

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN DYADIC DOMINANCE DURING INTERPERSONAL INTERACTION: THE COMPARISON OF FRIENDS' DYADS AND ROMANTIC COUPLES

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Abstract. Background. Dominance can be found in every dyadic relationship including romantic couples, friendships or business partnership. Even though research confirms that men tend to have more power than woman not only in romantic relationships, but also in friendships. However, some scholars doubt that men's dominance and women's submissiveness are just an established stereotype. Thus, more information about gender differences in power distribution in different types of dyads (friends and romantic) during interpersonal interaction is needed. **Aim.** The aim of this study was to assess the differences in male and female dominance during the interpersonal interaction considering the types of dyads (same-sex friendships or heterosexual romantic partners). **Participants.** 36 dyads participated in this study, which consisted of male friends' dyads (N = 12), female friends' dyads (N = 12), and heterosexual romantic couples (N = 12). The participants aged between 18 and 31 years old with a mean age of 22 years old (SD = 2.23). **Method.** The study consisted of two stages. In the first stage, the participants were asked some questions about themselves and their relationship, and were invited to participate in the experiment. All of the participants were informed about the terms of experiment (usage of video record) and were able to express their willingness to participate in this study in written form. The second stage of the research was a quasi-experiment. During this stage participants, i.e. friends and romantic partners' dyads, played the game "Jenga" for about 20 minutes. **Results, conclusion.** It was found that women tend to dominate more than men during the interpersonal interaction in general and in romantic couples. No differences in dominance were found comparing female friends' and male friends' dyads. However, more dominance was found in heterosexual romantic couples comparing to the male and female friends' dyads.

Keywords: dyad; dominance; romantic couple; same-sex friends; interpersonal interaction.

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INTRODUCTION

The Importance of dominance in Interpersonal Relations

It is known that dominance is an integral part of any relationship, especially in intimate ones, because of the partners' interdependence and inevitable mutual decisions (Dunbar, 2004). Based on the equality theory, which suggests that the balance of equality in relationships is the most comfortable and even people themselves in various ways tend to convince themselves that they are in equal relationships (even if they are not), and, if they recognize inequality, then they try to use both verbal and non-verbal techniques to prevent power imbalances (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). However, inequality in relationships is inevitable when partners in relationships are different from one another, the dominant partner arises, and who will be inclined to control relationships (Burgoon, Hansaker, & Dawson, 1995). This individual's tendency to dominate and have the power allow him or her to take a decision-making position not only in intimate relationships, but also in the society, and their decisions have certain consequences to other persons (Guinote, 2007).

The concept of dominance is associated with psychological factors that determine the need to dominate, i.e. to be superior to your partner. According to the literature it can be observed that the concept of dominance is widely used in many areas, as well as in medicine, business, and psychology (Willing, 2008). Though dominance is used in many fields, but it is inseparable from the two things: personal qualities and communication with other people (Willing, 2008). As it is known, communication can be divided into verbal communication, i.e. a naturally occurring language, and non-verbal communication, i.e. directly observed communication, which can be both gestures and facial expressions (Carter, 2010). Thus, to recognize the dominance in relationships, it is necessary to monitor both verbal and non-verbal communication. According to the scientific literature, non-verbal dominance includes such aspects as an open body posture, smiling, showing dissatisfaction, head twisting, abnormal intonation, and similar features (Helgeson, 2012, Carney, Hall, & LeBau 2005, Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000). Meanwhile, the verbal domination reveals giving orders for the partner what to do, presenting of arguments, and interrupting conversations (Helgeson, 2012, Lamb, 1981).

Most of the cultural and social factors reveal that males have higher dominance positions and possess social dominance orientation (Foels & Pappas, 2004, Pula, McPherson, & Parks, 2012). In addition, women confirm male dominance in relationships by claiming that they see men as more able to dominate in relationships (Dunbar, Bippus, & Young, 2008). However, there is the opposite opinion too, stating that position of both women and men in dominance is the same (Caricati, 2007, Straus, 2008).

Dominance in Heterosexual Romantic Relationships

It is stated that dominance in romantic relationships depends on the position of the partner, regardless of his/her age (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). However, it was observed that most of the persons involved in research are young, mostly students of different specialties (Lennon et al., 2012, Sprencher & Felmlee, 1997, Rogers, Bidwell, & Wilson, 2005). As it was mentioned before, dominance depends on the partner's position, in other words, if one partner dominates and takes a leading role in relationships, then the other will take obedient position and will be inclined to accept the dominant partner's proposals (Burgoon, Hunsaker, & Dawson 1994). In most cases this dominant position is predisposed by gender, even though women generally tend to believe that they are in equal relationships in making mutual decisions, but at the same time, men believe that they are the ones who have the most power in relationships (Sprencher & Felmlee, 1997). It can be assumed that men seek to take precedence in the relationship than women and to dominate in the decision-making (Galliher et al., 1999, Ponzi, Klimczuk, Traficonte, & Maestripieri, 2014).

Research show that women admire dominant partners, believing that such persons will be able to defend them, will be able to compete, and will be able to reach heights (Snyder, Kirkpatrick, & Barrett, 2008). Women also experience more satisfaction of relationships when men have a higher decision-making authority in relationships. However, women also evaluate themselves as having a certain power in relationships and more dominant when they are in equal power with their partners (Dunbar et al., 2008). There are two conditions in which women tend to assess themselves as having more influence on their partner: it is hoping (a) that they will take proposals mutual to the activities of their

couple; (b) that they will consider the number of solutions in which she can say more.

However, in most cases taking mutual decisions easily and without conflict about leisure activities are in the equal couples rather than in the couples which are characterized as strongly or weakly dominant (Ponzi et al., 2014). However, the most important thing is that the dominance is important for the relationship, because couples without a clear dominance argue less than couples with strong or weak dominance (Ponzi et al., 2014).

Dominance in Same-Sex Friendships

Same-sex friendship is perceived as a close relationship between a woman and a woman, and a man with a man. It is stated that men's and women's friendships are different, and one of those differences is that women's friendship is much closer than men's (Helgeson, 2012). It is likely that women's friendships are closer due to the need to have a warm, supportive and long-term relationships, and this is confirmed by Tani, Smorti and Peterson (2015) who state that women are more characterized in social support, intimacy, admiration and support. If the women's friendship is characterized by closeness, then the men's friendship shows competition between them (Helgeson, 2012).

Analyzing men's and women's dominance in both friendships and romantic relationships it can be stated that they are different, since it was discovered that women's friendship is more as a union, where much less dominance is envisaged (Dunbar & Abra, 2010), whilst, at the same time, in men friends' interaction much greater mutual domination was found (Moskowitz, 1993). It was noticed that men who are characterized as having a higher level of dominance and power imbalances will suffer negative emotions in friendship more often (Tani et al., 2015). As a result, it can be assumed that different power in friendships will be a kind of aspect which affects the poor quality of relations (Veniegas & Peplau, 1997).

Scientific studies found that despite women's development of close relations, one of the girlfriends, however, will demonstrate the dominance. It was discovered that the female domination is different from that of male; rather, their perception is different, because, according to Youngquist (2009), this is because of the intervention of a woman in the

same sex dyad will be perceived as more dominant than men intervention in the same sex dyad, which suggests that women in same-sex relationships tend to dominate more than men.

To summarize, the research confirms that dominance in any relationship is related to relationship satisfaction and may influence other important aspects of social interactions (e.g. number of conflicts, level of intimacy, and violence). However, there is a lack of research comparing behavioral aspects of dominance (both verbal and non-verbal) in different types of personal relationships (romantic relationships, friendships). Thus, this research is aimed at measuring observable features of dominance during the interpersonal interaction in different types of dyads (heterosexual romantic couples and male/female same-sex friends' dyads), and to compare the expression of these features among different types of dyads.

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Procedure

Participants. A total of 36 dyads (72 persons), consisted of 12 heterosexual romantic partners, 12 women friends, and 12 men friends participated in this study. Most of the participants were psychology students from Vytautas Magnus University (18 women and 17 men), but there were students from other universities and specialties, such as medicine, sociology, social work, history, marketing management, public health, physical activity, and programming.

The duration of dyad companionship differed: the shortest duration of companionship was between heterosexual romantic partners (2 months), and the longest duration of companionship was between men friends (16 years).

Experimental procedure. The study was conducted in March-May 2015. It consisted of two phases. First of all, the participants answered several demographic questions and questionnaire of personal dominance, and then after one week they were invited to participate in the experiment at Vytautas Magnus University. All dyads (heterosexual romantic couples, male and female same-sex friends) separately were invited to play a board game "Jenga" in the same room with the same conditions and instructions without information about the real aim of this task. This play

was recorded on the video camera. The duration of one play session was 20 minutes. This task was chosen because it allows creating the situation with both possibilities to demonstrate behavioral (positive and negative, verbal and non-verbal) dominance while playing, and the features of typical communication in dyads. Previous research measuring power distribution during social interactions also uses this game (e.g. Liu, Mok, Witt, Pradhan, Chen & Reiss, 2016). After the experiment each dyad was asked about the satisfaction of their communication and was provided with the information about the real aim of the task and short debriefing. The recommendation for this research was acquired from the Psychologists' Professional Ethics Board at Vytautas Magnus University.

Measures

Socio-Demographic Questions and Questionnaire of Subjective Personal Dominance

At the beginning of the study the participants were asked to provide personal information (name, partner's name, phone number, and e-mail). This data was requested to invite them to the second part of the study. Also, the participants answered demographic questions: age, sex, education, profession, working status, duration of friendship (in years), who was the initiator of the friendship. If they were e-friends and not romantic couples, they had to answer two additional questions: do they have romantic relations with someone outside this friendship; and, (if yes), what does their romantic partner think about this friendship?

The questionnaire about subjective personal dominance based on Burgoon and Dunbar (2000), and Dunbar and Burgoon (2005) was also provided for the participants. They had to assess their behavior during the interaction in 7-point semantic differential scale. The items included such adjectives as dominant/submissive, confident/unconfident, etc. in the opposite sites on the scale. Internal reliability of the scale was sufficient (Cronbach's alpha = .64). This scale was used as validity measure of behavioral features of observed dominance.

Behavioural Evaluation of the Dominance

Based on the previous experimental research of dyadic social interaction, verbal and non-verbal features of dominance were identified.

Verbal dominance consisted of four elements: telling other what to do, presenting arguments, successful and unsuccessful intrusions into other's speech (Helgeson, 2012, Lamb, 1981). Non-verbal dominance consisted of 9 features: talkativeness, loud speaking (Driskell, Olmstead, & Salas, 1993, Norton & Miller, 1975), positive emotions (smile, happiness, laughter), negative emotions (dissatisfaction, anger) (Hall, Coats, & Lebau, 2005, Carney et al., 2005, Hareli, Shomrat, & Hess, 2009, Lamb, 1981, Montepare & Dobish, 2003), disagreement, demonstration of disapproval (head shaking, expostulating voice with "um/ah") (Helgeson, 2012, Carney et al., 2005), self-touching, touching other, an open body posture, legs wide (shoulder width apart), hands folded together (crossed), hands widely placed on the table (rest on the table), hands placed on hips, both hands placed over the head) (Carney et al., 2005, Hall et al., 2005). All these features were coded watching visual material (one record time was 15 minutes). Both individuals of each dyad were observed and their behavior was recorded counting how many times a particular feature was repeated during the session (Hall et al., 2005, Luxen, 2005).

To ensure the validity of observed behavioral features of dominance video surveillance was performed by two experts (the authors of this paper). The experts performed monitoring of 11 from 36 dyads that participated in this survey (5 heterosexual romantic couples, 3 female same-sex, and 3 male same-sex friends), which represents about 31% of all the participants. The experts' compliance was evaluated using Spearman's correlation coefficients between all dominance features, taking $r \geq .7$ as the lowest value for validity (Ekman & O'Sullivan, 1991; Park & Levine, 2001). It was found that seven elements could be valued as reliable features of dominance in this study: telling the other what to do ($r = .82$), presenting arguments ($r = .86$), positive emotions ($r = .97$), disagreement ($r = .71$), demonstration of disapproval ($r = .91$), self-touching ($r = .99$), open body posture ($r = .96$). Additionally, general score of dominance as well as verbal and non-verbal dominance were used.

In order to assess validity of behavioral features of dominance, correlation analysis between verbal, non-verbal and general score of dominance and subjective scale of personal dominance was implemented using Spearman's correlation coefficient. The results showed weak, but significant or nearly significant correlations between these components:

correlation between verbal dominance and subjective dominance was .23 ($p = .05$), non-verbal dominance and subjective dominance $-.21$ ($p = .08$), general score of dominance and subjective dominance $-.31$ ($p < .01$).

It could be stated that subjective evaluation of personal dominance of participants somewhat corresponds to their actual behavior during interpersonal interaction.

RESULTS

The Comparison of Male and Female Dominance During Interpersonal Interaction

Based on previous research it was expected that both verbal and non-verbal dominance would be more typical for men than for women. In order to test this assumption, all features of dominance and scores of verbal, non-verbal, and general dominance were evaluated between male and female participants despite their relationship status using non-parametric Mann-Whitney criteria (Table 1).

Table 1. *The comparison of dominance features between men and women (N = 72)*

<i>Feature of dominance</i>	<i>Males mean rank n = 36</i>	<i>Females mean rank n = 36</i>	<i>U</i>
Telling other what to do	35.26	36.17	636.00 ns
Presenting arguments	33.88	39.13	553.50 ns
Positive emotions	33.90	39.10	554.50 ns
Disagreements	37.06	35.94	628.00 ns
Demonstration of disapproval	34.37	38.61	572.00 ns
Self-touching	29.71	43.29	403.50**
Open body posture	39.88	33.13	526.50 ns
Verbal dominance	35.26	37.74	603.50 ns
Non-verbal dominance	32.19	40.81	493.00 ns
General score of dominance	31.57	41.43	470.50*

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

ns non significant

The results show that women tend to dominate more than men, especially in non-verbal reactions: they scored higher in self-touching compared to men.

The Comparison of Male and Female Dominance in Heterosexual Romantic Couples

In order to evaluate the assumption that men tend to dominate both verbally and non-verbally during interpersonal interactions in romantic couples compared to women, comparison of dominance features between heterosexual romantic partners, using non-parametric Wilcoxon's criteria for two related samples was used (see Table 2).

Table 2. *The comparison of dominance features between heterosexual romantic partners (N = 12)*

<i>Feature of dominance</i>	<i>Negative mean rank^a</i>	<i>Positive mean rank^b</i>	<i>Z</i>
Telling other what to do	5.75	6.30	-.13 ns
Presenting arguments	5.07	7.63	-.22 ns
Positive emotions	6.00	6.00	-1.33 ns
Disagreements	5.13	5.75	-.74 ns
Demonstration of disapproval	5.29	4.00	-1.73 ns
Self-touching	6.50	6.50	-.51 ns
Open body posture	4.33	7.22	-2.04*
Verbal dominance	5.83	6.20	-.18 ns
Non-verbal dominance	6.33	6.67	-.08 ns
General score of dominance	6.10	6.79	-.67 ns

* p < .05

** p < .01

ns non significant

^a male dominance mean rank is higher compared to female

^b female dominance mean rank is higher compared to male

Unexpectedly, the results reveal that women are more likely to use an open body posture than men. No other differences in male and female dominance in the heterosexual romantic couples were found.

The Comparison of Dominance Among Different Types of Dyads

In order to evaluate the assumption that expression of dominance differ in different types of dyads, several evaluations of two independent samples using Mann-Whitney criteria were done. Total scores of verbal, non-verbal, and general scores of dominance of each type of dyad (female same-sex, male same-sex, and heterosexual romantic couples) were compared. First of all, the comparison of dominance between male and female same-sex friends' dyads was tested (see Table 3).

Table 3. *The comparison of features of dominance between male and female same-sex friends' dyads (N = 24)*

<i>Feature of dominance</i>	<i>Female friends' mean rank</i>	<i>Male friends' mean rank</i>	<i>U</i>
Verbal dominance	13.38	11.63	61.50 ns
Non-verbal dominance	14.29	10.71	50.50 ns
General score of dominance	14.38	10.63	49.50 ns

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

ns non significant

The results show that no statistically significant differences in dominance between female and male same-sex dyads were found.

Similar comparison of dominance was done between heterosexual romantic couples and female same-sex dyads. and between romantic couples and male same-sex friends' dyads (see Table 4 and Table 5).

Table 4. *The comparison of features of dominance between dyads of heterosexual romantic partners and female same-sex friends (N = 24)*

<i>Feature of dominance</i>	<i>Romantic couples' mean rank</i>	<i>Female friends' mean rank</i>	<i>U</i>
Verbal dominance	15.29	9.71	38.50*
Non-verbal dominance	12.75	12.25	69.00 ns
General score of dominance	13.67	11.33	58.00 ns

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

ns non significant

The results revealed that more verbal dominance was expressed in heterosexual romantic couples compared to female same-sex friends' dyads.

Table 5. *The comparison of features of dominance between dyads of heterosexual romantic partners and male same-sex friends (N = 24)*

<i>Feature of dominance</i>	<i>Romantic couples' mean rank</i>	<i>Male friends' mean rank</i>	<i>U</i>
Verbal dominance	16.50	8.50	24.00**
Non-verbal dominance	14.83	10.17	44.00 ns
General score of dominance	16.58	8.42	23.00**

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

ns non significant

The comparison of heterosexual romantic couples and male same-sex friends' dyads revealed that verbal and general score of dominance were more common between romantic partners than male friends' dyads.

DISCUSSION

This study was aimed at evaluating the differences in dominance during interpersonal interaction between males and females in different types of relational dyads (heterosexual romantic couples, female and male same-sex friends' dyads) As there is a lack of research on observable features of dominance among these three groups of dyads, experimental design of the study was implemented, where the participants were allowed for interpersonal interaction during the mutual board game "Jenga", when verbal and non-verbal features of dominance were examined. Previous research on verbal and non-verbal types of dominance was mainly implemented in one type of dyadic relationships, for example, between romantic partners (Durbarn & Burgoon, 2005) or between friends (Moskowitz, 1993). Meanwhile, this study examined both heterosexual romantic partners and same-sex friends' dyads where all three types of dyads were compared with each other, which allowed

measuring how female and male participants will tend to dominate interacting in opposite sex or the same sex dyads. This study also allowed to evaluate which sex is more dominant and in which features.

Even though it was expected that male participants will show more verbal and non-verbal dominance in the interpersonal interaction compared to females (based on Gonzaga, Keltner, & Ward, 2008, Ponzi, Klimczuk, Traficante, & Maestripieri, 2014; McCreary & Rhodes, 2001; Luxen, 2005), but this study showed completely opposite results. It was found that women in general tend to dominate more than men, especially non-verbally. The same results in gender differences were also found in heterosexual romantic couples. These contradictory results might be explained in several ways. First of all, most of the previous research in power imbalance of two genders was done based on subjective general evaluations about their own and their partner's dominance (Sprecher, 1997; Ponzi et al., 2014). Usually these subjective evaluations do not correspond highly to objective behavioral features of the dominance during the specific tasks. On the other hand, experimental research on dyadic dominance in the laboratory settings mostly are implemented with female and male participants who are strangers (Luxen, 2005; Gonzaga, Keltner, & Ward, 2008) or are instructed to implement some specific role (e.g. act equally during the task (Dunbar & Abra, 2010)), despite their own personal dominance. Thus, there is a lack of more solid evidence for gender differences in behavioral elements of dominance during the observable task. Another potential explanation of more expressed female non-verbal dominance might be related to gender roles and gender stereotypes. It is known that females are more concerned in relationship maintenance and more experienced in both perception and expression of non-verbal clues, especially in the intimate relationships (Briton & Hall, 1995; Reeder, 2003). Thus, a more expressed use of open body posture and non-verbal dominance in general might contribute to the previous explanations.

The comparison of dominance among the three types of dyads revealed unexpected results, also. Even though it was expected that the imbalance of power will be seen in same-sex friends' dyads (Dwyer, 2000), especially, in male same-sex friends compared to female same-sex friends (Moskowitz, 1993), but the results of this study showed no differences in the dominance between female and male friends' dyads,

and more features of the dominance were found in heterosexual romantic couples compared to both female and male friends' dyads. These results might be explained twofold. First of all, gender roles and perceived similarity between friends versus romantic partners might be important. The previous research shows that the individuals of the same sex during the interactions tend to behave similarly, usually based on their perceived gender roles (Reeder, 2003); the expectations towards same-sex friendships are also not so high and demanding compared to romantic relationships (Fuhrman, Flannagan, & Matamoros, 2009). Thus, no need for the dominance is needed during the interpersonal interactions in same-sex friends' dyads. On the other hand, other factors might be important in explaining the differences in dominance among these three groups of dyads. The duration of relationship, previous power distribution in dyads might be important explaining the results of this study.

In the end, some limitations of this study must be outlined. A small number of participants took part in this study; thus, the statistical power of the results was quite low. A higher number of dyads might help to provide more sounded conclusions. On the other hand, our study sample consisted mainly of students and included limited spectrum of all possible relational dyads (e.g., we were not able to invite homosexual romantic couples or cross-sex friends' dyads). To receive more representative data, it is necessary to have a greater number of different age participants, representing full range of possible relational dyads. Additionally, taking into account other important factors, related to power distribution in dyads, would also be beneficial.

Despite these limitations, this study is valuable for scholars interested in gender and relational status interaction for behavioral aspects of dominance. These results might also be useful for the practitioners working with couples facing communication problems.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Female are more inclined to demonstrate dyadic dominance compared to male during interpersonal interaction despite the type of relationship; they are also more inclined to use open posture as a feature of non-verbal dominance in heterosexual romantic couples compared to males.

2. No differences in dyadic dominance were found between male and female same-sex friends' dyads.
3. More verbal dyadic dominance was found in heterosexual romantic couples compared to both female and male same-sex friends' dyads.

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LYČIŲ DOMINAVIMO SKIRTUMAI TARPASMENINĖS SĄVEIKOS METU: DRAUGŲ DIADŲ IR ROMANTINIŲ PORŲ PALYGINIMAS

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Santrauka. Problema. Dominavimas gali pasireikšti bet kokiuose diadiniuose santykiuose, apimant romantinius santykius, draugystes ar darbinį kontekstą. Ir, nors tyrimai patvirtina, kad vyrai yra linkę labiau dominuoti nei moterys ne vien romantiniuose, bet ir draugiškuose santykiuose, dalis mokslininkų abejoja ir laiko tokį skirtumą lyčių

stereotipų pavyzdžiu. Taigi, reikia daugiau informacijos apie lyčių dominavimo skirtumus skirtingose diadose (draugų ir romantinių partnerių) tarpasmeninės sąveikos metu. **Tyrimo tikslas** – įvertinti vyrų ir moterų dominavimo skirtumus tarpasmeninės sąveikos metu, atsižvelgiant į diados tipą (tos pačios lyties draugų pora ar heteroseksualių romantinių partnerių pora). **Tyrimo dalyviai**. Tyrime dalyvavo 36 diados, iš kurių 12 buvo vyrų draugų poros, 12 moterų draugių poros ir 12 heteroseksualių romantinių porų. Dalyvių amžius buvo pasiskirstęs nuo 18 iki 31 metų (amžiaus vidurkis – 22 metai, $SN = 2,23$). **Tyrimo metodai**. Tyrimą sudarė du etapai. Pirmojo etapo metu tyrimo dalyviai atsakė į kelis klausimus, susijusius su jais asmeniškai bei jų santykiams ir buvo pakviesti sudalyvauti eksperimente. Visi dalyviai buvo informuoti apie eksperimento sąlygas (kad jų elgesys bus filmuojamas) ir galėjo išreikšti savo sutikimą dalyvauti tyrime raštu. Antrasis tyrimo etapas – kvazi eksperimentas, kurio metu visos diados žaidė stalo žaidimą „Jenga“ maždaug 20 minučių. **Rezultatai, išvada**. Gauta, kad moterys yra labiau linkusios dominuoti nei vyrai tarpasmeninės sąveikos metu tiek bendrai (neatsižvelgiant į diados tipą), tiek ir romantinėse porose. Dominavimo skirtumų nebuvo rasta lyginant draugių moterų ir draugų vyrų poras. Tačiau daugiau dominavimo požymių buvo rasta heteroseksualiųose romantinėse porose lyginant tiek su vyrų draugų, tiek ir su moterų draugių poromis.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: diados, dominavimas, romantinės poros, tos pačios lyties asmenų draugystės, tarpasmeninė sąveika.

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