, egalitarian, and matriarchal relationships, and for young through old marriages. The total sample was split into two subsamples at the Median of spouses' joint happiness ratings, into three subsamples at the quartiles of spouses' joint reports on dominance patterns, and into six subsamples according to length of cohabitation (0–2

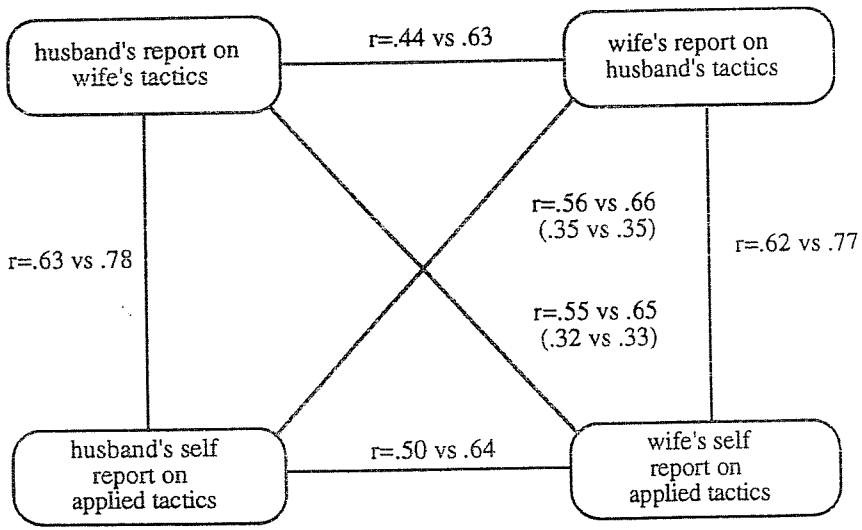

FIG. 2a. Correlations between spouses' self-reports on their applied influence tactics and their descriptions of their partners' tactics by marital happiness. Correlation indices for relatively unhappy spouses are reported first ($n = 141$ couples); the second index resulted in the sample of happy spouses ($n = 145$ couples). Correlation indices in parentheses indicate partial correlations with self-reports taken as a constant.

years, 3–5, 6–10, 11–15, 16–20, 21 and more years). Figures 2a, b, and c show correlations for actual congruence, perceived congruence, and accuracy separately for subsamples.

Figures 2a, 2b, and 2c also show that accuracy varies between happy and relatively unhappy relationships, and according to power structure, and length of marriage. The happier spouses are with their relationships and the more egalitarian their partnerships, the more likely they seem to be able to report accurately the behaviour of their partners. These findings need to be taken with caution as is shown by partial correlations in Fig. 2a, b, and c. If self-reports are taken as a constant, correlations between spouses' descriptions of their partners' behaviour and the partners' self-descriptions range from $r = .32$ to $r = .35$ both for happy and unhappy husbands and wives. Also dominance seems not to determine accuracy: both husbands and wives in matriarchal, egalitarian, and patriarchal relationships are equally inaccurate. Partial correlations range from $r = .32$ to $r = .37$. In contrast to happiness and dominance structure, length of marriage seems to determine accuracy. Partial correlations show that at the beginning of a relationship, the first two years, husbands and wives are rather inaccurate in their partner descriptions ($r = .25$ for husbands and

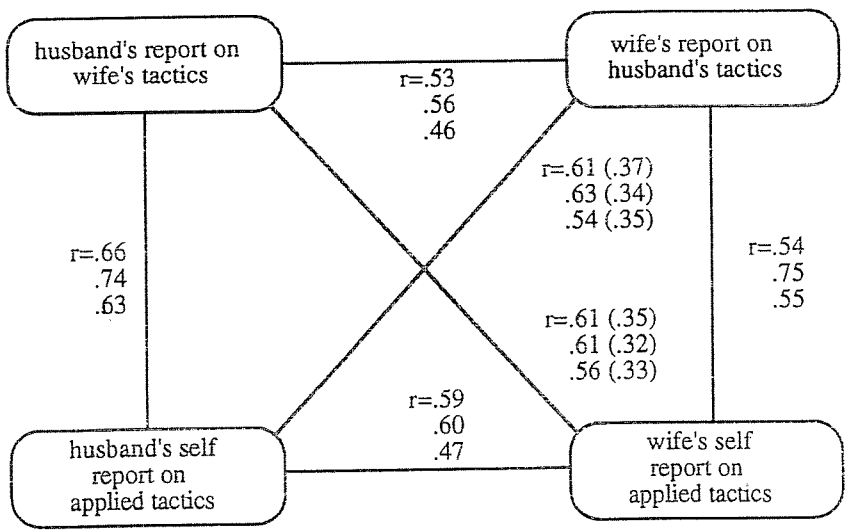

FIG. 2b. Correlations between spouses' self-reports on their applied influence tactics and their descriptions of their partner's tactics by dominance patterns. Correlation indices for matriarchal relationships ($n = 31$ couples) are reported first; the second index resulted in the sample of egalitarian relationships ($n = 194$ couples); and the third represents the sample of patriarchal relationships ($n = 61$ couples). Correlation indices in parentheses indicate partial correlations with self-reports taken as a constant.

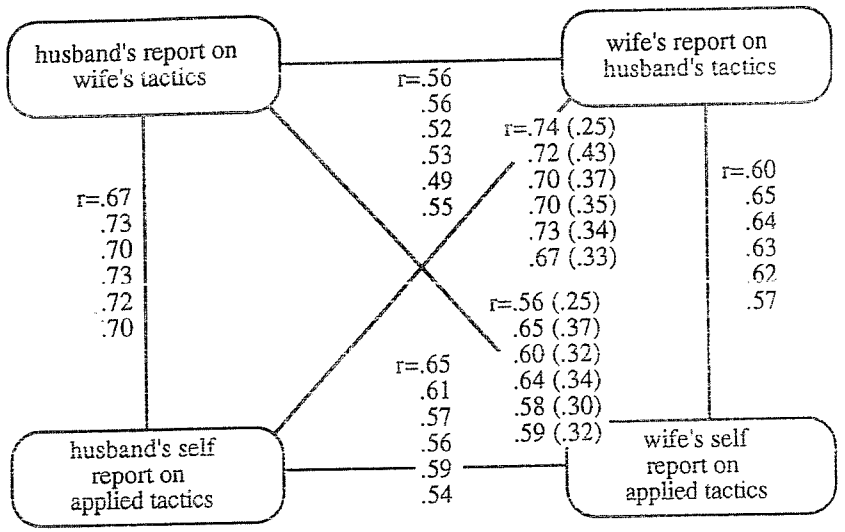

FIG. 2c. Correlations between spouses' self-reports on their applied influence tactics and their descriptions of their partners' tactics by length of marriage. Correlation indices for young relationships (1–2 years; $n = 14$ couples) are reported first; the second index resulted from the sample of couples living together for 2–5 years ($n = 44$ couples); the next indices resulted from the samples of couples living together for 5–10 years ($n = 45$), 10–15 years ($n = 38$); 15–20 years ($n = 36$), and more than 20 years ($n = 108$), respectively. Correlation indices in parentheses indicate partial correlations with self-reports taken as a constant.

wives); after the second year accuracy seems to increase (partial correlations range from $r = .30$ to $.43$). A closer look at determinants of spouses' accuracy seems necessary.

Determinants of Accuracy in Self/Partner Reports

Correlations in Figs. 2a, b, and c suggest that marital happiness and power account for accuracy. In the following section a more detailed analysis was computed separately for each tactic. Accuracy was operationalised as the absolute difference in spouses' agreement responses to each tactic and their estimations of their partners' agreement. Tables 3a, b, and c show, separately for each tactic, average distances between scores for husbands and wives, and for task types as well as correlations between distances and marital happiness, dominance patterns, length of marriage, age of spouses, education, and household income. Besides accuracy indices on a tactics level, total difference scores and correlations were computed on an item basis. It can be expected that differences based on tactics are less than those based on items, because averaging responses leads to a reduction in variance.

Tables 3a, b, and c show that accuracy depends on marital happiness. The happier spouses are with their relationship the more likely it is that their behavioural reports will correspond to their partners' estimations of their behaviour. This result was found both in analyses based on tactics and in those based on items. Happy spouses were especially accurate in

TABLE 3a
Differences Between Self-Reports and Partner's Reports on Applied Influence Tactics by Gender and Task Type

	Gender		*Probability Task*		*Value Task*		*Distributional Task*	
Strategy Label	*Husband*	*Wife*	*h*	*w*	*h*	*w*	*h*	*w*
Emotions								
1. Positive emotion	1.15	1.24	1.12	1.29	1.06	1.18	1.25	1.22
2. Negative emotion	.82	.95*	.88	.87	.76	.91	.81	1.04
Physical force								
3. Helplessness	.96	.84*	.86	.80	1.03	.88	1.01	.86
4. Aggression	1.07	1.08	1.14	1.06	1.08	1.10	1.00	1.08
Resources								
5. Rewards	1.06	1.03	.96	1.04	1.20	1.06	1.06	1.01
6. Punishments	.68	.72	.72	.65	.73	.88	.62	.67
Presence	1.17	1.20	1.13	1.20	1.11	1.05	1.23	1.31
7. Insisting	1.17	1.20	1.13	1.20	1.11	1.05	1.23	1.31
8. Leaving the scene	1.20	1.22	1.33	1.26	1.06	1.18	1.17	1.21
Information								
9. Overt information	1.11	1.01*	1.25	1.14	1.04	1.02	1.03	.86
10. Distorted information	1.11	1.10	1.14	1.06	1.16	.90	1.05	1.28
Persons								
11. Indirect coalition	1.26	1.29	1.39	1.37	1.27	1.20	1.11	1.29
12. Direct coalition	1.49	1.45	1.58	1.48	1.37	1.39	1.49	1.45
Facts								
13. Buying autonomously	1.09	1.16	1.29	1.20	1.07	1.13	.91	1.13
Roles								
14. Deciding according to roles	1.00	1.10	1.05	1.06	1.00	1.11	.94	1.12
Bargaining								
16. Trade-offs	1.20	1.22	1.22	1.07	1.26	1.13	1.16	1.34
17. Integrative bargaining	1.01	1.01	1.00	1.04	1.05	1.05	.98	.95
Reason								
18. Logical argumentation	1.08	.91**	.99	.94	1.05	.81	1.19	.96
Average difference across all tactics	1.09	1.09	1.12	1.10	1.08	1.06	1.05	1.10
Average difference across all tactics at item-level	*1.37*	*1.37*	*1.39*	*1.37*	*1.39*	*1.37*	*1.34*	*1.37*

h = husband; w = wife
Significant differences between means: * $P < .05$; ** $P < .01$.

TABLE 3b
Correlations of Differences Between Self-reports and Partner's Reports on Applied Influence Tactics and Relationship Characteristics

	Marital Satisfaction		*Dominance*		*Length of Marriage*	
Strategy Label	*Husband*	*Wife*	*Husband*	*Wife*	*Husband*	*Wife*
Emotions						
1. Positive emotion	.05	−.06	−.04	.01	.02	−.08
2. Negative emotion	−.18**	−.19**	−.06	.10	−.02	−.02
Physical force						
3. Helplessness	−.10	−.09	.15*	.14*	−.08	.02
4. Aggression	−.01	−.06	−.09	.06	−.02	.03
Resources						
5. Rewards	−.03	−.02	−.10	.03	.00	−.00
6. Punishments	−.14*	−.22**	−.02	.24**	.05	.17*
Presence						
7. Insisting	−.11	−.11	−.12*	−.02	−.07	−.07
8. Leaving the scene	−.05	.00	−.01	.05	−.11	−.02
Information						
9. Overt information	−.07	−.01	−.06	−.03	.00	−.00
10. Distorted information	−.12*	−.08	−.05	.01	.00	−.00
Persons						
11. Indirect coalition	.01	−.03	−.06	.06	.07	−.01
12. Direct coalition	−.06	−.04	−.02	.08	−.03	−.02
Facts						
13. Buying autonomously	−.23**	−.24**	−.03	.08	.06	.06
Roles						
14. Deciding according to roles	−.10	−.11	−.07	.10	.14*	.09
Bargaining						
16. Trade-offs	−.04	−.04	.01	.03	−.01	.02
17. Integrative bargaining	−.05	−.01	−.04	.13*	.02	.12*
Reason						
18. Logical argumentation	−.09	−.00	.00	−.01	.00	.06
Average correlation across all tactics	−.15**	−.16**	−.08	.13*	.01	.04
Average correlation across all tactics at item-level	*−.20***	*−.22***	*−.02*	*.17***	*.05*	*.06*

Significant correlations: * $P < .05$; ** $P < .01$.

describing their partners' negative emotional tactics, punishments, and autonomous purchases. Happy spouses appear to know exactly what their partners do in negative conflicts when they try to get their way by applying negatively evaluated tactics such as punishments and negative emotions. However, in comparison with unhappy spouses, happy couples were not significantly better at describing their partners' use of positive tactics such as positive emotions, rewards, overt information, bargaining tactics, and reason. Happy spouses' higher accuracy may in part be due to their better

TABLE 3c
Correlations of Differences Between Self-reports and Partner's Reports on Applied Influence Tactics and Demographic Variables

	Age		*Education*		*Household Income*	
Strategy Label	*Husband*	*Wife*	*Husband*	*Wife*	*Husband*	*Wife*
Emotions						
1. Positive emotion	.03	−.05	−.03	.02	.00	−.07
2. Negative emotion	−.02	−.02	−.02	−.02	−.04	−.09
Physical force						
3. Helplessness	−.12	.01	−.06	−.10	−.01	−.02
4. Aggression	−.05	.06	−.03	.10	.00	.04
Resources						
5. Rewards	−.01	−.00	.01	.10	.08	−.00
6. Punishments	−.02	−.13*	−.12*	−.23**	−.03	−.10
Presence						
7. Insisting	−.08	−.02	.04	.08	−.00	.00
8. Leaving the scene	−.10	−.01	.02	.13*	.00	.02
Information						
9. Overt information	−.05	−.02	.08	.09	.05	.12
10. Distorted information	−.04	.02	.03	.12*	.01	−.06
Persons						
11. Indirect coalition	.05	−.02	.04	.01	.05	.02
12. Direct coalition	−.10	.03	−.01	.11	.14*	.11
Facts						
13. Buying autonomously	.04	.05	−.01	.12*	.15*	.10
Roles						
14. Deciding according to roles	.10	.12*	−.01	.06	.05	.14*
Bargaining						
16. Trade-offs	−.04	−.02	−.11	.06	−.03	−.01
17. Integrative bargaining	−.05	.09	−.07	−.03	−.05	.03
Reason						
18. Logical argumentation	−.08	.05	−.01	−.02	.01	−.03
Average difference across all tactics	−.07	.05	−.04	.08	.07	.03
Average correlation across all tactics at item-level	*−.06*	*−.04*	*−.09*	*.01*	*.02*	*−.01*

Significant correlations: * $P < .05$; ** $P < .01$.

understanding of their partners and in part derive from an artifact: as actual behaviour congruence is higher in happy rather unhappy couples, happy spouses' accuracy could be high just because their behaviour is similar, and the mere description of their own tactics when asked to describe the partners' behaviour would lead to higher accuracy indices. As already discussed, happy partners' higher accuracy in partner descriptions disappears if self-reports are partialled out of the correlation between spouses' partner descriptions and partners' self-reports.

Dominance proved to be significant only in the female sample. Contrary to expectations, wives were better able to describe their husbands' tactics if the relationship was not perceived as patriarchal. The greater the husbands' power the lower the congruence of husbands' self-reports and wives' estimations of their behaviour. These results should not however, be interpreted as indicating that wives in patriarchal relationships do not know what their partners do. Perhaps wives' reports are quite accurate but dominant husbands put themselves in a better light in their self-descriptions. If dominant husbands fall into the trap of self-serving bias and describe themselves as tolerant and egalitarian decision partners, they may agree less often to statements concerning negatively evaluated tactics, whereas wives may describe their dominant husbands correctly, just as they act in everyday life. If accuracy is defined as the difference between self/partner reports then such tendencies would lead to lower accuracy indices. Unfortunately, the present data do not allow us to test whether this interpretation also holds for matriarchal relationships, because only a few couples reported that the wife had more power in their relationships than the husband.

Length of marriage did not lead to more accurate partner descriptions. On the contrary, the longer the relationship lasted, the less accurate wives were in describing their husbands' use of punishment and integrative bargaining tactics, and the worse husbands were at describing their wives' autonomous decisions according to roles. Also spouses' age, education, and the household income were not found to determine accuracy. Only a few of the reported correlations reached significance at a probability level of $P < .05$.

It was hypothesised that wives are better able to describe their husbands' behaviour than husbands are accurate in describing their wives' tactics. Table 3a shows that overall no gender differences appeared. Separate analyses for each tactic show, however, that wives were better able to describe their husbands' use of some tactics (e.g. helplessness, overt information, reason) and worse at describing others (e.g. negative emotions).

Type of conflict had no influence on spouses' accuracy. It might be too hasty to conclude that conflict plays no role in spouses' accuracy. Perhaps in the present study the manipulation of conflict was not strong enough to elicit differences between rather "cool" probability tasks and value and allocation tasks that can more easily become heated conflicts. It could also be argued that in some cases spouses may have greater difficulties in reporting on heated conflicts while in other cases they are well aware of the specific circumstances that led them into a heated dispute. In order to avoid escalation of a conflict, spouses need to know exactly how their partners' will respond, thus their reports on their partner's behaviour are more accurate.

Finally, it was to be determined whether spouses' accuracy increases for activities that they often perform relative to those that occur rarely. If a spouse agrees to statements in the questionnaire then he or she is likely to apply the respective tactics frequently and the partner might more accurately recall and evaluate use of those tactics. Correlations between husbands' and wives' average agreement scores in Table 2 and differences in self/partner reports in Table 3a do not support this assumption—for husbands $r(17) = .34$; $P < .10$; for wives $r(17) = .16$; $P > .10$. Perhaps in some cases spouses do have more accurate knowledge about frequently occurring events whereas in other cases spouses remember especially well that which happens rarely. Both hypotheses are plausible: frequently used tactics might be better remembered because a spouse has plenty of occasions to perceive and remember well the behaviour of the other. On the other hand, it is the rare and unexpected that attracts attention and might thus be better remembered.

CONCLUSIONS

It was argued that joint economic decisions within a private household resemble a "walk through marshy grounds" rather than a process that develops step by step from a beginning, characterised by the spouses' desire for an item, through information accumulation and rational evaluation to the purchase at the end. Spouses do not make decisions as described in normative decision models which assume that spouses make decisions in an explicit way (Sillars & Kalbflesch, 1989), that is, spouses are aware of making a decision, they concentrate on each other's preferences for some of the available alternatives, and know which characteristics they themselves and their partners prefer or reject. In short, it can be assumed that spouses are aware of each others' wishes, the available alternatives, and their characteristics, and that they concentrate on the joint interaction process.

The present study shows that spouses who are asked to describe each other's tactics in a joint decision situation construct what might happen according to their subjective concept of joint decisions. Descriptions of the partner's behaviour were shown to depend mainly on descriptions of one's own behaviour. It seems that one's own tactics are the best basis for predicting descriptions of the other's tactics. When spouses are asked to describe a joint decision situation in retrospect, they seem to know little about their partners. These findings are in line with the results of Davis et al. (1986), Quarm (1981), Corfman (1988) and others. Spouses' awareness, concentration on the joint situation, and recall capacities seem to be extremely limited. These results indicate a lack of explicit decision making, and support the view of spouses' implicit muddling-through processes.

It was assumed that happy spouses in contrast to unhappy spouses are better able to put themselves in the situation of their partner and are more likely to accurately perceive and report their partner's behaviour. It was further assumed that accuracy depends on dominance patterns, length of a relationship, gender, age, education, and type of conflict. None of the hypothesised determinants of accuracy was found to have a significant impact on spouses' descriptions of their own and their partners' behaviour. Marital happiness was shown to be related to accuracy just because congruence in actual spouse behaviour is high. If self descriptions are taken as a constant, correlations between spouses' descriptions of their partners' behaviour and their partners' self-descriptions are equally low in happy and unhappy marriages.

In conclusion, the present study demonstrates that spouses' descriptions of each other's decision-making behaviour are not reliable. Spouses are not aware of all the tactics applied by their partner and they do not accurately remember and report them. Joint decision-making processes are rather difficult to report on. Spouses are probably not explicitly aware of what is going on in detail and perhaps do not always know how they muddle through the process of making joint economic decisions. In surveys, when spouses are asked to report on joint decisions, they may "seek to satisfy" the researchers just by constructing answers based on what they think they themselves might do and on social stereotypes.

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