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# **Dominance Strategies in Romantic Couples' Interactions**

Doctoral Thesis

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## **Abstract**

This doctoral thesis combines three major topics of how Romantic Couples verbally and nonverbally Communicate Dominance. We research their behavioral dynamics from Evolutionary and Communication perspectives.

Against current psycho-social scientific theories, we do suggest that people that are stereotypically seen as submissive, those using other than direct, active, and aggressive strategies, can achieve their will as well. They simply use behaviors that researchers do not consider as dominant (powerful) behaviors and look for them. We explore the whole spectrum of dominance strategies and their context of where, when, and how they are used.

We chose a highly qualitative approach during the data collection and analysis part. We adapted a psychotherapy method for research purposes, our Relationship Drama, to overcome significant limitations that nonverbal and communication research struggles with. Therefore, we could see and further qualitatively analyze real couple's behavior in their real typically appearing conflict interaction.

Those are described in the theoretical part of this thesis, in chapter 1. Findings from yet unpublished studies that were presented at conferences and are relevant to specific topics are included as well as one case study illustrating dominance ascription complexity. The practical part consists of four articles. The first one is focused on the problem of dominance definitions and how dominance distribution is related to a couple's satisfaction. The second article focuses on dominance behaviors and strategies and presents a study of beliefs on how such behavior should look like. The third article describes the finding of 15 dominance strategies with their descriptions qualitatively coded from real couples' behaviors. The last article presents a very detailed question of the association between dominance strategies and sexual satisfaction.

The presented thesis brings a new method of researching communication and evidence of a broader spectrum of dominance behaviors than the current literature suggests and applied fields use.

Key words: Romantic relationships, Communication, Dominance, Behavioral Strategies

## Abstrakt

Předkládaná disertační práce kombinuje tři hlavní témata. Zabývá se tím, jak romantické páry verbálně a neverbálně komunikují dominanci. Zkoumáme jejich dynamiku chování z hlediska evolučních a komunikačních teorií.

Oproti současným psychosociálním vědeckým teoriím navrhuje, že lidé, kteří jsou stereotypně považováni za submisivní, ti, kteří používají jiné než přímé, aktivní a agresivní strategie, mohou také dosáhnout své vůle. Jednoduše používají chování, které vědci nepovažují za dominantní (mocenské) a nezahrnují jej do svého bádání. Tato studie zkoumá celé spektrum dominantních strategií a jejich kontext, kde, kdy a jak je partneri používají.

V části sběru dat i analytické jsme zvolili vysoce kvalitativní přístup. Přizpůsobili jsme metodu psychoterapie pro výzkumné účely, naše Partnerské drama, abychom překonali významná omezení oboru, s nimiž neverbální a komunikační výzkum zápasí. Proto jsme mohli vidět a dále kvalitativně analyzovat reálné chování párů v jejich skutečné, obvykle se objevující konfliktní interakci.

Teoretická úskalí jsou popsána v kapitole 1 této práce, kde jsou zahrnuty i poznatky z dosud nepublikovaných studií, které byly prezentovány na konferencích a týkají se konkrétních témat. Také je zahrnuta jedna případová studie ilustrující složitost přisuzování dominance. Praktická část se skládá ze čtyř článků. První je zaměřen na problém definic dominance a na to, jak distribuce dominance souvisí se spokojeností páru. Druhý článek se zaměřuje na dominantní strategie chování a představuje studii o přesvědčeních o tom, jak by takové chování mělo vypadat. Třetí článek představuje 15 dominantních strategií s jejich popisy založených na kvalitativním kódování skutečného partnerského chování. Poslední článek představuje velmi podrobnou otázku vztahu mezi strategiemi dominance a sexuální spokojeností.

Předkládaná práce přináší novou metodu výzkumu komunikace, evidenci širšího spektra dominantního chování, než navrhuje současná literatura a využití pro aplikované obory.

Klíčová slova: Partnerské vztahy, komunikace, dominance, strategie chování

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## **Introduction**

Close intimate bonds emerging from a long-term relationship are an essential and crucial part of every human life. According to many social psychology approaches, the level of relationship satisfaction goes hand in hand with communication quality. Communication is seen as the verbal and nonverbal cues forming a complex behavioral strategy that is actively interacting with the other person in a specific situation. A large amount of daily relationship communication is aimed to influence attitudes, emotions, or behavior of a partner, to express our wishes, therefore, to what we call in this study to express dominance behaviors.

Naturally, two people will sometimes differ in their ideas, needs, feelings, perceptions, and therefore conflicts between those will appear. Conflicts can be useful and healthy, bring change and development. As Mayer (2000) says, the problem is not in the existence of a conflict itself, it lies in the way we approach it and how we behave in it. If approached inappropriately with negative dominance behaviors, conflicts can bring negative outcomes and consequences to many areas of our lives, including social, psychological, or physical health (Canary & Canary, 2013). In simple words, conflicts are not good or bad. They give us the potential. Either to grow or to destroy. Sadly, according to the traditional psychological and biological view, dominance is prevalently seen as an assertive or aggressive behavior. Based on Hawley's social dominance research work (e.g. 2002), Johnson, S. L. et al. (2012) formulated a very knowledgeable and ethical proposal that:

**“One important developmental goal in humans is to learn socially competent ways to achieve dominance flexibly, using prosocial strategies”.** (p. 693)

# Chapter 1: Dominance Communication Research

## 1.1. Understanding dominance construct

Different applied disciplines, philosophical thinking, and scientific research have focused on power and dominance for many centuries. Regardless of the field, these constructs are understood as crucial not only for a given discourse but also as an essential driver of the behavior, a phenomenon of living beings. Already in 1938, Russell suggests that power is a fundamental concept in social sciences, just as energy is a fundamental concept for physics (Russell, 2004). Less radically and more generically, much closer to my focus within the field of Interpersonal Communication Dunbar & Burgoon (2005) and Dunbar & Abra (2010), state that dominance and power are important aspects of interpersonal relationships as well as external lives in general and personalities of individuals. Dominance and competition are essential themes in evolutionary theories across biological and psychological approaches (Barrett et al., 2007). In the close applied field of Relationship therapy, entire schools focus on power and dominance dynamics such as structural therapy (Minuchin et al., 2014), Strategic therapy (Watzlawick, 1967), or in a dynamic acting version Virginia's Satir work with "Statues" (Satirová, 1994).

Summarized for the field of communication, "The individuals then manifest these power differences via the use of communication strategies in a conflict episode (Dunbar, 2004, as cited in Bevan 2010, p. 53)". Conflict is not understood as an argument in a negative way. It is simply a difference between two parties that need to be manifested just in one version, therefore pressuring on a solution (compromise, consensus, new idea). Either internally between one's emotions, needs (e.g., hunger and wish to play a game), or external conflict between two and more people's perceptions, needs, etc. Therefore there are plenty of minor conflicts in every moment that is moving us throughout every day, navigating us, and providing development and movement in general.

But, even within this dyad, individuals have specific needs, wishes, preferences, or opinions, and there is a constant process of balancing between two individuals' needs and the couple's goals. Dominance is essential for the everyday life of romantic dyads. It is manifested in decision-making and overall communication about what both partners want, wish, need, and how successfully they achieve that. As individuals and as a couple. The topics where one's

image can differ from their partner's one naturally vary from small issues such as "What do we cook for dinner?", "Who will wash the dishes?", "Where to go for a vacation?" to more significant decisions of "Where will we live?" or "Whose career will be pursued more at some moments?". And many others.

These constructs' importance for an individual's everyday life has been well established among all human sciences. In this thesis focuses on close neighboring fields of human science such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and human biology, especially evolutionary theories, each using their established terminology and theories.

However, there are large discrepancies in what exactly is meant by dominance and power in each of them. Often in academic articles on dominance, the definition is absent, which leads to very contradictory results in otherwise high-quality studies (Johnson, S. L. et al., 2012). Therefore depending on the researcher's field, the idea of dominance, results, and theoretical underpinnings, and therefore sometimes also practical implications are not consistent. Furthermore, this problem doesn't lie only between fields but also exists within those fields (Ellyson, 1985; Dovidio et al., 1998; Gatica-Perez, 2009).

Step by step there will be demonstrated in this theses that the topic dominance itself and dominance in couples communication struggle with several discrepancies that lead to incoherencies and sometimes contradictions. Dominance is often considered as a coherent construct. However, many types are described (e.g., relationship vs. social, feeling dominance vs. dominance preference, or important situational vs. trait dominance, etc.). Many methods are used bringing contradicting results dependent on for example on who is judging dominance, if it is an independent observer ascribing, or if it is a self-reflection of the couple. This thesis is going to introduce chaotic conceptualizations and provide more clarity in definitions in line with communication and evolutionary thinking. Moreover its added value lies in the application of the dominance construct in a field of romantic couples that has not been studied extensively in this context.

## 1.2. Dominance definitions vary across fields

The theoretical discrepancies influencing our perspectives, and research results, lie mostly in the roots of scientific approaches.

In human and natural sciences, the research routes and discourse conceptualization of the dominance phenomenon mostly lie in evolutionary theories. In the context of evolutionary biology, the dominant is understood to be a gene, lynx, individual, or species that prevails within the framework of natural selection, i.e., the next generation preserves it. At the animal level, it is an increase in individual fitness, generally speaking, the ability to successfully extend genes and on higher level certain traits in future generations, so it is a measure of relative reproductive success (Barrett et al., 2007).

In ethological studies, dominance is understood in relation to other people. I.e., in the context of the individual's position in the group hierarchy, which is based on competition for resources (Chase et al., 2002). In human societies, there still are competitive processes in play that associate loss of status or resources with aggression in men (Archer, 2006). One of the essential purposes of a hierarchical structure and the individual's awareness of its place within it serves as aggression and conflict regulation mechanism through clearly defined strategies belonging to a particular position (food distribution, reproductive rights, etc.) (Fournier et al., 2002).

Researchers look also into physiological, specifically hormonal factors. The most discussed topic is the testosterone level in a given individual (Booth & Dabbs, 1993). It is shown that testosterone levels and dominance rates could be positively correlated in both men and women (Grant, 2001). Male sex hormone or androgens are associated with an increased masculinization of anatomical and behavioral traits, including an increase in dominance behaviors (Rose et al., 1972; Rubin et al., 1981). Females appear to be attracted to dominant males in the majority of primate species (Symonds, 1979; Wilson, 1975) including humans (Barrett et al., 2007; Třebický, 2017).

With the influence of psychological theories, the term stable personality trait appeared. It is constant or very little fluctuating during life, hides a set of genetic and physiological influences, such as temperament, behavioral predispositions, hormonal equipment, etc. (e.g., Cattell, B.C. et al., 1992; Ridgeway, 1987). Liska (1988) connects that to the ethological perspective and says that this personality trait determines an individual's position in the social hierarchy, which affects the individual's access to resources.



As part of the effort to establish a valid theory of personality, dominance as a stable trait of personality appears in the form of a scale in standardized psychometric questionnaires, which allow an empirically based analysis of personality components. For example, R. B. Cattell (1946) sees personality as a complex structure of personality traits of various categories, reflected in his sixteen-factor personality model (Cattell, R.B., 1946). Basic criteria for assigning personality traits are found on a bimodal scale, e.g., introversion - extraversion, emotional lability - stability, or dominance - submission. The use of the term dominance in personality psychology and the difference with other fields is problematic as it has been used in different contexts with different meanings. For example, in the NEO-PI-R, a commonly used psychometric tool, dominance is a sub-scale of the extraversion dimension (Costa and McCrae, 1992). In the NEO-PI-R, dominance is defined as social ascendancy and forcefulness of expression and measured with items such as “I naturally take the lead in group activities”, “people often look to me to make decisions”, and “in conversations, I tend to talk the most”. In different language versions of the NEO-PI-R other terms are used for the same sub scale that would, literally translated to English, refer more to “assertiveness”. The term dominance as it is linked to the concept of agency (cf. Leary, 1957) is measured by several sub scales in the NEO-PI-R. As Costa and McCrae suggest at p. 142 “For example, although the basic traits of dominance (or agency) and warmth (or communion) have long been seen as two of the most fundamental dimensions of human personality (Wiggins et al., 2003), the five-factor model has no factor that centrally includes either dominance or warmth. Rather factor analyses of the NEO-PI-R show that the central traits of dominance and warmth are widely dispersed and spread thinly among several of the five factors, particularly extraversion and agreeableness (Cattell, B.C. et al., 1992; Child, 1998; Conn & Rieke, 1994; Costa & McCrae, 1992).”

After the middle of the 20th century, researchers and practitioners began to focus on social behavior. They started to criticize the understanding of individual traits (dominance) only in terms of personality characteristics of the individual as an isolated subject. They included the context of interaction into the picture. In psychology, mainly with the effect of social learning, Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism in the 1950'. Therefore, theoretical schemes for describing the interpersonal aspect of personality under specific conditions begin to appear (Drapela, 2011). One of the models addressing this issue is Leary's typology of personality (Fournier et al., 2011; Leary, 1957). This model introduced a circular scheme of interpersonal behavior through 8 scales (16 categories), the most significant being

the scale of dominance - submission, affiliation - hostility (which will also be used for my research) and added the scale of conformity - individuality and responsibility - aggression.

Here we stand on the border of dominance as a stable personality trait that is constructed by genetic and physiological factors (Cattell, B.C. et al., 1992), and dominance as a set of acquired skills in the field of communication and interpersonal relationships, which Liska (1988, 1992) called social dominance. Or a situational dominance constructed by power bases, situational context, interactional partner (Dunbar & Abra, 2010). Other types of dominance include Relationship dominance or Perceived dominance – based on behavior seen by others versus „Ascribed dominance“ – expected level of dominance by others (Schmid Mast & Hall, 2004). There can be much more examples of types of dominance such as „Feeling of dominance, “Preference of dominance,” etc.

In the 1970s, the foundations were laid for a Structural approach (Minuchin, 2014). Understanding family or dyad as a set of relationships in terms of the structure of individual phenomena. Those are borders, boundaries, sets of rules, the structure of bonds between individuals (coalitions and alliances), and the family's distribution of power and influence. Power and influence make it possible to maintain the family's internal consistency (in line with - the one who pointed out the hierarchy as the prevention of aggression), allows to share common rules, exercise their rights, and enforce obligations. Power is associated with a function (role), and a lack of power or influence may result in insufficient fulfillment of a particular function in the family or dyad.

Watzlawick's (1967) theory of communication, which directly develops into a Strategic approach in the Palo-Alto School, has its roots in family and couple therapy. Watzlawick (1967) works with the idea that the way we communicate has a direct relationship with experience and behavior. He elaborates on the division of three basic types of relationships, which are strongly reflected in the used communication strategies. It is essentially the mutual power position of individuals, i.e., the degree of equality, when partners are either equal, then it is symmetrical communication. When partners reflect each other, or one is dominant (and uses a "one-up" communication strategy) and the other is subordinate (and uses "one-down" communication strategy), then there is “complementary communication”, where, on the contrary, the partner complements the behavior of the other. In terms of the use of power, they also mention a strategy that could be described as indirect is the pseudo-complementation of communication, in which a seemingly submissive individual is precisely the one who controls the situation and thus really dominates.

There is also an approach that sees dominance through human group hierarchy. Research has shown that new groups go through a very rapid hierarchical process, in the order of days. They are establishing individuals' position, their degree of power, and the group's degree of influence. That stays stable after few weeks. Individuals who showed skills necessary for leading others were recognized as dominant (Savin – Williams, 1975). As confirmed by Dunbar and Burgoon's (2000), more socially able individuals were described as dominant. Similarly, in romantic relationships, partners tend to create stereotypical behavior patterns after their first year (Bártová, 2016). It is essential to note the close relationship also between dominance and communication skills.

Biological theories and older theories from personality psychology provide a stereotypical view of dominance as a powerful, selfish, aggressive trait, or threatening behavior of an individual (Carli et al., 1995). Maybe there is a similar problem of easy misinterpretation, as the entire evolutionary theory experiences. Similarly, as it does not have to be the physically strongest who survive, maybe the most dominant also don't have to be the loudest or the most aggressive ones.

Dominance can be seen either as a stable trait. e.g., psychological traits, a morphological trait such as attractiveness, height, hormonal such are strong associations with testosterone level, power and status associations, etc. They consider as dominant those individuals who manifest direct and active behavior and are assertive, even aggressive. Or – from a more behavioral perspective - dominance can be seen situationally as the outcome of a specific interaction influenced by particular factors such as power bases, motivation, previous experience, etc., but those studies usually don't give concrete behavioral cues or strategies.

In summary, both between fields and even within specific fields of research and practice, the term “dominance” is used in many different ways for many different, albeit related, constructs. In this thesis the concept will be clearly defined in a context of romantic relationships as the stage when one partner is influenced by the other partner's expressive relation-based communicational acts (Lindová et al., 2012).

### **1.2.1. Dominance related constructs**

Apart from having several different meanings in different fields, dominance is often mixed with closely neighboring constructs or components of dominance such as Power, Status, or, Decision-making. In most studies, it is hard to find a proper definition of those constructs.

And even if definitions are given, they are often confused with other constructs such as status or power (Johnson, S. L. et al., 2012, Ellyson, 1985, 1988; Gatica-Perez, 2009). Therefore it is complicated to read results in the proper dominance context and make appropriate interpretations.

Not differing between theoretical constructs and definitions can have further theoretical and applied implications. The second stepping stone for the Satisfaction part of the attached article (Lindová et al., 2020) was a conference study focused on couples' satisfaction and dominance aspects (Průšová et al., 2016). In a linear regression model, we tested how 17 dominance-related scales covering four areas of relationship dominance affect Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS, Spanier, 1976) that is broadly used to research relationship quality and contains a scale directly on relation satisfaction. Furthermore we included a novel approach to test a) self-reported scores, b) partner reported scores, and c) the difference between them. Thanks to 66 long-term couples (132 participants) we found gender and scale specific effects on Satisfaction. We found that the relationship quality is affected by females' higher control but lower decision-making and higher education levels in males relative to females.

In more detail, male satisfaction was significantly predicted by more factors than female satisfaction. However, most predictors of male satisfaction comprised female dominance. Specifically, male satisfaction is most strongly predicted by female self-reported dominance and by a difference in the education level in favor of men. Female satisfaction was mainly predicted by their own control in relationship score and identically as in men, by a difference in the education level in favor of men.

Theoretically, there are suggestions on how to differentiate between those constructs. In 1983 Edinger and Patterson proposed that power may be considered to be the ability to influence others in some fashion. Dominance refers either to one's relative position in a power hierarchy or the specific outcome of a power conflict. Status usually denotes one's social dominance, that is, it reflects one's relative position in a social hierarchy. However, when searching within one specific construct, it can get more complicated. Safilios-Rothschild (1970) pointed at problems with the use of decision making as a measure of power, such as the fact that one person may make more of the decisions because the other has chosen to delegate those decisions.

A Resource theory that is a variant of social exchange theory has been most frequently used to explain power balance in relationships. It proposes that a person's power level is a function of the number of resources she or he possesses (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Blau, 1964). A resource refers to anything that one partner makes available to meet the other's needs. Either partner can be more powerful in different areas and aspects, depending on the relative distribution of valued resources.

For example, Cancian (1987) reports that the perception of emotional involvement was negatively correlated with perceptions of power. According to the "principle of least interest," the individuals who were less invested emotionally appear to have more say in their romantic relationships. In addition, males were most likely to be seen as the ones with less emotional involvement.

Many studies present (e.g., Heavey & Christensen, 1990; Habešová, 2011) that spouses are usually equal in the amount of power they have, but that what differs are areas of dominance (stereotypically technique vs. decorations). As said, power bases are the predispositions, but motivation is the key value in deciding when to use his/her power and how (what type of behavior to choose) (Heavey & Christensen, 1990). According to Habešová (2012), dominance is more stable in women - situational dom, relationship dominance, and personal dominance correlate. But not in men, they can have dominant personality, have a submissive position in the relationship and act dominant situationally, and furthermore it can differ from how they act at the workplace.

In this thesis we will present several studies that aimed to overcome these difficulties.

Our conference study for Human Behavior and Evolution Society conference (Průšová et al., 2014) was the first step for an article, forming a chapter in this thesis (chapter 2), on dominance constructs (Lindová et al., 2020). We compared constructs and their scales in factor analysis. From 52 long-term couples (104 participants), we used their scores on a questionnaire including standardized Pulerwitz's Sexual Relationship Power Scale (SRPS, Pulerwitz et al., 2000), Leary's ICL scale of dominance as a personality trait (Kožený & Ganický, 1976), their power bases, and social status. We also included dominance results from two experimental situations – Psychodrama, about their typical conflict and a Picture ranking task. We found evidence that supports the need to keep those constructs separated and be careful about including definitions in scientific studies.

There were three most substantial factors of Relationship dominance, Social Dominance, and Situational (objective) dominance. Relationship dominance consisted of self-ascribed

relationship dominance and Pulerwitz's Decision-making and Control scale. Social dominance consisted of social status and Leary's dominance scale and sociodrama. And, situational (objective) dominance consisted of sociodrama and picture ranking, self-ascribed situational power, and Pulerwitz's control scale.

A communicational theoretical perspective framework allows us to integrate thoughts and findings from those other fields leading us to a deeper understanding of the dominance construct and its context. The mainframe sees dominance as a situational process composed of various factors. Fundamentally, our behavior depends on the specific partner in an interaction, that is in this case always the same one, the specificity of situation varying, e.g., in themes, couples history or the level of importance, individual state (mood, energy, motivation, etc.). There is a difference whether we are deciding today's diner or moving to another country for one partners' job. The distinction between those closely related constructs provides the dominance concept formed by (e.g., Dunbar & Burgoon, 2000) goes even level deeper by proposing three cue aspects of every interaction.

### **1.2.2. Interactional perspective of dominance**

The paradigm framing our work has roots in Edna Rogers' concept (Rogers-Millar & Millar, 1979), where dominance is the result of a domineering interaction that is influenced by individual predispositions (power bases). Our primary focus in this thesis is the middle phase, where all the behavior is expressed – domineering.

Chronologically the first one, called power bases, covers the factors pointed out in psychological, social, and biological research, e.g., socio-economic status, hormonal levels, attractiveness, and many others. Both of the partners enter the situation with a specific amount of power that can, but does not have to be used for domineering. The relative level of power distribution between partners is a significant factor for deciding whether to enter a domineering interaction or what strategy to use (Carli et al., 1995; Frieze & McHugh, 1992). Although we agree that power, according to, e.g., Dunbar & Abra (2010) and Rogers-Millar & Millar (1979), is a crucial aspect of dominance. We suggest that more power doesn't necessarily mean more dominance. Even people with a low level of power can be dominant. They just use different domineering strategies – less direct (according to Freeze & McHugh, 1992), less active (Dunbar, 2005).

The middle phase. If one partner decides to pose his/her will, it happens in a specific interaction –domineering- where behavioral processes (quality and quantity) are displayed. It

can be (differently from dominance) only a one-way process. Partner doesn't have to be aware of being a part of domineering interaction or does not have to respond (Dunbar & Burgoon 2005; Dovidio et al., 1998), according to the situational dominance perspective.

Dominance – the third phase - is the result of the interaction. It has to be a two-way process, one partner wins (possesses his/her will), and the other one has to accept it (Dunbar & Burgoon 2005). This is very similar to the hierarchical dominance perspective. Dominance is defined as the stage when one partner is influenced by the other partner's expressive relation-based communicational acts (Lindová et al., 2012).

As mentioned, there is a necessary component that puts power sources into active use to achieve dominance. Motivation is the key value in deciding when to use his/her power and how (what type of behavior to choose). Shaver et al. (2011) pointed out several reasons for domineering behavior: first, asserting one's dominance, authority, rights, or competence. Second, expressing confidence in one's strengths, values, and opinions, and third deterring others from competing for, or exerting control over, one's resources. Or as pointed out by Gilbert (1997) to promote social status and inclusion, including efforts to enhance how much one is liked, valued, respected, and wanted.

Apart from motivation, also goals can play a role here. Goals can go two directions - what one desires or seeks to attain or avoid (Monahan et al., 1997). Conflict episodes typically involve multiple goals (Fukushima et al., 2006). Bevan et al. (2004) developed a serial argument goal typology, which Bevan et al. (2008) refined as (a) positive relational expression: communicating constructive relational feelings and sentiments; (b) mutual understanding as resolution: reaching a mutual outcome and/or increasing insight into a partner's perspective; (c) relational termination: seeking to reduce intimacy or end the relationship; (d) dominance as control: establishing power over the partner or the issue; (e) expressiveness negative: communicating destructive sentiments; (f) change target: altering a partner's behavior, and (g) hurt partner as benefit self: deliberately injuring the partner to win and/or for personal gain.”

## **1.3 Romantic couples**

### **1.3.1. Romantic couples and dominance theories**

Barrett et al. (2007), in their *Evolutionary Psychology handbook*, see dominance as a means for surviving. Couples are a particular group that mate to work on this "goal" - procreation and survival of offspring. Together. But, even within this specific dyad, individuals have specific needs, wishes, preferences, or opinions, and there is a constant process of balancing between two individuals' advantages and couples' ones. A relationship type is an important antecedent that can impact how individuals cognitively and communicatively approach interaction (Kellermann & Palomares, 2004; Bevan, 2010). Considering the specific context of a relationship, we can expect differences in behaviors that are chosen to dominate.

Couples' decision making – and domineering – is so often required by everyday life, people tend to decrease the constant need for domineering basically in two ways, often combined. One way is to distribute areas of dominance. For example, Heavey and Christensen (1990), and Habešová (2011) differentiated between men making decisions on technology whilst women were more often responsible for decisions on decorations and free time. The other way is to create typical communication patterns. Those repeating communicational patterns can appear on a scale of constructive strategies, those leading to higher relationship satisfaction, but also the destructive ones, that logically decreases the relationship quality. That is the reason why we study couples' behavior in the interaction that is typical for the specific participants.

### **1.3.2. Satisfaction**

We show how dominance, power, control, and status work with satisfaction in the chapter 2 on dominance related constructs and in the attached article (Lindová et al., 2020). In combination with verbal and nonverbal behavior, we created two studies focused on couples Satisfaction, Power, and Aggression in their typical conflict interactions.

In later International Society for Human Behavior and the Human Behavior and Evolution Society Conference studies (HBES, ISHE, Průšová et al., 2018), we found that "Aggressive behaviors do not help to win conflict interactions in romantic couples." We used behavioral codes from a qualitative analysis of the couple's most typical conflictual situation. This method is called: Relationship Drama, and will be elaborated upon further in this chapter.



We selected all open codes that were categorized as verbal and nonverbal aggressive behavior (e.g., swearing, blackmailing/throwing objects, grabbing). For a Regression analysis, we adjusted scores of the difference within couples for behavioral scores and also Control and Decision-making Power Scales (Pulerwitz, 2000) and sub-scales of Consensus, Satisfaction, Cohesion, and Affectional Expression from Dyadic Adjustment Scales (Spanier, 1976).

Interestingly, none of the aggressive behavioral displays significantly impacted situational dominance - winning or losing. Results showed that in men, the female partner's number of physical threats was positively related to the largest difference between partners on the sub-scale Relationship satisfaction. In women, verbal aggression displays were positively related to the largest difference on the Consensus sub-scale.

Aggression did not impact the result of conflict, nor has a connection to power or dominance. We hypothesized that these misbehavior were probably signs of frustration in otherwise functional relationships, which may be more complicated. Therefore, it's needed to include kind and withdrawing behaviors into the context and count with the influence of two strategies - the possible circular dyadic influence.

We also tested Sexual satisfaction and Sexual dominance (see attached article in chapter 5). We found some kind behaviors correlated with dissatisfaction and less direct, more manipulative strategies correlated with large female initiation of sexual activities.

### **1.3.3. Attachment theory**

An important neighboring topic for couples behavior and overall well-being, and, strangely a topic not being researched in the context with dominance is the Attachment theory (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). In the studies attached to this thesis not all available data has been analysed yet, and the link with Attachment Theory was not one of the initial aims of this thesis. Even though we cannot bring our results of how attachment can influence the quality of dominance behavioral cues or choice of a communication strategy, it is important to briefly mention this theory for understanding a couple's research context.

Attachment theory is nowadays the most robust theory of adult love relationships (Shaver & Hazan, 1994), explaining how people make and maintain powerful affectional bonds to significant others (Bowlby, 1988). Relationship researchers agree that the quality of these bonds strongly influences virtually every aspect of the human experience. Hazan & Zeifman (1999, p.351) clarify that "a secure attachment bond is an active, affectionate, reciprocal relationship in which partners mutually derive and provide closeness, comfort, and security.

These bonds are not simply based on “reciprocal altruism” but, rather, on a “profound psychological and physiological interdependence.” Attachment models shape “patterns of thought, affect, and behavior” (Fowler & Dillow 2011, p. 18). Depending on the school, there are either three or four categories of attachment orientation - the way we create bonds and feel safe in them: Secure, Anxious-ambivalent (preoccupied), Anxious-avoidant and dismissive-avoidant attachment.

Shi (2003), in her study on conflict behavior and attachment styles, states that partners often bring their early childhood and current relationship models to during a present conflict resolution and may slip into behavioral patterns without full awareness. Johnson, S. M. et al. (2001) go even further. In their study on Attachment injuries, they call it a theory of Trauma. Due to their bond and interdependence in relationships, incidents in which one partner responds or fails to respond at times of urgent need or increased vulnerability (especially in areas as isolation and separation) cause emotional injuries and strongly influence the relationship quality (Simpson & Rholes, 1994). They found that partners would also use the language of trauma when talking about attachment injuries, often using life-and-death terms, pointing to isolation and abandonment topics. Behavioral studies suggest connections with a specific type of attachment and specific behavior. Corcoran & Mallinckrodt (2000) lists exercising pressure on their partners for a Preoccupied style, Simpson et al. (1996) mention increased hostility. Abandonment anxiety has been connected to the use of blame, physical and verbal aggression, threats, patterns of demand–withdraw, feelings of guilt and hurt after a conflict, and lack of mutual discussion and understanding (Feeney et al., 1994). Fowler & Dillow (2011) tested Gottman’s Four horsemen of Apocalypse - most destructive couples behaviors (Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness, and Stonewalling). When those appear scientifically, they can achieve up to 95% accuracy of predicting divorce (Gottman, 1993; Gottman & Levenson, 2000). Among others, found a significant connection between the use of criticism and defensiveness and contempt in an Anxiously attached partner.

## **1.4. Interactional Communication research**

### **1.4.1. Conflict communication**

Conflict is defined as a clash (dispute) of two or more mutually exclusive efforts, forces, tendencies (Křivohlavý, 2002). Barki & Hartwick (2004) and Canary (2003) define conflict as perceived differences or disagreements between their interests, goals, or needs. According to Mayer (2000), it is a conflict of needs, interests, desires, or values incompatible with others'. The potential for conflict exists between all individuals and institutions that interact with each other (Mayer, 2000). There are many clarifications of a conflict, such as a cognitive vs. emotional one, differing in number of people, or intra-personal vs. inter-personal conflict. Interpersonal relationships play a significant role in a person's life, and as has been said, conflicts are inevitable in them (Canary & Lakes, 2013; Hargie, 2011; Mayer, 2000). Besides the parent-child relationship, the most crucial relationship in an individual's life is usually a romantic partnership (Vybíral, 2005). In contrast to kinship, romantic relationships are voluntary, more variable, and more fluid - changing (Laursen & Collins, 1994). The fate of maintaining a relationship then depends on how the partners can resolve conflicts, how they think in difficult situations, how they behave in them and how they experience them (Tran & Simpson, 2009) as well as the quality of their relationship, which also has a significant impact on the course of conflicts (Canary & Canary, 2013).

In contrast to the clear division of roles in the traditional family, partners' position is currently more balanced - they share decisions, leisure activities, friends. Conflicts arise from different roles, areas of interest, beliefs, or values. Partners have to agree on many things and balance many topics. There are disputes that need to be addressed and resolved (Argyle, 1994). Conflicts do not disappear from interpersonal relationships. Instead, people learn to better deal with them (more strategically) to achieve protection and strengthen their relationships (Canary & Lakey, 2013). It can protect relationships against stagnation and lead to change (Putnam, 2006), encourage creativity, increase motivation, bring better results, help get to know each other, and clarify inconsistencies (Hargie, 2011). When couples resolve a conflict along with a common interest in repairing emotional harm, both feel better after it (Burpee & Langer, 2005). In summary, conflicts point light to areas that are not perfectly fitting, maybe just due to a change in the external environment, and give the opportunity to make a plausible change. It is up to partners how they understand it and approach each specific challenge.

## **1.4.2. Behavioral dominance**

### **1.4.2.1. Verbal and Nonverbal expressions of dominance**

Many studies try to name dominance specific verbal and nonverbal cues or more complex patterns and domineering behavioral strategies. However, they were both unconvincing and have opposing results or did not focus on romantic couples.

Although there is some indication of the correlation between dominance and almost every category of communication such as mimics, gestures, posturology, number of words, successful interrupts, etc. Carney et al. (2005) results have its discrepancies such as, e.g., Keating et al. (1981) correlation of absence of smile with dominance in contrast when Hess et al. (2005) concludes that smile can be a display of dominance. But that doesn't mean that any of those findings cannot be correct and relevant. Various behavior strategies may exist, and there should be possibilities for one cue to appear in more than one form. And studies with designs expecting aggression can miss those non/verbal cues when they are non-aggressive but still leading to dominance strategies.

This is why we decided to use the Grounded theory qualitative method using open codes for analyzing couples' interactions.

In our early work in an article attached as chapter 3 (Lindová et al., 2012), we asked professionals in the psychotherapy and communication field to share their images, beliefs of how a person with a specific personality description would behaviorally interact with their romantic partner. In the article, you can read on four completely different domineering strategies and behaviors - Respectful, Coercive, Affectionate, and Ignoring. We created two axes of prosocial/asocial behaviors and Direct/indirect scale and formed psychological vignettes.

Those were professionals' beliefs of behavioral cues as pilot research exploring more than traditionally described dominance behavior. But we didn't know if those are manifested in real couples' interactions. Neither we learned how exactly those behaviors and dynamics be displayed in a real alive interaction. Therefore we designed a new complex study including a video recording of real couples conflict interactions in the most qualitative way possible, as I show in the chapter on Relationship drama or in the article attached as chapter 4 "Successful strategies," (Průšová et al., 2017).

### 1.4.2.2 Dominance Strategies

Many studies have been written in the area of dominance - mostly in the context of the organizational position in the workplace (one on one interaction), how to look dominant in PR or politics (one to a largely anonymous group) or associated with pathology and bullying in a school environment (one to a familiar small group), etc. There is a lack of research in the area of dominance and domineering in close relationships. And if there are some, they are focused on home violence or mixed with research focused on relationship power that leads to seeking aggressive behaviors.

There are studies on behavioral strategies in romantic couples, but not specific for dominance (power struggle) interactions. For example, Gottman & Krokoff (1989) formulated conflict solving strategies leading to marital satisfaction for both genders in heterosexual relationships. For women it is "getting her husband to confront areas of disagreement and to vent disagreement and anger openly." As negative outcomes, they named partners "whining, stubbornness, withdrawal from interaction, or the defensiveness of both partners.". But those strategies are not specific for domineering (power struggling) interactions.

Some studies are exploring behavioral strategies, but most of them are focused on the dominance between work colleges or strangers, many times done in groups. Most of them are not based on observations but based on questionnaires (mostly on beliefs) or self-reports, sometimes in the coding list form.

The dominance strategy is formed by a set of behavioral cues or patterns used to influence the interactional partner. As said before, dominance is mostly seen as active, direct, or aggressive behaviors, usually assuming that dominant are those individuals with a high level of power (Cattell, B.C. et al., 1992; Johnson, S. L. et al., 2012). Therefore some studies suggest that domineering can have a broader spectrum of behavioral displays (Carli et al., 1995; Gottman, 1989). Our study expands the current view of dominance by considering the whole range of behaviors, especially by the three quality scales - active vs. passive, prosocial vs. asocial, direct vs. indirect - and doesn't restrain individuals with a low level of power.

Those studies often use a two-pole scale of positive/prosocial and negative/anti-social behavior. Positive/prosocial provides alliance formation and cooperation, reciprocal resource exchange leadership, and persuasion (e.g., Hawley, 2002), nonverbally accompanied by laughter and participation. Dominance coupled with hostility can involve antisocial strategies for taking resources and threatening subordinates, such as manipulative behavior, intimidation, and social or physical aggression (Wiggins, 1977). They lead to the destruction of the solution

or the relationship, which can be manipulative behavior, ignoring, denial of responsibility, on the verbal level criticism, humiliation partner, incoherence and non-verbally e.g., hostility, aggression, not reacting.

Some studies (e.g., Carli, 1999, Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005) explore indirect strategies and suggest that the reason of their existence is that they are advantageous in situations where an individual has a lower amount of power. However, these strategies are often hidden because if an individual with a low level of power actively and directly approaches a partner with high power levels, he/she would most likely not succeed. According to, e.g., Frieze & McHugh (1992), direct strategies are those where the individual in the form of prosocial directly communicates his/her will and discussion about it, uses previous experience, attention to how others deal with it. Possibly, in the form of antisocial behavior, uses verbal and physical pressure, etc. As such, we define indirect strategies as those strategies where an individual does not disclose his/her will verbally but attempts to influence the partner's emotions or avoid conflict (interaction). For example, in prosocial form, after excessive tenderness and care, it is hard to refuse the partner's wish. In the case of antisocial behavior, that can be as threats to leave or ostentatious silence, which is intended to induce guilt in a partner. Frieze & McHugh found a positive correlation between the amount of power in the relationship and the level of directness in strategy usage. Furthermore, also the number of domineering strategies used increased when the amount of power decreased.

In 2015 we qualitatively analyzed video-recordings of interviews with 60 sixty long-term couples (120 participants) for a publication "Domineering Strategies in romantic partners: As self-reported statements in Interview" (Průšová et al., 2015). Partners were asked to verbally characterize situational dominance strategies that they and their partner used during an experimental situation where they were re-acting their typical conflict interaction.

We performed a categorization of 124 statements by content similarity. Groups of 16 strategies emerged: Arguments, Empathy/ Creativity (e.g., motivating the partner), Excuses/ Persuasion, Manipulative techniques (reproaching), Coercion, Aggression, Verbal superiority, Calm leadership/ Conversation management, Calmness, Guilt provocation, Emotional manipulation, Stifling silence, Stubbornness, Walkout, and Problem denial. Three additional categories appeared: Power, Right, and Activity.

Since we not only wanted to see what people think but how they actually behave in an interaction, we designed a qualitative research method (Relationship drama). We let couples show us their typical, commonly appearing couple's conflict interaction (attached article Průšová et al., 2017 as chapter 4). From the beginning until the end, with all emotions and behavioral flexibility in, e.g., smashing doors, throwing magazines, or tiny gentle kisses on the partner's shoulder. We saw various environments (living rooms, bedrooms, cars, walks), various motives ("Clean the dishes" to "I'm worried you don't love me anymore"), various lengths (from few sentences to days of tension). We analyzed each statement and movement in grounded theory qualitative analysis. We brought to the light 15 different behavior strategies leading to getting or losing what they are asking the partner for. Those are (1) Explanation of own insights, (2) kind-reasoning, (3) excitement/humor, (4) whining, (5) helplessness, (6) argumentative, (7) dramatization, (8) guilt-manipulation, (9) non-responsiveness, (10) problem-denial, (11) attention-shift/pseudo-solution, (12) blunt-aggression, (13) silent-fuming, and (14) partner-debasement, (15) Tender comforting/coercion. The full coding list you can find in the attachment of article in chapter 4.

Thus, in contrast to the mainstream literature, we established a piece of evidence that there is a broader spectrum in behavioral qualities in dominance interactions and their equality. Our first behavioral study asks professionals about their beliefs (Chapter 3). In the second study, we asked couples themselves, and in the third large study, we thoroughly coded their actual behavior. Active and passive strategies emerged as well as prosocial and asocial, direct and indirect, low power and high power domineering strategies.

## **1.5. Communication Research methods**

### **1.5.1. Who is the proper judge of Dominance?**

Already in the 1980's, Sypher & Sypher (1984) warned that there are consistent discrepancies and low levels of agreement between self-report and objective measures of the same construct. This was also confirmed in 2005 by Dunbar and Burgoon. In their article on Perceptions of power and dominance, they posed a question "Who is best qualified to report on dominance – the participants themselves or 'objective observers?'" (p.213). Even though animal ethology can easily ascribe dominance to the most resourceful one, those markers are not clear, are more complex in humans. With the confusion in the meanings of the term

Dominance meaning, it is hard to decide if the dominant one is the one looking that way according to outside judges, or the one feeling it as an inside member of the relationship being able to read partner's behaviors in the context of long term experience. Therefore the results between participants, observers, "objective" standardized tests differ.

In Chapter 2, we analyzed, among others, a single question from our survey "Indicate the overall dominance distribution between you and your partner." Couples were filling it individually, and the result results revealed that even partners themselves do not necessarily agree on who is the dominant one. Only 89 couples out of 147 couples agreed on couple dominance balance in their relationship. In the 89 couples that agreed on the dominance balance, both partners independently answered either that both are equal in dominance (25 couples) or that one particular partner was dominant over the other (64 couples).

Further, we wanted to see if manipulative strategies are used more by lower-powered partners, and therefore we conducted a small study for the International Society for Human Ethology (Průšová et al., 2016). Based on the Dyadic power theory, we hypothesized that if they used a direct strategy to ask for something, they would not be successful in getting it. Also, that lower-powered people will use more coercive behaviors to compensate for their power disadvantage. We analyzed two experimental behavioral tasks and power and standardized dominance measures (SRPS, Pulerwitz et al., 2000) and self-reported dominance measures. We found that 45% of 'winning' participants (in their stereotypical conflict) scored lower in power and dominance than their partners.

Results also revealed that open aggression was more often used by lower power partners, as well as the use of affiliation and problem solving to reach their goals. Higher powered partners used emotional and verbal manipulation more frequently than lower power partners. Ignoring strategies were used independently of the power level.

Analyzing the influence of power on dominance strategies in couples for ISHE (Průšová et al., 2016), we noticed that partners themselves do not agree on the definition of dominance either. Therefore we decided to look qualitatively into "What do we mean when talking about dominance" (Průšová et al., 2017).

We analyzed couples' video-recordings, answering two simple questions: "Who was the dominant one in the interaction." Surprisingly, even when partners were interviewed together, only 56% of couples agreed with their partner on who was dominant. When analyzing reasons for ascribing dominance, five larger categories emerged. Therefore we transcribed, open-coded



for verbal content, and qualitatively categorized full responses to the second question, “Why did you ascribe dominance to your partner/yourself?”.

And we found five larger categories of what is their nonscientific, laymen, definition of dominance: 33% of responses were referring to a higher level of activity (talking and moving more, being more expressive), 31% referred to win/loss (fulfilled one’s request, or a partner resisted the other partner’s request), in 18% of the cases they pointed out Expressed aggression (appearing angry, yelling). A category pointing to one's right or truth (one was being correct, had a right, partner made a mistake) occurred in 11% of the responses, and 7% of responses consisted of the simple ignorance of the partner’s request. It seems that the theoretical discrepancies, and maybe even research results, lie mostly in the roughs of approaches. We summarized those into three larger perspectives of what people are referring to when talking about dominance: (1) the outcome (win or lose), (2) the level of expressiveness (higher activity, ignoring, and aggression), and (3) being right.

The first two categories correspond with the traditional psychological and behavioral perspectives. The argument of "the right" potentially refers to a situational power source in interactions among romantic couples partners. The connection of being right as a criterium to ascribe dominance/submission is mentioned within a communication perspective also by Millar and Rogers (1987). Once again, we saw a piece of evidence that the theoretical discrepancies, maybe even discrepancies in research results, lie mostly in the differences in these approaches.

Further in this thesis you can find a case study of a dominance interaction of one of our couple. You can see an example of how under different approach the ascriptions and scores of who is the dominant one vary.

### **1.5.2. Instruments and Behavioral methods**

Most communications studies are done through surveys of behaviors, where participants either qualitatively share their beliefs or self-perceptions about their own behavior (cf. Buss, 1989), report about behaviors of close ones (Dunbar & Abra, 2010), or even more common, quantitatively mark behaviors that they consider valid on pre-prepared checklists (cf. Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Some studies use behavioral observations and experimental designs in behavioral research where participants discuss specific topics in a laboratory setting while being video-recorded. In romantic couple research, it is usually a topic related to the relationship, e.g., “discuss events of the day”, or “a conflict resolution (discussion of a problem area of continuing disagreement)”, or “mutually agree upon a pleasant topic” (Gottman & Levenson, 2000). This method is also used outside in romantic couples dyadic and group research, where the instruction can be “agree on ... to bring to the moon” (NASA experiments) (e.g. Bottger, 1984; Hassall, 2009). Or similarly the Desert Survival Problem of ranking 12 items (Burgoon et al., 2002; Dunbar & Abra, 2010) or “agree on distribution some amount of money between ..” (Mehu et al., 2007; Dunbar, 2005).

Although behavioral studies are usually designed to analyze (code, rate, or count) actual video-recorded behavior, there still appear to be crucial limitations. One of the main critiques is the argument of unnatural behavior of participants when they are “examined” in a “research laboratory” setting. In the standard setting, both participants sit on prepared chairs, sometimes at an exact 90-degree angle, and cameras are put in-front of participants, so recordings are standardized and high quality.

However, these measures to ensure standardization, lead to compromises. For example, they leave out full non-verbal modalities, such as proxemics, standing, or moving positions. Some gestures and other behavioral cues can be reduced just because of environmental effects on communication (they just do not have enough physical space for the movement). Also, their natural involuntary physiological reactions differ in a laboratory setting within an artificially evoked conflict. Furthermore, those studies are mostly quantitative, researching few behavioral cues or patterns of communication.

When exploring couples' communication, it was crucial to give our participating couples the option to express the full variety of behavior in the most natural setting we could. We overcame the fields' boundaries by revising psychodrama and adjusting it for research purposes (by licensed therapists). We paid particular attention to prevent potential harm from re-experiencing possibly negative moments, especially when excluding the therapy purpose.

### **1.5.3. Psychodrama and therapy**

In order to achieve high ecological valence of couples behavior and overcome the before mentioned limitations, we modified a method known well from the therapeutical context “Psychodrama” for scientific purposes. It is a method first described by Jacob Moreno in the early 20th century (1946). Under an expert's lead, a subject reenacts past situations from his real-life to evaluate them and reflect on them (Kellermann, 1992).

Since then, many other therapists and scholars use similar protocols, including more or less moving. For example within the Palo Alto family therapy approach, Virginia Satir (1983) formed “Statues” with patients for family therapy purposes, or e.g., CBT uses role-playing (DeRubeis et al., 2010). Nowadays it is used as a tool for efficient supervision in e.g., Balint’s model.

Even though therapist and modifications vary in the level of therapist’s and client’s activity and also in the level of deepness, they share the belief (Farmer & Geller, 2005; Kellerman, 1992) that using actual behavior of a patient, client, or trainee and letting them experience past and real future situations in a safe context is very efficient for diagnostic, therapeutical and teaching purposes.

The idea and tradition are that therapy and research should go hand in hand are established since the beginnings of family therapy within, e.g., Palo Alto school and Watzlawicks’ and his colleagues communication theory handbook in 1967 (Watzlawick et al., 2011). Using an interdisciplinary approach - borrowing a therapy tool allows us to more precisely research couples ’interactions and overcome (nonverbal) communication research limitations.

During a therapy session, a client briefly describes a specific situation that is either individually or within a group reenacted under the lead, facilitation a therapist. Through recreating a scene and re-playing, the client access easier and, more precisely, original motivations, feelings, and thoughts. Due to the option of pausing an interaction, reflection, meta-communication, and sometimes group reflecting, a client gains new insights and possibly can re-enact the specific interaction to acquire a corrective experience. As an ending part of the process, there is always a debriefing and insights anchoring phase to support positive change (Kellerman, 1992).

## **1.6. The Relationship Drama Method**

### **1.6.1. Context introduction**

The Relationship drama is a protocol, a method, that bridges the Interpersonal research and psychotherapy/psycho-social training practice. Since re-acting a personal situation encourages couples to express their typical behavior in its most natural quality and quantity, with a gentle safety modification, it can increase the ecological validity of behaviors expressed by participants in a laboratory research setting in a less limiting way, compared to the traditional research. For our research purposes, we started with an introduction part with in-depth interviews and visualization technics. According to therapy protocols, we led couples through a reenactment part. Without analyzing, searching for insights, and re-experiencing corrective behaviors, we skipped straight to gentle ending and debriefing.

We consciously scheduled the Relationship drama method was after one standardized experimental interaction and two interviews. Hence, the couples had time to adjust to a testing environment, relax and show more natural behavior. Further, I offer our example of how exactly we constructed the research design where it was invented and piloted. We used a mixed-method design, including online questionnaires (about 1 hour) and in-lab testing (about 90 minutes in total) comprising qualitative and quantitative parts.

### **1.6.2. Research Design**

After an introductory e-contact with participants, we asked them to complete, separately at home, a set of online Qualtrics Questionnaires focused on various life areas (personality, power distribution, attachment, relationship satisfaction, etc.). In the laboratory, participants were adequately informed about their rights and about the whole procedure. Including being videotaped for some time during testing, but not when and where the camera is hidden. After providing informed consent, participants were asked to complete the first Introductory interview and Pictures Ordering Task. That gave participants enough time to adjust the laboratory testing situation for the following core testing (the RD method).

An oral history interview was aiming the quality and processes of their relationship, relationship definition, typical conflict interaction, and a more in-depth focus on the description of behavioral patterns and behaviors of this interaction.

This interview naturally leads to rearrangement of the laboratory environment (into, e.g., kitchen). Partners cooperated to reconstruct the typical interactional process. They were asked

to “act out” with as high accuracy (both verbal and nonverbal) as possible using exact phrases, movements, and the chronology in the conflict situation, also while using props (e.g., “dishes,” “beds”). They often needed to practice before they agreed that the form accurately reflected their regular interactions. When needed, the researcher led them to visualize the beginning of their conflict, helping the partners retrieve the appropriate emotions and atmosphere. Final recordings of the interaction typically lasted 3 to 10 minutes. If necessary for safety reasons, the researcher/therapist mediated the conflict to its end.

The last interview followed and contained more technical questions to increase the accuracy of further analyses. Those were mostly about moments that have not been resolved or clear in the Relationship Drama or accuracy of specific behaviors, e.g., giggling, timelines, etc. Because the reenactment of a conflict may have caused stress or bring up negative emotions, we used a deeper debriefing, including techniques of, e.g., seeking positive moments (e.g., recalling positive relationship situations from the past week).

The behavioral testing procedure was recorded by two videocameras (one behind a one-way mirror and one hidden in an object in the room) and an in-room audio-recorder in order to avoid losing verbal or nonverbal cues due to movement and rotation of partners.

Besides using this method in other studies, e.g., on Courtship behavior, we tested a hundred heterosexual couples in this doctoral research. Sixty from the Czech Republic and Slovakia (Faculty of Humanities, Charles University) and a 40 at the University of California in Santa Barbara, USA), aged between 20 and 40 years, dating at least one year and living together at least six months.

### **1.6.3. Case study section: Dominance dynamics and ascriptions in Couple’s interaction**

An illustrative case study example shows couple No. 62 in their “Turn off the lights, please...” interaction. They chose to solve conflictual needs using excitement, playfulness, cuteness, and gamification. They were a young couple (man 26 years, woman 24 years old) in a four-year relationship. Both related to University in the direction of clinical psychology studies. In our Relationship Drama task, couples chose to re-acted their conflicting evening interaction. It was a moment right before they are about to go to sleep when they need to decide

who will turn off the lights as their stereotypically appearing conflictual dynamics within only 13 communication exchange steps.

### **1.6.3.1. Interactional process**

They started when both were lying in bed, already in their pajamas and about to go to sleep. First, the woman asked her partner to get up and turn the light off with a tender, playful, cute, a little childish voice tone and whining/appealing/bagging facial expressions ("sad doggy eyes"). With calmness and being in contact, he showed an interest in his partner, but firmly he pointed out that that night was her turn to do so. She answered with an uncertain, more playful voice and expression of a pure cuteness, "I was turning it off the last time...". With a kind smile becoming loving laughter he started "NONONO, last time I..." when she jumped into his speech, lovingly gently touched his leg and with a tender begging and amused voice she argued newly "but you are closer...". He disagreed with his partner's request, but he did react to the change of reasoning. He was not accepting her argument but zooming out and bringing a new suggestion of a solution to the interaction. In a kind, loving and steady way, he said, "nononono... let's play chin chin, then" (similar to rock, paper, scissors).

She tried once more, rejected his idea, and pushed it a little further with sabotaging "nono, we will not play chin chin.. \*p's name\*, pleeease, hahaha... please, I'm already lying down, chachacha". And demonstratively laid down, putting her blanket on and turning her back but with a half-joking facial expression. Then she imitated/acted defiance and stayed turned away. He reacted with an amused and tender facial expression, not answering, and gave space.

Then she started turning back to him, came closer and with a tender "chacha" she looked at him. He repeated his suggestion with a challenging voice, "so let's play Chin chin." She agreed. And lost both. The game itself and her initial request. And in this case, even though using a mediator and (at least at the first site appearing) the chance factor, he resisted her dominance attempt and won the game. He navigated the entire conversation in the pattern of disagreement with her argument/request or rejection but always included a suggestion of his solution, explanation, or invitation/challenge in a calm, steady, amused, and loving notion and turned it towards a third deciding party - the game.

In closed coding, we found nine communication units for the man and eight for the woman. All were in the prosocial category as humor, contact, empathy, and loving behaviors. No codes appeared among Ignoring/avoiding neither Aggressive category. This couple managed to use humor, gamification, playfulness during the full time of their conversation, expressing interest in each other and tenderness.

She lost in the game and her request. But in line with Rollin and Bahr's (1976) unrevised Dyadic power theory, and based on their insight from an interview, we strongly hypothesize that they both, as a couple, "won" in short and long-term in the meaning of strengthening their relationship. In the interview after relationship drama, they agreed that they were similarly dominant. They pointed out that they consciously use a game to prevent conflict and a fast way to solve it.

### **1.6.3.2. Dominance ascriptions and measures**

To show how complicated it could be to assess dominance and where and why research studies can differ, we included various types of dominance measures (survey reports, interview, behavioral task) and multiple points of view (partners themselves, qualitative analysis, and observers).

Overall dominance distribution differed a little among couples - the man was feeling 50/50 dominance, female felt 40% and her partner 60%, which indicates on one note an equal relationship, on the other hand, his perception of "perfectly equal" and hers "I feel a little submissive."

In this qualitative analysis of Interactional dominance, where criteria for indicating dominance by fulfillment of one's wish/request or resisting partner's, we pointed as dominant the male partner. Based on a woman's initiating request of a task, partner's resistance, and woman's acceptance of that.

Couples themselves agreed in a follow-up interview on being equally dominant in their interaction. But as the male partner indirectly revealed his female partner's strong power source - "she is able to fall asleep with the lights on," therefore even though she proposed a request, she did not "need" it, and both partners were aware of that. The male response points to previous experience in this exact situation, and therefore previous tuning and relationship knowledge indicates her lower motivation and, thus, a stronger (latent) power source.

They pointed male's dominance strategy as activity, initiation, suggestions, and coercion. He pointed her strategy to her power sources (personal topic unimportance), and she indicated negotiating and play/game as her dominance strategy.

We also asked three master's and higher communication students to review our recordings and assess couples' dominance behaviors. They reached a complete agreement that the male partner was dominant. Their responses to why they ascribe dominance are interestingly diverse in the criteria that they employed. Such as "he won the game, if they didn't play the game they would seem similarly dominant," or "he took the initiative," or "he said that she is not right and made her play the game... therefore he won in this exchange", and one comment aiming dominance to the situational aspect of "it wasn't in his hands, the game decided."

#### **1.6.3.4. Behavioral displays and dynamics**

This interaction would not appear among the traditionally listed ones. E.g., in the NASA exercise or in an experimental task of agreeing on splitting the money, talking about troubling topics, etc. This tiny sparkling solution of a minor everyday issue would not have showed up in the traditional experimental research settings. Even though those small, meaningless differences of opinions, wishes, and needs appear in couples' everyday life more prevalently than large, serious, and bordering argument topics. They are often dressed in the suit of "dirty dishes" or "dirty socks next to the bed," but it is the same dynamics that can have a similar communication pattern.

Also, lying down on the bed would not be possible in traditional settings. All the aspects of playfulness and acted/played rejections would not have been displayed and administered within the traditional communication research design setting.

Due to the use of our innovative approach, we were able to identify new strategies. In the following a few of them are elaborated upon.

#### **1.6.3.5. Example of non-typical strategies**

**Sadness, Helplessness, and Fear.** The Sadness modality may be fascinating to research further. In traditional literature, it is listed among negative behaviors. Within a generic population, showing sadness is often understood as weak behavior and, e.g., female crying can be, wrongfully, considered highly manipulative. In the intimate environment of long-term



romantic couples context, we hypothesize that it may be a positive sign of high trust within a couple to be able to communicate fears openly, vulnerabilities, and discomfort to each other and therefore to keep the relationship tuned according to both spouse's current needs. Even though sadness is expressed with slow, heavy movements, we argue the automatic categorization as "passive," "withdrawing," and "weak" behavior. Also, saying what we are disappointed about, how it feels, and what can be changed, just with an authentic sad face, doesn't hint that much of the traditional "vicious manipulation" view. It may be a kind, open way to communicate discomfort to a partner in a non-conflictuous way?

**Tender comforting/coercion** is a strategy typically used by men (18 to 2), and the most losing one of all with a far distance from any other, 11% success rate. We could formulate the question as to why men would use behavior that disadvantageous for themselves? And why wouldn't women use it more often, especially since they should be, in theory, the ones more caring and emotionally sensitive? Or, do they, and is it just not considered a dominance situation by the couple, and therefore they even didn't mention it during testing? We found a positive correlation of women using Tender Comforting with men's Silent fuming, which can hint at dynamics between partners of a woman being very caring when a man is nonverbally angry. That could indicate that men use it as complementary to their women's vulnerability when sharing emotions, and women use Tender Comforting when their man is very upset as a comforting strategy.

It is such an unsuccessful strategy and still so frequently used by men. We can hypothesize that the reason is not aiming an immediate win in the current troubling situation but strengthening the relationship, achieving a closer, deeper couple's bond, and winning the partner, therefore as a relationship-building strategy (Driver & Gottman, 2004)? Those hypotheses could be mildly supported by combinations of strategies correlation analysis, where male Tender Comforting correlated positively with female use of Explanation of her insights, or Whining. It was the only negative correlation among all strategies when the Argumentative strategy in women is absent. But not as we could expect, with female use of Helplessness. Or, is it used by less powerful men? This hypothesis could be supported by correlations of positions in conflict for men using Tender Comforting, where there was no significance between whether they initiated the interaction or were recipients, but there was a positive correlation with being in an offensive position. Therefore regardless of starting, they were (also) actively requesting

their own need/idea. Those questions could be better answered with further analysis of Tender Comforting with the couple's Power and Satisfaction values.

#### **1.6.4. Discussion of the Relationship Drama method**

We conclude that the choice of adapting a psychotherapy method served our purpose of more in-depth exploratory interpersonal research very well. We were able to uncover "natural" behaviors in "natural couple's conflicts" in their suggested "natural" environment and their broader contexts and deeper meanings.

We were able to observe also differing motives, intentions, and levels of vulnerability varying from "You didn't clean the dishes, again!" to "I'm feeling very insecure that you maybe don't like me that much anymore and losing you scares me."

Thanks to this method, we could see the full interactional process without installing cameras into their living room. To follow the chronological structure and keep participants' complete freedom in showing how "they really are." Furthermore, we could ask about their couple's metacognition directly to those participants. This method allowed us to balance the depth of knowledge and the couple's safety. Such as balance the depth and intensity of emotions and behaviors, and if needed, by incorporating initial meditation technique and using the options to "re-wine" forward to its ending, pause, or stop get back to some essential part. In a therapy context, non-verbal methods are used as "speeder," how to get very quickly and easily to the very core point of intra/inter-personal struggle. It includes many other communication channels and unreflected psychodynamic processes to show up compared to only talking about an issue in a doctor's office. In the therapy setting, it is essentially a scalpel that can be used by trained professionals because there is a specific order of steps to make the intervention ("surgery") successful. There is never a certainty of anything deep and complicated showing up during the process. The therapist's main task is to keep a safe environment responsibly and immediately intervene when seeing a possible hurting moment. After this technique, debriefing is an ethical condition to prevent any possible flashbacks or damages to a couple's bond after uncovering possibly painful wounds.

Getting back to the beginning and using the metaphor from the medical field, nonverbal technics, especially psychodrama, is like a scalpel. It is very efficient, brings in all aspects very quickly, and helps to create a real full experience of a "re-enacted" situation. In the words of one of our participants in another study with a clinical sample, a stabilized psychotic patient,

after re-acting a conflict with her ex-husband, "I haven't think of this moment for fifteen years, and I felt so so angry at the moment. I was really there. I haven't felt anger for a few years now due to meds that are calming me down. It is weird how it is still hidden somewhere in my memory that fully, after all these years.". It is a very sharp tool that brings an intense and complex experience very quickly.

Due to its "sharpness" and flexibility, this method can benefit the interpersonal communication research, also when using more modern technical equipment, such as Kinect, virtual reality behavioral, or psychophysiological research methods. But it needs and must be mediated by a trained professional who is trained to intervene, can protect the safe environment, and lead a proper debriefing. It is not intended for all groups of people. For example, a psychotic diagnosis is a firm contraindication. It could be potentially harmful due to the unstable boundary between reality and imagination in those patients. There needs to be an ethical discussion of proper indication and proper protocol "pre-meditating" its use. In sum, when used with proper care and ethics, this is a strong method to further investigate human interactions. In this thesis focussed on human interactions between partners in the context of a romantic relationship.

## Summary

The presented study introduces and explains that romantic couples' dominance strategies can be much more variable than the stereotypical point of view believes.

We brought pieces of evidence for the necessity of placing dominance in the proper context for every academic and practitioner that uses this concept for his/her work. There are differences in definitions across fields. There are differences in ascriptions of dominance. Differences are depending on the method that are used and also differences according to who is judging.

Therefore, it is important to list a proper definition of what we mean by dominance in every academic or even laymen's paper or article. For example, results from studies on testosterone, body shape, and observers judged level of dominance point to a different dominance concept than dominance as a personality trait and even further from interactional dominance in one situation.

In practice, we need to be more humble when, e.g., as a social worker, one comes to a family and makes a quick judgment of who is the most influential one based on perceived aggression. For relationship therapy, maybe it is the calm looking like a victim partner who holds power and indirectly, with non-aggressive strategy, controls decisions. With regard to using the term dominance in practice it should be noted that dominance behavior, as used in studies like the ones in this thesis and personality traits named dominance can be two very separate things.

We created, piloted, and tested within various environments with various target groups a new communication research method that allows participants to express naturally variable behaviors. Therefore researchers can record movements and behaviors in their natural quality even in a laboratory setting.

Thanks to that, we introduce 15 variable strategies of romantic couples. We brought into light some strategies that are typically not considered as dominant ones but have a large place in actual couple's dominance experiences, such as Helplessness (Fear), Tender comforting, or Attention-shift/Pseudosolution. Chapter 4 showed their prevalence and their success rates related to achieving what one asks for. It is not meant as a creation of a new typology. The purpose is to show variable qualities of behaviors that one can use to balance everyday interpersonal differences. In chapter 5, we suggested the first connection of dominance strategies to sexual satisfaction. Based on our studies and our newly developed method for data

gathering (relationship drama), those strategies will be researched in further studies on couples overall satisfaction, power distribution and various dominance areas.

A case study of dominance dynamics demonstrated how complicated it is to ascribe dominance. Analyzing one couple's dynamics in detail, we showed differences between the couple's behavior, their perception, test results, and observers' point of view.

Furthermore, a better understanding of dominance strategies could help to refine psycho/socio diagnosing tools, such as personality questionnaires that have an everyday effect on real human lives in areas of Psychotherapy, Social work, Pedagogics, or even business decisions concerning whom to collaborate with. In sum, when used with proper care and ethics, this is a strong method to further investigate human interactions. In this thesis focussed on human interactions between partners in the context of a romantic relationship.

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## Chapter 2

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### Power Distribution and Relationship Quality in Long-Term Heterosexual Couples

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#### ABSTRACT

Power imbalance in romantic couples is associated with lower relationship quality. Reasons underlying this phenomenon remain, however, unclear. In 192 Czech and Slovak long-term heterosexual couples, we measured relationship quality (Dyadic Adjustment Scale) and assessed its link with perceived relationship power, control, decision making, and personality dominance. Decreased relationship quality was found in power-imbalanced couples, and power distribution affected perceived relationship quality especially in men. In women, lower perceived relationship quality was associated with their partners' control and personality dominance. Results are discussed in the context of interdependence and approach/inhibition theories of power, and some culturally specific explanations are provided.

#### Introduction

Many researchers (Burgoon & Hale, 1984; McClelland, 1987) view power as one of the core concepts of interpersonal psychology, whereby power in romantic relationships is of special interest within this wider context. The term power is usually defined as the ability to influence another person's behavior in one's favor and to resist another person's attempts at influencing one's behavior (Simpson, Farrell, Oriña, & Rothman, 2015).

Research had relatively consistently shown that in perceived relationship power, men tend to score higher than women (Felmlee, 1994; Gillespie, 1971; Murstein & Adler, 1995; Peplau & Campbell, 1989; Ponzi, Klimczuk, Traficante, & Maestripieri, 2015; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997). The greatest relationship satisfaction, however, tends to be found in couples where partners have equal power (Brezsnyak & Whisman, 2004; Gray-Little, Baucom, & Hamby, 1996; Ponzi et al., 2015; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997; Whisman & Jacobson, 1990; but see Felmlee, 1994).

More frequent negative interpersonal behaviors and communication styles in couples with power imbalance are often viewed as the cause of their lower relationship quality and satisfaction. According to the theory of social power (French, Raven, & Cartwright, 1959), coercion is the basic negative source of power and it is associated with a correspondingly negative style of exerting power. Coercive behavior, including aggression, has been negatively linked to relationship satisfaction and stability (Frieze & McHugh, 1992; Kaura & Allen, 2004; Shackelford & Goetz, 2004). Relationships characterized by power equality, on the other hand, have been associated with a lower incidence of psychological symptomatology (Galliher, Rostosky, Welsh, & Kawaguchi, 1999) and less violence (Coleman & Straus, 1986; Gomez, Speizer, & Moracco, 2011). The majority of research, however, either focuses specifically on victims of violence or does not address partners separately. For instance, perceived relationship quality in violence perpetrators thus

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remains unknown. Relationship quality from the perspective of the high-power versus low-power partner in couples with power imbalance has not been systematically addressed as yet.

According to the approach/inhibition theory of power by Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson (2003), high power is associated with positive affect and attention to reward and to the ways in which others satisfy their personal goals, whereas low power is associated with negative affect and attention to threat, punishment, and interests of other persons. Based on this outline, one could expect high-power partners to be more satisfied in relationships than the low-power partners are.

Interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), on the other hand, postulates that individuals who have better alternatives to the current partner (higher mate value) are less dependent on their relationship and have greater relationship power. This is because if the current relationship does not provide rewarding outcomes, they are more likely to leave it. Partners with a lower mate value, in contrast, tend to be more dependent on their partners and have lower relationship power. Moreover, having a partner with a higher mate value and being more dependent on the relationship leads to increased relationship satisfaction. Therefore, interdependence theory predicts high-power partners to be less satisfied and low-power partners to be more satisfied in their relationship.

It seems, however, that these two theories address different levels of relationship power. Research on *interpersonal power* distinguishes between process power and outcome power, where the process power (power processes) refers to the techniques or strategies used to gain control, while the outcome power (power outcomes) describes who actually takes decisions (Cromwell & Olsen, 1975). These aspects of power seem to be relatively independent of each other, and their association with relationship quality can vary. This was demonstrated in a study by Bentley, Galliher, and Ferguson (2007), who found a negative association between giving in to a partner and relationship satisfaction in young people of both genders, but a positive association between decision making and relationship satisfaction only in young men. In a similar vein, predictions of the approach/inhibition theory are based chiefly on differences in the process power between partners, whereas interdependence theory focuses on differences in the outcome power.

Power is processed (exerted) by control over one's own and one's partner's actions (Pulerwitz, Gortmaker, & DeJong, 2000). Perception of having more power than a partner leads to higher exerted control (Rollins & Bahr, 1976), but the link between power and control is not necessarily linear. For example, individuals who highly exceed their partners in power may not need to produce many control attempts because their partners try to meet their desires prior to control attempts (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). Among the strategies of process power, negative, coercive control includes the use of force or threats (Stark, 2007), which has been negatively associated with relationship satisfaction (Shackelford & Goetz, 2004). A coercive power strategy may be based on personality dominance, which is seen as a predisposition to forceful and assertive interpersonal behavior, as opposed to a deferential, cooperative, and conflict-avoiding submissive personality (Cattell, Eber, & Tatsuoka, 1970).

To sum up, it is not clear who the dissatisfied partner in power-imbalanced couples is and what the specific cause of his/her dissatisfaction is, especially in couples where violence or other extreme forms of coercion are not reported. Furthermore, it is unclear what causes an individual's dissatisfaction: one's own perceived position in the couple hierarchy or the behavior and relationship perceptions of the partner.

Moreover, it is unclear whether men and women are satisfied with the same power distribution. Literature seems to indicate that the association between power in a relationship and perceived relationship quality is to some extent gender-specific. In relationships where power balance is skewed, couples with higher-power men tend to be more stable and satisfied than couples with higher-power women (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Centers, Raven, & Rodrigues, 1971; Peplau & Campbell, 1989; Weisfeld, Russell, Weisfeld, & Wells, 1992). Higher satisfaction in couples where men have more power may be due to female preference for socially dominant mates



(Sadalla, Kenrick, & Vershure, 1987). This preference has been explained in terms of an adaptive mechanism stemming from the times when dominance was linked to male ability to protect and provide resources for the female as well as to better male reproductive qualities (Weisfeld et al., 1992). Moreover, women can be directly motivated by the expected association between dominance and earning potential, which is specifically connected to relationship satisfaction (Bryan, Webster, & Mahaffey, 2011). These interpretations are, however, based on a somewhat speculative assumption of a correlation between social dominance and relationship power. Moreover, it is unclear whether the association between perceived relationship quality and male ascendancy is a cross-culturally universal phenomenon: existing research casts some doubt on this assumption (Lucas et al., 2004). Eastern European countries are of special interest in this context because of their history of politics of mandatory employment of both men and women, general delegation of household work to women due to suppressed feministic movement, and confiscation of property and low career chances for men during the period of state socialism (Fodor, 2002).

The aim of our study was to test our predictions, based on previous research, that couples with perceived equal power distribution are more satisfied and better adjusted than couples who report power imbalance and that among couples where one partner is perceived as having clearly higher power than the other partner, couples with higher-power men are better adjusted and display higher relationship satisfaction.

Next, we tested the association between perceived relationship quality of an individual and his/her perceived relationship power and between an individual's perceived relationship quality and relative relationship power as perceived by his/her partner. We were specifically interested to see (a) whether relatively low or relatively high relationship power is associated with relationship dissatisfaction, (b) whether one's own and/or one's partner's relationship power perceptions are specifically associated with one's relationship quality perceptions, and (c) whether men and women differ in their satisfaction with specific relationship power distributions. Finally, we wanted to investigate possible specific power-linked factors connected to relationship quality. To this end, we measured relationship control, decision-making dominance, and personality dominance and evaluated their effect on relationship adjustment and satisfaction. Decision-making dominance was chosen as a measure of power outcomes, that is, a measure of the ability to have things one's own way in a relationship. Relationship control measured the perceived intensity/unpleasantness of one's partner's control attempts. Personality dominance was assessed as a source of the negative, coercive power processes.

## Materials and methods

### Participants

We included participants from three larger studies focused on behavior in romantic relationship, which were undertaken in 2008 through 2018. Inclusion criteria were age 18 to 40 (i.e., early and middle adulthood; two couples with one partner exceeding the maximum age were also included), relationship length of at least 6 months and cohabitation of at least 3 months. Data from 168 participants (84 couples), aged 21 to 39 years (mean = 26.3 years for women,  $SD = 3.6$ ; 27.4 years for men,  $SD = 4.1$ ), which constituted the first subsample, were collected as part of a project Intimate Behavior in Cohabiting Couples by Havlicek, Husarova, Rezacova, and Klapilova (2011). These couples were recruited via fliers at 25 Prague gynecologists' offices and received a remuneration of 2,000 CZK (88 USD) for their participation in the whole larger study. Average relationship length was 5 years and 4 months, and 39% of participants had at the time of data collection completed college/university. A second subsample comprised 126 individuals (63 couples), aged 19 to 46 (mean = 23.9 years for women,  $SD = 4.2$ ; 26.0 years for men,  $SD = 5.4$ ) recruited via advertisements at educational institutions, therapy offices, and using our own social connections.

Each couple was compensated by 400 CZK (18 USD) for their time. Average relationship length was 3 years and 7 months. Nearly a half of the participants (49%) had completed college/university at the time of data collection. The third subsample included 88 participants (44 couples), aged 18 to 40 (mean = 24.8 years for women,  $SD = 5.0$ ; 26.2 years for men,  $SD = 6.1$ ) from the study Manipulative and Dominance Strategies in Conflicts of Romantic Couples With Normal Personality Profile and With Avoidant Personality. They were recruited via advertisements at educational institutions, job portals, and using social connections. Each couple was rewarded by 1,000 CZK (44 USD) for participation in the whole larger study. Average relationship length was 3 years and 11 months and 27% of the participants had completed college/university at the time of data collection.

In total, our sample thus included 192 Czech and Slovak (all Caucasian) heterosexual couples in a long-term relationship who had at the time of data collection dated for at least 8 months and cohabited for at least 5 months. Although university students formed part of the sample, we tried to acquire a heterogeneous sample and include couples from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. We excluded potential participants with a confirmed psychiatric diagnosis.

All participants were informed about the goals of our study and gave their informed consent. Ethical aspects of the study were approved by the Institutional Review Board of Charles University, Prague, Faculty of Science (No. 2009/7), and by the Ethical Committee of the National Institute of Mental Health, Klecany (59/2016).

### Measures

Participants completed a demographic information form regarding their gender, age, length of relationship, as well as level of education.

*Dyadic Adjustment and Satisfaction.* To measure partners' current relationship quality, we used Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976). It consists of 32 items, and its total score (where a higher score indicates higher adjustment) is determined by four factors: Dyadic Consensus (13 items), Affectional Expression (4 items), Dyadic Satisfaction (10 items), and Dyadic Cohesion (5 items) (Spanier, 1976). The DAS was completed by both partners in each couple and both their total DAS scores and scores on the Dyadic Satisfaction subscale were used in subsequent analyses.

*Perceived relationship power* was assessed using a single direct question: "In your current romantic relationship, which of you is more dominant/powerful?"<sup>1</sup> answered by each partner separately. If uncertain about the meaning of dominance/power, participants were told it indicates who has more say in a relationship. In the 84 couples from the Intimate Behavior in Cohabiting Couples Project, this question was included in an interview with experimenter (KK). Participants' free answers were recorded and later categorized into *low relationship power*, *equal relationship power*, and *high relationship power* by a trained experimenter blind to the couple's other data. The remaining participants indicated their answers on a percentage scale (0%: *partner completely dominant/powerful*, 100%: *I am completely dominant/powerful*). These answers were also later categorized into 0% to 45%: *low relationship power*, 46% to 54%: *equal relationship power*, and 55% to 100%: *high relationship power*.

<sup>1</sup>In Czech, the question was: "Kdo je ve vašem současném vztahu dominantní?" We have deliberately used the term "dominantní", which in Czech refers broadly to general influence superiority, instead of the Czech equivalent of powerful, i.e. "mocný, mít moc", which is not used in everyday language in that sense.



*Relationship control and decision-making dominance.* These two variables were measured using a slightly modified Sexual Relationship Power Scale (Pulerwitz et al., 2000). In its original form, it consists of 23 items loading on two subscales, but in our study, four items related to condom use were excluded (three from Relationship Control and one from Decision-Making Dominance scale). The Relationship Control subscale (example item: “Most of the time we do what my partner wants to do”) was administered using a 4-point, Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*). A higher score indicated a lower level of perceived control by partner (i.e., higher independence). In the Decision-Making Dominance subscale, participants were asked who usually has more say about certain decisions (“Who usually has more say on whether you have sex?”). Answers were indicated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*I always do*) to 5 (*my partner always does*). A higher score thus indicates lower decision-making dominance of the subject. For statistical analyses Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) 1 and 2, the scale was reversed to match other dominance/power scales where higher scores indicate higher power.

*Personality Dominance* was measured by Interpersonal Check List (ICL; Leary, 1957; Kožený & Ganický, 1976), which classifies interpersonal behavior into 16 variables and 2 broad interpersonal dimensions, Dominance and Love. We used the score for Dominance.

### Analyses

We calculated a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare couples categorized into eight types based on perceived power distribution in Dyadic Adjustment and Satisfaction. We used categorical regression to calculate the effect of an individual’s and his/her partner’s perceived relationship power level on Dyadic Adjustment and Satisfaction. Independent samples *t*-tests were performed to investigate whether a decrease in men’s Dyadic Satisfaction is associated with higher or lower power in men themselves and in their partners.

We performed two APIMs for dyadic data (Kenny, Kashy, Cook, & Simpson, 2006) to identify the effect of independent actor and partner predictors Relationship Control, Decision-Making Dominance, and Personality Dominance and covariate Length of Relationship on dependent variables Dyadic Adjustment (APIM 1) and Dyadic Satisfaction (APIM 2). APIM provides separate but simultaneous estimates of actor and partner effects of dyad members (Ackerman, Donnellan, & Kashy, 2011). The model distinguished between men and women in the dyads. Mutual independence of predictors was confirmed by a correlational analysis. Paired-samples *t*-tests (with couple as a pair) were applied to assess differences between men and women in Dyadic Adjustment, Dyadic Satisfaction, and individual predictors. Using Kendall correlation, we assessed the between-partner correlation of these variables.

### Results

Of the total of 184 couples in which both partners indicated their relative power within the dyad by answering the one-item question, 104 (57%) agreed on couple power balance, that is, both partners either independently indicated that they are equal in power (25 couples; 24%) or that one particular partner has more power than the other (79 couples). Of the latter couples, 44 (56%) had higher-power females and 35 (44%) higher-power males. The binomial probability of such a distribution is  $p = .054$ . Equal couples reported a higher relationship quality than those where either partner had more power ( $t_{102} = 2.02$ ,  $p = .046$ , Cohen’s  $d = .49$  and  $t_{102} = 1.87$ ,  $p = .064$ , Cohen’s  $d = .43$  for Dyadic Satisfaction and Dyadic Adjustment, respectively). In power-imbalanced couples, those with high-power males and high-power females differed in neither Dyadic Adjustment nor Satisfaction ( $t_{77} = .69$ ,  $p = .49$ , Cohen’s  $d = .16$ ,  $t_{77} = .11$ ,  $p = .91$ , Cohen’s  $d = .02$  for Dyadic Adjustment and Satisfaction, respectively).

**Table 1.** Dyadic Adjustment and Dyadic Satisfaction in couples, categorized according to both partners' perceptions of power distribution.

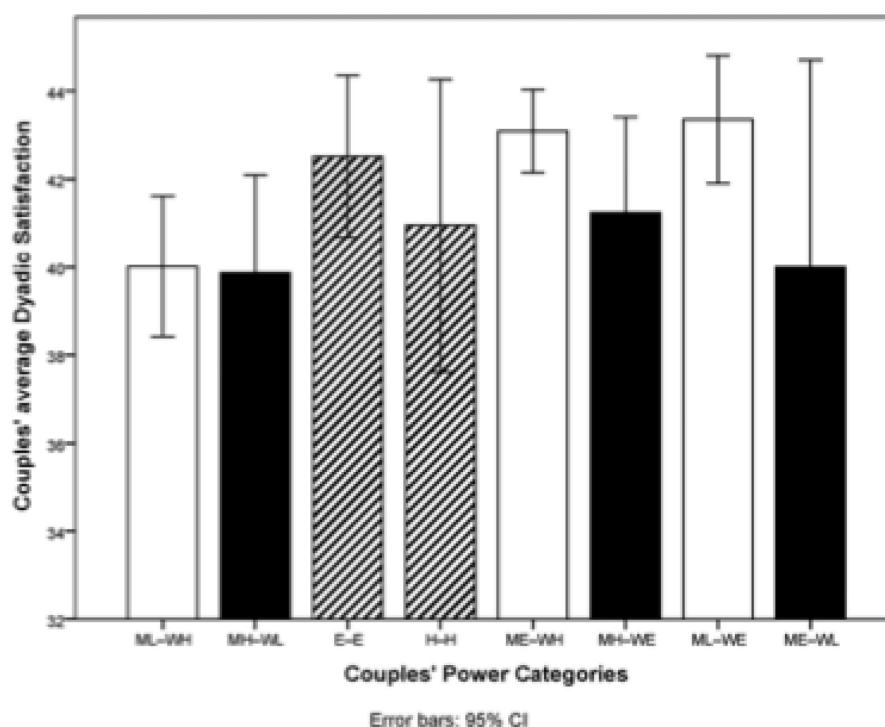
Power distribution in couple	Couple's Average Dyadic Adjustment			Couple's Average Dyadic Satisfaction	
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
High (female) – low (male)	44	114.7	11.8	40.0	5.3
High (male) – low (female)	35	112.8	12.6	39.9	6.5
Equal – equal	25	119.0	11.7	42.5	4.5
High – high	17	117.7	11.6	40.9	6.5
High (female) – equal (male)	26	119.5	7.1	43.1	2.3
High (male) – equal (female)	21	116.6	10.6	41.2	4.8
Equal (female) – low (male)	7	122.6	6.7	43.4	1.6
Equal (male) – low (female)	9	115.6	11.5	40.0	6.1

Next, we categorized couples into eight categories based on the pattern of power distribution. Descriptive statistics for these eight couple categories are shown in Table 1. Figure 1 illustrates differences between these categories in couple's average Dyadic Satisfaction. Differences between these categories in relationship quality were statistically non-significant in ANOVA ( $F_{7, 176} = 1.64, p = .13, \eta^2 = .057$  and  $F_{7, 176} = 1.51, p = .17, \eta^2 = .061$  for Dyadic Adjustment and Dyadic Satisfaction, respectively).

Categorical regressions explored the effect of perceived relationship power in both the individuals themselves (actors) and their partners on Dyadic Adjustment and Dyadic Satisfaction in men and women. Own and partner's perceived relationship power explained 4.5% of variance in men's Dyadic Adjustment ( $p = .078$ ) and 6.2% of variance in men's Dyadic Satisfaction ( $p = .020$ ; Figure 2). In women, own and partner's perceived relationship power explained 1.7% of variance in Dyadic Adjustment ( $p = .54$ ) and 3.4% of variance in Dyadic Satisfaction ( $p = .18$ ; Figure 2). Both own (actor's) and partner's perceived relationship power was associated with men's Dyadic Satisfaction ( $\beta$ s = .23 and .16,  $p < .001$  and  $p = .013$ ). In men, Dyadic Satisfaction was lower when they perceived themselves as having low power in a relationship ( $t = -2.57, p = .012$ , Cohen's  $d = .48$ ) or high power ( $t = -2.03, p = .045$ , Cohen's  $d = .36$ ) than in those who perceived themselves being in power-balanced relationship (Figure 2(a)). When, however, the effect of perceived relationship power of their female partners was considered, low female power decreased men's Dyadic Satisfaction ( $t = -2.18, p = .032$ , Cohen's  $d = .44$ ), while high female power did not have this effect ( $t = -.93, p = .36$ , Cohen's  $d = .16$ ; Figure 2(b)). Results for women tended to complement those of men: Lowest Dyadic Satisfaction was associated with own low relationship power, but there was no difference in Dyadic Satisfaction between women who had low- and high-power partners.

Subsequently, we ran a pair of dyadic analyses to learn more about the specific factors linked to power imbalance associated with decreased relationship quality. We specifically tested the effects of negative power processes (partner's control, coercive power strategy of personality dominant partners) and power outcomes (decision-making dominance) on relationship quality by performing APIMs 1 and 2 with independent predictors Relationship Control, Decision-Making Dominance, and Personality Dominance, with length of relationship as a covariate. These measures were available for 126 individuals (63 couples) from the second wave of participant recruitment. Descriptive statistics, as well as differences and correlations between scores for male and female partners for dependent variables and predictors considered for APIMs 1 and 2 are listed in Table 2.

In APIM 1 with Dyadic Adjustment as the dependent variable, independent dyadic variables explained 3% of variance for men and 22% of variance for women. For APIM 2 with Dyadic Satisfaction as the dependent variable, independent dyadic variables explained 7% of variance for men and 28% of variance for women. The results of APIM 1 and 2 follow the same pattern and we report only those of APIM 2 in more detail (Table 3).



**Figure 1.** Dyadic Satisfaction in couples categorized according to power distribution.

Note: ML-WH: man reports having lower, woman reports having higher power; MH-WL: man reports higher, woman lower power; E-E: couple agrees on equal power; H-H: both partners report having higher power than the partner; ME-WH: man reports being equal, woman reports having higher power; MH-WE: man reports having higher, woman equal power; ML-WE: man reports having lower, woman equal power; ME-WL: man reports having equal, woman lower power. Open bar: woman reports having higher power than the man reports having; Hatched bar: both partners report having the same power; Closed bar: man reports having higher power than woman reports having.

According to APIM 2, women's Relationship Control (or independence from their male partner's control) was associated with higher Dyadic Satisfaction in both men and women. Both the overall actor and partner effects of Relationship Control on Dyadic Satisfaction were also significant. Moreover, women were less satisfied when their partner scored high on Personality Dominance, and the effect of male and female Personality Dominance was significantly different, with women's Personality Dominance having a negligible effect on Dyadic Satisfaction.

## Discussion

In our study of Czech (and Slovak) long-term couples, we found higher relationship quality in couples who perceived that power is in relationship distributed equally than in those who perceived power distribution in their relationship as unequal. Couple's power distribution was more strongly linked to men's than to women's relationship quality perceptions. Specifically, relationship quality in men decreased when they perceived themselves as having either less or more relationship power than their partners but also in cases where their female partners perceived themselves as having less relationship power than they did. On the other hand, women's perceptions of relationship quality were more strongly linked to negative power processes (control, dominance) than men's relationship quality perceptions were. More specifically, in women, being controlled by a man and man's personality dominance were both associated with the perception of lower relationship quality.

In line with most previous studies (Gray-Little et al., 1996; but see Felmlee, 1994; Galliher et al., 1999; Ponzi et al., 2015; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997), we found higher satisfaction in couples



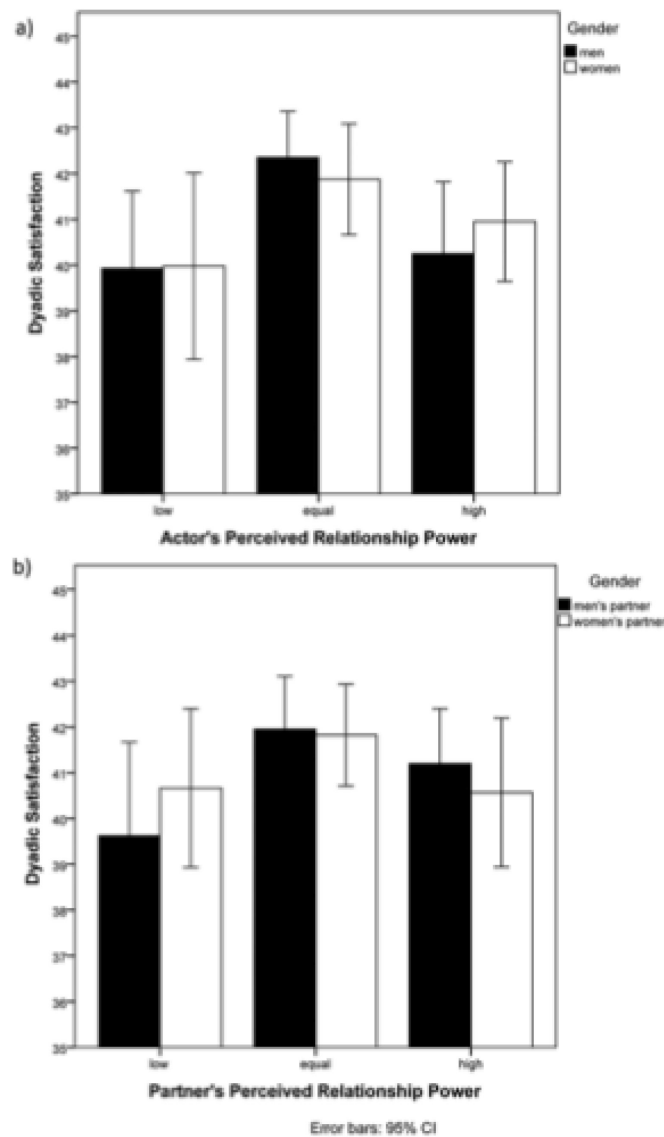


Figure 2. Association of Dyadic Satisfaction in men and women with their own (actors') perceptions of relationship power (a) and with their partners' perceptions of relationship power (b).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of predictors and covariates for APIM 1 and 2.

Variable N = 63	Men		Women		Paired t-test	Kendall correlation
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Dyadic Adjustment	111.4	12.2	113.3	13.2	-1.31	.37***
Dyadic Satisfaction	39	5.3	39.2	5.9	-.21	.17
Relationship Control	47.9	5.6	48.3	7.2	-.35	.04
Decision-Making Dominance	21.0	2.4	21.5	2.7	-.96	-.28**
Personality Dominance	4.3	6.4	3.0	7.6	1.10	.02
	Couple's mean	Couple's SD				
Length of Relationship	38.8	26.4				

\* < 0.05; \*\* < 0.01; \*\*\* < 0.001, Length of relationship given in months.  
For details on scales, see Methods.



who perceived themselves as power-balanced than in couples who perceived themselves as power-imbalanced. In earlier studies, respondents also often tended to perceive the male partner more powerful (Felmlee, 1994; Peplau, 1979; Peplau & Campbell, 1989; Ponzi et al., 2015; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997), and higher stability and satisfaction tended to be found in couples where the male partner had more power than in couples where the female partner had more power (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Centers et al., 1971; Felmlee, 1994; Peplau & Campbell, 1989; Weisfeld et al., 1992). The latter was not, however, confirmed by all studies which used WEIRD samples (e.g., Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997). Moreover, a cross-cultural study by Lucas et al. (2004) found an association between men's love and men's own ascendance in decision making in American and British samples, but no clear association in a Chinese sample, while among Turkish men, love was positively associated with women's ascendance. In women from all four countries, however, romantic love was associated with their own power in decision making.

Although love and relationship adjustment/satisfaction are not interchangeable concepts, such results may well point to important cross-cultural and gender differences with respect to the impact of male and female relationship power on couple's perception of their relationship. In our Czech sample, imbalance in couple's power distribution in men's favor does not seem to be positively associated with relationship quality any more than power in favor of the woman is. In relationships in which partners agreed that one is more powerful than the other, couples with women perceived as more powerful were relatively numerous (56%) and no less well-adjusted or satisfied than couples in which men are more powerful. Moreover, women's perception of lower power was associated with men's relationship dissatisfaction, but women's perception of higher power was not linked to decreased satisfaction in their male partners.

This missing advantage of couples with high-power males in our sample could be explained in the context of the historical and cultural development of Czech (and Slovak) society, especially the specific position of men in the pre-1989, socialistic society. Although in a socialistic society, men had more access to power and important positions in the public sphere than women did (Fodor, 2002; Havelková, 1993; Šiklová, 1997); they also suffered from a profound loss of prestige and resources due to postwar property confiscations, low ceiling for earning potential, and limited career options independent of active cooperation with the regime (Šiklová, 1993; Wagnerová, 1995). At the same time, men were not encouraged to participate in household chores or family care: That was delegated to women. In consequence, men lost their power bases related to relationship and family power. The only strategies connected to relationship power left to them were passive dominance strategies, such as avoidance of household chores and disparaging women in public (Vodochodský, 2007; Wagnerová, 1995). Despite the transformation that started in 1989, this female-dominated household norm and male power enacted in terms of being "passive" and "not very practical" seems to persist in the Czech (and eventually Slovak) society to some extent even in the next generation (Vodochodský, 2007).

Existing research offers little in terms of explaining the mechanism underlying the association of relationship power with relationship quality. It does not say whether lower relationship satisfaction in power-imbalanced couples is solely due to lower relationship satisfaction in low-power partners who cannot have things their way while the high-power partners who can exert influence in such relationships are satisfied or whether—in line with interdependence theory—high-quality partners who are less committed to their relationships because they see more numerous and better alternatives to the current relationship subsequently become more powerful and less satisfied (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). Our results indicate that the former could be relatively more relevant for women, whereas the latter might explain the association between perceived relationship quality and couple's power distribution in men. Women are dissatisfied when they are controlled by their partners and when they have a partner with high personality dominance (Table 3), but when they have somewhat more power in a relationship than their partners, their relationship satisfaction is not decreased (see Figure 2(b)). These results for women are thus in line with

This gender difference is striking and implies that with respect to relationship power, different underlying processes are at play in men and women. Whereas one's lower relationship power could be viewed as a favorable consequence of having a high-quality, highly valued partner—as seems to be a case for the men in our sample—it can be also viewed as an unfavorable state that arises in consequence of a partner's negative coercive behaviors. The latter seems to be the case for women in our sample. Most other studies associate relationship satisfaction with higher power in men rather than women. East European, post-socialistic countries such as the Czech Republic might differ due to their specific history where the female-dominated household norm used to be a consequence of societal processes in a communist country.

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implications of approach/inhibition theory (Keltner et al., 2003) which predicts that lower—but not higher—relationship power is associated with negative feelings and possibly also relationship dissatisfaction. It is also in line with the social power theory (French et al., 1959), which sees coercive power as destructive for a relationship.

For men, however, feeling more powerful than their partner is consistently associated with their decreased relationship satisfaction (Figure 1), as predicted by interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). In fact, it seems that in men both of these contrasting theories, that is, interdependence and approach/inhibition theory, could play a role and explain part of the results, that is, relationship dissatisfaction in men who perceive themselves as having either more or less relationship power than their partners. In women, interdependence theory either does not apply or the potential positive effect of partners' high quality (and high power) on women's relationship satisfaction is eliminated by the relatively stronger association between men's negative power processes and female relationship satisfaction. Similarly, the impact of negative behavior associated with male power could outweigh the putative initial female preference for dominant males.

The difference in results' patterns for men and women could be explained by gender differences in process power, where male power has been associated with more coercive behavior than female power. Men are more likely than women to use more direct, self-enhancing, and aggressive influence tactics. Women, on the other hand, are more likely than men to use communal and other-oriented actions and indirect strategies such as regression (Buss, 1981; Buss, Gomes, Higgins, & Lauterbach, 1987; Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Johnson, 1976). Possible biological mechanism involved here might include testosterone, which is higher in men and linked to dominant behavior (Mazur & Booth, 1998). Personality dominance in general is often viewed as a tendency to assertive and aggressive behavior (Cattell et al., 1970).

In contrast to control and personality dominance, perceived imbalance in decision-making power did not lower relationship adjustment and satisfaction. We could thus confirm previous suggestions that process power (control) and outcome power (decision making) are indeed independent concepts (Farrell, Simpson, & Rothman, 2015) and expand to adult couples earlier findings from adolescent couples where partners' control was found to have a stronger negative impact on relationship quality than partners' decision-making power did (Bentley et al., 2007).

Our study is limited to some extent by its non-representative sampling. Sampling bias may lead to inaccuracy in the proportions of couples where men versus women have higher power, but it should not affect the association of either gender's power with relationship satisfaction. The three subsamples included in the study do slightly differ in age and education level, but the overall overlap in demographics is large. In the first subsample, relationship power was coded qualitatively from free answers, whereas in the other two subsamples it was indicated on a scale. This may have led to slight differences in terms of whether participants who indicated being almost but not quite equal were coded as equal or high/low in power. Nevertheless, the three subsamples do not differ in proportions of participants assigned high/equal/low relationship power (chi squares 4.9,  $p = .30$  and 3.1,  $p = .55$  for men and women, respectively). It is therefore unlikely that the data collection method had a significant effect on study results.

## Conclusion

Our results are in line with previous research which found higher satisfaction in romantic relationships where power is shared equally than in those with unequal power distribution. More specifically, we arrived at some evidence to the effect that men's dissatisfaction is associated with men's perceived high and low relationship power and with women's perceived low power and that women's dissatisfaction seems to be specifically connected to men's control and personality dominance.



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## Chapter 3

Lindová, J., Průšová, D., Klapilová, K. (2012). Nonverbal behavior contrasts the respectful, coercive, affectionate and ignoring domineering strategies, 111-125. *Antropologie*, 50 (1).



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### **NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR CONTRASTS THE RESPECTFUL, COERCIVE, AFFECTIONATE, AND IGNORING DOMINEERING STRATEGIES**

*ABSTRACT: Studies of the nonverbal behaviors associated with dominance have yielded various, sometimes incompatible, findings. One of the possible reasons is that nonverbal behavior associated with dominance is stereotypically thought to be dynamic and active, which has led to an overestimation of direct domineering over indirect domineering behavior. The latter has attained little attention in the frame of nonverbal behavior. Herein, we aimed to increase the known spectrum of nonverbal behaviors employed in domineering within the context of long-term relationships using a model of four domineering strategies; these strategies are based on combinations of dimensions of prosociality and power. Thirty-three raters (24 women and 9 men) were asked to (1) read four vignettes regarding the four domineering strategies and imagine a romantic partner of each type in a typical domineering situation, (2) outline typical nonverbal behaviors of the imagined person within 10 nonverbal modalities. Approximately 2000 statements were collected. These were categorized by a second group of twelve students (nine women and three men), separately by modalities and domineering strategies. Finally, brief summaries about typical behaviors for each domineering strategy were written by compiling all categories found. The attributed nonverbal behaviors clearly differentiate among the four domineering strategies (i.e., the "respectful", "affectionate", "coercive", and "ignoring" strategy). Moreover, content analysis disclosed two subtypes for each strategy which we termed "active" and "passive". These differed in the amount of expressiveness, movement, and contact with the partner. The nonverbal profiles of the ignoring and affectionate strategies largely deviate from the common view of dominant behavior found in literature.*

*KEY WORDS: Nonverbal behavior – Dominance – Romantic relationships – Prosociality – Power – Domineering strategy*



## INTRODUCTION

Dominance is a pervasive, but also equivocal concept, with many different meanings in every social or biological science. In evolutionary terms, increasing one's own fitness is contingent on acquiring resources, and in a social species such as humans, this is mediated by both cooperating (increasing own fitness together with the whole social unit) and competing (increasing own fitness at the detriment of other(s); Trivers 1971) with others. Dominance can be seen as winning a competition for resources in a social group (Darwin 1859). Natural selection, then, should favor behavioral strategies leading to preferential resource gaining within a group, i.e., to dominance (Dawkins 1989). Dominance, in this sense, is a relative measure and it is at best determined on the level of a dyad or interaction. Rank in a group hierarchy, in contrast, does not always determine all dominance relationships to other group members, as hierarchy does not need to be linear (Drews 1993), and in a particular dyad, the overall lower ranking individual can dominate over an overall higher ranking individual.

Commonly, researchers define dominance on the proximal level using terms including force, confidence, agonism, or even threat and aggression (Carli *et al.* 1995, Maslow 1937, Ridgeway 1984, Wiggins 1979). In contrast, other researchers emphasize that dominance is determined by the effectiveness in acquiring resources within a dyad or social group, *regardless* of the means by which this is done (Hawley 1999). A long-term romantic relationship is likely to be a good example of a dyad where we find different strategies to gain control over resources and the partner (we call these "domineering strategies") which manifest themselves through different patterns of behaviors. Some of these may contradict the common definition of dominance based on coercion and assertiveness not only by including prosocial, in addition to coercive strategies, but also by not always requiring direct expression of power, but by including indirect, e.g., manipulatory, strategies.

Many researchers have examined the topic of how dominance is expressed by and perceived from nonverbal behavior (e.g., Argyle 1988, Burgoon *et al.* 1990, Dunbar, Burgoon 2005, Ellyson, Dovidio 1985, Gifford 1991, Henley 1977, Schwartz *et al.* 1982, Sillars *et al.* 1982). However, we still have little knowledge about how nonverbal behavior is associated with dominance in romantic relationships, because studies have rarely focussed on dominance in a romantic dyad. More general studies of nonverbal behavior and dominance paint a more detailed picture; however they also show interesting contrasts and limitations.

On one hand, naïve observers seem to agree on which nonverbal behaviors are associated with dominance (Gifford 1994, Hall *et al.* 2005), which indicates that they may share a stereotypical concept of dominance including some specific behavioral traits. On the other hand, many studies demonstrate particular associations between specific behavioral displays and self-assessed trait dominance (measured by standardized psychological tools), dominance beliefs of naïve participants, and dominance enforced by the hierarchical position of the subject in the observed group, among others. Here however, contradictory results appear frequently among different studies. For instance, dominance has been associated with an elevated, open, and relaxed posture (Burgoon, Hoobler 2002, Cashdan 1998, Schwartz *et al.* 1982, Tiedens, Fragale 2003, Weisfeld, Beresford 1982), but also with tense and closed posture (Burgoon 1991). Furthermore, it was associated with close proximity (Burgoon *et al.* 1984), but also less proximity (Burgoon 1991), both more smiling and less smiling (for a review, see Hall *et al.* 2002, Schmid Mast, Hall 2004), more eye gaze and less eye gaze (for a review, see Knapp, Hall 2005), a relaxed facial expression (Aguinis *et al.* 1998), but also a lowered brow and non-smiling mouth (Keating *et al.* 1977), and both more and less interpersonal touching (for a review, see, Stier, Hall 1984). Among the more consistent findings, we find a higher looking-while-speaking to looking-while-listening ratio (Dovidio, Ellyson 1982, 1985, Ellyson *et al.* 1980, Exline *et al.* 1975, Kimble, Musgrove 1988), frequent (Cashdan 1998, Kimble, Musgrove 1988) and loud speech (Kimble, Musgrove 1988, Tusing, Dillard 2000), and expressive voice modulation (Burgoon, Le Poire 1999, Tusing, Dillard 2000).

Possibly reflecting the aforementioned inconsistencies, some complex observational studies and meta-analyses bring much weaker evidence about associations between objectively assessed dominance (i.e., based on personality questionnaire scores, measures of behavior, role/rank, or socioeconomic status indicators; excluding impressions about dominance) and measured (coded) nonverbal behaviors (Gifford 1994, Hall *et al.* 2005). In their meta-analysis, Hall *et al.* (2005) found no association with "actual" (i.e., objectively measured, in contrast to "perceived") dominance and similar concepts for the majority of behaviors considered, including smiling, gazing, postural relaxation, body/leg shifting, conversational overlaps, and many others. However, they did find more bodily openness, smaller interpersonal distance, louder speech, more interruption, and perhaps more relaxed sounding voices to be associated with

dominance and similar concepts. However, although these associations were statistically significant, the effects (combined *Z*s) were not very strong or were based on a small number of studies. A specific meta-analysis of the association between speaking time and dominance (not considered by Hall *et al.* 2005) found an overall strong positive correlation, but showed that the association is relatively weaker for actual dominance measured by outcomes, than when dominance was judged by perceivers or measured by questionnaires, and that the strongest relationship was when dominance was assigned by a role (Schmid Mast 2002).

There are several factors which may explain the inconsistencies within this research area. For example, as mentioned above, dominance is a term that refers to many distinct concepts. Nevertheless, some authors do not define what precise meaning they assign to it (e.g., Carli *et al.* 1995, Hall *et al.* 2005). Most importantly, trait dominance, referring to a (mostly self-reported) biological and social predisposition of the subject to gain control in interactions (Cattell *et al.* 1992), and interactional dominance, a communicative act where the control attempt of one individual is met by acquiescence from another (Rogers-Millar, Millar 1979, Dunbar, Burgoon 2005), are very distinct constructs and therefore need to be treated as separate.

In the following study, we focus on the established dominance which exists in long-term romantic dyads, and is result of a combination of both trait- and interactional dominance, since the predispositions to dominance in one partner can be accomplished only if his/her partner's predispositions are lower than his/her own. This kind of dominance meets the criteria for the evolutionary concept of dominance as described above, as it describes the effectiveness in gaining control over the relationship resources and partner's behavior, it is relative and dyadic. We believe that trait dominance, interactional dominance, and dominance in long-term partnerships, which is a specific combination of both, are so diverse, that findings (e.g., regarding associated nonverbal behavior) with respect to one of them cannot be applied to the other two without further testing. Similarly, it is problematic to consider findings connected with related concepts including "status" or "power" as applicable, as they can be expressed through different nonverbal behaviors.

When attempting to study interactional or dyadic dominance, it is difficult to develop an ecologically valid experimental design which would aim to both provoke domineering effort in a dyad (e.g., romantic partners), as well as allow us to observe and investigate the result of

the interaction (i.e., who actually influences the behavior of the other). Instead, researchers often infer the dominance status from cues which may not be directly relevant (e.g., who leads the verbal communication) or base their conclusions about interactional dominance on self-report of the partners or on subjective judgments of naïve raters (e.g., Cashdan 1988). As can be seen in studies which use more than one method to assess dominance, these measures (especially subjectively felt and observed dominance) are weakly correlated with each other (e.g., Schmid Mast, Hall 2004). Consequently, the behaviors associated with dominance derived from these studies, and summarized by Dunbar and Burgoon (2005): "the prototypical nonverbally dominant communicator would be kinesically and vocally dynamic (using more gestures, greater eye gaze, more vocal animation and greater amounts of talk) while giving the impression of relaxation and confidence" (p. 211) may not correspond to characteristics of persons who actually gain control over the behavior of the other. In fact, all other methods of dominance assessment except the monitoring of actual outcomes in terms of control over the other or resources may lead to an overestimation of direct domineering over indirect domineering, which is less conspicuous and tends to be removed from the stereotypical beliefs about dominance. Direct and indirect domineering have been distinguished for marital verbal communication in a conflict situation (verbal influence), where direct strategies are a) talking about the issue, b) referring to past experience or what others do in the same situation, or c) verbal and physical coercion, and indirect strategies include a) being affectionate and nice, b) ignoring the issue or pretending there is no disagreement, or c) emotional withdrawal, refusal of sex and threatening to leave (Frieze, McHugh 1992).

In the framework of nonverbal behavior, indirect strategies have not garnered much attention. In a majority of studies, both dominance and nonverbal behavior associated with dominance are implicitly expected to be distributed along one axis (dominance-submission or dominance-absence of dominance, where direct domineering behaviors are the key characteristics of the "dominance" pole of the axis). Therefore, universally present dominance displays are usually sought. However, Lindová *et al.* (in prep.) suggest that four distinct domineering strategies with very different behavioral displays should be distinguished, based on combinations of two interpersonal personality dimensions – prosociality (affiliation) and power (defined as a personality predisposition to dominance,



e.g., in terms of good social communication skills; Dunbar, Burgoon 2005).

### **Domineering strategies**

The model of four domineering strategies (Lindová *et al.* in prep.) can be applied to any kind of dual long-term relationship, including romantic relationships. This model builds upon the idea that power, as defined above, is not a necessary condition for domineering. For example, individuals lower in power than their counterparts can still dominate by using more indirect strategies. The high-power-high-prosociality ("respectful") strategy is characterized by good social skills, popularity among others, respect and admiration from others, and a focus on the problem combined with respect for others. The high-power-low-prosociality ("coercive") strategy is characterized by coercion and displays of strength which are usually followed by the retreat of the counterpart. The other two domineering strategies are typically adopted by the individuals with lower power in the dyad. The low-power-high-prosociality ("affectionate") strategy is characterized by high affiliation and expression of affection and dependence, where the counterpart reacts by sympathy and feelings of debt leading to generosity. The low-power-low-prosociality ("ignoring") strategy is characterized by negation, refusal and ignoring, where the counterpart reacts by resignation or seeking alternative solutions. The high-power (respectful and coercive) strategies are considered as direct, whereas the low-power (affectionate and ignoring) strategies are considered as indirect.

In the present study, we intended to use the four domineering strategies proposed by Lindová *et al.* (in prep.) to learn more about different nonverbal behavioral patterns that can be employed in domineering. Our specific aim was to describe nonverbal profiles of these four domineering strategies within the context of the romantic relationship by compiling descriptions of typical behaviors suggested by participants. We attempted to explore whether people stereotypically connect some patterns of behavior with each of the four domineering strategies, as we have defined them. We further intend to explore if such behavioral patterns discriminate among the four domineering strategies and how much they correspond to the stereotypical picture of domineering behavior described in literature.

## **METHODS**

### **Participants**

We recruited two groups of participants. The first group was asked to fill in a questionnaire with open questions, in order to collect their opinions about nonverbal behaviors associated with the four domineering strategies. The second group categorized the statements of the first group into broader categories.

The first group was composed of 24 women and 9 men (mean age 26 years) who were students or teachers at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic and at the Prague College of Psychosocial Studies. More women were enrolled because of a higher proportion of female attendants at these institutions. Since many researchers report a higher sensitivity to nonverbal cues in women than men (e.g., Rosip, Hall 2004), we regard the predominance of women in our sample as advantageous rather than limiting. We recruited subjects who had either participated in a course on nonverbal communication or had taught it, as they were more likely to consider particular nonverbal behaviors separately and define them clearly.

The second group of participants consisted of 12 students from the Faculty of Humanities at Charles University, Prague, nine women and three men (mean age 22 years), who had participated for course credit in a nonverbal communication course. They formed six pairs of categorizers, which were gender mixed if possible (i.e., in three cases), in which each received a proportion of statements to categorize (see below).

### **Construction of vignettes**

A vignette for each of four domineering strategies was constructed by modifying more general psychological descriptions from Lindová *et al.* (in prep.) so as to better suit the nature of romantic partners' interactions. Each vignette included the name of the domineering strategy derived from its position on the prosocial and power dimensions and a short description of the strategy an individual used to communicate their own interest and will; mainly if it was direct (open) or not, and how much the person pursuing the described strategy insisted on it. A more detailed explanation of the strategy followed, including a description of extreme forms of such behavior. The final part of the vignettes included an interpretation of a partner's acquiescent behavior. All references to nonverbal behavior were avoided and the text was formulated using more general

behaviour- and (verbal) communication terms. The full versions of the vignettes are presented in *Table 1*.

**Procedure**

Participants from the first group were asked to read four vignettes regarding domineering strategies (described above), and were given the opportunity, if necessary, to inquire about parts they found unclear. Subsequently, they received a blank questionnaire which listed 10 nonverbal modalities: eye gaze, smile, facial expression, gestures, body posture, body movements, spatial behavior, touch (self and partner), vocal expression, and paraverbal behavior. All participants had knowledge about the meaning and were able to name

some examples of these modalities. For each of the four domineering strategies, participants in the first group were asked to imagine a romantic partner (sex not specified) of a particular type (pursuing a particular domineering strategy) in a typical domineering situation and then to describe the typical nonverbal behaviors they would attribute to this person, separated by modalities, into the questionnaire.

**Analysis**

Approximately 2000 statements about nonverbal behaviors were collected. They were sorted into 40 envelopes, by modalities and domineering strategies. Our next aim was to categorize these statements into

TABLE 1. Vignettes with descriptions of four domineering strategies, which were presented to participants.

Characteristics of vignettes	
The powerful asocial type: (SA)	The powerful prosocial type: (SP)
<p>This is a person with strong natural authority. He/she communicates his/her opinions or will to his/her partner forcefully, allows no discussion, or possibly gives orders. He/she may not be aware of his/her partner's will, or does not consider it as relevant, and does not take it into account. During an escalated conflict, he/she may use verbal or nonverbal aggression to reinforce his/her superiority.</p> <p>SA commands respect from his/her partner. Consequently, the partner of SA partly accepts the notion that the will of SA is more important than his/her own. The partner tries to comply with SA's wishes. SA may also arouse fear of failure in his/her partner.</p>	<p>This is a person with strong natural authority, who expresses his/her opinions and will openly, directly, and in a non-conflict way. He/she acts casually, agreeably and kindly. In many cases, he/she does not make much effort to enforce his/her will. People who assert oneself more actively, especially through successful organization of leisure time and social activities of the couple or larger social group, are also found among SP. When SP gets into a conflict or dispute with his/her partner he/she tries to explain his/her point of view and take account of his/her partner's needs.</p> <p>SP commands respect from his/her partner, who naturally accepts SP's will and has no problem identifying with it. SP can be inspiring for his/her partner and impress him/her with his/her ideas.</p>
The powerless asocial type: (LA)	The powerless prosocial type: (LP)
<p>This is a person who does not express his/her opinions and will openly, but tends to insist on it. He/she usually does not cooperate on decision-making, negates his/her partner's opinions and suggestions or ruins their accomplishment. He/she may also point out how harmful his/her partner's suggestions are, and in some extreme cases even use (psychological) extortion.</p> <p>His/her partner tends to give up to maintain calmness and agreeableness in the relationship.</p>	<p>This is a person who expresses his/her will unconvincingly, but in a gentle and conflict-free way. He/she emphasizes his/her investment into the relationship, devotion and dependence on the partner, and tends to bring evidence for it by extraordinary care for his/her partner. LP often flatters and praises the partner, and points out the goodness of his/her partner and the high quality relationship they are having.</p> <p>His/her partner feels that he/she is important and valuable for LP due to the care given and attention paid by him/her. Additionally, PL can arouse a feeling of debt or regret in his/her partner. In consequence, the partner feels obliged to reciprocate PL's care and fulfill his/her wishes.</p>

Note: The powerful asocial type, Coercive; the powerful prosocial type, Respectful; the powerless asocial type, Ignoring; the powerless prosocial type, Affectionate. Interpretative short names of domineering strategies were not presented to subjects, in order not to constrain the imaginery of participants concerning nonverbal behavior of the respective types by focusing on one characteristic for each type only.



several categories typical for each domineering strategy and nonverbal modality. The categorization had several phases. In the first place, we used a group of categorizers who were blind to the tested concept, to decrease a possible effect of the researcher who might be biased by the theoretical concept in consideration. This gross categorization was performed by pairs of categorizers to decrease individual variation during the categorization process. Each pair received 4 or 8 envelopes (all four domineering strategies in 1–2 nonverbal modalities) and was asked to categorize all statements present in each envelope (separately) according to the similarity of the described behavior and to name each category.

These categorizations were consecutively thoroughly inspected by two researchers (authors of the study; JL, DP). Some logical problems were found, as e.g., identical statements sorted into several different categories, deviation from forming the same common categories across all domineering strategies (e.g., forming the categories direct gaze for one domineering strategy and strong gaze for another despite their large overlap in content etc.) Therefore, the researchers decided to modify the categorizations where needed. Where modifications were necessary, the following rules were adhered to: a) exclusion of equivocal items, b) exclusion of items not belonging to the given modality, c) differentiation between categories describing qualitative and quantitative behavioral variance (e.g., low/high frequency of smiles and felt/false smiles etc.), d) if possible, defining the category in terms of the structure and dynamics of movement rather than functional (communicational) characteristics, e) if possible, using categories of a similar meaning to those described in literature (this concerned mainly the modality smile, where we adhered to Ekman's (1985) types: felt smile, false smile, and Chaplin smile). Ekman's work (1985) on basic emotions was also used for categorization within the modality of facial expressions. And f) to constitute the same mutually exclusive categories for all domineering strategies (with the possibility to be absent in some strategies) within one modality. The final categorization represents a consensus of both researchers.

For each established nonverbal category, we summed up all statements pertaining to it within a particular domineering strategy. Thus, we obtained a measure of the intensity of occurrence of each category for each domineering strategy. Only a group of at least four statements was considered as occurrence of a nonverbal category within a given strategy. E.g., the category direct gaze included 12 statements for the respectful strategy,

20 statements for the coercive strategy, 6 statements for the affectionate strategy, and less than four, i.e., was not recorded, in the case of the ignoring strategy (see *Table 2*).

Each category was specified by a title and a brief verbal description after a qualitative inspection of statements belonging to it. Contents of other categories were taken into account in order to differentiate categories from each other. Previous findings and common terms and definitions used in literature on nonverbal behavior (e.g., Dunbar, Burgoon 2005, Hall *et al.* 2005) were used as a framework for construction of category descriptions. Brief summaries about typical behavior for each modality and domineering strategy were written by compiling all main categories found.

Finally, these descriptions of typical behavior for individual modalities were compared with results in other nonverbal modalities and with psychological theory about domineering strategies (e.g., Dunbar, Burgoon 2005, Henley 1977). Consequently, a final description of nonverbal behavior for each domineering strategy was compiled and is presented in the following section.

## RESULTS

Our respondents attributed many nonverbal behaviors to each of the "respectful", "affectionate", "coercive", and "ignoring" domineering strategies. The overall pattern of nonverbal behaviors seems to clearly differentiate among these four strategies, although some behaviors occur in several domineering strategies.

A resulting list of categories and their intensities (total number of statements sorted to each category), separated for individual modalities, for all domineering strategies, is given in *Table 2*.

During the content analysis on the level of modalities and whole behavioral profiles, we aimed to find compact descriptions of nonverbal behavioural profiles, i.e., avoid behaviourally incompatible characteristics (e.g., frequent and rare gaze) within one profile. Consequently, two instead of one profile for each domineering strategy emerged, representing a solution leading to compact descriptions of nonverbal behavioral profiles. These were called substrategies. The behaviors which differed between substrategies were mostly related to the amount of activity the individual employed for domineering. Therefore, we formulated a passive and active substrategy for each of the four domineering strategies.



TABLE 2. Intensity of behavioral categories for the respectful, coercive, affectionate, and ignoring strategies counted as the number of statements sorted into each category.

Category / domineering strategy	Respectful	Coercive	Affectionate	Ignoring
<b>Eye Gaze</b>				
Piercing		15		
Direct	12	20	6	
Averted				10
Mild			16	4
Pleasant	4		9	
Wide-eyed	4			
Long/frequent	12	11	10	
Short/rare		10	7	14
Flitted	4			4
Balanced	12			
<b>Smile</b>				
Disagreeable (Chaplin)		19		6
False		11	15	16
Natural (felt)	17		13	
Conspicuous	12			
Soft			15	11
Frequent	6		7	
Rare		10		8
<b>Facial expression</b>				
Anger		24		
Tension (strength, determination)		24		
Joy/satisfaction	15		10	
Interest	8			
Calmness	11			
Disgust				9
Tension (defience)				8
Sadness (despair)			17	6
High expressiveness	14			
Low expressiveness		7	7	9
Pretentiousness				9
<b>Gestures</b>				
Aggressive		12		
Conspicuous	12	11		5
Strong (swift, rapid)		11	4	6
Bland			11	12
Calm	8		5	6
Unmature (childish)				5
Natural (pleasant)	20			
Frequent	8		5	
Rare			8	8

TABLE 2. Continued.

Category / domineering strategy	Respectful	Coercive	Affectionate	Ignoring
<b>Body posture</b>				
Upright	20	10	4	
Tense (stiff)		6	6	5
Hunched			11	14
Relaxed (natural)	11			
Self-confident		4		
Loose			5	
<b>Body movements</b>				
Swift (uncontrolled)		16		4
Firm		15		
Controlled	12	8		
Unnatural				6
Nervous			7	4
Unsteady			4	
Calm	12		17	
Natural	6			
High mobility	13			
Low mobility	6		6	8
<b>Spacial behavior</b>				
Enters partner's space	12	22	15	11
Protects own space	5	16	5	14
Respects partner's space	15		11	6
Lets partner enter own space	4		11	4
<b>Touch</b>				
Firm (intrusive)	8	10		4
Agressive		7		
Unpleasant (cold)		5		
Soft	5		11	7
Friendly (smooth, warm)	15		11	
Frequent	12		9	6
Rare	6	16	7	9
Passively accepts			6	
<b>Vocalization</b>				
Firm	10	10		5
Distinctively modulated	11	8	4	4
Pleasant	8		9	
High pitched (shrill)				5
Calm			4	
Unpleasant				4
Undistinguished			6	
Loud		10		
Medium loud	4			
Quiet			8	4

TABLE 2. Continued.

Category / domineering strategy	Respectful	Coercive	Affectionate	Ignoring
Verbalization				
Speaks much	4		4	
Speaks little			6	6
Listens	5		4	
Does not listen		4		

Note: Intensities lower than those of four statements in one category are not shown.

**The respectful (high-power-high-prosociality) strategy**

**Common characteristics**

A person who pursues the "respectful" strategy maintains an upright and relaxed body posture. He/she has a medium loud, but distinctively modulated voice, which is firm and pronounced, yet pleasant.

**The passive substrategy**

He/she maintains balanced eye contact, which is firm, direct, as well as warm and pleasant. Occasionally, he/she lets the gaze flit about a little. He/she often smiles naturally. He/she has calm or satisfied facial expressions. His/her gestures are calm and natural as well. He/she moves calmly, effectively, and naturally. He/she respects his/her partner's space. He/she touches his/her partner pleasantly and softly, though infrequently. He/she carefully listens to his/her partner's talk.

**The active substrategy**

He/she maintains a long eye contact, which is firm, direct, and pleasant or even wide-eyed (as an expression of interest). He/she smiles conspicuously. He/she is very expressive, showing frequent facial expressions related to interest and joy. He/she often uses conspicuous, but natural gestures. He/she is considerably mobile, and his/her movements are effective and natural. He/she often enters his/her partner's space and accepts if the partner acts in the same way. He/she touches his/her partner often, firmly and expressively, but gently. He/she speaks often.

**The coercive (high-power-low-prosociality) strategy**

**Common characteristics**

He/she executes very strong, swift, rapid, and conspicuous gestures. Often, these have negative content, regarded as mostly aggressive or "dominant". He/she maintains an upright body posture, which may

sometimes be tense and stiff. He/she enters his/her partner's space while protecting his/her own space. He/she has a loud, firm and expressive voice. He/she monopolizes the conversation, ignores his/her partner and interrupts his/her partner's speech.

**The passive substrategy**

He/she hardly ever makes eye contact or smiles. He/she is very non-expressive. His/her movements are firm and controlled. He/she very rarely touches, and his/her eventual touches are cold.

**The active substrategy**

He/she looks long or often, and straight into his/her partner's eyes. Sometimes, the gaze becomes piercing. He/she uses false or otherwise unpleasant smiles. He/she expresses tension, strength, determination, but also anger and aggression. He/she moves swiftly without good control. He/she touches firmly and aggressively in extreme cases.

**The affectionate (low-power-high-prosociality) strategy**

No common characteristics were found for the active and passive substrategy.

**The passive substrategy**

He/she averts his/her gaze, smiles softly or has a sad face. He/she gestures modestly or calmly, and rarely. He/she has a hunched or sometimes stiff body. He/she moves very little, or moves calmly. He/she keeps a distance from his/her partner. He/she touches infrequently and softly. His/her voice is silent and undistinguished. He/she hardly speaks, but likes to listen.

**The active substrategy**

He/she is characterized by a long and piercing gaze, frequent or long smile, which can be natural, but also false. This corresponds with a satisfied facial expression. He/she uses dynamic gestures with affiliative meanings.

He/she has a loose or upright posture. He/she moves nervously and unsteadily. He/she enters his/her partner's space and likes to let his/her partner enter his/her own space. He/she often touches his/her partner, using slightly more expressive, and friendly touches. He/she likes being touched by his/her partner. His/her voice is relatively quiet and pleasant. He/she likes both to speak and listen to his/her partner.

**The ignoring (low-power-low-prosociality) strategy**

No common characteristics were found for the active and passive substrategy.

**The passive substrategy**

He/she maintains a mild and unsecure gaze. He/she smiles softly and unnaturally. He/she is very unexpressive, but often tense. He/she gestures rarely, blandly, and shows nervousness. He/she holds a hunched body posture. He/she moves slowly and blandly. He/she protects his/her own space. He/she touches very rarely and softly. He/she has a quiet voice and speaks rarely.

**The active substrategy**

He/she avoids eye contact. His/her smile appears unnatural and false. He/she sometimes mocks his/her partner. He/she frequently uses false expressions, as feigned despair. His/her true expressions include disgust. Strong and conspicuous (even aggressive), but also false gestures can occur. Occasionally, he/she uses immature, simple gestures. He/she holds a tense and stiff body posture. He/she moves unnaturally, sometimes swiftly. He/she protects his/her space, but enters his/her partner's space as well. He/she touches firmly and unpleasantly. He/she has a firm and expressive voice, often high in pitch. He/she speaks very little.

**DISCUSSION**

All passive substrategies are generally characterized by low expressiveness, little movement and low physical contact with the partner. Besides these general similarities, there are important differences in behavior among the four passive domineering substrategies. The overall impression ranges from natural and pleasant (the passive "respectful" substrategy), through strong and aggressive ("coercive"), and calm and quiet ("affectionate") to bland and insecure nonverbal behavior ("ignoring"). Vocalizations of the "respectful" and "coercive" substrategies are expressive in contrast to the bland vocalization of the "affectionate" and "ignoring" substrategies. While the "coercive" and "ignoring" strategies lack facial expressiveness, the "respectful" strategy tends to use mild positive emotional expressions, and the "affectionate" strategy characteristically uses an expression of sadness. The passive strategies also differ according to spatial behavior and attentiveness to the partner's speech, which is characterized by both respect for partner's space and attentiveness to his/her speech in the "respectful" strategy, lack of both in the "coercive" strategy, preference of spatial distance, but great attentiveness in the "affectionate" strategy and withdrawal in the "ignoring" strategy.

In contrast, the active substrategies are generally characterized by high expressiveness, high mobility and entering the partner's space. They represent more extreme and also more distinct forms of each domineering strategy. The overall behavior spans from rich natural and positive displays in the "respectful" substrategy, through sharp nonverbal displays and body tension in the "coercive" strategy, and loose and unsteady movements in the "affectionate" strategy to conspicuous,

TABLE 3. Occurrence of nonverbal cues of dominance as described by Dunbar and Burgoon (2005) in eight domineering substrategies.

Cues of dominance described by Dunbar and Burgoon (2005)	Domineering strategy and substrategy							
	Respectful		Coercive		Affectionate		Ignoring	
	Passive	Active	Passive	Active	Passive	Active	Passive	Active
Intense gesturing	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	+
Intense eye gaze	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-
Great talking time	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
Vocal animation	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+
Relaxation	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Confidence	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	-



unnatural nonverbal displays in the "ignoring" strategy. Perhaps the most contrasting are facial emotional expressions, being strong and positive, including joy and interest, in the case of the "respectful" and "affectionate" strategies, false and positive or strong and negative, such as anger, in the case of the "coercive" strategy, and negative such as disgust and feigned despair in the case of the "ignoring" strategy. The strategies also clearly differ in tactile and spatial behavior, where the "respectful" strategy is characterized by intense positive contact with the partner, and an acceptance of his/her partner's contact behaviors, the "coercive" strategy is characterized by intense and often negative contact with the partner, and no acceptance of his/her partner's contact behaviors, the active "affectionate" strategy is characterized by intense positive contact initiation, and seeking partner's contact behaviors, and finally the passive "ignoring" strategy is characterized by visually ignoring the partner with an occasional unpleasant tactile contact and a protection of own space.

We suggest that factors which determine which strategy and substrategy an individual is likely to pursue will be associated with his/her personality (e.g., prosociality/affiliation) on the one hand, and his/her power sources (e.g., mate value) on the other. Power sources can be expected to remain relatively stable during one romantic relationship, but not *across* relationships for an individual, as they are also a function of his/her partner's value, and these might change with different partners. In contrast, personality traits are relatively stable both within and across relationships (Robins *et al.* 2002). Therefore, individuals may be expected to "switch" between the high-power and low-power strategies, but not between the high-prosociality and low-prosociality strategies across relationships. On a situational level however, we suggest that the nature of a specific conflict or topic of conversation may influence whether a high-prosocial or a low-prosocial domineering strategy will be used at that moment: conflicts which elicit negative emotions (e.g., responsibilities of the partners) will be more likely to lead to the implementation of low-prosocial strategies, whereas neutral and positive topics (e.g., leisure time activities) will lead to the tendency to choose high-prosocial strategies. In addition, situational factors such as motivation to dominate in a particular situation are likely to determine changes between the active and passive domineering substrategies within one relationship. Moreover, as was suggested by Dunbar and Burgoon (2005), higher domineering activity can be expected in dyads with a similar level of power in both partners. In contrast, in studies which imposed or

observed dyads with a great status or power difference between the two individuals, a more passive dominance profile was likely to arise.

It is also important to note that the fact that an individual shows nonverbal behaviors characteristic for a "domineering" strategy does not imply that this individual is actually dominant in the particular relationship. Whether using a domineering strategy will lead to dominance depends on the specific interaction with the partner who can behave either submissively or may also pursue a domineering strategy, as well as on situational factors.

When compared with findings concerning nonverbal behavior and dominance, as reviewed by Dunbar and Burgoon (2005), we see that nonverbal profiles of the ignoring and affectionate strategies largely deviate from what has been commonly considered as dominant behavior in literature (Table 3). In contrast, these two strategies resemble all three forms of indirect verbal influence as described by Frieze and McHugh (1992): being affectionate and nice corresponds to the nonverbal profile of the "affectionate" strategy, while disregarding others and emotional withdrawal are important aspects of the nonverbal profile of the "ignoring" strategy.

Even if we consider only direct domineering strategies, which are proposed to lead to dominance more frequently than indirect strategies (Lindová *et al.* in prep.), our results provide important extensions to previous findings. Specifically, previous inconsistencies regarding, for example, the frequency of gazing, touch and smile associated with dominance could have arisen due to differences in the prevalence of active versus passive domineering in respective studies.

Our findings, although based on beliefs of participants about associations between domineering strategies and nonverbal behaviors, differ considerably from past research on stereotypical associations between dominance and nonverbal behavior. The previous findings meta-analyzed by Hall *et al.* (2005) found dominance and similar concepts to be associated with participants' beliefs about more gazing, gesturing, touching of others, higher vocal variability, loudness, more interruptions, higher rate of speech, and perhaps more nodding, body/leg shifting, and vocal relaxation, and less smiling, less raised brows, less postural relaxation, less self touch, lower interpersonal distance, less pausing during speech, and finally, lower pitch. We were not able to confirm any of these associations for all four domineering strategies. Moreover, even for the two direct domineering strategies, the respectful and coercive strategy, we confirmed only higher vocal variability, and

partly more gesturing, a lower interpersonal distance, and more gazing to be typical for both (for gesturing and distance, this was true only for the active, but not the passive, respectful substrategy, and for gazing, it was true only for both active, but not for both passive, substrategies). However, loudness, frequent interruptions, less smiling, lowered brows and less posture relaxation was confirmed for the coercive strategy only. And in contrast, more touching of others, vocal relaxation, and lower pitch were obtained solely for the respectful strategy. The remaining nonverbal behaviors found significant by Hall *et al.* (2005; higher rate of speech, more nodding, body/leg shifting, less self touch, less pausing during speech) were not mentioned systematically by our participants, therefore are probably not believed to be associated with either dominance strategy (but note that in some cases, this may have been the consequence of the methodology used here; e.g., head nodding might not have been triggered since the modality head movements was not included in the questionnaire).

Findings from former observational (coding) studies seem to be more concordant with the variability of nonverbal profiles connected with dominance, as obtained by our study. The specific associations of nonverbal behaviors with dominance were occasionally confirmed for some (sub)strategies in our study. For instance, the previous finding of an upright posture (Weisfeld, Beresford 1982; not considered separately by Hall *et al.* 2005) was confirmed for both the respectful and coercive strategies. Considering other posture characteristics, a relaxed posture was typical for the respectful strategy, but a tense posture was more typically mentioned by participants for the coercive strategy. Both of the low-power strategies were characterized by a variety of different postures including stiff, loose, or hunched. The lack of general association between relaxation and dominance was already shown by the meta-analysis by Hall *et al.* (2005). Interestingly, the category open body posture, found previously to be associated with dominance by Hall *et al.* (2005), did not appear in our study at all. This could be considered as evidence for the hypothesis formulated by Cashdan (however not supported by her own study, Cashdan 2004), that open body postures can be a by-product of relaxation and social ease of some dominant people (characterized by popularity). However, we cannot exclude the possibility that the less frequent mentioning of an open body posture by participants was an artifact of the research method (we used the Czech translation of body posture "držení těla", which may evoke more the

physical body posture rather than postural expression of an internal state).

Beliefs about intensity of eye contact were variable within each strategy except for the ignoring strategy, which was characterized by avoidance of gaze. For the respectful, coercive, and affectionate strategies, both high (to extremely high) and low (or balanced) intensities of gaze were mentioned by participants, which we used in our analysis as one of the characteristics constituting the distinction between the active and passive substrategies. Perhaps, the absence of an association between gaze and dominance in the meta-analysis by Hall *et al.* (2005) and inconsistencies in studies reviewed by Knapp and Hall (2005) were caused by an important proportion of passively domineering participants, who did not tend to use intense eye contact, across previous studies.

Similarly, intensity of smile differed between active and passive prosocial strategies (less smiling in general was found for the ignoring strategy and also for the coercive strategy); the passive respectful substrategy was characterized by frequent, but not intense smiles. The other substrategies were characterized not only by less frequent and intense, but also sometimes by atypical types of smiles (e.g., false smiles). Inconsistent findings regarding smiling and dominance have been reported earlier (Schmid Mast, Hall 2004). In agreement with this, the meta-analysis of Hall *et al.* (2005) found no association between smile and dominance. Some authors have extensively discussed the difference between the association of smile and dominance in men and in women, and what effects affective and motivational states have on the interaction between dominance and smiling (Schmid Mast, Hall 2004, Cashdan 1998). Importantly, Cashdan (1998) also hypothesizes that affiliative behaviors used by women to gain high status lead to a positive association between smile and status.

Closer distance or entering partner's space, as previously found by Hall *et al.* (2005), was found to be a typical characteristic for the coercive strategy and all active substrategies from the remaining three, and may, therefore, be considered as one of the most generally used dominance behaviors.

Another relatively consistent finding across domineering strategies, but one not so consistent with previous research, was regarding the associations of dominance and voice characteristics. The meta-analytic finding by Schmid Mast (2002) of longer talking time of more dominant people was confirmed for the coercive strategy, and the active respectful and affectionate strategies, but not for the passive prosocial strategies and



for the ignoring strategy. Both direct strategies, respectful and coercive, and the active ignoring substrategy were further characterized by firm voice and distinctive modulation, which are characteristics surprisingly not confirmed by previous meta-analytic studies (Hall *et al.* 2005, Schmid Mast 2002). On the other hand, further to Hall's *et al.* (2005) meta-analytic findings of loud speech and relaxed voices in dominant people, these were each confirmed for only a single strategy in our study, the former for the coercive strategy, and the latter for the respectful strategy. Similarly, more interruption, significant in Hall *et al.* (2005), was found only for the coercive strategy.

#### **Limitations and future directions**

First, it should be noted that our conclusions are based on the beliefs our participants held about the association of certain psychological characteristics with nonverbal behaviors. These do not need to correspond to real associations (see, e.g., Gifford 1994, Hall *et al.* 2005). Additionally, future studies need to elucidate if these nonverbal behavioral profiles also appear when using observational methodology.

Furthermore, the instructions for participants might be seen as problematic, providing a lot of space for individual imagination. For example, participants could have differed in the type of domineering situation they focused on. However, the high intensity (number of statements) of some behavioral displays (categories) present in individual strategies indicates that there was relatively high agreement about the typical characteristics of the strategies across imagined situations. On the other hand, this qualitative approach applied on a relatively large sample of respondents allowed us to describe less typical behavioral displays that may be products of the variable situations imagined. Future research should look to confirm or disprove some of the behaviors we report, for each of the four types of domineering; this could be done using several well described situations in a dyadic interaction.

An important limitation to address is that we have not specified the gender of the described person in the instruction. It might be argued that because of the stereotypical perception of men as more active and dominant, the participants might imagine men more often within the direct, high-power strategies, and women within the indirect and low-power strategies. Therefore, low-power strategies might contain more behaviors that are associated with feminine behavior and high-power strategies might contain more behaviors associated with masculine behavior. Further research should (1) delineate

nonverbal displays of all domineering strategies while imagining either a man or a woman, (2) compare the proportion of all four strategies in a representative female and male sample of coupled participants.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

In the present study, we present a first attempt to systemize the variability in dominance behavior. We describe not only the coercive and the direct prosocial (termed respectful) domineering strategies, but also include the less typical "indirect" domineering strategies (affectionate and ignoring; Lindová *et al.* in prep.) to complete the picture about patterns of behaviors used to gain control in a romantic relationship. We explored people's beliefs about typical nonverbal behaviors associated with these four domineering strategies. Through our questionnaire we were able to acquire open statements from participants about what nonverbal behaviour they thought each of these four domineering strategies would exhibit. We conclude that there is a clear, distinct set of typical behavioral displays believed to be associated to each of the four domineering strategies. Moreover, during the qualitative analysis, we found that two distinct subtypes (substrategies) within each domineering strategy emerged, which were characterized by overall low versus overall high nonverbal activity. These substrategies were labeled passive and active. Furthermore, we found that only some of the strategies and substrategies, mostly the high-power strategies (respectful and coercive) and/or active substrategies, are characterized by nonverbal behaviors corresponding to the common view of nonverbal dominance behavior presented in current literature. The newly described nonverbal behavioral patterns related to dominance seem to be similar to indirect verbal domineering strategies as found by Frieze and McHugh (1992). Further, we suggest some explanations for previous inconsistencies regarding associations of nonverbal behavior and dominance, by identifying particular behaviors associated with each of the individual domineering strategies. We believe that such enriched knowledge will have direct benefits in relationship counselling and related applied fields, e.g., by increasing awareness of less overt domineering behaviors, and providing those being counselled with more efficient communication strategies. As this research was based on the subjective beliefs of participants, future studies should investigate if actual, objectively measured domineering behaviors match the profiles of the four

domineering strategies described in this study. Future work should also show how these strategies are distributed between men and women, and what relationship there is between feminine and masculine nonverbal behavior and nonverbal displays for particular domineering strategies.

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## Chapter 4

**Průšová, D., Adams, A., Klapilová, K., Lindová, J., Dunbar, N. (2017, May 25-29). Successful domineering strategies in romantic couples conflict. Conference of The International Communication Association, San Diego, CA, USA.**

### **Successful Dominance Strategies in Romantic Couples' Conflict**

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## **Abstract**

Domineering in romantic relationships - the ways romantic partners impose their will - is an integral and fundamental part of relationship functioning. This study explores the variability of behavioral domineering strategies utilized in couples' communication. Romantic couples ( $N = 63$ ) reenacted a typical conflict interaction while being recorded. We used open codes to qualitatively analyze the verbal and nonverbal behavior of partners during the reenactment. Codes were ascribed to behaviors that led to one partner's display of situational dominance; these codes were categorized into domineering strategies. We identified 14 dominance strategies which featured qualities such as activity, pro-sociality, directness, and the strength of expressed behavior. We conclude that in real-life disputes of romantic couples, we can find several influential domineering strategies overlooked by the traditional socio-psychological literature, some of which are prosocial or indirect. A better understanding of the variability in domineering could help to improve diagnosis and therapy.

*Keywords:* couples conflict, dominance, interpersonal communication

## Successful Dominance Strategies in Romantic Couples' Conflict

Establishing and maintaining romantic love in a long-term relationship is a fundamental human need. However, according to many social psychology approaches (Křivohlavý, 2002; Canari & Canari, 2014; Gottman a Krokoff, 1989) decreasing levels of relationship satisfaction may be caused by problems in communication. Communication is defined as the verbal and nonverbal cues that form a complex behavioral interaction strategy with another person in a specific situation. Interestingly, much of the daily communication between couples in long-term relationships is used to express one's own wishes to influence the attitudes, emotions, and behaviors of one's partner whether directly or indirectly; we label this behavior dominance (Dunbar, 2004).

Shaver, Segev, and Mikulincer (2011) explains three primary reasons why partners may enact domineering behaviors: first, to assert one's own dominance, authority, rights, or competence. Second, to express confidence in one's strengths, values, and opinions. Third to deter others from competing for or exerting control over one's resources. In a related study, Gilbert (1997) claims that domineering is used "to promote social status and inclusion, including efforts to enhance how much one is liked, valued, respected, and wanted." Nonetheless, couples attempt to reduce the need for domineering behaviors in their everyday decision making strategies. Two primary strategies can be used to do so: One way is to distribute areas of acceptable dominance behaviors in ways that are reinforced by stereotypical norms in society (Habešová, 2011; Heavey, 1990). Another way is to create patterns and strategies of behavior that are considered typical and routinely expressed in interactions with one's romantic partner. Though partners who repeat communicational patterns can appear to be using constructive strategies, such as those leading to higher relationship satisfaction, they can also utilize destructive strategies that decrease relationship quality. As such, the goal of this study is to explore the variability of behavioral domineering strategies utilized in couples' communication and the impact on relationship satisfaction.

### **Dominance Construct**

As confirmed by many studies, domineering in romantic relationships - the ways romantic partners impose their will - is an integral and fundamental part of relationship functioning. Dominance is often considered a coherent and observable construct. The

traditional socio-psychological approach tends to construe dominance as a stable, internal personality characteristic. Individuals who manifest direct and active behaviors such as assertiveness and aggressive are perceived to be dominant (Cattell, B.C. et al., 1992). From a biological perspective, dominance is associated with higher testosterone levels and aggressive tendencies (Archer, 2006). This perspective that dominance is represented by active, direct, and aggressive behaviors prevails across behavioral research (Johnson, S. L. et al., 2012). Such studies assume that dominant individuals are typically those who hold a higher level of power. However, research from a communication perspective suggests that dominance can be understood as more situational and as the outcome of diverse factors (e.g. power basis, motivation, previous experience, etc.), rather than just a higher level of power alone. Burgoon and Dunbar (2000) argue that dominance is a product of both the personality of the sender and the situational context (a Person X Situation approach). From this perspective, the use of dominance then varies according to the specific type and topic of interaction and across specific partners.

Within communication, the interactional perspective claims that dominance is a communicative act where the control attempt of one individual is met by acquiescence from another (Rogers-Millar, Millar 1979; Dunbar & Burgoon 2005). Power is understood as an ability, that can but does not have to be used for domineering. The partner does not have to be aware of the balance of power, comply in the interaction, or respond to it (Dunbar & Burgoon 2005; Dovidio, 1998). However, Dyadic Power Theory (Dunbar, 2004) explains that there are repeatedly appearing differences in the quantity of expressed behavior in couples who are unequal in power. This theory predicts a curvilinear relationship between control attempts and power: those who have the least and the most power make the fewer control attempts than those who have equal power. Therefore, having a higher power level alone does not by itself contribute to domineering behavior. Frieze and McHugh (1992) in a study on distressed marriages found a similar pattern between the level of power and the amount (and directness) of strategies. The tendency is that when a women has less power than her husband, she uses more different (and more indirect) behavioral strategies to influence her partner.

This phenomenon can also be explained from an evolutionary perspective: when one has significantly more power than one's partner, he/she does not need to fight to be dominant. Similarly, if one has a very low level of power he/she would probably lose an open conflict; thus, it is not advantageous to start an argument that one has no chance of winning. Therefore, couples equal in their power express the most amount of domineering behaviors and control attempts because they have the most potential to influence their partner (Dunbar, 2005). The

strategies one can use to influence their partner vary. For example, indirect strategies are presumably advantageous in situations where an individual has a lower amount of power (Carli, 1999, Dunbar, 2004). However, these strategies are often hidden. Studies also suggest that dominance can have an even wider spectrum of behavioral displays (Carli et al., 1995; Hawley, 2002; Hall, Coats & LeBeau, 2005). However, a gap exists in the current literature: previous studies rarely consider the potential for powerless people to enact dominance.

### **Verbal and Nonverbal Expressions of Dominance**

Many studies examine specific verbal and nonverbal dominance cues as well as more complex patterns of behavioral domineering strategies. Although there is a relationship between dominance and almost every nonverbal modality, this relationship may not apply in the same way to the context of romantic dyads. For example, Keating et al. (1981) suggests a correlation between both a lowered brow and a non-smiling mouth and dominance; this is in contrast to Hess et al. (2005) who concludes that smiling can be a display of dominance. Similarly, studies have shown that both more eyes gaze and less eye gaze are also shown to be associated with dominance (Knapp & Hall 2005). Hall, et al. (2005) conducted a meta-analysis in which they examined 27 different nonverbal cues of dominance (which they call “verticality”) in 120 different studies. They found a variety of nonverbal cues, including reduced self-touch, an increase of illustrator gestures, closer interacting distances, less vocal variety, louder and faster speech, more interruptions, fewer speech errors, lower voice pitch, and greater vocal relaxation, were all associated with greater dominance. Because studies often have conflicting results due to the way that dominance is measured, there may be additional variables that mediate and moderate the relationship between nonverbal cues and dominance. For example, the context of being in a relationship may necessitate the usage of different nonverbal cues compared to the context of being in a workplace argument: Whereas giving your spouse the silent-treatment may be an effective dominance strategy in a relationship, the same technique would likely prove ineffective in a supervisor-employee relationship. As such, there may be many ways to enact dominance in many different types of context and through the technique or open coding, we can better examine these strategies as they occur in relationships.

This study posits that people who are typically viewed as stereotypically submissive can use dominance strategies in their relationship; though, they are likely to use more non-direct and less active strategies. This study explores the variability of behavioral domineering strategies that lead to situational dominance. The standard procedure in similar studies (Gottman, 2000, Cheng et al., 2012) is to keep couples discussing standardized relationship topics for a designated time, while sitting in standardized position. However, such procedures limit and restrict behaviors and are not likely to allow researchers to explore the richer verbal and nonverbal strategies that are most likely to be used in naturally occurring conflicts.

To overcome this limitation within the past research, we utilize a modified therapeutic method originally described by Jacob Moreno in the early 20th century which is now broadly labeled with the term “psychodrama”. The goal of a psychodrama is to improve the ecological validity of the behaviors expressed by participants in a laboratory setting by encouraging couples to express their typical behavior in its most natural quality and quantity. According to Farmer and Geller (2005), Psychodrama is a method that allow clients to replicate everyday experiences using spontaneous role playing and dramatic self-presentation to investigate and gain insight into their lives. A process of a therapy session is typically utilized as an introductory part of the psychodrama wherein a client briefly describes a situation to an expert. Next, the expert facilitates the process in which the subject is asked to reenact her/her past situation from the naturally occur event; they are encouraged to draw upon their original motivations, feelings, and thoughts to evaluate and reflect on the event. In general, reenacting the situation with the help of a professional or a therapy group offers therapeutic insight that can be used to create a conscious change of one’s own behavior and re-play the situation to achieve a corrective experience (Kellerman, 1992). The aim of the current study is to explore domineering strategies that romantic couples use in a conflict interaction. By observing and qualitatively analyzing couples' conflict interactions, we intend to answer our research question: What is the full variety of qualities of dominance behaviors and behavioral strategies that romantic partners use for influencing each other?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited through a volunteer snowball sampling technique using online social networks, and printed advertisements at both therapy offices and educational



institutions in Prague, Czech Republic. Each couple was compensated with US \$16 for their time. Participating were 63 romantic dyads (126 individuals, Czech and Slovak), that had been living together for a minimum of six months, and both partners without ascribed psychiatry diagnoses. Partners were between the ages of 19 and 46 years old ( $M = 24.87$ ,  $SD = 4.78$ ). The mean duration of romantic relationship was 2.91 years, range from 7 months to 14 years ( $SD = 2.16$ ). Employment statuses represented those with part-time jobs (14.61%); full-time jobs (29.23%); students (39.23%); working students (11.54%); and unemployed (5.38%). Participant levels of education included those with less than a high school education (5.38%); high school graduates (44.62%); and college/university graduates (53.06%).

## **Measures and Procedure**

This study utilized a mixed methods design that employed the use of online questionnaires and laboratory observations consisting of three interview segments and two tasks that allowed the researchers to observe couples' communication in action.

Participants volunteered for this study by signing up over email. After an introductory e-contact with participants, we asked them to each complete their own pre-survey (separately at home) that examined the following variables: socio-demographical and economical status, relationship status, length of relationship, relationship satisfaction, and power/dominance distribution. After completion of the pre-survey, couples attended our laboratory session for a 90-minute appointment. To begin their appointment we informed participants of their rights and procedures, obtained informed consent, and informed the participants that their session was being recorded. Next, the researcher separated participants and asked them to complete an individual picture-ordering task to which each person organized eight images according to their preference. Then participants individually completed an additional pre-survey and reunited in our interaction room and sat together on a couch. The researcher then performed a brief interview to ask how the couple got together. Following the interview, the couple was again asked to perform the picture-ordering task; however, this time they were asked to agree on the order and perform the task together. The same pictures were utilized. Then, participants were again separated into two different rooms and after completing participants again met together in the interaction room. The laboratory study was recorded via 2 video cameras; one was inside the room with participants, and the other was on the other-side of a one-way mirror. For the

purposes of this study, the observations during the “relationship drama” conflict reenactment were analyzed.

### **The “Relationship Drama” method**

As mentioned previously, we modified the Psychodrama method into our “Relationship drama” (RD). As suggested in the original therapeutic psychodrama, we emphasized the introductory part of the process and utilized a deep interviewing technique with guided visualization. At the core of this section, we asked participants to reenact a typical dyadic conflict. We also enhanced the effect of the natural situation by rearranging the room and using props. After the reenactment we moved to a gentle closing and debriefing. Because we used therapeutic tools and our testing involved a re-enactment of a conflict that may have a potentially negative impact on participants’ psychological wellbeing, the testing was provided by researcher/therapist.

**Oral history interview.** The RD began with a semi-structured oral history interview; the goal of this interview was to examine the quality and processes of their relationship, the definition of their relationship, and a typical conflict interaction. An emphasis was put on the detailed description of behavioral patterns of this interaction. Examples of the interview questions include: “How would you characterize your relationship?” and “What are the conflict areas within your relationship?”. These questions provided us with an understanding of the bases and qualities of the relationship so we could observe the interactional dynamics. More importantly, it let participants be creative and cooperative instead of feeling examined; this allowed for a more honest and precise responses to additional questions such as: “What is the typical process of those situations?”, “What are your emotions, thoughts, etc.?” and “What are your behavioral expressions?”

**Relationship Drama.** This interview naturally lead into a rearrangement of the laboratory environment (e.g. into a “kitchen”) and partners cooperated to reconstruct the typical interaction/conflict process. An interviewer instructed couples to reenact their typical conflict. They often needed to practice before they agreed that the form accurately reflected their normal interactions. When needed, the researcher led a visualization of the beginning of the conflict, which helped the partners to retrieve the appropriate emotions and atmosphere. They were

asked to “act out” with as high accuracy as possible (both verbally and nonverbally) using the exact phrases, movements, and the chronology in the conflict situation while also using props (e.g. “dishes”, “beds”). If necessary for reasons of safety, the researcher mediated the conflict to its end.

**Post-Interview.** Immediately following the RD, the researcher performed accuracy checks by questioning and clarifying the context and meaning of ambiguous behavioral cues. More technical questions about the accuracy of the performed behaviors were asked to be corrected further in analyses. These were mostly about moments which were not resolved or clear in the RD or the accuracy of specific behaviors (e.g. giggling, time accuracy etc.). To avoid further misinterpretation and specifically focus on dominance, we asked participants about the meanings of behaviors, emotions, and possible consequences of those acts. For example, “Who was more dominant in the interaction?”, “How was it displayed?”, “How would you name/describe the strategy you used for influencing your partner?” Because the reenactment of a conflict may have caused stress or bring up negative emotions, we used a debriefing technique used to identify more positive feelings such as: “What do you appreciate about your partner?”

## **Analysis Materials**

Each Relationship Drama that was recorded ranged in length between 1.5 – 12 minutes. For analysis, we used literal transcripts of each recording. Following Gottman’s (1979) advice, we included nonverbal features (e.g. pauses) into the verbal transcripts. To understand the specific behaviors, their meanings, and consequences presented in the couples’ conflict (Hallberg, 2006) we also utilized additional information from the Oral history interview and the post-interaction interview. These were analyzed in a form of detailed note-transcription from the recordings of the interviews. At this stage, we also started in-process memos to incorporate this information at the final steps of analytical process as recommended by Lindlof (2011).

**Transcription.** We started with a literal written transcript (prescribing also ehms, pauses, bloopers, grammatical errors etc.) of video-recordings from the RD and also corrected for concrete discrepancies between the experimental situation and reality e.g. time frames “left and returned after 2 hours”. We did not code irrelevant behaviors evidently caused by the

experimental situation or mentioned after the RD (e.g. nervous smiling). As a coded unit, we selected a logically coherent statement, according to the couple's dynamics and dynamics of meanings in each partner's sentences, usually since the point at which one partner starts talking until the other partner starts talking. We systematically separated dialog of 63 couples into over 3,000 speech units. Also, we corrected concrete discrepancies between the experimental situation and reality (time frames, smiling, emotionality, etc.) and behavior that was not shown in the RD but reported as important in the post-interview.

Every literal transcript of the RD was coded by the same researcher that led testing and transcribed the data. Each code was supervised and commented by another expert coder in every phase of coding and adjusted accordingly by the first coder. In all steps, video-recordings, comments and memos from interviews were used if necessary. As mentioned, we performed this study in three phases, each time with a more specific focus. In each phase, we used a constant comparative method (Boeije, 2002, Lindlof, 2011 p.251) of going back and forth through the pure data and codes to provide unity within the codes across couples.

## **Analytical Procedure**

Based on the need to explore couples' communication in various typically non-researched dimensions, we used a delicate multi-step open coding process including constant comparison to analyze couples interactions in various multi-level categorizations. We also included the possible contextual factors. This approach led us to explore the couples' dominance strategies that are usually overlooked for the reason of not being considered as stereotypically dominant.

**Coding.** In the first step, we utilized open, line-by-line, coding of 25 couple's transcripts (both partners) to capture the form, content and meaning of each sequence; sometimes also reflecting on a previous code or the partner's code. Comments from an expert regarding this first round of coding identified intuitive, highly subjective, and less systematic open codes that were adjusted. Using a focused coding method, we began conceptualizing our findings and re-coded all transcripts with more selective codes and created a coding scheme. Similarly, we used selective (but still open coding) with the second group of 20 couples; we also re-coded the previous 25 to enhance consistency. To test and finalize the coding scheme, we applied our codes and schemes to the last 18 couples. In the final step, we re-coded the

whole sample of 63 transcripts, checked memos, and included previous scientific knowledge. Then we finalized our coding catalogue into the form of a dominance behavioral scheme (Appendix A).

A need for distinguishing between verbal behavior, nonverbal behavior, and emotional expression codes, as well as distinguishing between the content, form and effect in the interactional processes arose. We created three subcategories of behavioral codes for a precise description. Mostly, we coded displayed behaviors that were present and visible like a smile; but also, important un-displayed behaviors such as “not answering”. For each line, we usually coded between 1-5 verbal codes, 1-3 expressions, and 1-3 nonverbal codes per unit.

Verbal codes described both verbal content (e.g. opinion, agreement, etc.) and verbal acts (e.g. bragging, explaining, etc.) They usually formed a meaningful common code. For example; “explanation of own opinion”. Expressions were more subjective codes, describing emotions, notions, and qualities of the behavior. For example: “expression of aggression”. Standing separately from the verbal code, and the expression identified, the nonverbal behavioral observation itself was also coded. For example: “fast speech”, “gazing at partner.” The three codes were combined into a description such as: “expression of happiness and smiling, laughter, fast speech, gazing at partner.”

**Situational Process Analyses.** Next, we analyzed the process of the conflict interaction. We separated each individual analysis into four important phases of the interaction (beginning, interactional, peak, and final phase). Groups of codes from those phases were used for further analysis. We also analyzed the situational factors that may have potentially influenced the strategy that was used. In other words, the motivation for the conflict and the circumstances of both initiating and closing the conflict. Three dimensions of situational factors were specified and we provided a separate categorization within each: (1) The motive of conflict; (2) the offense (influencing partner if requesting), or defense (not being influenced if partner requests); and (3) the type of request as either a positive (to do something) or negative (not to do something) attempt. This is similar to the method employed by Buss (1992). Following this procedure, we assigned theoretical codes to each couples’ interaction.

To form coherent behavioral strategies, we used a two-step categorization: first individual then within a focus group. We created cards to organize categories and introduce every couples’ specific behavioral code and situational factors codes. We compared our findings with memos and scientific theory and named fourteen final dominance strategies.

Finally, we analyzed codes and situational factors within every identified dominance strategy to describe the typical behavior and conditions in what was considered a specific strategy.

## **Analyses and Results**

### **The Process of a Conflict Interaction Analyses**

We divided each interactional analysis into four chronological procedural stages. The first stage was the beginning of the conflict. We selected one or two verbal units on the side of the partner that was either directly or indirectly starting the interaction. Usually it was the first sentence of an interaction; in few cases it was just a non-verbal behavior such as “straight tense body, aggressive knocking on a table”. The second and third stage covered the interactional process after beginning and before ending codes. The third stage was the peak. Peak is the exact communicational act (or small group of acts) coded and lead to the final dominance behavior. We selected communicational peaks for every successful domineering strategy, usually formed by 5-10 codes of content and nonverbal behavior to form the dominance. Finally, the ending codes were verbal units coded that stated whether the request was fulfilled or not and indicated that dominance or submission occurred.

### **Dominance Ascription**

It was necessary to decide who was the dominant and submissive partner. Dominance was defined as the action in which when one partner sought to influence the action of the other partner (Lindová et al., 2012). We ascribed dominance (based on the ending codes) to the partner who either successfully enforced his/her control attempt or resisted his/her partners' control attempt. We were able to assign dominance to 53 couples: 30 women and 23 men were coded as the dominant partner. In ten cases, we were unable to ascertain the relative dominance because the conflict did not have the character of a power struggle or it did not have a clear ending.



## Situational Factors

When going back to every couple's interaction to divide each conflict according to the chronological phases, we noticed three situational factors that required further exploration: the (1) motive, (2) behavioral change intention, and (3) offensive/defensive type. We categorized these factors separately and included them as contextual information in categorizing the couples' interactions into strategies to enhance the researcher's accuracy of assessment and decision-making.

## Motives

To create a typology of motives, we analyzed the types of request from the beginning codes, specified them with additional information from interviews, and categorized them. We also assessed whether the requesting partner wanted the other person to do something, or to stop doing something, or none of the partners had a clear intention and they appeared in a conflict. Lastly, we analyzed the condition under which the strategy was used. We created a simple formula by examining the beginning code in comparison to the winning code and assigned the condition based on which the strategy used was either in an offensive manner (the partner posing a request wins) or in a defensive manner (winning partner resists other partner's request). All results (typology, assessment, and formula) were re-ascribed back to each couple's individual analyses.

**Motive Categorization.** Beginning codes were copied and adjusted into a unified form for categorization. With every couple, we double-checked for similarity of a motive described during the oral history interview and/or during the post-interview. By grouping together similar codes and statements with a similar meaning, we started generating more generic codes and categorizing them together.

In total, we collected 63 motives, one from each couple: only half of them (34/63, 53.9%) were fulfilled. We found five main motivational areas: (1) Request of a task (e.g. washing the dishes) (8x, 12.7%); (2) Request of a change of partners behavior in a positive formulation or a disagreement with partners behavior in a negative formulation (e.g. do not use my mug) (12x, 19.1%); (3) requests of an attention with a subcategory of injustice by partner by lack of attention (9x, 14.3%); (4) conflicts over a joint activity with a subcategory of injustice by partner by breach of a promise (17x, 27%); and (5) conflicts over a joint plan and

long-term relationship decisions (e.g. should we buy a dog?) with a subcategory of a theoretical discussion (should people lock their door?) (16x, 25.4%).

Regardless on the final dominance, women initiated the interaction (placed a request) 37 times (58.7%), which was more than men (26x, 41.3%). A similar gender distribution was found among motives that were fulfilled (the initiator was dominant): 22 women and 12 men. The most typical motive for women was a common plan (11/37, 29.7%) and request of a change of partner's behavior (6/37, 16.2%) as second most common. In men, there was more equal motive distribution among requesting a task (5/26, 19%), conflict of a joint activity (6/26, 23%), and a request of a change of partner's behavior in (6/26, 23%).

**Behavioral Change Intention.** We noticed an important difference based on whether one partner attempted to increase or decrease the other partners' behavior. Buss (1987) also noticed these contextual variables in his romantic couples manipulation study. He named tactics used to get another to do something as "behavioral instigation", and tactics used to get another to stop doing something as "behavioral termination." We added one more criteria: "arisen from situation" for those cases where the conflict rises from the situation or discussion and partners do not have previous interest in influencing each other. Instigations appeared in a total of 39 cases (25 female; 14 male). In 22 cases, it was fulfilled. Instigation examples "Let's get a dog together." Terminations appeared in a total of 14 cases (7 female; 7 male) and were fulfilled in 9 cases, example is "Stop using my mug". An examples of a conflict arisen from situation was "you forget documents at home" appeared in 10 cases but we were able to decide dominance only for 3 of them.

**Offense/Defense.** We formed two subcategories, offensive and defensive, to examine whether the partner who wins is the one that makes the request or not. We sorted the individual strategies by a simple formula - the one who places an attempt and is dominant is "defensive" and if the partner who does not place a control attempt who resists the partner's control attempt is considered as "offensive". This factor is very similar to the well-known demand/withdrawal pattern Klinetob and Smith (1996) that supports the validity of our category. We found partners' dominance slightly less in defensive conditions (22/52 cases, 42.3%) than offensive ones (30/52 ones, 57.7%). Women were three times more often (23 female and 7 male) successful under offensive conditions (when initiating the interaction) and men were twice as much often (15 male and 7 female) successful under defensive conditions (when not fulfilling female's request).

## **Categorization into Strategies**

For the purpose of exploration and naming strategies, we used a two-step method. In a first step, four researchers created their own categorization individually and in a second step the same expert team came to a final conclusion using a focus group categorization. Two of those researchers were the same who did the previous coding.

**Cards preparation.** We prepared a set of 53 cards, one for each couple's interaction where we ascribed dominance, providing contextual and behavioral information. Each card consisted of the name of the interaction of a conflict (e.g. couple no. 13 was named "You spend a lot of time with your family") accompanied by a vignette ("The couple are at the male's parents' house. The female wants her partner to spend more time with her instead of helping his father with house construction"). To describe behaviors, we used sequences of behavioral codes (verbal, nonverbal, and expression) from the beginning codes, peak codes, and winning codes along with a visual picture (a print-screen from video-recording of the couple during the crucial phase of conflict interaction). We also included situational factor information specific for each couple: a winning gender, motive, intention form (instigation/termination/arising) and offense/defense condition (Appendix B).

**Individual Categorization.** The full set of cards was given to each researcher individually to get familiar with each interaction and to form their individual suggestion of categorization upon the principle of similarity, especially of peak codes, but corrected with all the rest of contextual and behavioral conditions. Four categorizations were administered and analyses for similarities in (a) grouping of the same couples together and (b) naming and characterizing groups. Even though researchers varied in grouping similar couples, they pointed out five similar or identical modalities. Those were (1) aggression, (2) ignoring, (3) manipulation, (4) kindness (pro-sociality), and (5) sadness.

**Focus Group Categorization.** Finally, a focus group categorization was performed. Starting with a short presentation summarizing similarities and variances in individuals, the focus group opened with discussion on the topic of categorization approaches. Upon agreement, we physically put labels with the name of those five modalities by adding and moving cards of interactions; we then reached the final scheme. We started the process with grouped cards of couples where all four researchers agreed on belonging together. We placed

those - one by one - in the right distance from each modality and followed with the rest of cards by either adding them into already existed group or placing them according to the distance from modalities. With adding more and more cards into the scheme, we met the need for constant correction. In a last step, we discussed groups containing less than three cards individually and deciding whether to group these with a neighboring category or to leave them aside in their own groups. We sorted 53 interactions into 14 groups forming behavioral strategies and named them: (1) Explanation of own insights, (2) kind-reasoning, (3) excitement/humor, (4) whining, (5) helplessness, (6) argumentativeness, (7) dramatization, (8) guilt-manipulation, (9) non-responsiveness, (10) problem-denial, (11) attention-shift/pseudo-solution, (12) blunt-aggression, (13) silent-fuming, and (14) partner-debasement.

### **Final Strategies: Description of Behaviors and Context within Strategies**

To describe verbal and nonverbal behaviors typical for each strategy, we used peak codes from individual analyses. By assessing similarities between individuals within the same group, we selected the most common or important codes in each category. Based on these codes, we describe typical behaviors for each of these 14 strategies and created appropriate definitions. We also included data from the situational context analyses, and the winning gender. Then we grouped those strategies based on areas of prosocial versus asocial behaviors, level of directness or avoidance, or expressed weakness or strength. To best demonstrate each strategy, we created an example sentence for each involving the colloquial topic of “the dirty dishes”, that appeared in our sample in 6 out of 63 couples’ most typical conflict interaction topics.

#### **Strong and kind strategies**

**Explanation of own Insights.** This category is defined as an open, sensitive, and calm but firm communication. It uses subjective testimonies such as one’s own needs, emotions, beliefs, etc. Typical verbal content codes for this strategy are serious explanation of own perspective, reflection of partner’s comments, and non-reacting on partner’s negative emotions. The attitude is calm, kind, sad, firm. Nonverbally, it expresses relationship-forming emotions and desires and is expressed with more serious or sad, but firmness. A washing the dishes request example would appear as: “It would make me happy, if you clean the dishes. It is important to me to have a reliable partner.”

The dominance achieving ones were two women in offense (one instigating and one terminating) and two men in defense situation (7.5%). In 3 cases the motive was conflict over a joint plan.

**Kind Reasoning.** This strategy uses calm, kind, and peaceful, but firm and uncompromising explanations and reasoning with official rules or previous agreements in a respectful and caring way. It typically reflects previous agreements, explaining context, rules, logic, and suggests solutions. It takes in account a partner's opinion and asks for final approval. Nonverbally the partner speaks with a kind, maternal, loving, but strong voice. A sentence example would be: "It just needs to be cleaned up, remember, we agreed on that before. Will you please do it?" This strategy was successfully used in 5 cases (9.5%), almost equally distributed in every aspect. Three times used by men and 2 times by women. It was also equally distributed among offense and defense context, 3 times as a conflict over future plans. In all times it was used in the context of instigation.

### **Weak prosocial looking strategies**

**Excitement and humor.** We defined this strategy as an expression of enthusiasm and excitement, talking about positive aspects or a use of an official game as a solution process (laughter, humor, compliance). It includes actively trying to convince one's partner by showing positive emotional affect towards their request and partner and/or trying to find a solution in a funny way. Nonverbals include excited, happy movements, and facial expressions are characteristic, active gesturing (illustrators), accented happy voice often accompanied by laughter. A sentence example includes: "Hey, it is fun to clean it, watch what you can do with all those bubbles" or "let's go for rock, paper, scissors."

Two men in defense and 1 women in offense used this strategy (5.5%).

**Whining.** This strategy is an active and weak prosocial looking form, using asking, explaining and begging (low power expressions, excitement, compliments). It is typically with explaining, defending, and expressing positive partner related emotions and self-weakness and effort to empathize and meet the partner's conditions. It is usually portrayed with weak nonverbal expressions of kindness, care for partner and relationship, but also impatience, fear, and nervousness. The verbal strategy is dual: alternating between uncertainty (pleading or

nervous and “accented” voice) and calm, loving voice. A typical sentence would be “Please, honey, I would appreciate very much if you help me with cleaning, you do it so well anyway. Will you do the dishes for me, please?” Whining was used by 3 women and 1 man (7.5%), equally in offensive and defensive form of a instigating request in all cases.

**Helplessness (Fear).** We defined this strategy as a communication of sadness, fear, and sorrow in a very loving and respectful way (Interest in partner's opinion, pointing out partner's or relationship value, self-weakness, despair). It is a passive, but direct strategy. One is expressing feelings of being hurt and sad and openly discussing it without a manipulative intention. Verbal codes are explanations of emotions, opinions, fears, suggestions of vague decisions and “yes, but” rejections of partner’s support attempts. Sad, and insecure closed body posture is characteristic. Speaking quietly with weak and sad voice, low in movements that are slow. Expressions of despair and helplessness emotions that he/she really feels. Sentence example would be: “Honey I am worried that I may break a plate, can you stay here with me while I wash it, will you help me?” This strategy was used only in one case successfully, we feel the need to point out the difference from guilt manipulation (No.11) and suggest a possibility of “just feeling sad” without a manipulative intention.

### **Active Indirect Strategies**

**Argumentative (Communication-fouls).** This strategy is objectively reasonable looking, but uses offending arguments (communication fouls, flooding, coercive persuasion, expression of power). Argumentative is characterized by rapid argumentation, listing multiple arguments, while not letting the partner speak. The content is aimed at distracting the partner and appealing to the partner alternating with logical explanations. It can potentially lead to biting remarks while overacting or exaggerating. Typical codes are interruption of partner, argument, solution suggestion, coercion, sarcasm, emphasis etc. Nonverbally, the posture towards the partner is relaxed, natural with lively movements that can sometimes become stronger with an accent. Eyes are alternating between partner and the ground. Voice tone is quieter but forceful and clear. It uses clear full sentences and does not allow the partner to interrupt. It uses an “explaining” voice. Example would be “Can you clean the dishes today? Well, I know your mother didn’t teach you that, I can fix that...” It appeared in 6 cases (11%),



equally distributed among men and women and in 5 cases in offense. Motives and intentions were spread without a pattern. Interestingly.

**Dramatization.** This is a manipulation of the partner's emotions by over-problematizing with expressions of accompanied powerlessness (emotional blackmail, catastrophic scenarios, strong emotional excitation). Often uses with blaming/accusations "always", silence "nothing", extortion of the partner's sense of guilt. He/she uses direct, but often closed body posture, with intense gestures and tense movements, gazes at partner often with an accent. It uses a quick, quiet and weak voice, sadness, or nervousness. Expressions include anger, hysteria, hostility, vanity, pain, sadness. An example includes "There are dirty dishes here, how can this be every day like that, you never clean, we will probably die from the bacteria that are living with us." This strategy was found in 5 cases (9.5%), used mostly by women in an offense context (4 times) and by 1 man in defense. The motive and intention of change were split without a pattern.

**Guilt Manipulation.** This is characterized by behavior aiming to manipulate the partner's emotions through guilt (false helplessness, despair), accompanied by accusations and (self)blaming as well as sad comments. The typical expressions are of frustration from the situation by blaming the partner, argumentative with aggressive expression of his/hers position, and emotions using sarcasm or absurd statements. It has lively and tense movements changing with weak body posture and crying. It uses a deeper stricter voice that attacks/accuses or is a weak and blaming voice. It expresses pain, sadness, weakness, helplessness, or insecurity changing with tension, activity or aggression. A sentence example would be "I've been working so much, I've made you dinner, did you like it? I am so tired now, you know I like a clean house, you never help me..." In all five cases (9.5%) this strategy was used by women. In all cases, it was an offensive strategy when in four times requesting either a task or a future plan.

### **Avoiding Strategies**

**Non-responsive.** These are defined by disinterest and ignorance of partners' emotions and of a problem (ignoring, silence, unresponsiveness). It is characterized by non-reacting to partner's statements, remaining silent or vague responses and promises with disinterested or irritation in voice and mumbling. Nonverbally, it includes relaxed or slumped body posture, occasional gestures, and eye contact, usually continuing his/her own activity. It uses small

economic and fluid movements, a quiet/drawling voice and slow or rapid cadence. A sentence example is: “Yea.. Ehmm.. What did you say?” In total, it was found in 5 cases (9.5%) three men and two women, all defensive and 4 times instigating. The motive was two times request of a task and two times of an attention and one change of partner’s behavior.

**Problem Denial.** This strategy is characterized by active and argumentative ignorance of a problem or reducing its importance, expressing interest in partner, but ignoring his/her arguments and emotions. It is characterized by active argumentation and explanation of his/her opinion, repeating irrelevant arguments and self-defeating statements. I also is undermining or denying a problem and demeaning the partner’s opinions or emotions. The body is static, facing the partner with occasional larger gestures, accented, lower pitched doubting voice. A sentence example is: “Those dishes really don't have to be washed up today, relax.” This strategy was used equally by two women and two men (7.5%); women as defense when accused of breaking previous agreement and by men as resisting partners’ task request and changing a plan.

**Attention shift and Pseudo-solution.** This strategy is defined as a problem sabotage and pseudo-solution accompanied by prosocial behaviors (activity and care about partner’s expressions, problem ignoring, distractions, silent coercion). It is characteristic of showing an interest in the partner while shifting attention from the problem with expressions of submissive behavior, slow and relaxed movements, doing what partner requested, but poorly. Or, actively almost nervously repeating an irrelevant solution with loving but coercive touches and affiliative gestures and persuasive voice. A sentence example includes: “Honey, you seem so tired and I care so much about you, how about we go to the living room and watch a movie?” In all three times (5.5%), this strategy appeared among men when their partner requested attention or task.

### **Coercive and aggressive strategies**

**Blunt Aggression.** The strongest open form is blunt aggression defined by open psychological or physical aggression (swear words use, hostility, abuse, aggressive self-pity, object throwing). It is characterized by verbal and physical aggression, insults, accusations, and self-pity sarcastic comments. It typically includes rapid body movements, angry expressions, direct eye contact, a loud voice, yelling. A sentence example is: “You are just a pig! Fuck, look how dirty the kitchen is! Clean it up, now!” Attempted twice by women,

successfully used just in one case by one when blaming partner for not caring. Although it appeared rarely, following the literature of domestic violence, we decided to keep it separate on our list.

**Silent fuming.** This code is characterized by tense, uncompromising, passive pressure, and ignoring of partner's emotions (reckless enforcement, guilt and responsibility, denial etc.). The characteristic codes are a strict statement of one's own solution and constantly repeating it, statements of disinterest in partner's ideas or emotions, and blackmail with leaving. It includes staring into the ground, static, straight body, or keeps doing his/her own activity and obviously avoiding eye contact. It uses a quiet, deeper, and stricter voice. The nonverbals include expressions of power, aggression, or pride, but also silence, resolution, and disinterest in partner. A sentence example includes: "I said I want it to be washed up, fuck! This is the last time I am talking to you unless you do it..." followed by walking away. We found this strategy in two men in defense when the partner requested joining the activity.

**Partner Debasing.** This strategy is defined by pseudo-reasoning and insidious (not open) aggressive attacks aimed at the partner (mockery, superiority, humiliation). It includes statements of being right, but not having any evidence to support it. It is also demeaning and undermining of the partner, patronizing, distracting, using forceful coercion. In particular, it is seen as the use of irony and sarcasm, infantilization of partner, and pointing out his/her incompetence, fast, forceful argumentation, blaming, and guilt manipulation by self-pity comments. Nonverbals include straight, but relaxed body, posture is usually facing the partner, completed by direct and prolonged eye contact. He/she uses variable but very intense (mimic and gesture) expressions. The voice tone is mocking, debasing, sometimes accompanied by ironic laughter. The sentence example is: "Look at that! Ewww! I can't believe you've survived with those dirty dishes everywhere, this is how animal live. Now I know why you were single before I met you." We found it used by four women who initiated the interaction with a disagreement with partner's behavior in all four times (7.5%).

## **Discussion**

In summary, we identified 14 dominance strategies and few patterns in strategy choice and situational conditions. Silent fuming was used by men in defense when a partner requested joining an activity. Attention shift and pseudo-solution used men when their partner requested attention or task. Partner debasing strategy was chosen by women who initiated the

interaction with a disagreement with partner's behavior. Guilt manipulation was present when women were requesting either a task or a future plan. Some strategies were used equally by both genders but under different conditions, such as problem-denial that women used as defense when accused of breaking previous agreement and men in a situation of resisting partners' task request and changing a plan.

In future research, Analyzing submissive strategies separately could lead us to some strategies, that are meant to be dominance but did not result that way and due to focusing on dominance they remained overseen. One of those could be repeatedly appeared behaviors of being very nice and supportive by calming down partner, hugging him/her and caring. After that, the analyses of dynamics may bring new findings. Important seems to analytical focus on those couples we excluded because it was not possible to decide dominance. Those cases were mostly due to creating a new option or over coming conflict some other way. Maybe, there is a strategy of active and creative cooperation with partner that is overlooked due to limitations of this study, where one partner had win (his/her request had to be fulfilled).

Following the suggestion of Gottman (1989) and Carli (1999) that domineering can have wider spectrum of behavioral displays, we constructed this study to explore the full spectrum of domineering strategies and the context of their use. Consistent with Freeze and McHugh (1992) and Dunbar and Burgoon (2005) we found strong variety in the quantity and intensity of produced behavior from very active in the case of an argumentative strategy to a very passive one in the extreme case demonstrated by ignoring the partner. Also, a full variety of prosocial to asocial behaviors appeared on a scale from kind explanation of insights to blunt aggression. We found avoidance and manipulative strategies widely in contrast to traditional psycho-social perspective of direct, strong, controlling behavior. Although there are direct strategies such as kind reasoning, there are also indirect problem-denying or guilt-manipulating strategies used. Also, in contrast to the traditional perspective, there was a difference appearing in the traditionally so called dominant - weak and strong behavior. From very strong blunt aggression to very weak, but still successful, helpless and fear, or whining strategy. Variety in use appeared also between genders. Strategies like guilt manipulation or partner debasement were successfully used by women, and attention shift or silent fuming were expressed by men. There are strategies equally used such as explanation of insights, non-responding and argumentative strategy.

In contrast to traditional view of dominance, we found a wide spectrum of behaviors that are weak, passive or indirect but still leading to successful fulfillment of own aim. Therefore, there is a difference between traditionally defined dominance behavior displayed

and actual resulting dominance and submission at the end of conflict. Since there are differences not just in quantity of expressed behavior but also in quality, we do suggest future studies focusing on the relation of power qualities of active-passive, direct-indirect, prosocial-asocial and weak-strong behavior when (not) resulting in dominance. It can have an impact for psychological and sociological diagnosing of dominance especially in the area of dominance measured by questionnaires that are based on the stereotypical active and aggressive definition. Moreover, it may help practitioners (e.g., psychotherapists or social workers) with making better diagnosis and improving therapeutical process for couples or families.

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## Appendix A, The list of behavioral codes

Type of codes	Basic codes	Short definition
+ often distinction between the coded person and partner. I used own/ p. E.g. stating own opinion, repeating p suggestion, disagreement with p explanation, etc.		
Procedural codes (moving the discussion) Asking for something, or putting a request, more dyadic - moving the situation forward.	Requirement	Stating a request from partner.
	Rally	Peppy call to action
	Request	nicely asking for something, "may I have..."
	Giving directions	Like a boss talking to you. You are told how to do it, but you still kind of free to do your own thing
	Command	Like a direct order, you have to do it
	Suggestion	(giving ideas, proposing)
	Inquiring	Asking a question, keeping a question going (not necessarily positive, but sometimes)
	Statement	Stating something
	Pointing out	Just kind of pointing out something is there, noticing and then pointing out
	Question	Generic (in)direct question for anything. Asking for specification, p.'s solution etc.
Explanation	Just providing an explanation, giving a reason, kind of building your argument or case, it has to have logic or meaning inside	

## Appendix A, The list of behavioral codes

	Elaborate explanation	Like, explaining but more elaborate, it has to have logical or meaning inside
	Specification	Basically providing more specific details to better explain something vague
	Reflection	Like a reminder of what was agreed on in the past, and also kind of the polite or pillowy version of it as well, looking back in therapy. Reflection of plan, previous agreement, situation what has been happening. Description - you have been doing this and this and this, not a blame on itself
	Persuasive Appeal	In the meaning of "kind prosocial appearing coercion, nice, calm, polite. Not begging, but asking someone to be more empathetic to me. Can you stop being too harsh on me. Saying "It's okay, come to me now." "Let's make up". It looks a little weakish
	Implore	Kind of begging, but like to a king, and not necessarily whiny, and kind of like puppy-eyes
	Interruption	Can be an attempt to interrupt or successfully
	Emphasis	Stressing, saying something strongly and with a point
	Repetition	Repetition (saying the same thing a few times in a row)
	Overwhelming	Kind of like monopolizing - stating a lot of arguments, a long talk. You don't let your partner interrupt you, occupying the conversational floor (does not necessarily have to be logical)
(Non)Compliance	Consent	Often combined with other codes. It can be kind consent, blaming consent, regular consent. Confirmation, agreeing. If there is more than yes - then add some context depending on the previous code. Like "Consent to partner's explanation." Verbally agreeing to something
	Confirmation	Agreeing, usually to some piece of information, without emphasis.
	Compliance	Agreeing and kind of consenting, but like not really having their heart in it
	Submission	Agreeing and kind of consenting, but FOR sure not having your heart in it
	Disagreement	"No," "I don't agree." People are not on the same page. "I am not doing that." Rejection of plan, partners wishes, opinion, etc.
	Rejection	Refusing partner's wish, suggestion, movement.
<b>Offense/defense codes - More filled with power</b>	Constructive criticism	Critiqueing, but helpful and the good kind (usually with partners opinions, attitudes, behaviors, or like with dishes). See this is not clean enough. There is something wrong with it, then you are not trashing the person.
	Coercion	Forcing someone to do something, saying something to do something with emphasis, can sometimes be like the length of staring that causes this
	Insisting on	Returning to the topic, making clear his/her wishes, not letting go.
	Resolute Unyielding	So like being firm in not doing what they want you to do (when the force is coming to you, you put up a barrier and the other person does not get to you)

## Appendix A, The list of behavioral codes

	Defense	Defending your opinion, behaviors, standing up for yourself, refusing to take guilt (not actually a barrier, pushing back)
	Withdrawing / getting closer	Stating or expressing less/more involvement and interest in conversation/partner. Changing the proximity (physical or bond) by e.g. focusing on something else, shutting down, hugging partner, apologising
	Put down	This whole category really - but using nonverbals only to put down the other in some type of way. Showing rejection, disgust, disagreement
Prosocial codes	Deescalate	Trying to bring things down, back to a contentment state
	Humor	Using humor, being funny
	Telling a story/ Sharing	Talking about own experience, explaining.
	Active listening	Being interested in partner's speech, common "hm", "yes".
	Paraphrase	Trying to repeat the point of pyrtners's statement about his thoughts, feelings, perceptions etc.
	Understanding	Confirmation of understanding or admitting not understanding. Saying or showing partner, that his/her message is transferred, or not "Yes, I understand what you want to say", "I'm confused".
	Affirmation	Pointing out that the relationship is valuable, important
	Admitting a mistake	Admitting a mistake, you were right I was wrong.
	Apology	I'm sorry
	Correction of mistake/ make up	As a reaction to own mistake, trying to make it right with a new attempt, or pointing out, that it is solved by concrete act, e.g. bringing flowers
	Forgiveness	Reassuring partner that some trouble has passed/been solved. "okay, it is alright"
	Promise	I promise
	Assurance	"No it's really okay," "no you look really good," "I really do care"
	Thanking	"Alright, thank you for understanding"
	Calming	Usually used with like babies, like shooe, soothing, "it's going to be okay"
	Giving space	Letting partner his/her own time, space
	Immediacy	Paying attention, being present, being there for them, showing caring
	Confusion	Expressing or stating confusing, you don't get what they are saying, but you want to
	Expressing Affiliation	Nonverbal - good touching, kissing, supporting, smiling, physical acts

## Appendix A, The list of behavioral codes

Indirect codes	Hinting	Trying to say something, but not saying it. Being super diplomatic. Suggestion you should do that. You don't actually say it, but you hope they come to that realization
	Prolonging, hesitating	Time-play, keeping your space, finding an argument, holding the argument by saying "hmmmm..." Turn-holding, filling the space with something else so you don't lose your turn
	Threatening question	Not blaming directly, but hinting there is a strong disagreement and answer can open a negative reaction, usually sensed tension from a voice. "Are you going out toning"?
	indefinite/vague/dismiss	..."yeah, well, you know".
	Disregarding sigh	"Ohh, what's your problem now?"
	Psuedo-solution	Kind of complying like "I am doing something" but actually not doing the thing you are supposed to do
	Problematization	Not saying no, but kind of finding problems why something will not work instead.
	Excuse	Coming up with an excuse... using external conditions to kind of reason your behavior.
	Shifting Guilt	Saying "I didn't do anything, you were the one in charge," "no you need to feel guilty about this, not me."
	Indirect blame	Saying something bad, pointing out something negative. Can be a little bit sarcastic. More intense then criticism - not saying you did it wrong, but saying "you should have done it better." Not saying you are responsible or messy, but pointing something out.
	Dramatization	Absurd suggestion, over-stating something, catastrophe, being dramatic
	Playing dumb	Like saying in a sarcastic/funny way "Oh, we have a pantry! I had no idea!"
	Showing doubt	Not trusting someone or saying you are a little hesitant, are you really sure about that? "Really... this pizza is really good for you..."
Expression of sadness	Nonverbal part that comes here - expressions of sadness or dissatisfaction - belongs to these codes.	
Psychological violence (self destructing)	Self-debasement	Swearing like about yourself, I am stupid, or it can be like whining because you are sad directed at yourself.
Psychological violence (partner destructing)	Sarcasm	Not saying openly what you want to say, any type of bad sarcasm. (not good sarcasm - that is under humor)
	Disregard	Lowering the value of something - it can be at the partner, or the relevance of the argument. Lowering the importance of something. "It really doesn't matter, I don't care."


## Appendix A, The list of behavioral codes

	Humiliation	Making fun of someone, like stating the obvious steps like "You were supposed to take your keys with you, put them in your pocket." Making them feel bad about things, Jabs.
	Direct Blaming	About blaming, but like straight blaming, more intense, strong dramatization, aimed at the partner, the partner's personality or something
	Manipulative blaming	Guilt Manipulation, like "The whole day I am work, and you are just lying here doing nothing"
Verbal aggression	Intense argument	Fast talking, yelling, going back and forth, intense
	Threatening	Blackmail, threatening, intimidation, like "Unless you do this, I am leaving." Stating negative consequences for the relationship
	Swearing (cussing)	Swear words - just using it. Not aiming at the partner, "this is fucked."
	Vicious swearing	Swear words - aimed directly at the partner "you are fucking stupid."
Physical Aggression	Violence - things	Throwing things, making noises with it, banging something too loud
	Violence - partner	Throwing things - but actually at the partner, or being aggressive actually AT the partner - touching or being violent in any way
	Displays of aggression	Nonverbal - looking aggressive, everything that goes with dominance - heard straight, chin forward, rolling eyes, showing signs of arrogance, more power than should be normal
<i>Types of Ending situation / withdrawing</i>	Despondent	Silence, ignoring, not responding, not paying attention, it is pretty mean - but not in a naïve way - it's like an "I don't give a damn" way. Or there can be a pretty weak silence. Being so low that you cannot even respond. "I'm over it."
	Passive aggressive silence	I do care - but I am not talking to you on purpose. Maybe something like storming out. Like when someone offends you, and you avoid them, like locking yourself in a bathroom and crying loudly. Trying to show the partner you are pretty pissed. Also pouting... Passive aggressive silence. Like "leave me alone."
	Not reacting	Not answering p.'s question, not reacting nonverbally, ignoring, stonewalling
	Closing/ conclusion	A discussion of ending the conflict, things like "so, let's don't talk about it anymore" so it's already solved, more like a neutral attempt at ending the situation or problem
	Storming out	Leaving the place, and usually happens with the code of passive aggressive silence. Storming out. I am done and I am aggressive right now, and I am going for a walk to think about it.
	Expulsion	Partner-directed. Basically the same as storming out, but asking your partner to do it. Like, "Just go, I don't want to talk to you or touch you now."
	Tabling	Leaving for important objective reasons, like I need to go to school or it's late or night. It's more objective. Neutral

## Appendix A, The list of behavioral codes

	Problem denial	Clear problem denial. Neutral.
Returns / getting closer	Following	Following the partner if they leave
	Enter/Return	Combing back from whatever the situation was before - or like the first time a person enters a scene
<b>Emotional expressions</b>	Positive expression	Happiness, interest, kindness, love, joy, calmness, focus / paying attention, strength, stability, seriousness, fun, safety, tenderness, playfulness, cuteness,
	Neutral expression	sadness, insecurity, pain/hurt, helplessness, emphasis, confusion
	Negative expression	Disinterest, contempt, withdrawal, hostility, anger, despair, frustration, condescendence, disappointment, hopelessness, nervousness, weakness, power,
Description of emotion	Explaining emotion	Not showing it, but talking about how you feel. "I feel sad about.."
Behavioral, non-verbal codes	What is the type of movement, gesture. Emphasis, facial expressions - smile, laughter, voice differences, calm voice, aggressive voice, sad voice, baby talk, crying, tension, pressure, tender touches, hugs, eye rolling. Movements e.g. fast, relaxed, tense, etc Use of this to support the expression.	

## Appendix B, Cards for categorization into strategies

Name: "So don't wash it at all if you can not do it properly!"	Vignette: Female is in the kitchen and previously wanted her partner to help her to clean. Male is coming to the kitchen and asking for what to do.	Winning gender: M
	Peak codes: interruption + problematization of comply + exp of helplessness, false compliance & compliance - task + sabotage - skimping + exp of disinterest + nv slow relaxed movements and facial expressions, slow speech, deep voice	
Beginning codes: request of activity - help	Dominance codes: Acceptation of win + relaxed leave + exp relief, satisfaction+ nev happy voice	Defense
Motive: request of a task	Submission codes: resignation - withdrawal of request + reproach - p. behavior	Instigation

## Chapter 5

**Průšová, D. & Weiss, P. (2021). Strategie partnerské komunikace, sexuální spokojenost a iniciace sexuálních aktivit v dlouhodobých romantických vztazích. *Sexuologia*.**

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### **Strategie partnerské komunikace, sexuální spokojenost a iniciace sexuálních aktivit v dlouhodobých romantických vztazích**

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## **Abstrakt**

Zažité komunikační strategie v každodenních konfliktních situacích v páru souvisí s realizací, respektive iniciací sexuálních aktivit a se spokojeností v rovině sexuální. Byly nalezeny rozdíly i mezi pohlavími. Pokusili jsme se nahlédnout možný vztah mezi ustáleným způsobem partnerské komunikace a sexuální spokojenosti a s iniciací sexuálních aktivit mezi partnery.

V této studii představujeme naši novou metodu experimentálního partnerského komunikačního výzkumu - Partnerské drama, i jeho výsledky v podobě behaviorálních dominantních strategií čítajících široké spektrum různorodých kvalit chování.

Z 15 strategií chování jsme zjistili souvislost se sexuální spokojeností u šesti. S nižší mužskou spokojeností souvisejí dvě, Vysvětlování emocí ženami a mužské Naštvané mlčení, s nižší ženskou sexuální spokojeností pak jedna, Klidné zdůvodňování muži. Silnější korelace, potvrzené partnerem/partnerkou v oblasti nižší sexuální spokojenosti i iniciace aktivit, jsme zjistili pro dvě strategie, Klidné zdůvodňování muži a Vysvětlování pocitů ženami. Ženy více iniciovaly sexuální aktivity, když jejich typická strategie byla Laskavé pečování, Popírání problému a sabotáž a Odvádění pozornosti a pseudořešení.

Vzhledem ke kontextu explorativní mixed-method studie, nízkého počtu respondentů a tedy možných statistických nepřesností je vhodné zmíněné poznatky chápat spíše jako naznačené směry dalšího bádání v oblasti partnerské komunikace.

**Klíčová slova:** *Partnerská komunikace, Strategie chování, Sexuální spokojenost, Iniciace sexuálních aktivit*

## **Abstract**

In romantic couples, communication strategies in everyday conflict situations are related to sexual activity initiation and overall sexual satisfaction. Gender differences were also found. We tried to take an innovative look at the possible association between couple's typical relationship communication behaviors and the area of sexual life, here specifically sexual satisfaction and the degree of distribution of the initiation of sexual activities between partners. In this study, we present a new experimental method for relationship communication research - the Relationship drama and its results in the form of behavioral dominance strategies, including a wide range of diverse qualities of behavior.

Out of our 15 behavioral strategies, we found a correlation in six. There are two related to lower male satisfaction, Explanation of Insights by women and male Silent fuming. Lower female sexual satisfaction is related to male Kind Reasoning. We found stronger correlations, confirmed by the partner, in lower sexual satisfaction and initiation of activities, for two strategies, Kind reasoning by men and Explaining insights by women. Women initiated sexual activity more when their typical strategies were Kind Reasoning, Problem Denial/Sabotage, and Attention shift/Pseudo-Solutions.

Given the context of an exploratory mixed-method study, performing statistical analysis with a lower number of participants could cause possible statistical inaccuracies. It is appropriate to understand mentioned findings rather as an indicator of directions for further research in the field of romantic relationship communication.

**Key words:** *Relationship communication, Behavioral strategies, Sexual satisfaction, Initiation of sexual activities*

## Úvod

Vztahy jsou jednou z nejdůležitějších životní oblastí a potřebou většiny lidských bytostí. Ve vztahových interakcích potřebujeme komunikovat. Jednou z nejčastějších partnerských komunikací je komunikace o konfliktních aspektech vztahu (Christensen, 1987; Gottman, 2000; Dunbar, 2005). To, jakým způsobem, si partneři sdělují svá přání, své potřeby, jakým způsobem vyjadřují a prosazují svou vůli a samozřejmě i to, jak na toto sdělení partner(ka) (ne)reaguje. V dlouhodobém vztahu partneři často jednájí určitým způsobem, opakují situace a tvoří tak stereotypní vzorce chování, v tomto případě stereotypní dominantní strategie.

Párová interakce zahrnuje získání dominance v určitých oblastech jedním z komunikačních partnerů. Mocí a dominancí se zabývá mnoho různých vědních oborů po mnoho desetiletí, ve většině případů jsou tyto konstrukty chápány jako klíčové nejen pro daný diskurz, ale i jako základní hybatel chování živých tvorů. Russel říká již v roce 1938, že moc je fundamentálním konceptem ve společenských vědách, stejně jako je energie fundamentálním konceptem pro fyziku.

Schmid, Mast a Hall (2004) zdůrazňují, že dominance je jednou z nejdůležitějších dimenzí sociálních interakcí. Aby sociální interakce proběhla hladce, je nutné vyjadřovat vlastní dominanci a také správně rozeznat míru dominance partnera. Tu může prozradit paraverbální chování jako přerušování, délka mluvení, ale i neverbální projevy, jako úsměvy či upřený pohled. Dunbar (2005) a později Dunbar & Abra (2010) uvádí, že dominance a moc jsou důležitými aspekty mezilidských vztahů i života a osobnosti jednotlivců. S evoluční terminologií předpokládá dominanci v párové interakci jako schopnost prosadit své zájmy oproti partnerovi, případně je chápe jakožto shodné zájmy obou partnerů.

Oblast výzkumu interpersonální komunikace, ať již partnerských vztahů, nebo i třeba z oblasti firemního prostředí a profesní komunikace, se stále potýká s rozporuplností výsledků a metodologickými mezerami ohledně konkrétních neverbálních projevů chování a skýtá mnoho vědecky zatím nezodpovězených otázek (Gatica-Perez, 2009). To může být zapříčiněno například převažujícím množstvím dotazníkových studií, nebo standardizacemi prostředí (často židle v 90 stupňovém úhlu), které limitují postavení těla participantů. Další častou obtíží jsou nesjednocené definice, kdy například dominantní chování může být viděno jako komunikační proces výhra-prohra, pozice v hierarchii, nebo jako agresivní a mocenské chování, vycházející původně z oblasti psychologie osobnosti (Gifford, 1991; Lindová et al., 2020). Ve většině studií různých oborů jsou však vynechány z výzkumného repertoáru například strategie mírné, provztahové, či pasivní a méně důrazné.

Proto jsme se v naší studii rozhodli na problematiku partnerské interakční konfliktní komunikace nahlédnout nejdříve kvalitativně. Upravili jsme metodu vytvořenou původně pro potřeby psychoterapie, která nabízí předvedení plného rejstříku přirozeného individuálního chování každého z partnerů - níže popsané Partnerské drama (Průšová et al., 2017). Následně jsme kvalitativní metodou grounded theory přistoupili ke kategorizaci fází konfliktních interakcí a otevřenému kódování projevů chování.

Osobnostní faktory, individuální vztahová historie, zdroje a úrovně moci i situační faktory, se kterými oba partneři do konkrétní interakce vstupují, jsou značně komplikované (Pulerwitz et al., 2000; Dunbar & Burgoon, 2000; Lindová et al., 2012). Není proto překvapivé, že jsme vytvořili podobně komplikované strategie chování, které se mohou lišit například v míře přátelskosti, se kterou s partnerem jednáme (Ladd & Profilet, 1996; Johnson, S. L. et al., 2012). Mohou se lišit i v míře přímosti, se kterou sdělujeme své záměry a požadavky (Frieze & McHugh, 1992; Christensen, 1988), či dokonce v míře aktivity, kterou projevujeme při řešení situací (Dunbar & Abra, 2010). Ačkoliv by se zdálo velmi výhodné z předchozího výčtu volit přímé, aktivní a přátelské řešení, kdy oba partneři otevřeně a konstruktivně hovoří, v praxi jedinci často volí strategie mnohem více destruktivní a nepřímé.

V komplikovaných partnerských interakcích může nastat rozporuplná situace. Přímá a přátelská strategie komunikace nemusí být tou, která je úspěšná, co se týče "naplnění" vlastní vůle. V případě, že partneři opakují destruktivní komunikační strategie (ať už vlivem stereotypizace chování či prosté neznalosti chování lepšího), může toto vést ke snížení partnerské spokojenosti či dokonce k destrukci celého vztahu (Gottman et al., 1977; Gottman, 2000).

Nedílnou součástí partnerského života je také sexualita. V psychoterapeutické praxi rodinných a párových systémů je na proces sexuality nazíráno jako na jeden z komunikačních vzorců, který se odráží i v dalších oblastech (tématech) partnerského života. Pokud mají partneři problém komunikovat své potřeby v sexuální rovině, je rozumné pro terapeutické účely nahlédnout i do procesu, jak si sdělují své potřeby například v rovině emoční, či v domlouvání se na společném plánu na víkend a podobně. Cílem terapie pak může být narušit stereotypní patologické vzorce chování a nalézt vzorce vhodnější (Jones, 1996).

Schopnost otevřeně vyjádřit sexuální přání nebo komunikovat o sexuálních obavách s partnerem je spojena s větším sexuálním uspokojením (Byers, 2011; Mark & Jozkowski, 2013). Z výzkumů manželských párů je zřejmé, že nedostatky v komunikaci o sexuální intimitě jsou spojené s nižším sexuálním uspokojením (Theiss, 2011).

V oblasti lidského chování se tradiční sexuologická literatura zaměřuje na souvislost sexuální spokojenosti a iniciace aktivit s některým typem attachmentu, tedy míry bezpečnosti partnerského pouta, které si jedinec vytváří vzhledem k partnerovi mnohdy na základě rodičovských vzorů. Zvláště chování partnerů s úzkostným a vyhýbavým typem attachmentu se ukazuje jako spojené s nižší sexuální spokojeností (Clymers et al., 2006; Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Mark et al., 2018; Rouleau et al., 2018), ovšem ženy s úzkostnějším attachmentem projevují více sexuálního chování obecně (Impett et al., 2008). Není však obvyklé ve výzkumu komunikace detailně kódovat konkrétní behaviorální projevy a faktické chování daného páru (Lindová et al., 2020).

Sexuální spokojenost je definována jako hodnocení pozitivních a negativních dimenzí sexuálního vztahu (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). Tyto dimenze mohou zahrnovat osobní zkušenosti či zkušenosti sexuálního partnera (např. jak často člověk dosáhne orgasmu během styku), nebo vztahující se aspekty sexuality (např. jak často má pár sex, nebo jak otevřeně diskutuje o sexuálních záležitostech).

Výzkumy prokazují spíše vyšší sexuální spokojenost manželských párů (Edwards & Booth, 1994; Lawrance & Byers, 1995; Oggins et al., 1993). National Health and Social Life Survey prokázalo, že 88% sezdaných dospělých v USA bylo ve svém vztahu „extrémně“ nebo „velmi“ fyzicky spokojeno a 85% emocionálně spokojeno (Michael et al., 1994).

Iniciace sexuálních aktivit je definována jako první krok partnerovi tlumočit/sdělit (verbálně či neverbálně) sexuální zájem či touhu po sexuální aktivitě ve chvíli, kdy se zrovna takové chování neodehrává (Gossmann et al., 2003; O'Sullivan & Byers, 1992). Simms & Byers (2013) však upozorňují, že existuje velmi málo výzkumných studií na iniciaci sexuálních aktivit. Většina z existujících je zaměřena na genderové rozložení a jeho souvislost se spokojeností. Schoenfeld a kol. (2017) zjistili, že vyšší frekvence sexuální aktivity souvisí s větším sexuálním uspokojením u obou pohlaví. V partnerských vztazích mají muži sklon zahájit sex téměř dvakrát častěji než ženy (Byers & Heinlein, 1989). Sexuální uspokojení je podle autorů spojeno s častějším iniciací sexuálních aktivit u obou pohlaví a méně častou negativní reakcí na iniciaci partnera u žen.

Jak rovnováha sexuální iniciativy mezi partnery ovlivňuje sexuální uspokojení, nebylo zatím zcela prokázáno. Lau a kol. (2006) uvedli, že představa, že muž by měl vždy zahajovat sexuální interakce byla spojena s nižším sexuálním uspokojením u obou manželů.

Ovšem Simms & Byers (2009, 2013) upozorňují na rozporuplnost studií, kde participanti vypovídají o své/partnerově iniciaci a studií, které zahrnují např. deníkové metody, tedy na

diskrepance mezi vnímaným a reálným chováním. Uvádějí možné vysvětlení této diskrepance v tom, že sexuálně spokojenější jedinci vidí mnohem pravděpodobněji partnera jako častěji iniciujícího, než ti, kteří jsou sexuálně nespojeni, a to bez ohledu na reálnou frekvenci styku. Navíc vzhledem k odlišným projevům svádění u žen a mužů a používání (ne)přímých strategií (např. Greer & Buss, 1994) je otázkou, kdo vlastně interakci skutečně iniciuje.

### **Cíle výzkumu**

V předložené studii se pokoušíme zmapovat, jak mohou komunikační vzorce během stereotypního (opakovaného a zažitého) partnerského konfliktu souviset se sexuální spokojeností partnerů a s mírou iniciativy sexuálních aktivit. Zajímalo nás, zda například stereotypně chladné a odmítavé chování jako reakce v průběhu partnerského konfliktu může mít souvislost s nižší sexuální spokojeností a nižší iniciací sexuálních aktivit. Zjišťovali jsme, zda se tak děje pro jedno či obě pohlaví, a zda se pohledy partnerů shodují.

### **Soubor**

Participantů byli rekrutováni upoutávkou na sociálních sítích a v terapeutických a vzdělávacích institucích v Praze a za svůj čas byli kompenzováni odměnou 400 Kč/pár. Pro komunikační část studie jsme získali výsledky od 67 dlouhodobých heterosexuálních partnerských dvojic (134 českých a slovenských mužů a žen) bez psychiatrické diagnózy. Pro část sexuologickou jsme získali data od 32 dvojic kvůli pozdějšímu přiřazení sexuologických otázek do výzkumného designu.

Soubor participantů má poměrně značnou variabilitu věkovou (19-46 let,  $M = 24,87$ ,  $SD = 4,78$ ), ale i délky vztahu (medián 3,4 roky s rozpětím od 7 měsíců do 21 let,  $M = 41,2$  měsíců,  $SD = 37,39$ ). Z hlediska vzdělání mělo nižší než středoškolské 5%, střední 45% a vysokou školu mělo 50% souboru.

### **Metoda**

Studie byla součástí širšího výzkumu partnerských komunikačních strategií, který probíhal pod záštitou Univerzity Karlovy, Pražské vysoké školy psychosociálních studií a Národního ústavu duševního zdraví v letech 2013-2017. Použili jsme mixed-method design, který sestával z kvantitativní dotazníkové části, experimentálních behaviorálních interakcí a hloubkových interview.

Pro tuto studii jsme zvolili metodu *Partnerské drama*. Začínalo hloubkovým rozhovorem o

partnerských konfliktních oblastech. Oba partneři byli požádáni, aby vybrali konflikt, který se jim v poslední době stereotypně opakuje. Rozhovor o konfliktu postupně přecházel v jeho popis až přesné znění vět, které partneři používají, a vyústilo v představbu místnosti do podoby té, která je pro ně typická (např. kuchyň, auto, ložnice). Pokud partneři používali pomůcky, i v experimentální situaci dostali jejich náhrady (např. počítač, telefon, volant, skleničky). Samotná experimentální situace začínala krátkou vizualizací prostředí začátku konfliktu vedenou výzkumníci a následně partneři co nejpřesněji předvedli/přežili krok po kroku, jak jejich typická konfliktní interakce vypadá. Nahrané interakce se z hlediska délky záznamu pohybují mezi 3 a 10 minutami a tematicky variují od rozložení a splnění domácích povinností (úklidy), splněných a nesplněných slibů, důležitých rozhodnutí (např. pronájem bytu), aktuálně vyvolané situace (např. nestíhání, rozhodnutí, kterou cestou jít), až k těm týkajícím se vztahu samotného (např. obava z opuštění). Ihned po skončení interakce proběhlo další interview sloužící jako debriefing, kdy došlo k ujištění se, že nedošlo k poškození vztahu či žádného z partnerů.

Partneři volili své vlastní téma pro přežít konfliktu interakce, ve kterém opakovaně zažívají nedorozumění, ne nutně sexuálně laděné. Ovšem tím, že šlo o typický dlouhodobý komunikační vzorec prolínající se jejich vztahem, lze usuzovat na jeho dlouhodobost a možný vliv na oblast partnerské sexuality, minimálně v obecnějších rovinách, jako je například sexuální spokojenost.

Ke statistickému zpracování dat bylo využito Pearsonových korelací pro zjištění vzájemných vztahů proměnných, tedy strategií chování, se základními sexuologickými charakteristikami. Behaviorální proměnné (komunikační strategie) jsme měřili jako (ne)přítomnost (0/1). Pro zjištění souvislosti mezi možnými partnerskými strategiemi (uvedenými v tabulce 1) a sexuální spokojeností a sexuální iniciativou jsme položili respondentům dvě otázky. První se týkala iniciace sexuálních aktivit ("Prosím, pokuste se odhadnout procentuální míru toho, kdy se vy, nebo váš partner(ka) pokoušíte iniciovat sexuální aktivitu"), kde partneři rozdělili míru iniciativy na procentuální škále (např. „Pokud Vy iniciujete ve 100% případů, pak udáváte, že Váš partner iniciuje 0%“). Druhou otázka byla "Jste spokojen(a) s Vaším aktuálním sexuálním životem?", kde partneři určovali svou spokojenost na škále od 1 - velmi spokojený/á po 5 - velmi nespokojený/á. Pro statistickou analýzu byla čísla použita v základní formě, ovšem pro diskuzi výsledků a porovnání s literaturou jsme škálu převedli na procenta.

Protože v dyadické interakci dlouhodobého intimního vztahu je známé vzájemné



ovlivňování se a cirkularita chování partnerů, počítáme nejen s výpověďmi daného jedince, ale také s výpověďmi a chováním partnera. To znamená, že jsme korelovali jak vlastní dotazníkové odpovědi s vlastním chováním, tak s odpověďmi a strategií partnera, a to pro obě pohlaví zvlášť.

Tab 1. Strategie identifikované za použití partnerského dramatu

Název Strategie	Popis/Definice	Příklad požadavku na mytí nádobí by zněl...
<b>Vysvětlování pocitů (Explanation of own Insights)</b>	Otevřená, empatická, klidná ale pevná komunikace subjektivních sdělení o "já" potřebách, emocích, postojích apod.	<i>„Potěšilo by mě, kdybys to nádobí umyl. Je pro mě důležité mít spolehlivého partnera.“</i>
<b>Klidné zdůvodňování</b>	Klidné, laskavé a mírné, ovšem pevné a nekompromisní vysvětlování skrze zdůvodňování oficiálními pravidly či předchozími dohodami.	<i>„Je třeba to jen umýt, pamatuješ, na tom jsme se shodli dříve. Uděláš to prosím?“</i>
<b>Nadšení a humor</b>	Vyjadřování zájmu a nadšení, upozornění na pozitivní aspekty či použití hry pro rozhodnutí (Smích, humor, poddajnost).	<i>„Hej, je zábavné to umývat, podívej, co všechno ty bublinky zvládnou“ nebo „pojdme na kámen, papír, nůžky.“</i>
<b>Prošení/kňourání (Whining)</b>	Láskyplné a aktivní přesvědčování, vysvětlování a prosby (vyjadřování nízké moci, nadšení, komplimenty).	<i>„Prosím, zlatíčko, velmi bych ocenila, kdybys mi pomohl s úklidem, ty to děláš tak dobře. Umyl bys pro mě to nádobí, já se dnes necítím, prosím?“</i>
<b>Sdílení bezmoci (obav, smutku)</b>	Vyjadřování smutku, obav, lítosti velmi láskyplným a respektujícím způsobem (zájem o názor p., upozorňování na hodnotu partnera, či vztahu, vlastní slabost, zoufalství).	<i>„Lásko, mám strach, že bych mohla rozbit talíř, můžeš tu zůstat se mnou, když ho umývám? Pomůžeš mi, mohl bys to umýt ty, prosím?“</i>

Tab 1. Strategie identifikované za použití partnerského dramatu

Název Strategie	Popis/Definice	Příklad požadavku na mytí nádobí by zněl...
<b>Laskavé konejšení/přesvědčování</b>	Laskavé, láskyplné, vlídné uklidňování či přesvědčování partnera. Zaměřenost na osobní, nebo vztahovou pohodu mnohem více než na řešení problému.	<i>"Miláčku, já vím, že toho máš víc než hodně a trápí mě to. Třeba by ti pomohlo se uvolnit, když na chvíli přesuneš pozornost jen k umývání nádobí. A já s tebou budu v místnosti. Co říkáš? Pojd', jdeme na to!"</i>
<b>Argumentativní (komunikační fauly)</b>	Objektivně a racionálně vypadající diskuze s použitím útočných argumentů (komunikační fauly, zahlcování, nátlak, vyjadřování moci).	<i>"Umyješ to nádobí dneska? Víím, že tě to tvá matka nenaučila, mohu to napravit vždyť je přeci normální... takže jak to bude, už to mělo být hotové.."</i>
<b>Dramatizace</b>	Manipulace emocemi partnera/ky skrze problematizování a vyjadřování bezmoci (emoční vydírání, katastrofické scénáře, silná emoční excitace).	<i>"Jsou tu špinavé talíře, jak to tak může být každý den takhle, nikdy je neumyješ, pravděpodobně zemřeme na bakterie, které s tu námi žijí."</i>
<b>Manipulace vinou</b>	Chování se záměrem vyvolat v partnerovi pocit viny (hraná bezmoc a zoufalství), doprovázené výčitkami a (sebe)obviňujícími výroky.	<i>"Tolik jsem toho udělala, připravila jsem ti večeři, líbilo se ti to? Jsem teď tak unavená, víš, že mám ráda čistý dům, nikdy mi nepomůžeš... "</i>
<b>Nereagování a Opovržlivé ignorování</b>	Nezájem a ignorace emocí partnera/ky a problému (Ignorování, povýšenost, nereagování).	<i>"Ano ... Emmm .. Co jsi říkala?"</i>
<b>Popírání problému/ Sabotáž</b>	Ignorování či bagatelizace problému, ovšem aktivní vyjadřování zájmu a provztažového chování směrem k partnerovi.	<i>"Ty talíře se dnes opravdu nemusí umýt, odpočň si."</i>
<b>Odvádění pozornosti/pseudorešení</b>	Obcházení problému a pseudořešení doprovázené provztažovým chováním (aktivita a vyjadřování péče o partnera/ku, ignorace problému, odvádění pozornosti, tichý nátlak).	<i>"Zlato, vypadáš tak unavený a moc mi na tobě záleží, co kdybychom šli do obývacího pokoje, dívali se na film a nechali to nádobí skřítkům?"</i>

Tab 1. Strategie identifikované za použití partnerského dramatu

Název Strategie	Popis/Definice	Příklad požadavku na mytí nádobí by zněl...
<b>Otevřená agrese</b>	Otevřená psychická či fyzická agrese (nadávky, hostilita, zneužívání, agresivní sebeznehodnocování, házení předmětů apod.)	<i>„Ty jsi prostě jen prase! Kurňa, podívej, jak špinavá ta kuchyň je! Umyj to! Hned!“</i>
<b>Napjaté mlčení</b>	Napjatý, nekompromisní, pasivní nátlak a ignorace partnerových emocí (bezohledný nátlak, obviňování a upozorňování na zodpovědnost p., popírání).	<i>„Řekl jsem, že chci, aby to kurňa bylo umyté! Je to naposledy, co s tebou mluvím, pokud to neuděláš...“ následované odchodem.</i>
<b>Ponížení partnera</b>	Pseudo zdůvodňování a zákeřné (skryté) agresivní útoky na partnera (posměch, nadřazenost, zesměšnění p.), či přesvědčování o pravdě bez relevantního opodstatnění.	<i>„Podívejte se na to! Fůůj! Nemůžu uvěřit, že jste přežili s takhle špinavým nádobím, takhle žije zvíře. Ted' vím, proč jsi byl svobodný, než jsem tě potkala.“</i>

## Výsledky

Tab. 2a Korelace strategií chování a sexuologických charakteristik - Muži

Behaviorální strategie	Korelace	Iniciace sexuálních aktivit	Iniciace sex. aktivit Partnerka	Sexuální spokojenost	Sexuální spokojenost Partnerka
<b>Klidné zdůvodňování</b>					
Vlastní strategie	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	-,402*	,402*	0,289	,619**

Tab. 2a Korelace strategií chování a sexuologických charakteristik - Muži

	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,025	0,025	0,115	0,001
	<i>N</i>	31	31	31	27
Strategie partnerky	<i>PC</i>	-0,300	0,300	0,177	0,196
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,101	0,101	0,341	0,326
	<i>N</i>	31	31	31	27
<b>Sdílení pocitů (Explanation of own Insights)</b>					
Vlastní strategie	<i>PC</i>	-0,128	0,128	-0,137	-0,196
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,494	0,494	0,461	0,326
	<i>N</i>	31	31	31	27
Strategie partnerky	<i>PC</i>	,518**	-,518**	0,311	0,247
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,003	0,003	0,088	0,213
	<i>N</i>	31	31	31	27
<b>Napjaté mlčení mužské odpovědi</b>					
Vlastní strategie	<i>PC</i>	0,199	-0,199	,373*	0,272
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,284	0,284	0,039	0,169
	<i>N</i>	31	31	31	27
Strategie partnerky	<i>PC</i>	-0,100	0,100	-0,205	-0,272
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,594	0,594	0,269	0,169
	<i>N</i>	31	31	31	27
<b>Popírání problému/ Sabotáž</b>					
Vlastní strategie	<i>PC</i>	0,048	-0,048	0,045	0,247
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,799	0,799	0,812	0,213
	<i>N</i>	31	31	31	27
Strategie partnerky	<i>PC</i>	0,090	-0,090	-0,156	-0,196
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,631	0,631	0,401	0,326
	<i>N</i>	31	31	31	27
<b>Odvádění pozornosti/pseudořešení</b>					

Tab. 2a Korelace strategií chování a sexuologických charakteristik - Muži

Vlastní strategie	<i>PC</i>	0,120	-0,120	-0,156	-0,196
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,519	0,519	0,401	0,326
	<i>N</i>	31	31	31	27
Strategie partnerky	<i>PC</i>	-0,048	0,048	-0,205	0,000
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,796	0,796	0,269	1,000
	<i>N</i>	31	31	31	27
<b>Vlídne konejšení/přesvědčování</b>					
Vlastní strategie	<i>PC</i>	-0,109	0,109	-0,120	-0,109
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,560	0,560	0,521	0,588
	<i>N</i>	31	31	31	27
Strategie partnerky	<i>PC</i>	-0,227	0,227	-0,012	0,272
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,219	0,219	0,947	0,169
	<i>N</i>	31	31	31	27

Tab. 2b Korelace strategií chování a sexuologických charakteristik - Ženy

Behaviorální strategie	Korelace	Iniciace sexuálních aktivit	Iniciace sex. aktivit Partner	Sexuální spokojenost	Sexuální spokojenost Partner
<b>Klidné zdůvodňování</b>					
Vlastní strategie	<i>PC</i>	0,134	-0,134	0,196	0,000
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,504	0,506	0,326	1,000
	<i>N</i>	27	27	27	30
Strategie partnera	<i>PC</i>	-0,208	0,214	,619**	0,186
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,297	0,284	0,001	0,324
	<i>N</i>	27	27	27	30
<b>Sdílení pocitů (Explanation of own Insights)</b>					
	<i>PC</i>	-,406*	,404*	0,247	,373*

Tab. 2b Korelace strategií chování a sexuologických charakteristik - Ženy

Vlastní strategie	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,035	0,036	0,213	0,043
	<i>N</i>	27	27	27	30
Strategie partnera	<i>PC</i>	0,082	-0,081	-0,196	-0,124
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,685	0,686	0,326	0,513
	<i>N</i>	27	27	27	30
<b>Napjaté mlčení</b>					
Vlastní strategie	<i>PC</i>	0,166	-0,165	-0,272	-0,208
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,409	0,411	0,169	0,271
	<i>N</i>	27	27	27	30
Strategie partnera	<i>PC</i>	-0,052	0,052	0,272	,415*
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,796	0,797	0,169	0,023
	<i>N</i>	27	27	27	30
<b>Popírání problému/ Sabotáž</b>					
Vlastní strategie	<i>PC</i>	,449*	-,457*	-0,196	-0,149
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,019	0,017	0,326	0,431
	<i>N</i>	27	27	27	30
Strategie partnera	<i>PC</i>	-0,109	0,109	0,247	0,088
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,587	0,589	0,213	0,643
	<i>N</i>	27	27	27	30
<b>Odvádění pozornosti/pseudořešení</b>					
Vlastní strategie	<i>PC</i>	,384*	-,382*	0,000	-0,208
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,048	0,049	1,000	0,271
	<i>N</i>	27	27	27	30
Strategie partnera	<i>PC</i>	-0,233	0,231	-0,196	-0,149
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,243	0,246	0,326	0,431
	<i>N</i>	27	27	27	30
<b>Vlídne konejšení/přesvědčování</b>					

Tab. 2b Korelace strategií chování a sexuologických charakteristik - Ženy

Vlastní strategie	<i>PC</i>	,384*	-,382*	0,272	0,000
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,048	0,049	0,169	1,000
	<i>N</i>	27	27	27	30
Strategie partnera	<i>PC</i>	0,307	-0,305	-0,109	-0,079
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0,120	0,122	0,588	0,678
	<i>N</i>	27	27	27	30

### Sexuální spokojenost

Na 5-ti bodové škále spokojenosti (1-nejvíce) byla u mužů zjištěna střední hodnota spokojenosti 2,06 (SD=0.961) a u žen 2,0 (SD 0,73). Při převodu na procenta tedy u našich českých a slovenských participantů zjišťujeme 80% spokojenost.

Z údajů uvedených v tabulce č.2 zjišťujeme tři behaviorální strategie související s nižší sexuální spokojeností. Ženy uváděly nižší sexuální spokojenost, když partner standardně Klidně zdůvodňoval. Ženy usuzovaly na partnerovu nižší sexuální spokojenost, když samy používaly Vysvětlování postojů a emocí. Muži pak vypovídali o vlastní nižší sexuální spokojenosti a zároveň vlastním častým Napjatým mlčením. Vyšší spokojenost nebyla asociována s žádným konkrétním typem chování.

### Iniciace sexuálních aktivit

V procentuálním rozložení iniciace sexuálních aktivit mezi partnery uváděla obě pohlaví častější iniciaci styku muži. U žen byl tento rozdíl v percepci aktivity výraznější – muže vnímá jako iniciátora 66% z nich, muži se tak vidí pouze v 57% případů.

Pozitivních výsledků iniciace sexuálních aktivit jsme našli významně více pro ženské chování, než pro chování mužské. Ve většině případů však šlo pouze o ženské (vlastní) výpovědi, nikoliv odpovědi jejich partnerů.

Ženy vypovídaly o vyšší vlastní iniciaci sexuálních aktivit, když samy používaly behaviorální strategie Laskavé pečování, Popírání problému/sabotáž a Odvádění pozornosti a pseudořešení. Tedy, ženy, které se běžně chovají laskavě, nebo vyhýbavě, začínaly sexuální aktivity častěji, než jejich partneři. Muži, kteří uváděli, že začínají sexuální aktivity méně než jejich partnerky, komunikovali strategií Klidného zdůvodňování. Muži i ženy se shodli na vyšší

mužské iniciaci sexuálních aktivit, když žena používala Sdílení pocitů a emocí jako své běžné chování.

## **Diskuse**

### **Sexuální spokojenost**

Naše relativně spokojené páry jsou lehce méně spokojené, než se tradičně uvádí v zahraniční literatuře. Lawrence a Byers (1995) a Oggins et al. (1993) průměrně uváděli 88% spokojenost, oproti našim 80%. V souladu s výsledky studií propojující otevřenou sexuální komunikaci s vyšší sexuální spokojeností (Byers, 2011; Mark & Jozkowski, 2013) se přitom i u našich strategií prokázala nízká mužská sexuální spokojenost u mužského Napjatého mlčení. Nižší sexuální spokojenost je v případě, kdy se staví komunikační bariéra mezi partnery, více než logická. Ženské odpovědi však žádnou souvislost s vlastní spokojeností ani iniciací neprokázaly. Což je zajímavé v situaci, kdy jsou partnerem vlastně odmítány a partner není spokojený.

Oproti tradiční literatuře (Clymers et al., 2008; Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Mark et al., 2018; Rouleau et al., 2018), byly pouze dvě další strategie chování, které naznačily souvislost s nespokojeností. U Klidného zdůvodňování jsme našli souvislost, kdy muži, kteří klidně, fakticky a otevřeně komunikovali se svými partnerkami, předpokládali nižší sexuální spokojenost žen - a jejich partnerky to skutečně i potvrdily. Také u Vysvětlování pocitů ženami, které v konfliktních interakcích nechávaly partnera nahlédnout do svého nitra, měly respondentky představu, že jejich partner je méně sexuálně spokojený. Jejich partneři tento však tento dojem nesdíleli.

Pro vysvětlení rozporu s literaturou o otevřené komunikaci a spokojenosti (Byers, 2011; Mark & Jozkowski, 2013) by bylo zajímavé zjistit, zda oba partneři v interakci používali přímou provztahovou komunikaci. Mohlo totiž jít pouze o pokus jednoho partnera, přičemž druhý mohl reagovat vyhýbavě či úzkostně – pak by byl náš poznatek v souladu se zjištěními jiných studií (Clymers et al., 2008; Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Mark et al., 2018; Rouleau et al., 2018). Jiné vysvětlení by mohlo spočívat v předpokladu, že typické komunikační vzorce v partnerství zůstávají podobné napříč různými tématy (Jones, 1996). Je tedy možné, že ačkoliv pár řešil konfliktní interakce v jiných oblastech vlídně a rozumně, nemusí se tak dít v oblasti sexuální komunikace (Mark & Jozkowski, 2013; Byers, 2011; Theiss, 2011).



## **Iniciace sexuálních aktivit**

Distribuce iniciace sexuálních aktivit je u našeho souboru v souladu s literaturou (např. Byers & Heinlein, 1989), která uvádí vyšší iniciaci sexuálních aktivit muži obecně. I rozdíl v poměru mezi pohlavími v roli iniciátora je v souladu s výpověďmi participantů v jiných studiích, kdy se představa partnerů a realita četnosti chování rovněž často různí (Simms & Byers, 2009, 2013, Greer & Buss, 1994).

Ženy se strategií Sdílení vlastního prožívání mají představu nižší partnerovy sexuální spokojenosti a zároveň nechávají vyšší iniciativu v oblasti sexuálních aktivit na partnerovi. Může jít o vliv jejich vztahové nejistoty (Impett et al., 2008), a tedy vyhýbání se iniciaci aktivit kvůli obavám ze selhání. Naopak může být jejich komunikace velmi otevřená, přičemž tento vzorec chování naznačuje tradičnější rozložení dominance, kdy je stejná a vyšší mužská dominance asociována s vyšší vztahovou spokojeností (Lindová et al., 2020) a v souladu s literaturou i s častějším zahajováním sexuálních aktivit muži (Byers & Heinlein, 1989).

Zároveň Klidně vysvětlující muži měli představu vyšší iniciace sexuálních aktivit jejich partnerkami. Ženy ovšem tento dojem nesdílely. Vysvětlením by mohla být vztahová spokojenost mužů přetavená do představy o vyšší sexuální aktivitě partnerek (Simms & Byers, 2013). Nabízí se i možnost, že pokud mezi partnery panuje klidná, laskavá atmosféra a problémy partneri řeší s respektem jak k faktům, tak emocím svým i druhého, mají partneri "představu" o tom, že jejich partner iniciuje více (Simms & Byers, 2013). Je možné, že otevřená vlídná komunikace otevírá brány představě, že jsme chtění, což promítneme i do představy o vyšší iniciaci aktivit partnerem. Stejně vysvětlení je platné i v opačném směru, kdy v atmosféře obran a útoků (např. výčitek, znehodnocování činů partnera) je přirozené vidět a obhajovat více vlastní přičinění a vlastní snahy oproti partnerovým/partnerčiným.

Nižší sexuální spokojenost však může značit "kamarádštější" vztahy, kde je harmonická shoda důležitější než sexuální aktivita. Nižší stupeň napětí ve vztahu může odrážet nižší míru sexuálního napětí, a tedy nižší sexuální aktivitu a iniciaci. Mnoho párů ale uvádí nízkou důležitost sexuality pro život. Je možné, že ve spokojeném vztahu s otevřenou komunikací nehraje sexualita tak významnou roli. V těchto párech pak mohou lidé přičítat vinu za nízkou iniciaci sexuálních aktivit sami sobě.

Intimita, něha a péče je základem strategie Laskavého pečování a pozitivní korelace s iniciací sexuálních aktivit tedy není překvapující. Ačkoliv tato strategie byla projevoována

oběma pohlavími, je zajímavé, že pozitivní souvislost vychází pouze pro ženské chování. Ženy a muži používají k uklidnění partnera pravděpodobně jiné druhy partnerských strategií. Je možné, že muži se zaměřují více na láskyplné dotyky a verbální ujišťování, zatímco ženy pokračují dále k návrhu intimní sexuální aktivity.

V samotných partnerských interakcích (scénkách a interview) se během výzkumu neobjevila ani jedinou snaha o řešení konfliktu skrze erotické a sexuální chování. Ženy ale během přehrávání typického partnerského konfliktu projevily flirtování i roztomilé a hravé strategie řešení konfliktu (podobné uvádí např. Greer & Buss, 1994). V tomto kontextu bychom mohli porozumět i výsledku větší sexuální iniciativy těch žen, které využívaly strategie Popírání problému/sabotáž a Odvádění pozornosti a pseudořešení (tedy nepřímé vyhýbavé strategie). Dle literatury úzkostnější, a možná i závislejší ženy mohou iniciovat sexuální aktivity ve větší míře kvůli pocitu vztahové nejistoty (Impett et al., 2008).

## **Závěr**

Naše studie ilustruje novou metodu zjišťující reálné projevy partnerského chování a komunikace formou Partnerského dramatu. Porovnáváme přitom pohled obou partnerů, tak i tematické propojení 15-ti behaviorálních dominantních strategií se základními sexuologickými otázkami, v tomto případě se sexuální spokojeností a s iniciativou sexuálních styků.

Méně spokojené byly ženy, jejichž partner Klidně zdůvodňoval. Méně spokojení byli muži, kteří Napjatě mlčeli. A ženy měly představu, že jejich partner není sexuálně spokojený, když Klidně vysvětlovaly své emoce a postoje.

Ty ženy, které častěji zahajovaly sexuální aktivity než jejich partner, používaly strategie Laskavé pečování, Popírání problému/sabotáž a Odvádění pozornosti/pseudořešení. Muži iniciovali sex více v těch párech, kde jejich partnerka používala strategii Vysvětlování pocitů a emocí. Naopak méně zahajovali muži sexuální aktivity, když sami Klidně zdůvodňovali.

Další studie především kvantitativního charakteru by dle našeho názoru měly především ověřit souvislosti sexuální (ne)spokojenosti a míry iniciace sexuálních aktivit hlavně s ženským laskavě vyhýbavým chováním a mužským napjatým mlčením. U obou pohlaví pak prověřit i klidné otevřené druhy komunikace.

## Dedikace

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#### **Approval of co-authorship and agreement with use of scientific publication in Ph.D. thesis**

I, Petr Weiss, am informed and agree that Denisa Prusova will use the article "Strategie partnerské komunikace, sexuální spokojenost a iniciace sexuálních aktivit v dlouhodobých romantických vztazích" as part of her Ph.D.

As an advisor and co-author I confirm that Denisa Prusova has participated on following study  
Průšová, D. & Weiss, P. (2021). Strategie partnerské komunikace, sexuální spokojenost a iniciace sexuálních aktivit v dlouhodobých romantických vztazích. *Sexuologia*. Accepted for 1/2021


By

Literature review, study design, method creation, data collection, preparation and analysing, results interpretation, manuscript preparation.

In: Prague

Date: 26-2-2021

Signature:

  
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**Approval of co-authorship and agreement with the use of scientific publications in Denisa Průšová's Ph.D. thesis**

I, Jitka Lindová, am informed and agree that Denisa Průšová will use the articles "Nonverbal behavior contrasts the respectful, coercive, affectionate and ignoring domineering strategies", "Power Distribution and Relationship Quality in Long-Term Heterosexual Couples", and "Successful domineering strategies in romantic couples conflict" as part of her Ph.D. thesis.

As a co-author I confirm that Denisa Průšová has participated on following studies by:

Lindová, J., Průšová, D., Klapilová, K. (2012). Nonverbal behavior contrasts the respectful, coercive, affectionate and ignoring domineering strategies, 111-125. *Antropologie*, 50(1). Denisa Průšová participated on designing the study, and preparing conceptual background for the study, and was responsible for participants management and data collection. This study followed from Denisa Průšová's project during her study supervised by me (Jitka Lindová), where the data were reanalyzed and the paper was written by me.

Lindová, J., Průšová, D., Klapilová, K. (2020). Power Distribution and Relationship Quality in Long-Term Heterosexual Couples. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 1-14. Denisa Průšová managed a part of the participants, and collected a part of the data. The article in its present form was designed by me and Kateřina Klapilová, and written by me. It was created after Denisa Průšová changed her supervisor. We were happy to be able to use the data that she collected during her studies under my supervision as a part of the sample.

Průšová, D., Adams, A., Klapilová, K., Lindová, J., Dunbar, N. (2017, May 25-29). Successful domineering strategies in romantic couples conflict. *Conference of The International Communication Association*, San Diego, CA, USA.

Denisa Průšová was the main contributor to all parts of the paper.

In: *Prague*

Date: *26.2.21*

Signature: *[Handwritten signature]*



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**Approval of co-authorship and agreement with use of scientific publication in Ph.D. thesis**

I, Kateřina Klapilová, am informed and agree that Denisa Prusova will use articles “Nonverbal behavior contrasts the respectful, coercive, affectionate and ignoring domineering strategies”, “Power Distribution and Relationship Quality in Long-Term Heterosexual Couples”, and “Successful domineering strategies in romantic couples conflict” as part of her Ph.D. thesis.

In: PRAGUE Date: 8.3.2021

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Klapilová', written over a circular stamp.



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**Approval of co-authorship and agreement with use of scientific publication in Ph.D. thesis**

I, Norah Dunbar, am informed and agree that Denisa Prusova will use the article “Průšová, D., Adams, A., Klapilova, K., Lindová, J., Dunbar, N. (2017, May 25-29). Successful domineering strategies in romantic couples conflict. *Conference of The International Communication Association*, San Diego, CA, USA.” as part of her Ph.D. thesis.

In: Santa Barbara      Date: March 11, 2021

Signature:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Norah Dunbar'.



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**Approval of co-authorship and agreement with use of scientific publication in Ph.D. thesis**

I, Aubrie Adams, am informed and agree that Denisa Prusova will use the article “Průšová, D., Adams, A., Klapilova, K., Lindová, J., Dunbar, N. (2017, May 25-29). Successful domineering strategies in romantic couples conflict. *Conference of The International Communication Association*, San Diego, CA, USA.” as part of her Ph.D. thesis.

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