

## **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 Findings from yet unpublished studies that were presented at conferences and are relevant to specific topics are included as well as one case study illustrating dominance ascription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