

ECONOMICS 8100

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Part 1. Budget

1. CONSUMPTION SET X

Assumptions: (Universe of Choice Objects): X

Bundles: Elements of X . $x \in X$

Assumptions about X .

1. $\emptyset \neq X \subseteq \mathbb{R}_+^n$.
2. X is closed.
3. X is convex.
4. $0 \in X$.

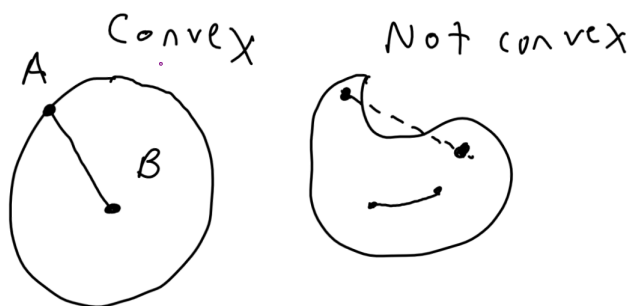


FIGURE 1.1. Examples of a Convex/Non-Convex Set.

2. BUDGET SET B

Budget Set: $B \subseteq X$

X defines the scope of the model. B is what an *individual consumer* chooses among.

Example. Budget Set with Prices and Income

$$B = \{x \mid x \in X \text{ \& } x_1 p_1 + x_2 p_2 \leq m\}$$

Example. Ice Cream Bowls

Every ice cream bowl x has some non-negative number of scoops of Vanilla, Chocolate, Strawberry.

$$X = \mathbb{R}_+^3$$

Budget B is the set of bowls with *no more than one scoop of ice cream*.

$$B = \left\{ x \mid x \in \mathbb{R}_+^3 \text{ \& } \sum_{i=1}^3 x_i \leq 1 \right\}$$

This is the unit-simplex in \mathbb{R}_3 .

$(1, 0, 0) \in B$. (On the boundary.)

$(0.5, 0.5, 0) \in B$. (On the boundary.)

$(0.25, 0.25, 0.25) \in B$. (In the interior.)

$(2, 0, 0) \notin B$

Part 2. Preference

3. THE PREFERENCE RELATION

Preference Relation is a **Binary Relation**.

Formally, a binary relation on set X is a subset of the Cartesian product X with itself.

$$\succeq \subseteq X \times X$$

Another way to denote an ordered pair is “in” the relation:

If $(x, y) \in \succeq$ we can also write $x \succeq y$.

Informally we say “ x ” is at least as good as “ y ”, or “ x ” preferred “ y ”.

Axioms of \succeq .

Axiom 0 (*reflexive*): $\forall x \in X, x \succeq x$. This is implied by *axiom 1*.

Axiom 1 (*complete*): $\forall x, x' \in X$, either $x \succeq x'$ or $x' \succeq x$ (or both).

The consumer has “some” preference over every pair of objects.

Axiom 2 (*transitive*): $\forall x, x', x'' \in X$ if $x \succeq x'$ and $x' \succeq x'' \Rightarrow x \succeq x''$.

\succeq is a “weak order” if it is complete and transitive.

4. RELATIONS AND SETS RELATED TO \succeq

Subrelations:

\sim is the indifference relation. $x \succeq y$ and $y \succeq x \Leftrightarrow x \sim y$.

\succ is the strict relation. $x \succeq y$ and not $y \succeq x \Leftrightarrow x \succ y$.

Related Sets:

$\succeq(x)$ “upper contour set”, “no worse than set”

$\preceq(x)$ “lower contour set”, “no better than set”

5. FROM PREFERENCES TO CHOICE

Choice Correspondence.

We will assume that from a budget set B a consumer “chooses” *choice set* C according to their preference \succeq . $C = \{x | x \in B \text{ \& } \forall x' \in B, x \succeq x'\}$.

Informally, C is the set of objects that are at least as good as anything else in the set.

Example With Transitive Preferences

$X = \{a, b, c\}$. $a \succeq b, c \succeq a, c \succeq b$.

$$C(\{a\}) = a, C(\{b\}) = b, C(\{c\}) = c$$

$$C(\{a, b\}) = a, C(\{a, c\}) = c, C(\{b, c\}) = c$$

$$C(\{a, b, c\}) = c$$

6. CYCLES LEAD TO EMPTY CHOICE SETS

6.1. The Problem with Intransitive Preferences. $X = \{a, b, c\}$. $a \succeq b, c \succeq a, b \succeq c$. *This is intransitive!*

Choice correspondence:

$$C : P(X) / \emptyset \rightarrow X$$

$$C(\{a\}) = a, C(\{b\}) = b, C(\{c\}) = c$$

$$C(\{a, b\}) = a, C(\{a, c\}) = c, C(\{b, c\}) = b$$

$$C(\{a, b, c\}) = \emptyset$$

This consumer cannot make a choice from the set $\{a, b, c\}$.

6.2. Cycles and Empty Choices. Notice in the previous example, $a \succ b, a \succ c, c \succ a$. We have proved (essentially) that if there is a cycle, there is an empty choice set.

In fact, suppose, there is an empty choice set **and** X is finite. There must be a cycle.

$$\forall x \in B, \#(\succ(x)) < \#(B)$$

By completeness, $\forall x \exists x' \in X : x' \succ x$. Choose an x_1 , let x_2 be any element of $\succ(x_1)$. We have $x_2 \succ x_1$. If there is an $x_3 \in \succ(x_2)$ such that $x_1 \succ x_3$ we have identified a cycle. Otherwise, we continue with an inductive step. Suppose we have $x_n \succ \dots \succ x_1$. $\succ(x_n)$ is non-empty. Either it contains an element x_{n+1} such that there is an $x_i \succ x_{n+1}$ in which case we have identified a cycle or it does not and we continue with another inductive step. Either we find a cycle or reach the N_{th} step

with $x_N \succ x_{n-1} \succ \dots \succ x_1$. $\succ (x_N)$ is non-empty.

So, the cycle condition is equivalence to a non-empty choice set. Transitivity of \succsim implies transitivity of \succ which implies no cycles (try this last step at home). But do no-cycles imply transitivity of \succsim ? No. Here is a counter-example:

$$x \succ y, y \sim z, z \succ x$$

7. INTRANSITIVITY: EMPTY CHOICES, INCOHERENT CHOICES: PICK ONE.

So if no-cycles of the strict preference is equivalent to non-empty choice (in finite sets), and transitivity of \succsim is not equivalent to no-cycles, why do we assume it?

Finite non-emptiness: For any B with $\#(B) \in \mathbb{I}$, $C(B) \neq \emptyset$

Coherence: For every x, y and B, B' such that $x, y \in B \cap B'$, $x \in C(B) \wedge y \notin C(B) \Rightarrow y \notin C(B')$.

Suppose there is an intransitive \succsim . There exists either a B where $C(B) = \emptyset$ or there exists a x, y, B, B' where the choice correspondence is incoherent.

By intransitivity:

$$1) x \succ y, y \succ z, z \succ x$$

$$C(\{x, y, z\}) = \emptyset$$

$$2) x \sim y, y \sim z, z \succ x$$

$$3) x \sim y, y \succ z, z \succ x$$

$$x \notin C(\{x, y, z\})$$

$$y \in C(\{x, y, z\})$$

$$x \in C(\{x, y\})$$

$$4) x \succ y, y \sim z, z \succ x$$

Can you find the incoherent choice?

8. INDIFFERENCE SETS

8.1. Indifference Maps. To understand preferences, we often draw sets of the form $\sim(x)$. Many times these are one dimension smaller than the space of bundles, in which case we often call them *indifference curves*, but they need not have any special structure, unless we make further assumptions about preferences. There is only one thing we really know about these sets.

8.2. Complete, Transitive Preferences have Indifference Sets that Do Not Intersect. Result. *Indifference curves do not cross.* For two bundles $x \succ y$, $\sim(x) \cap \sim(y) = \emptyset$.

Proof is given visually below:

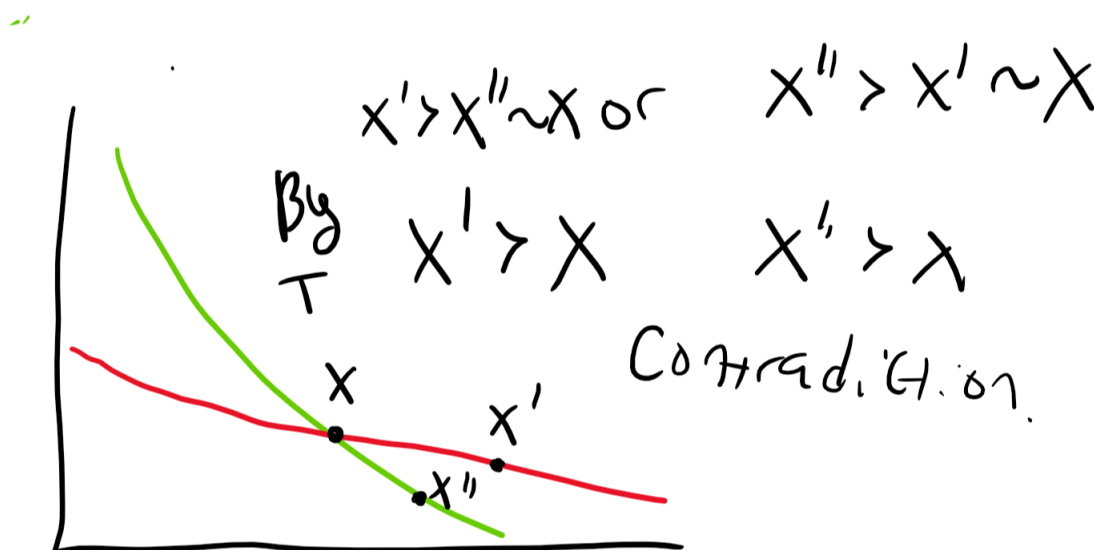


FIGURE 8.1. Distinct Indifference Sets do not Intersect

Part 3. From Preference to Utility

9. UTILITY REPRESENTS PREFERENCES

Suppose there is some $U : X \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ such that $U(x) \geq U(x') \Leftrightarrow x \succeq x'$ then we say $u(\cdot)$ represents preference relation \succeq . When does such a representation exist?

9.1. Finite X .

Proposition 1. *A $U(\cdot)$ exists that represents $\succeq \Leftrightarrow \succeq$ is complete and transitive.*

Proof. Let's start with \Rightarrow .

Because \geq is complete on the real numbers, for every $x, y \in X$ either $u(x) \geq u(y)$ or $u(y) \geq u(x)$ thus because $u(\cdot)$ represents \succeq , it is complete.

By similar argument, \succsim is transitive. For every three $x, y, z \in X$. If $u(x) \geq u(y)$ and $u(y) \geq u(z)$ then $u(x) \geq u(z)$ because \geq is transitive on the real numbers.

Now we prove \Leftarrow :

Define $U(x) \equiv \#(\prec(x))$

Example: $a \succ b, b \succ c$. $\prec(a) = \{a, b, c\}$. $U(a) = 3$.

Lemma: For $x \succsim y$, $\prec(y) \subseteq \prec(x)$ (proved in PS1).

By this lemma, for $x \succsim y$, $\prec(y) \subseteq \prec(x)$ and thus $\# \prec(y) \leq \# \prec(x)$ and $u(x) \geq u(y)$. \square

9.2. Countably infinite X . Pick any arbitrary order on the bundles: (x_1, x_2, \dots) . And assign weights to those bundles $w(x_i) = \frac{1}{i^2}$. The following utility function represents preferences:

$$u(x) = \sum_{y \in \prec(x)} w(y)$$

Example: “ π shows up unexpectedly when eating ice cream.”

An even number of scoops of ice cream are better than an odd number of scoops and otherwise more is better than less.

$$u(2) = \sum_{i=1}^{\infty} \left(\frac{1}{(2i-1)^2} \right) = \frac{\pi^2}{8}$$

$$u(4) = \frac{1}{4} + \frac{\pi^2}{8}$$

9.3. Uncountable X . The *Lexicographic* preferences have no utility representation:

$$X = \mathbb{R}_+^2$$

$(x_1, x_2) \succ (y_1, y_2)$ if $x_1 > y_1$ or $x_1 = y_1$ and $x_2 > y_2$.

\succsim is complete, and transitive. [Prove this for practice].

Pick two real numbers $v_2 > v_1$ and construct four bundles $(v_1, 1), (v_2, 1), (v_1, 2), (v_2, 2)$.

$$(v_2, 2) \succ (v_2, 1) \succ (v_1, 2) \succ (v_1, 1)$$

Suppose there is a utility function representing these preferences, then we have two disjoint intervals:

$$[u(v_2, 1), u(v_2, 2)]$$

$$[u(v_1, 1), u(v_1, 2)]$$

For every real number, we can construct an interval like this. Because the rationals are dense in the reals, there is a rational number in each of these intervals. Thus, for every real, we can find a unique rational number. That is, we have a mapping from the reals into the rationals which implies that the cardinality of the rationals

is at least as large as that of the reals. $\#\mathbb{Q} \geq \#\mathbb{R}$. This contradicts that the cardinality of the rationals is strictly smaller than the reals.

9.4. An example of preference relation with a utility representation. Cars have horse power in $[0, 999]$ and cup holders in \mathbb{Z}_+ (integers).

Suppose preferences are lexicographic and more cup holders are more important than more horsepower.

$u(c_i, h_i) = c_i + \frac{h_i}{1000}$ represents these preferences.

See problem set 2 for example where we do not bound the horse power.

9.5. What ensures a utility representation in an uncountable universe? A preference relation is representable by a utility function $U(x)$ iff $\forall x, y \in X$ s.t. $x \succ y$, $\exists x^* \in X^* \subset X$ s.t. $x \succsim x^* \succ y$ and the set X^* is countable.

To construct the utility function, $U(x)$, Pick any arbitrary order on the bundles in X^* : (x_1, x_2, \dots) . And assign weights to those bundles $w(x_i) = \frac{1}{i^2}$. The following utility function represents preferences:

$$u(x) = \sum_{y \in \succsim(x) \cap X^*} w(y)$$

9.6. Continuous \succsim . Preference relation \succsim is continuous if $\forall x \in X$, $\succsim(x)$ and $\prec(x)$ are closed in X .

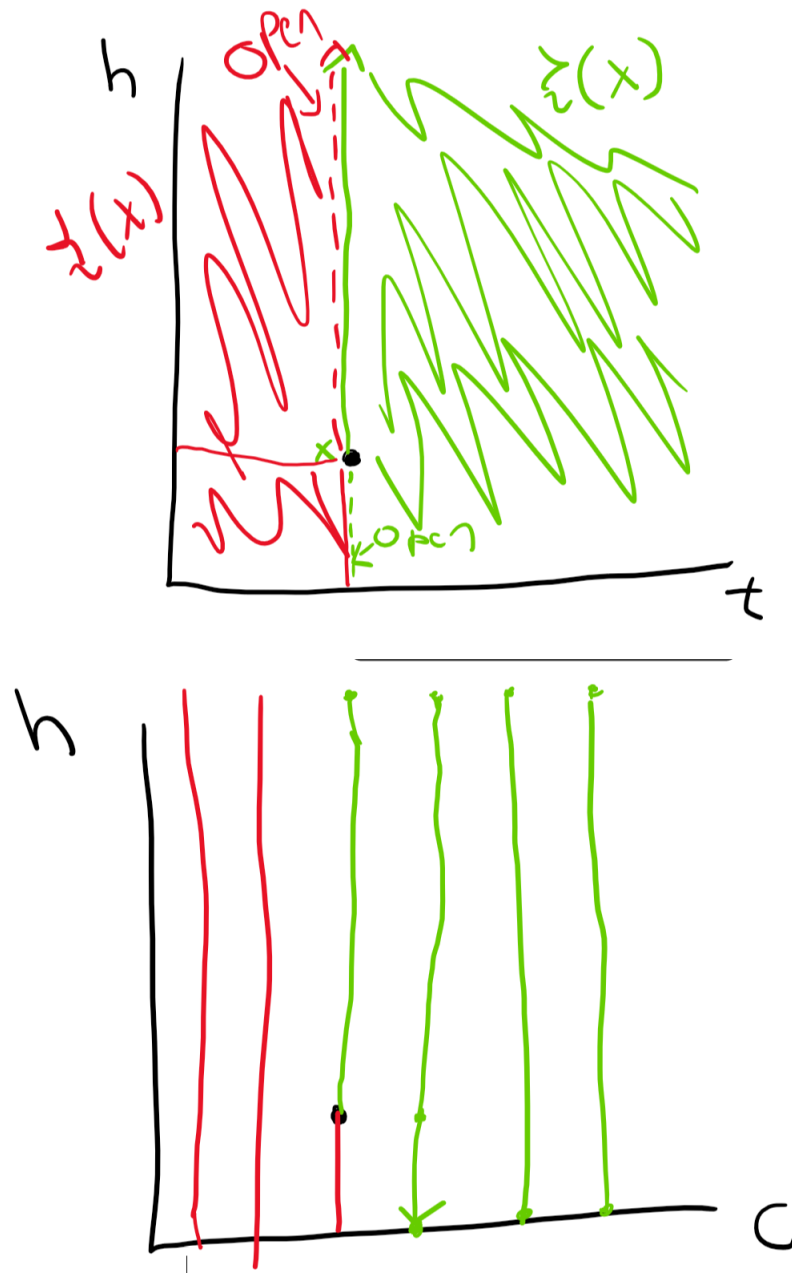


FIGURE 9.1. Not Continuous/Continuous Lexicographic Preferences.

9.7. **What ensures a continuous utility representation?** A *complete*, *transitive*, and *continuous* preference relation \succsim can be represented by a continuous utility function $U(x)$ and, a continuous utility function represented C,T,C preferences.

10. OTHER PROPERTIES OF \succsim

10.1. **Monotonicity.** Ensure consumers consume on the boundary of the budget set.

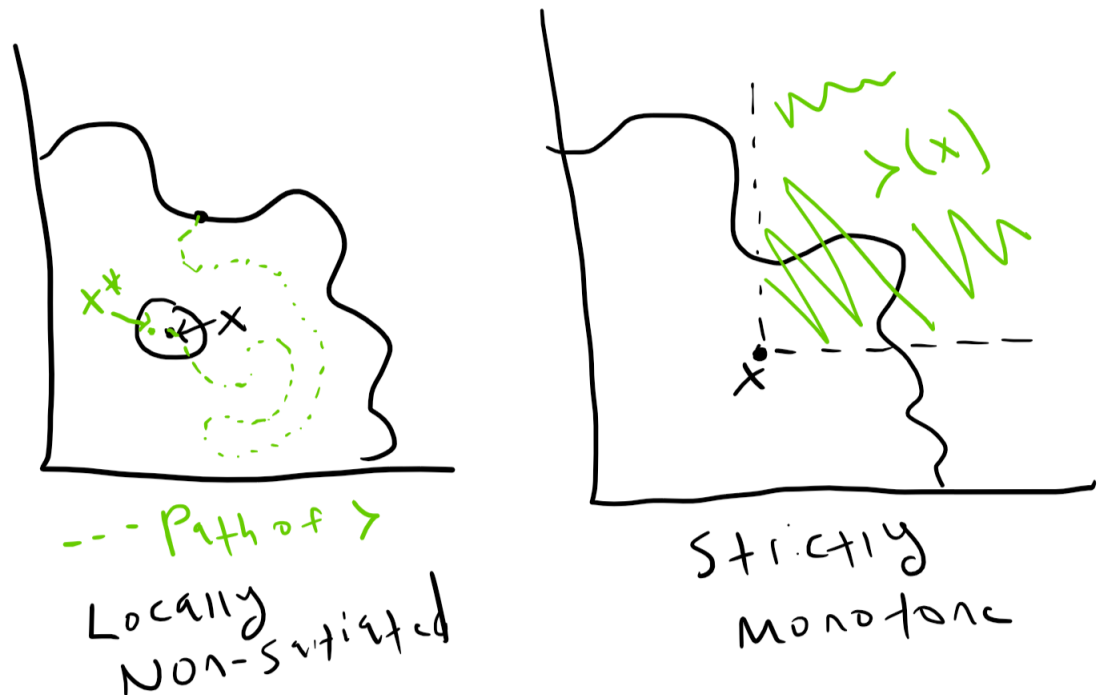


FIGURE 10.1. Locally Non-satiated vs. Strictly Monotone

10.1.1. *Strict Monotonicity. More stuff is better.*

First, some notation:

For $X \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$

$x \geq x'$ iff $x_i \geq x'_i$ for all $i \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$

$x \gg x'$ iff $x_i > x'_i$ for all $i \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$

For example: $(2, 2) \gg (1, 1)$, $(2, 1) \geq (1, 1)$, $(1, 1) \geq (1, 1)$

Definition. Strict Monotonicity. $x \geq x' \Rightarrow x \succ x'$ and $x \gg x' \Rightarrow x \succ x'$

10.1.2. *Local Nonsatiation. Definition. Local Nonsatiation.* $\forall x \in X$ and $\forall \varepsilon > 0$, $\exists x^* \in B_\varepsilon(x)$ such that $x^* \succ x$.

A consumer can always change the bundle a “little bit” no matter how small that little bit is, and find something strictly better.

10.2. Convex Sets, Convex/Concave Functions, Quasi-Convex/Concave Functions.

10.2.1. *Convex Sets.* In a subset of euclidean space X , the line between $x \in X$ and $x' \in X$ is another point in the set X given by $tx + (1 - t)x'$ where $t \in [0, 1]$. We call points like this **Convex Combinations** of x and x' .

For example: $x = (1, 0)$, $x' = (0, 1)$. If we take $t = 0.5$. The convex combination is $0.5(1, 0) + 0.5(0, 1) = (0.5, 0.5)$.

A **convex set** $S \subseteq X$ is a set of points that contains all of its convex combinations.

Formally, $\forall x, x' \in S, \forall t \in [0, 1], tx + (1 - t)x' \in S$.

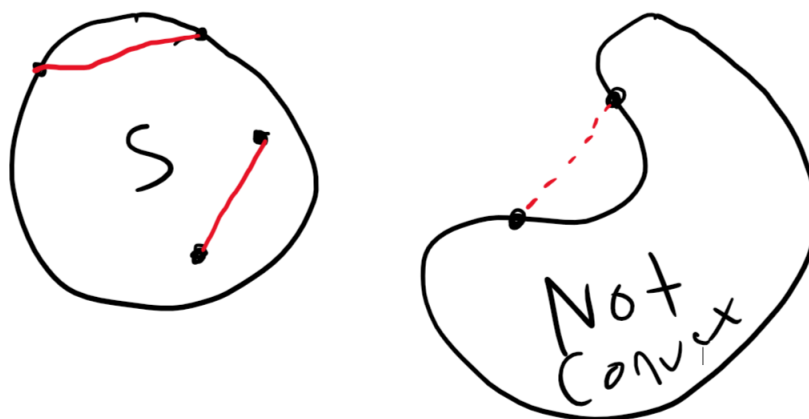


FIGURE 10.2. A Convex and Non-Convex Set

10.2.2. *Convex Functions.* A line between two points “on the function” lies above the function itself.

Convex Function:

$$\forall x, x' \in X, t \in [0, 1], tf(x) + (1 - t)f(x') \geq f(tx + (1 - t)x')$$

Strictly Convex Function:

$$\forall x, x' \in X, t \in (0, 1), tf(x) + (1 - t)f(x') > f(tx + (1 - t)x')$$

Contour Sets:

A convex function has **convex lower contour sets**.

10.2.3. *Concave Functions.* A line between two points “on the function” lies above the function itself.

Concave Function:

$$\forall x, x' \in X, t \in [0, 1], tf(x) + (1 - t)f(x') \leq f(tx + (1 - t)x')$$

Strictly Concave Function:

$$\forall x, x' \in X, t \in (0, 1), tf(x) + (1 - t)f(x') < f(tx + (1 - t)x')$$

A concave function has **convex upper contour sets**.

10.2.4. *Quasi-Concave Functions.* A function $f(x)$ is quasi-concave if **and only** it has convex upper contour sets.

A function $f(x)$ is quasi-concave if and only if is a monotonic transformation of a concave function.

A function $f(x)$ is quasi-concave if and only if $f(tx + (1 - t)x') \geq \min\{f(x), f(x')\}$ for $t \in [0, 1]$.

A function $f(x)$ is **strictly quasi-concave** if and only if $f(tx + (1 - t)x') > \min\{f(x), f(x')\}$ for $t \in (0, 1)$.

Notice that, for a strictly quasi-concave utility function, let $x' \succ x$, then the set $tx + (1 - t)x' \in \succ(x)$ for $t \in (0, 1)$. Thus, there is a small enough ball around that point $B_\epsilon(tx + (1 - t)x') \in \succ(x)$. Thus, these points are in the interior of $\succ(x)$ and \succ is **strictly convex**.

10.2.5. *Quasi-Convex Functions.* A function $f(x)$ is quasi-convex if **and only** it has convex lower contour sets.

A function $f(x)$ is quasi-convex if and only if is a monotonic transformation of a convex function.

A function $f(x)$ is quasi-convex if and only if $f(tx + (1 - t)x') \leq \max\{f(x), f(x')\}$ for $t \in [0, 1]$.

A function $f(x)$ is **strictly quasi-convex** if and only if $f(tx + (1 - t)x') < \max\{f(x), f(x')\}$ for $t \in (0, 1)$.

10.3. Convexity of \succ .

10.4. **Utility and Preference Relationships.** $U(x)$ strictly increasing $\Leftrightarrow \succ$ is strictly monotonic.

$U(x)$ is (strictly) quasiconcave $\Leftrightarrow \succ$ is (strictly) convex.