Educate and Empower: An Online Intervention to Improve College Women's Knowledge

and Confidence When Communicating in a Romantic Relationship

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Historically, and especially during the covid-19 pandemic, the vast majority of unpaid family care has been provided by women with devastating associated outcomes including lost jobs, increased poverty, and mental health concerns (Almeida et al., 2020; Dang et al., 2020; LeanIn, 2020; Power, 2020). In addition, many women experience relationship dissatisfaction (The Austin Institute for the Study of Family and Culture, 2014). Typically, women report lower relationship satisfaction than men (Boerner et al., 2014; Bulanda et al., 2011; Jackson et al., 2014; Lewin, 2017; Windsor & Butterworth, 2010); one study found that only 57.4% of women reported that their marriages were "very happy" (Smith et al., 2015). For many women, relationship dissatisfaction may be a contributing factor to depression (Whitton & Whisman, 2010; Woods et al., 2019). Family work distribution, defined as the way in which household labor and child care is shared between a couple, has been shown to relate to women's relationship satisfaction with relationship satisfaction increasing as the distribution of family work becomes more equal (Galovan et al., 2014; Helms et al., 2010; Ogolsky et al., 2014). In addition, communication, defined as sharing thoughts and feelings in a positive way, is a salient predictor of women's relationship satisfaction as communication quality is positively associated with satisfaction (Bannon et al., 2020; Carroll et al., 2013). Heterosexual and cisgender identifying women are the focus of this study because straight couples report greater relationship inequity in the domain of housework and communication compared to same-sex couples (Gotta et al., 2011). Young women are an especially important population to educate regarding salient predictors of relationship satisfaction because they typically have not made long-term

relationship commitments (Brown, 2020). Thus, the purpose of this study is fourfold: (1) to educate college women about family work distribution, (2) to teach college women about effective communication in a romantic relationship, (3) to educate college women about a model of effective communication, and (4) to increase college women's confidence in communicating effectively with their future partner. This intervention is aimed to empower young women to make thoughtful choices regarding their future partner based on research related to healthy romantic relationships. Ultimately this intervention may increase future relationship satisfaction, reduce depression in women, and equalize family work distribution for women.

Relationship Dissatisfaction and Outcomes

Women provide the vast majority of unpaid family care (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2016), and the increasing care needs due to the covid-19 pandemic are disproportionately assumed by women as they are more likely to work part-time, reduce their work hours, have less job security, and earn lower income (Alon et al., 2020; Carlson et al., in press; Collins et al., 2020; Hess et al., 2020; LeanIn, 2020; Power, 2020). The inequitable share of unpaid care work assumed by women is related to devastating outcomes including increased stress and poverty, and reduced physical, mental, and relational wellbeing (Bevans & Sternberg, 2012; Eisler & Otis, 2014; Hamel & Salganicoff, 2020; Hess, et al., 2020).

Even prior to the pandemic, women overall reported lower marital happiness and global marital satisfaction than men (Boerner et al., 2014; Bulanda, 2011; Jackson et al., 2014; Lewin, 2017). In 2014, 20% of married women and 41% of cohabiting women considered leaving their partner, compared to 13% of married men and 26% of cohabiting men (The Austin Institute for the Study of Family and Culture, 2014). Marital happiness decreased 7% over two years for

women, and only 57.4% of women and 62.8% of men reported that their marriages were very happy (Smith et al., 2015). Relationship dissatisfaction among women contributes to negative relationship outcomes. It is estimated that 24% of marriages start with low levels of quality and satisfaction (Lavner et al., 2012). Marriages that start with low satisfaction are at high risk for negative marital outcomes and higher divorce rates (Lavner et al., 2012); and about 40-50% of married couples in the U.S. divorce (American Psychological Association, 2020). Women's relationship dissatisfaction has been linked to depression (Whitton & Whisman, 2010; Woods et al., 2019). Because dissatisfaction is a defining attribute of many romantic relationships and is related to depression, it is important to educate women about salient variables related to relationship dissatisfaction and depression and increase their efficacy in communicating about these factors.

Theoretical Framework

Three theories form the foundation of this study including gender role theory, equity theory, and Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory. Housework and emotion work (i.e. improving others emotional well-being and providing emotional support; Erickson, 1993) are both aspects of romantic relationships that have been disproportionately placed on women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). According to gender role theory, the behavior women and men demonstrate as well as the roles they occupy are a reflection of gender role beliefs; gender roles contribute to maintaining the division of labor through the socialization process and gender stereotypes (Eagly & Wood, 2016). Gender role beliefs stem from the idea that women and men have complementary abilities and belong in certain roles, which are culturally constructed, but which society incorrectly assumes to be inherent characteristics within women and men (Eagly

& Wood, 2016). For example, the division between communal and agentic characteristics are descriptive of women's and men's sex-differentiated roles and behavior with communal characteristics disproportionally given to women while agentic behaviors are assigned to men (Eagly et al., 2000).

Family work also may be disproportionately placed on women because it is associated with relational constructs that are typically associated with being feminine (Erickson, 2005), e.g., caring for children. While gender has historically been viewed as a fixed characteristic or property an individual possesses, gender is actually performed and something individuals "do" rather than have (West & Zimmerman, 1987). In this gender performance, women and men adjust to gender roles by acquiring the specific skills and resources needed as well as adjusting their social behavior to maintain their gender performance congruent with their gender role (Eagly et al., 2000; Eagly & Wood, 2016). Gender role theory informs the imbalance of family and emotion work between women and men by demonstrating the way in which gender role beliefs and stereotypes contribute to maintaining the unequal division of labor.

Equity theory also informs the study by explaining the distressing effect of inequity in relationships on the individual. This theory posits that an individual's experience of inequity either to one's benefit or detriment causes feelings of emotional distress (Adams, 1965). This is consistent in the domain of family work as individuals who feel that they either benefit or lose regarding the distribution of household labor feel more distressed than individuals who have an equal division of labor in their family (Lively et al., 2010). Research suggested that the most satisfying relationships are equitable ones in which neither partner has an advantage (Sells & Ganong, 2017). Emerging adults demonstrate this in their anticipation of being most satisfied in

equal relationships where household work, paid work, power, and decision making are shared equally (Sells & Ganong, 2017).

The development of the intervention is informed by Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977). "Perceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgments of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (Bandura, 1982). Bandura's theory incorporates four sources of self-efficacy including performance accomplishments (i.e. independent practice performing and succeeding in the desired behavior), vicarious experience (i.e. observing someone modeling success in the task of interest), verbal persuasion (i.e. suggesting that people can successfully overcome to accomplish the task of interest), and emotional states (i.e. positive affect related to engagement in the task of interest). What people believe about their capacities for a given task or situation can be predictive of their behavior, thoughts, and reactions in response to aversive situations (Bandura, 1982). One's self-efficacy related to a specific task or situation can be improved with educational practices that target the appropriate knowledge and skills needed to perform successfully (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 1982). According to Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, as confidence increases, active efforts increase to obtain the desired outcome even in the face of obstacles or aversive experiences (Bandura, 1977).

Predictors of Relationship Satisfaction

This study will focus on family work distribution and communication. First, family work distribution can be defined as the way in which household labor and child care are shared by a couple with regard to the specific tasks and time spent performing them. Family work is unpaid work that is done to maintain the family and home (Shelton & Josh, 1996). Women have

historically and continue to do the majority of family work; 46% of women and 22% of men do housework including cleaning and laundry on an average day (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Women spend an average of 2.5 hours of housework a day whereas men an average of 1.9 hours (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). On average, women spend twice as much time on food preparation and house cleaning and more than three times the amount of time doing laundry as men (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). In households with children under age 6, women spend an average of 1.1 hours providing physical care compared to men who spend an average of 27 minutes (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Little progress has been made towards equality between men and women within the household domain.

Family work distribution is related to women's relationship satisfaction with satisfaction increasing as the division of family labor becomes more equal (Chong & Mickelson, 2016; Galovan et al., 2014; Helms et al., 2010; Ogolsky et al., 2014; Pedersen, 2017; Schober, 2012). Marital quality is associated with agreement on the way household tasks and responsibilities should be divided (Ogolsky et al., 2014). Women are less satisfied in their relationships when the division of family work is inequitable (Carlson et al., 2020; Lively et al., 2010; Ogolsky et al., 2014). As women perceive inequity in the division of household labor, they experience greater distress as well as increased negative interactions with their partner (Chong & Mickelson, 2016; Lively et al., 2010; Mikula et al., 2011). Women with less equitable standards for the division of labor experienced lower levels of marital quality (Ogolsky et al., 2014).

Women's ability to communicate within their relationship is another important predictor of relationship satisfaction (Bannon et al., 2020; Carroll et al., 2013). Negative communication was linked to negative relationship effects including disengagement, distress, and divorce (Barry

et al., 2019; Hawkins et al., 2012; Markman et al., 2010). Women's ability to communicate about their needs affects household work distributions (Carlson et al., 2020). Direct communication strategies were associated with greater change toward the desired outcome (Miller & Carlson, 2016; Overall et al., 2009). However, indirect strategies produced little to no change (Overall et al., 2009). Women's ability to engage in conflict constructively also increased their relationship satisfaction (Babcock et al., 2013)

Given that family work distribution and communication skills are related to relationship satisfaction, this study aims to increase knowledge about these salient constructs and confidence in communication with a partner about the importance of work distribution and communication skills.

Interventions that Improve Knowledge and Confidence

Prior research has demonstrated that targeted interventions can increase knowledge and efficacy among college students. The STOP Dating Violence video intervention was designed to educate college students about dating violence and appropriate bystander interventions. The online intervention was effective in teaching undergraduate students about appropriate bystander interventions (Herman & O'Brien, 2020; O'Brien et al., 2019). Similarly, the CARES online intervention used three of Bandura's four major sources of self-efficacy and improved college students' knowledge and skills in supporting grieving peers, and increased confidence in communicating with bereaved peers (Hill & O'Brien, in press). Another intervention, targeting college women, used Bandura's four major sources of efficacy information to increase women's confidence and active interests in what are considered "male domains/careers" (Betz & Schifano, 2000). The intervention was successful at increasing college women's "Realistic" confidence

(confidence in their ability to perform several traditional male-typed tasks; Betz & Schifano, 2000).

Existing Relationship Interventions

We hypothesize that an online intervention teaching women about family work distribution, effective communication in romantic relationships, and a model of effective communication will improve women's knowledge on the aforementioned constructs and enhance confidence in communicating effectively with their future partner. To date, no interventions have been developed that target improving women's knowledge and efficacy in discussing constructs related to relationship satisfaction including family work distribution and communication. Relationship interventions have historically consisted of in-person programs that often required a fee, participation from both partners, and numerous hours of course work and material (Markman et al., 1993; Rhoades & Stanley, 2011; Wadsworth et al., 2011). The in-person group workshop or class setting relationship interventions focused mainly on couple-based approaches to improve communication and problem-solving skills (Markman et al., 1993; Rhoades & Stanley, 2011; Wadsworth, et al., 2011). Relationship interventions have moved online more recently, reaching a wider population of people as they are more easily accessible and less time intensive (Braithwaite & Fincham, 2007; Doss et al., 2016). While several online and in-person relationship interventions have been developed for individuals (as opposed to couples), these programs either require participants to have prior relationship experience or assume they are in a current relationship (Braithwaite & Fincham, 2007; Doss et al., 2016). Overall, relationship interventions often require an extensive time commitment, fee, and couple participation, while

focusing on reducing unhealthy behaviors in a relationship rather than preventing individuals

from entering into an unhealthy relationship.

Method

Development of the Intervention

A video intervention was created by an undergraduate Honors student in psychology (the

first author and principal investigator) and a counseling psychology professor with expertise in

studying interpersonal relationships to achieve the purposes of this study (i.e., to educate college

women about family work distribution, teach college women about effective communication in a

romantic relationship, educate college women about a model of effective communication, and

increase college women's confidence in communicating effectively with their future partner).

First, an in-depth review of the literature and existing relationship interventions was

conducted to inform the content of the intervention. Second, the most salient communication

skills and strategies from several empirically supported interventions were compiled into a list

(The Conversation Project, 2020; Gottman, 2004; Gottman et al., 2014; Gottman & Silver, 2012;

Harrington, 1999; Markman et al., 2010; PREPARE/ENRICH, 2019).

Third, the student and professor sorted the list of communication skills and strategies into

themes. These themes then were used to create an 8-step model for how to communicate with a

current or future partner (using the acronym "PARTNERS"). Following is a description of each

step in the communication model and the research underlying the step.

P – **P**repare – When needed, and especially when discussing conflicts or desired changes

in a relationship, couples should thoughtfully prepare for the conversation. They should think

about the most important things that they want to communicate and choose a good time and place for the conversation (Conversation Project, 2021).

        A – Attend to how you will talk about your concerns – Couples should attend to how they address their concerns and avoid criticism and blame when communicating with their partner (Gottman et al., 2014; PREPARE/ENRICH, 2019). Also, expressing empathy towards one another is important in couple communication (Floyd & Markman, 1984; Gottman & Silver, 2012).

        R – Remember to point out positives – Before discussing conflicts or desired changes in a relationship, couples should highlight positive aspects of their partner (Floyd & Markman 1984; PREPARE/ENRICH, 2019).

        T – Talk with your partner and use "I" statements – When couples communicate about conflicts or desired changes, they should use "I" statements to demonstrate responsibility for their thoughts and feelings (Gottman et al., 2014; Harrington, 1999; Markman et al., 2010; PREPARE/ENRICH, 2019). This strategy allows couples to express their needs to one another in an explicit manner (Gottman et al., 2014). As couples discuss conflicts or desired changes they should focus on their present concerns, rather than dragging up the past, which can be unproductive (Gottman, 2004; Harrington, 1999).

        N – Now, really listen to each other – It also is important that partners actively listen to each other, giving the other their full attention, taking turns as the speaker and listener, and listening to understand, rather than to express judgement (Gottman et al. 2014; Markman et al., 2010; PREPARE/ENRICH, 2019). Paraphrasing or reflecting back the partner's thoughts and feelings, restating points to clear up any confusion, and postponing problem solving until each

partner can restate the perspective of the other is a helpful strategy in couple communication, especially when discussing conflicts or desired changes (Floyd & Markman, 1984; Gottman et al., 2014; Gottman & Silver, 2012; Markman et al., 2010).

E – Engage in action planning to improve the relationship – Couples should express commitment to working on their relationship, explicitly name what needs to change, and work together to develop an action plan for positive change in the relationship (Gottman, 2004; PREPARE/ENRICH, 2019). The couple's action planning also should consist of setting specific and measurable goals, and they should return to their plan over time to determine if the goals for change have been met or need to be adjusted.

R– Remember that women often do more – Women typically perform more emotional and physical labor in relationships, which is important for couples to recognize to come to an agreement in which both partners contribute equitably.

S – Speak up to ensure your needs are met – Partners should continue to advocate for what they each need as the relationship progresses. The last two steps were informed by the literature, but developed by the researchers for the study's purposes.

Fourth, the student and professor wrote the script for the three-part intervention together, based on research findings (see Appendix B). The first segment of the intervention educates participants about constructs that relate to relationship satisfaction. This segment highlights the ways in which family work distribution and communication contribute to shaping women's satisfaction in their romantic relationships (Bannon et al., 2020; Carroll et al., 2013; Galovan et al., 2014; Helms et al., 2010; Ogolsky et al., 2014). The tendency for women to do more in their

romantic relationships also is emphasized (Carlson et al., in press; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2016; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

The authors also developed 12 questions informed by research that related to predictors of satisfaction in romantic relationships. These questions were posed at two points in the intervention so participants could consider whether a current or future partner fulfilled these predictors of relationship satisfaction. Participants were given this prompt: "When you think about your current or future relationship, it is helpful to ask yourself the following questions." The questions were as follows: Is your partner someone who "You can trust and count on to be there for you?" "Is easy to talk to about your thoughts, feelings and concerns?" "Really listens to you when you are speaking?" "Cares about your feelings?" "Can work through conflict and relationship problems constructively?" "Is strongly committed to healthy communication in your romantic relationship?" "Believes that sharing housework and childcare responsibilities is important?" "Is committed to dividing housework and childcare equally?" "Would take the initiative to do their share of the family work without being asked?" "Wants a true partnership where the woman is not expected to do more than her share of the family work?" "Is devoted to being an actively involved parent (if you decide to raise children)?" and "Is committed to doing their part to have a genuinely loving, equal and satisfying relationship?"

The second segment of the intervention describes each step of the PARTNERS Communication Model. The final step of the intervention was designed to increase college women's confidence in communicating effectively with their future partner by demonstrating how they might use the PARTNERS Communication Model in a romantic relationship.

Participants will be provided with two possible conflicts. The first conflict describes a time when the male partner is not doing their share with regard to cleaning the bathroom. The second conflict describes a scenario in which both partners need to search for a new apartment, but the male partner would rather play video games than contribute to the apartment search. Participants will be asked to think about how they would apply the PARTNERS Communication Model if they were to discuss the conflict with their partner. After each scenario is posed, a description of how the PARTNERS Communication Model could be applied to the scenario will be provided.

At the conclusion of the intervention, participants will be given an infographic of the PARTNERS Communication Model and the 12 questions discussed as part of the intervention (see Appendix C). Throughout the intervention, important points were repeated and summarized. This intervention is accessible for those at a 9th grade reading level or beyond (Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test through Microsoft Word; Kincaid et al., 1975). Furthermore, we attended carefully to diversity when developing the intervention. For example, the depicted couples in the scenarios will vary in terms of their racial/ethnic identity.

Two graduate students and one advanced undergraduate student involved in related research were asked to provide feedback regarding the intervention script. Revisions were made after receiving their feedback. Additional revisions were made after a counseling psychologist who works with the targeted demographic reviewed the script and provided feedback. Two faculty committee members also will review the intervention script and provide feedback prior to finalizing the script for the video intervention.

The final step for the creation of the video intervention involves hiring a professional narrator to provide the voiceover for the intervention. The voices of the couples in the application examples will be taped by college students.

Participants

To determine the number of participants necessary, an a priori statistical power analysis, using G*POWER v3 sofware (Faul et al., 2007) was calculated. To achieve statistical power of 0.95, a medium effect size ($f = 0.3$), with an overall $a = 0.05$, the recommended sample size was 48 participants for one MANOVA. An estimated 150 participants are needed because we are calculating multiple MANOVAS. To account for problematic responses or missing data, 225 participants will be recruited for this study. Undergraduate women at the University of Maryland between the ages 18 and 22 who identify as heterosexual and are able to read and write in English will be recruited.

Procedures

After receipt of Institutional Review Board approval, participants will be recruited through the University of Maryland Psychology Department subject pool, social media, personal contacts, and student names obtained from the registrar. The invitation to participate in the study will contain a link to an online Qualtrics survey. After the participants provide informed consent, they will complete a pre-test survey consisting of measures assessing knowledge of family work distribution, knowledge of communication, knowledge of a model of effective communication, and relationship communication self-efficacy. The qualitative measures will be presented first to prevent the quantitative measures from informing the qualitative responses. Participants then will be randomly assigned to either the video intervention, information only, or control conditions.

Students assigned to the intervention condition will watch the online video intervention (about 12 minutes). We will instruct participants to "Please watch the following video about predictors of relationship satisfaction and communicating with romantic partners. We ask that you watch very carefully for the entirety of the video, as you will be asked questions about what you saw."

The students in the information only condition will be asked to read an adapted version of the intervention script. This version will include the information presented in the first and second segments of the video intervention without the examples or application questions (see Appendix D). Participants will be instructed to "Please read the information on the following pages about predictors of relationship satisfaction and communicating with romantic partners. We recommend that you read carefully, as you will be asked questions about what you read."

The control group will watch a short clip from a TV show of a heterosexual couple interacting with one another.

Each participant also will complete a post-test survey containing measures assessing knowledge of family work distribution, knowledge of communication, knowledge of a model of effective communication, relationship communication self-efficacy, and demographic information. Before proceeding to the posttest measures, participants will read the following directions: "You now will be asked to respond to more questions about romantic relationships. You have seen these questions previously. We ask that you respond thoughtfully and completely to these questions a second time to receive compensation for your participation in this study. Thank you!" The measures contain four qualitative open-ended questions and three quantitative measures. Two validity checks will be included in the survey within the quantitative items, to

assess whether participants are attending carefully to the items (see Appendix E). Participants

will receive course credit or a $10 gift card after completion of the study.

Measures

Knowledge of family work distribution. Three measures will be used to assess

knowledge of family work including the Family Work Subscale on the Knowledge About Family

Work and Communication Scale, the Family Work-Related Desired Partner Characteristics, and

the Knowledge of Family Work - Qualitative Assessment.

The Family Work Subscale on the Knowledge About Family Work and Communication

Scale is a 4-item subscale that assesses knowledge of family work in romantic relationships (see

Appendix F). This measure was developed by the authors with the assistance of a research team.

The Hill and O'Brien (in press) Knowledge About Grief Scale was used to inform the

development of new items relevant to the intervention. The measure was piloted with six

undergraduate students in psychology. Three doctoral students also provided feedback on the

items. A counseling psychologist who works with the targeted demographic checked that items

assessed the knowledge in the intervention.

After calculating the mean and standard deviation of the responses received from

undergraduate psychology students and taking into account the feedback we received, we revised

and deleted items. Participants will rate the degree to which they agree with four statements

using a 6-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 6 = *strongly agree*). Items include: "Today, women

and men do the same amount of family work," "Women who do the majority of the family work

in their relationships are at risk for being very depressed," "Women are most satisfied in their

relationship when they divide family work equally with their partner," and "Negative couple

interactions increase when women do more family work that their male partners." An index of knowledge regarding family work in the intervention will be created by reverse-scoring one item and then adding scores on the items to create a total score. High scores will indicate strong levels of knowledge on family work distribution in romantic relationships**.**

The Family Work-Related Desired Partner Characteristics is a qualitative assessment of participants desired partner characteristics related to family work that was created by the authors (see Appendix G). The development of this item was informed by the Hill and O'Brien (in press) measure Qualitative Assessment of Knowledge of Grief, CARES Intervention Steps and Resources. Participants will be asked to respond to the question: "What are your top desired characteristics for a romantic partner?" The directions also ask that participants do not look up or ask anyone else for the answers. For each response two coders will independently indicate whether or not the response is related to family work distribution with 0 being no response, 1 being related to family work, and 2 for unrelated responses. Some responses that would receive a 1 include responses that list one of the following: "Believes that sharing housework and childcare responsibilities is important," "Is committed to dividing housework and childcare equally," "Would take the initiative to do their share of the family work without being asked," "Wants a true partnership where the woman is not expected to do more than her share of the family work," "Is devoted to being an actively involved parent (if you decide to raise children)," and "Is committed to doing their part to have a genuinely loving, equal and satisfying relationship." The number of responses receiving a score of 1 will be summed with high scores indicating a desire for partner characteristics that are consistent with the information on family work discussed in the intervention.

The Knowledge of Family Work – Qualitative Assessment is an open-ended question created by the researchers that assesses knowledge about family work in romantic relationships (see Appendix H). The Hill and O'Brien (in press) measure Qualitative Assessment of Knowledge of Grief, CARES Intervention Steps and Resources was used to inform the development of this item. Participants will be asked the following question: "What do you know about family work distribution in a romantic relationship?" Responses to the question will be rated on a scale from 0 to 4, with 0 representing missing responses, 1 representing one correct fact reported, 2 representing two correct facts reported, 3 representing three correct facts reported, and 4 representing more than three correct facts reported. High scores will indicate strong levels of knowledge regarding family work distribution as it relates to relationships.

Knowledge of communication. Knowledge of effective communication will be measured through the Communication Subscale on the Knowledge About Family Work and Communication Scale and the Communication-Related Desired Partner Characteristics assessment.

The Communication Subscale on the Knowledge About Family Work and Communication Scale consists of four items that assess knowledge on communication in romantic relationships (see Appendix F). The Hill and O'Brien (in press) Knowledge About Grief Scale was used to inform the development of new items relevant to the intervention that were generated by the authors with the assistance of a research team. Six undergraduate students in psychology piloted the measures and three doctoral students provided feedback.

After calculating the mean and standard deviation of the responses received from students, we revised the items. Based on the feedback we received from a counseling

psychologist who checked that items assessed the knowledge in the intervention, we deleted and

changed items. Participants will rate the degree to which they agree with the four statements

using a 6-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 6 = *strongly agree*). Items include: "Women who

communicate directly are more successful in getting their needs met," "A male partner's ability

to communicate well does not strongly predict women's relationship satisfaction,"

"Communication problems are not one of the top causes of divorce," and "It is likely that a

woman would be depressed because of poor communication in her relationship." An index of

knowledge regarding communication in the intervention will be created by reverse-scoring two

items and then adding scores on the items to create a total score. High scores mean participants

have advanced knowledge on communication in romantic relationships.

Knowledge on communication also was measured using the Communication-Related

Desired Partner Characteristics qualitative assessment (see Appendix I). This open-ended

question assessed participants' desired partner characteristics related to communication. The Hill

and O'Brien (in press) measure Qualitative Assessment of Knowledge of Grief, CARES

Intervention Steps and Resources was used to inform the development of this item relevant to the

intervention that was generated by the authors. Participants will be asked to respond to the

question: "What are your top desired characteristics for a romantic partner?" For each response

two coders will independently indicate whether or not the response is related to communication

with 0 being no response, 1 being related to communication, and 2 for unrelated responses. Some

responses that would receive a 1 include the following: "You can trust and count on to be there

for you," "Is easy to talk to about your thoughts, feelings and concerns," "Really listens to you

when you are speaking," "Cares about your feelings," "Can work through conflict and

relationship problems constructively," and "Is strongly committed to healthy communication in

your romantic relationship?" The number of responses receiving a score of 1 will be summed

with high scores meaning a desire for partner characteristics that are consistent with the

information on communication in the intervention.

Knowledge of a model of effective communication. The Knowledge of PARTNERS

Communication Model - Quantitative Assessment and the Knowledge of PARTNERS

Communication Model - Qualitative Assessment will be used to measure knowledge of the

PARTNERS Communication Model.

The Knowledge of PARTNERS Communication Model - Quantitative Assessment is a

17-item measure developed by the authors to assess knowledge about effective communication

skills as described in the PARTNERS Communication Model (see Appendix J). Participants will

indicate the degree to which they agree with the items on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly*

disagree; 6 = *strongly agree*). The O'Brien et al. (2019) measure, Knowledge Regarding

Appropriate Bystander Interventions, was used to inform the development of this measure.

Modified items from the O'Brien et al. (2019) measure included: "Telling my partner 'I feel

frustrated when you don't listen to me is a helpful way to share a concern." Most of the items

were not modified but rather used to inform the development of new items generated by the

researchers and reviewed by experts in counseling psychology. Members of a research team

consisting of six undergraduate students and three graduate students in psychology also provided

feedback. Examples of items that were created include: "It is important to paraphrase my

partner's perspective before sharing my points," "Direct communication strategies are too

assertive," and "Setting specific relationship goals will help promote change." An index of

knowledge regarding effective partner communication will be created after reverse-scoring eleven items and then adding scores on the items to calculate a total score. Participants with high scores have advanced knowledge regarding effective couple communication as taught in the intervention.

The Knowledge of PARTNERS Communication Model - Qualitative Assessment is an open-ended question designed to assess knowledge of effective communication as taught through the PARTNERS Communication Model (see Appendix K). The Hill and O'Brien (in press) measure Qualitative Assessment of Knowledge of Grief, CARES Intervention Steps and Resources was used to inform the development of the item relevant to the intervention that was generated by the authors. Participants will be asked the following question: "Imagine that you are really upset with a future romantic partner because they did something that really hurt you. State specifically what you would do and/or say related to this very upsetting situation." Responses to the question will be rated on a scale from 0 to 8, with 0 representing missing or incorrect responses, 1 representing one point consistent with our intervention reported, 2 representing two points consistent with our intervention reported, 3 representing three points consistent with our intervention reported, 4 representing four points consistent with our intervention reported, 5 representing five points consistent with our intervention reported, 6 representing six points consistent with our intervention reported, 7 representing seven points consistent with our intervention reported, and 8 representing eight points consistent with our intervention reported. A high score will indicate strong knowledge of effective partner communication as taught in the PARTNERS Communication Model.

Relationship communication self-efficacy. Relationship communication self-efficacy will be measured through two assessments including the Effective Relationship Communication Self-Efficacy measure and the Confidence in Relationship Communication Item.

The Effective Relationship Communication Self-Efficacy scale is a 17-item measure assessing participants' confidence using effective communication strategies as described in the intervention (see Appendix L). This measure was adapted from a measure by O'Brien et al. (2019) about bystander self-efficacy in dating violence situations. Using a 6-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 6 = *strongly agree*), participants will rate the degree to which they agree with each of the 17 items. The authors used the general design of the measure by O'Brien et al. (2019) to inform the development of the new measures. The authors removed, changed, and added items to fit the study's purposes. The generated items were revised after receiving feedback from experts in counseling psychology and members of a research team consisting of six undergraduate students and three graduate students in psychology. Examples of items that were created include: "I am confident that I can avoid criticizing my partner when they are frustrating me," "I am confident that I can explicitly tell my partner that they need to change for the relationship to work," and "I am confident that I can wait for a good time to talk to my partner if I am too hurt to communicate in a caring manner." Scores on the items will be summed to create an index of confidence in ability to communicate effectively with a romantic partner. Participants with high scores have strong confidence in their ability to communicate effectively with a romantic partner.

The Confidence in Relationship Communication Item assesses confidence communicating a concern in the relationship with a romantic partner (see Appendix M).

This item was modified from the O'Brien et al. (2019) measure, Knowledge Regarding

Appropriate Bystander Interventions. Participants will be asked the following: "On a scale from

1 to 10, how confident are you in your ability to communicate with a romantic partner about a

concern in your relationship?" A high score will indicate strong confidence communicating in a

romantic relationship.

Analyses

      Quantitative analyses. First, we will examine whether participants differ across

conditions on the pre-test measures and demographics. Second, the means, standard deviations,

ranges, reliabilities, and correlations among the variables will be calculated. Then, four

multivariate analyses of variance will be used to test the hypotheses. For each analysis, the

experimental condition will be the independent variable, Time 1 scores are the covariates, and

Time 2 scores will be the dependent measures. An alpha level of .05 will be used to assess

significance.

      The first analysis will examine differences in scores on the post-tests of the (1) Family

Work Subscale on the Knowledge About Family Work and Communication Scale, (2) Family

Work-Related Desired Partner Characteristics, and (3) Knowledge of Family Work - Qualitative

Assessment for the intervention, information only, and control conditions while controlling for

the pre-test scores (see Figure 2).

      The second analysis will assess differences in the post-test scores on the (1)

Communication Subscale on the Knowledge About Family Work and Communication scale and

the (2) Communication-Related Desired Partner Characteristics for the intervention, information

only, and control conditions while controlling for the pre-test scores (see Figure 3).

The third analysis will examine differences in scores on the post-test measures including the (1) Knowledge of PARTNERS Communication Model - Qualitative Assessment and the (2) Knowledge of PARTNERS Communication Model - Qualitative Assessment for the intervention, information only, and control conditions while controlling for the pre-test scores (see Figure 4).

The fourth analysis will examine differences in the post-test scores on the (1) Effective Relationship Communication Self-Efficacy and the (2) Confidence in Relationship Communication Item for the intervention, information only, and control conditions, while controlling for the pre-test scores on each measure (see Figure 5).

Qualitative analyses. In addition, qualitative analyses will be conducted to determine the themes for the desired partner characteristics. Qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was used to identify common themes in the responses to the Family Work-Related Desired Partner Characteristics and the Communication-Related Desired Partner Characteristics qualitative questions. A coding scheme for themes in the responses to the Family Work-Related Desired Partner Characteristics and the Communication-Related Desired Partner Characteristics qualitative assessments was developed. The Family Work-Related Desired Partner Characteristics includes the following response categories: "Believes that sharing housework and childcare responsibilities is important," "Is committed to dividing housework and childcare equally," "Would take the initiative to do their share of the family work without being asked," "Wants a true partnership where the woman is not expected to do more than her share of the family work," "Is devoted to being an actively involved parent (if you decide to raise children)," and "Is committed to doing their part to have a genuinely loving, equal and satisfying relationship" (see Appendix N). The Communication-Related Desired Partner Characteristics

includes the following response categories: "You can trust and count on to be there for you," "Is easy to talk to about your thoughts, feelings and concerns," "Really listens to you when you are speaking," "Cares about your feelings," "Can work through conflict and relationship problems constructively," and "Is strongly committed to healthy communication in your romantic relationship" (see Appendix O). Two coders will independently code each response.

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Figure 1

Research Model
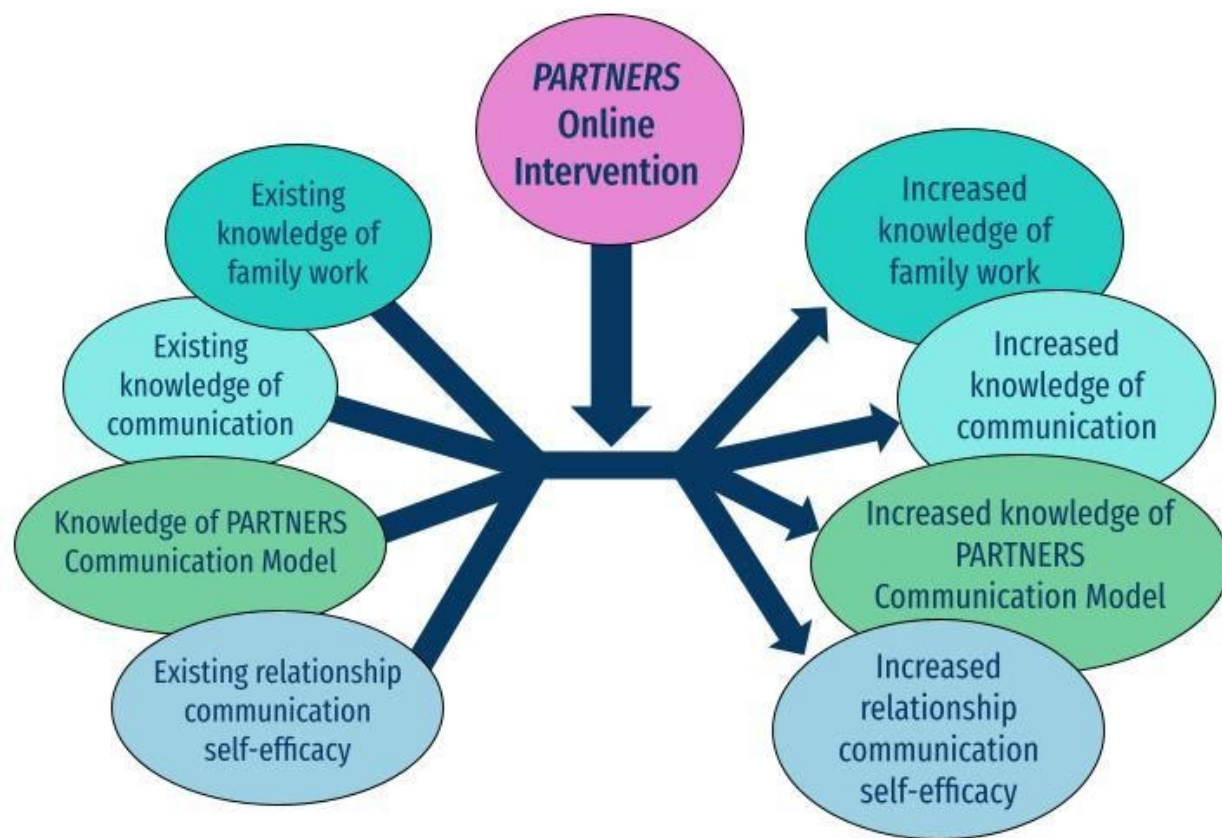
Note. Hypothesized model for increased knowledge and confidence in the intervention group as a result of the PARTNERS Intervention

Figure 2

MANOVA for Knowledge of Family Work

MANOVA 1: FAMILY WORK

Independent variable

Experimental conditional: Intervention, information only, or control

Covariates

Time 1: Family Work Subscale on the Knowledge About Family Work and Communication Scale

Time 1: Family Work-Related Desired Partner Characteristics

Time 1: Knowledge of Family work - Qualitative Assessment

Dependent variables

Time 2: Family Work Subscale on the Knowledge About Family Work and Communication Scale

Time 2: Knowledge of Family work - Qualitative Assessment

Time 2: Family Work-Related Desired Partner Characteristics

Note. This figure outlines the components of the first MANOVA analyses to assess differences in knowledge of family work among the three experimental conditions at the post-test.

Figure 3

MANOVA for Knowledge of Communication

MANOVA 2: COMMUNICATION

Independent variable

Experimental conditional: Intervention, information only, or control

Covariates

Time 1: Communication Subscale on the Knowledge About Family Work and Communication Scale

Time 1: Communication-Related Desired Partner Characteristics

Dependent variables

Time 2: Communication Subscale on the Knowledge About Family Work and Communication Scale

Time 2: Communication-Related Desired Partner Characteristics

Note. This figure outlines the components of the second MANOVA analyses to assess differences in communication among the three experimental conditions at the post-test.

Figure 4

MANOVA for Knowledge of the PARTNERS Communication Model

MANOVA 3: PARTNERS Communication Model

Independent variable

Experimental conditional: Intervention, information only, or control

Covariates

Time 1: Knowledge of PARTNERS Communication Model - Quantitative Assessment
Time 1: Knowledge of PARTNERS Communication Model - Qualitative Assessment

Dependent variables

Time 2: Knowledge of PARTNERS Communication Model - Quantitative Assessment
Time 2: Knowledge of PARTNERS Communication Model - Qualitative Assessment

Note. This figure outlines the components of the third MANOVA analyses to assess differences in knowledge of the PARTNERS Communication Model among the three experimental conditions at the post-test.

Figure 5

MANOVA for Relationship Communication Self-Efficacy

MANOVA 4: CONFIDENCE

Independent variable

Experimental conditional: Intervention, information only, or control

Covariates

Time 1: Effective Relationship Communication Self-Efficacy

Time 1: Confidence in Relationship Communication Item

Dependent variables

Time 2: Effective Relationship Communication Self-Efficacy

Time 2: Confidence in Relationship Communication Item

Note. This figure outlines the components of the fourth MANOVA analyses to assess differences in relationship communication self-efficacy among the three experimental conditions at the post-test.

Appendix A

Review of Literature

This literature review is divided into five subsections. The first section addresses relationship dissatisfaction and its link to depression and other relationship outcomes. The second section discusses gender role theory, equity theory, and Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, all of which provide the theoretical foundation for this study. The third section reviews the literature on the associations among family work, effective communication and relationship satisfaction. The fourth section discusses existing interventions that improve college students' knowledge and confidence in a variety of domains. The fifth section describes the literature on existing relationship interventions. The literature review concludes with the hypotheses for this study.

Relationship Dissatisfaction and Outcomes

Women provide the vast majority of unpaid care work (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2016). The increasing care needs due to the pandemic have been disproportionately assumed by women. Women with children who already did more than fathers have increased their time performing housework and childcare to accommodate for homeschooling needs and the lack of childcare during the pandemic (Carlson et al., in press). Women are more likely to permanently lose their jobs compared to men as a result of covid-19 (Dang & Nguyen, 2020). In fact, 100% of the jobs lost in December 2020 belonged to women (Ewing-Nelson, 2021). As women have assumed the majority of unpaid care work during the covid-19 pandemic, they have suffered devastating outcomes. Specifically, women experienced more severe stress and stress-inducing events than men (Hamel & Salganicoff, 2020), as well as

greater negative mental health from worry and stress caused by the pandemic (Frederiksen et al., 2020). The expectations placed on women to fulfill increasing care needs contribute to women's disproportionate poverty (Eisler & Otis, 2014), especially as women with children reduced their work hours substantially more than fathers (Collins et al., 2020), and were more likely to stop working altogether (Alon et al, 2020).

Women also are less satisfied in their relationships, reporting lower marital happiness and global marital satisfaction than men (Boerner et al., 2014; Bulanda, 2011; Jackson et al., 2014; Lewin, 2017). In 2014, 57.4% of women and 62.8% of men said their marriages were very happy, which was a 7% decrease in women's marital happiness from only two years earlier (Smith et al., 2015). 20% of married women and 41% of cohabiting women considered leaving their partner in 2014 compared to 13% of married men and 26% of cohabiting men (The Austin Institute for the Study of Family and Culture, 2014). Women are less likely than men to be very happy in their relationship (Lewin, 2017), and more likely than men to report more "aversive partner relations" (Windsor & Butterworth, 2010). While the gender difference in marital satisfaction was minimal, there was a gender difference with married women reporting lower relationship satisfaction compared to married men (Jackson et al., 2014).

Young women are a key demographic as many are entering into serious relationships, but have not made long-term relationship commitments. It is estimated that 61% of women between the ages of 18 and 29 are interested in dating and 36% of women are seeking a committed relationship. Also, the average age at which women are first married is 27.9 years (Population Reference Bureau, 2021). Heterosexual and cisgender identifying women are the focus of the current study because heterosexual relationships are more likely to correspond with gender

disparities. A study examining differences in the division of housework between straight, lesbian, and gay couples found that lesbian and gay couples reported more equal divisions of housework than heterosexual couples (Gotta et al., 2011). This demonstrates the way in which heterosexual couples are affected by traditional gender role beliefs and stereotypes that maintain the unequal division of labor (Eagly & Wood, 2016). Also, lesbian and gay couples reported greater equality in communication than straight couples (Gotta et al., 2011).

The focus of this intervention is on women rather than men because women cannot rely on men to voluntarily engage in doing more to equalize their relationships. In fact, men are more likely than women to report equality in the distribution of housework (Gotta et al., 2011). Male partners typically do not judge the division of family work accurately leaving women to be placed in the position to remind their partners about housework and childcare duties. Thus, educating young women about research on romantic relationships could enable them to make thoughtful choices regarding the desired characteristics of future partners and increase the likelihood of their having equal relationships.

About one-quarter of marriages start with low levels of quality and satisfaction (Lavner et al., 2012). Marriages that start with low satisfaction are at the highest risk for negative marital outcomes and higher divorce rates (Lavner et al., 2012). About 40 to 50% of married couples in the U.S. divorce (American Psychological Association, 2020). A study examining relationship satisfaction demonstrated that women whose relationship satisfaction was more highly variable had higher levels of depressive symptoms (Whitton & Whisman, 2010). A reciprocal relationship between relationship dissatisfaction and depressive symptoms has been found in women

demonstrating that relationship dissatisfaction may be a contributing factor to depressive symptomatology (Woods et al., 2019).

Theoretical Framework

Three theories inform the current study. The relational construct (family work distribution) included in this study was informed by gender role theory and equity theory. First, gender role theory explains the connection between gender roles that maintain the disproportionate workload for women in their families. Women and men's behavior or roles they occupy become stereotypic and part of their gender role (Eagly & Wood, 2016). Gender role beliefs stem from the idea that men and women fit complementary abilities represented in culturally constructed gender roles (Eagly & Wood, 2016). The perceived differences between men and women in society are incorrectly assumed to support inherent differences between them, even though the division of labor is dependent on the cultural and environmental conditions (Eagly & Wood, 2016). The division between communal and agentic characteristics is descriptive of women's and men's sex-differentiated roles and behavior with communal characteristics disproportionally given to women while agentic behaviors are assigned to men (Eagly et al., 2000).

Family work and emotion work fall into the "communal" characteristics that are disproportionately assigned to women (Eagly et al., 2000). The division of labor between women and men also is a reflection of gender role beliefs and gender roles that contribute to maintaining the division through the socialization process (Eagly & Wood, 2016). The family work distribution with a traditional gender ideology assumes women are responsible for performing the house and family work typically associated with being feminine (Erickson, 2005). Because

women have typically performed the majority of housework and emotion work due to cultural conditions, these responsibilities have become characteristic of women's gender roles (Eagly & Wood, 2016).

It has been suggested, however, that gender is actually performed by women and men such that gender is not a fixed characteristic or property, but rather something that individuals "do" (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Women and men adjust to gender roles by acquiring the specific skills and resources needed as well as adjusting their social behavior to maintain their gender performance congruent with their gender role (Eagly et al., 2000). One's gender identity becomes a standard by which women and men regulate their behavior, thus consistent behavior according to the standard yields positive emotions and higher self-esteem whereas conflict between the two causes negative emotions and lower self-esteem (Eagly & Wood, 2016). Family work may be disproportionately placed on women because they often are relational constructs that are characterized as female-typed tasks. Women and their partners might make the assumption that these constructs fall into a woman's role within the relationship and thus maintain the inequitable division of labor.

Equity theory also informs the study by explaining the distressing effect that inequity in relationships has on the individual. Equity theory is about understanding the effect of equity and inequity within relationships (Hatfield & Traupmann, 1981). Equity theory assumes that an experience of inequity either to one's benefit or detriment causes feelings of emotional distress (Adams, 1965). This is consistent in the domain of household labor as individuals feeling that they do or do not benefit with regard to amount of housework experienced more negative emotions, specifically these individuals feel more distressed than individuals who felt the

division of housework was equitable (Lively et al., 2010). An equitable relationship is where a member or observer of the relationship concludes that every participant in the relationship receives equal "relative gains" (Hatfield & Traupmann, 1981). The most satisfying relationships are equitable ones in which neither partner has the advantage (Sells & Ganong, 2017). Men and women between the ages of 18 and 29 anticipated they would be most satisfied in an equal gender role relationship when compared to one where either the male or female partner has the lead (Sells & Ganong, 2017). A majority of participants also noted their desire to be in an equal relationship where household work, paid work, power, and decision making were equal (Sells & Ganong, 2017).

Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory informed the development of the intervention. Bandura emphasized the value of self-efficacy, defined as the confidence in performing behaviors required to achieve one's goals. What people believe about their capacities for a given task or situation can be predictive of their behavior, thoughts, and reactions. As self-efficacy increases, performance is enhanced and then leads to eventual success despite obstacles or aversive experiences (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1982). Educational practices that provide individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to perform successfully can improve self-efficacy related to a specific task or situation (Artino, 2012). According to Bandura's theory, mastery experiences, vicarious experiences/social modeling, verbal persuasion, and emotional states contribute to self-efficacy development. These four main sources of efficacy create a framework for targeting the appropriate knowledge and skills in arranged actions steps needed to develop self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1982).

Predictors of Women's Relationship Satisfaction

Family Work Distribution. Family work distribution, defined as the way in which household labor and child care is shared among a couple with regard to the specific tasks and time spent performing them, is an important contributor to women's relationship satisfaction. Family work is unpaid labor performed to maintain family members and the home (Shelton & John, 1996). Consistent with the historical trends of the division of labor, women currently perform the majority of family work (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Specifically, 70% of women participated in food preparation and cleanup activities compared to 43% of men; and 50% of women reported cleaning and doing laundry compared to 22% of men (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). While women often perform a majority of the food prep, cleaning, and laundry, men spent more than twice the amount of time doing tasks related to the lawn, garden, houseplants, and home maintenance and repairs (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).

In 2019, this divide remained largely the same as women spend at an average of 2.5 hours of housework a day whereas men spent an average of 1.9 hours; and 46% of women and 22% of men did housework including cleaning and laundry on an average day (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Similarly, in households with children under age 6, women spend an average of 1.1 hours providing physical care compared to men who spend an average of 27 minutes (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). One positive trend from 2003 to 2019 is the increasing percentage of men participating in food preparation and cleanup daily from 35% to 48% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). However, women's share of this work also grew from 66% to 70% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019), demonstrating the consistent disproportionate load of family work women are still expected to perform.

Interestingly, women's relationship satisfaction increases as the family work distribution becomes more equivalent (Galovan et al., 2014). As women reported greater engagement from their husbands in routine family work the relationship quality of both partners increased (Galovan et al., 2014). This is demonstrated in that father's share of the childcare predicted the mother's relationship satisfaction, but this relationship was not present for fathers (Schober, 2012). Similarly, the quantity of housework and emotion work performed by male partners predicted marital well-being for women (Pedersen, 2017). Not only does male partners' share of childcare contribute to women's relationship satisfaction, but the quality of engagement in child care is predictive as well. Both women's and men's marital quality is predicted by women's perception of father-child relationship quality (Galovan et al., 2014). When women's partners were skilled at child care, women reported higher marital satisfaction (Pedersen, 2017). Also, new mothers reported greater relationship satisfaction and fewer negative interactions with their partner when they perceived the division of labor to be fair (Chong & Mickelson, 2016). Consistent with these findings, coprovider couples, who equally share breadwinning responsibility, reported the most equitable division of household labor and the greatest marital satisfaction, demonstrating a link between the two (Helms et al., 2010).

On the other hand, perceived inequity in the division of labor and couple responsibility contributes to relationship dissatisfaction (Chong & Mickelson, 2016; Mikula et al., 2011; Ogolsky et al., 2014). When women perceive inequity in the division of household labor, they also experience increased negative emotions (Lively et al., 2010). This is consistent with equity theory demonstrating that those who under benefit from the relationship experience adverse emotions (Lively et al., 2010). Perceptions of the unequal division of labor can increase negative

interactions with one's partner and decrease relationship satisfaction (Mikula et al., 2011; Chong

& Mickelson, 2016). One study demonstrated that women who perform the majority of

housework experience less relationship satisfaction than women with an equal family work

distribution with their partners (Ogolsky et al., 2014). Women also experience less marital

quality when they believed in an equal division of household labor, but perceived inequity in the

actual division, thus supporting the idea that as women perceive inconsistency between the belief

and behavior of family work distributions their relationship satisfaction decreases (Ogolsky et

al., 2014).

      Communication. Research suggests that effective communication also contributes to

relationship satisfaction. Constructive communication is associated positively with marital

satisfaction (Carroll et al, 2013). In dating couples, collaborative communication efficiency and

self-reported problem-solving skills were independently and together associated with

relationship satisfaction (Bannon et al., 2020). A longitudinal study on relationship satisfaction

found that women's positive communication was positively correlated with their relationship

satisfaction at the being of their marriage and 10 years later (Ruffieux et al., 2014).

      However, negative communication contributes to negative relationship effects. A study

on premarital couples found that negative communication between the couple was correlated

with later divorce and distress (Markman et al., 2010). In married couples, negative

communication from husbands was associated with wives disengaging from their husbands

(Barry et al., 2019). Disengaged communication mediated the relationship between individuals'

depressive symptoms and lower relationship satisfaction as well as lower relationship

satisfaction and higher depressive symptoms (Barry et al., 2019). Communication problems have

been one of the most common reported reasons for divorce by both women and men (Hawkins et al., 2010).

Women's ability to communicate about their needs affects their household work distribution and relationship satisfaction (Carlson et al., 2020). In a study examining the division of housework, communication, and relationship satisfaction, partner communication linked the division of housework to relationship satisfaction. The partner's gender affected this relationship (Carlson et al., 2020). While women's communication quality was not associated with their relationship satisfaction, their partner's communication quality was related to satisfaction (Carlson et al., 2020). Women's communication quality shaped their household work distribution, while their partner's communication quality determined whether women perceived equity and felt satisfied within their relationship (Carlson et al., 2020). This study demonstrated the importance of women's ability to communicate in determining the division of labor.

Partner communication further affects family work distribution in that conflict mediated the relationship between partner support and relationship satisfaction (Cramer, 2006), suggesting that relationship satisfaction may depend upon partners being supportive and dealing with conflict constructively (Cramer, 2006). Women's satisfaction increased when they improved their ability to engage in conflict constructively (Babcock et al, 2013). When women were taught a combination of friendship enhancement and conflict management with their partners, their relationship satisfaction improved greatly. For male partners, however, friendship enhancement alone demonstrated sufficient improvements in their relationship satisfaction (Babcock et al., 2013). This finding is consistent with the results of another study examining partner communication and related to the perception that women want to talk about relationship issues

while men typically withdraw (Afifi et al., 2012). After observing couples engage in conflict-inducing conversations the researchers found that when women perceived their partner's avoidance during these interactions, they felt dissatisfied in their relationship after the conversation and one week later (Afifi et al., 2012). This demonstrated women's high standards for open communication in their relationship; when their standards were not met by their partners, women experienced relationship dissatisfaction.

Communication strategies also affect women's relationships. A study on effective communication strategies for couples found that direct communication strategies compared with positive-indirect strategies were perceived as unsuccessful in promoting change for women and their partners (Overall et al., 2009). However, in regards to actual change, direct communication strategies were associated with greater change as reported by male partners and perceived by women (Overall et al., 2009). Indirect strategies produced little to no change (Overall et al., 2009). Women who were more direct in their communication about housework and limits were more successful in achieving the desired outcome and greater satisfaction with the arrangement (Miller & Carlson, 2016). A similar study found that active voice, defined as "constructive active behaviors such as attempting to improve conditions by discussing problems, suggesting solution, and altering problematic behavior" was received more positively by the opposite partner and improved relationship functioning (Overall et al., 2010). Extensive research on couple relationships supported this finding and encouraged couples in conflict to clearly express their specific and explicit positive needs (Gottman, 2004). Women who practice direct and assertive forms of communication may be more satisfied in their relationship in the long-term than women who communicate indirectly about their needs.

Interventions that Improve Knowledge and Confidence

Past research on interventions that improve college student's knowledge and confidence was used to guide this study and proposed intervention. The STOP Dating Violence video intervention was designed to educate college students about effective dating violence bystander interventions. (Herman & O'Brien, 2020; O'Brien et al., 2019). Two studies investigated whether an online intervention teaching students to identify situations that involve dating and containing concise steps for how to safely intervene would lead to an improvement in knowledge about bystander interventions. Results supported this hypothesis; participants in the online intervention exhibited greater knowledge about bystander interventions when compared to the other conditions (Herman & O'Brien, 2020; O'Brien et al., 2019).

Similarly, another intervention (CARES) used three of Bandura's four major sources of self-efficacy to educate college students about grief and how to support grieving peers (Hill & O'Brien, in press). The intervention improved college students' knowledge, skills, and confidence in communicating with bereaved peers (Hill & O'Brien, in press). Another intervention, targeting college women, used Bandura's four major sources of efficacy information to increase women's confidence and interests in what are considered "male domains/careers" (Betz & Schifano, 2000). The intervention was successful at increasing college women's "Realistic" confidence (confidence in their ability to perform traditionally male-typed tasks; Betz & Schifano, 2000).

Existing Relationship Interventions

Numerous online and in-person relationship interventions have been developed to improve relationship functioning, however, only 27.6% of recently married couples participate in

some kind of marriage or relationship intervention before or after getting married (Duncan,

2018).

       In-person. Many in-person interventions have been created to educate and train couples

and individuals dealing with relationship issues on practices to improve relationship functioning

and satisfaction. Gottman, a well-known researcher and clinician in psychology, has done

extensive work on marital relationships (Babcock et al., 2013; Gottman et al., 2014; Gottman,

2004; Gottman, 1994; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). Gottman developed a therapeutic framework

for couples counseling called the Gottman Method (Gottman et al., 2014). The Gottman Method

has informed the development of couple's workshops to improve relationships (Gottman et al.,

2014). One workshop is The Art and Science of Love (ASL) and is divided into two parts

(Gottman et al., 2014; The Gottman Institute, 2021). Each part is a two-day workshop for

couples to learn how to build friendship and intimacy as well as regulate conflict (Gottman et al.,

2014). Couples learned about the Sound Relationship House theory and how to build healthy,

secure relationships (Babcock et al., 2013; Gottman et al., 2014). Workshop leaders educated

couples on sharing admiration for one another, turning toward rather than away to build

emotional connection, and tools for effective couple communication (Gottman et al., 2014).

Couples practiced these skills through interactive exercises, role-plays, and presentations guided

by workshop leaders (Gottman et al., 2014). This workshop demonstrated positive effects on

marital satisfaction, friendship quality, and conflict for a sample of distressed couples (Babcock

et al., 2013).

       While Gottman's workshop was a significant addition to existing empirically based

relationship interventions, the research and subsequent workshop focused solely on couples.

Single individuals also may benefit from learning knowledge and skills related to how to build healthy, secure relationships before they start dating or make long-term commitments in a relationship. Workshop participation initially required in-person participation from couples, yet has evolved into more accessible formats such as an online training course and a virtual event (due to the Covid-19 pandemic). The workshop also requires couples to commit to two days of sessions as well as an expensive fee of up to $599 (The Gottman Institute, 2021). These requirements limit the workshop's accessibility to those with limited access to resources needed to attend and pay for such a course, especially those who would need to pay for childcare or have to take off from work to attend the workshop.

The Fatherhood Relationship and Marriage Education (FRAME) is another intervention specifically designed for mothers and fathers in low-income families that included relationship education, training on managing stress, as well as training on child-centered parenting (Wadsworth et al., 2011). Participants in the FRAME program demonstrated lower financial stress, decreases in negative coping behaviors and responses, and improvements in problem solving (Wadsworth et al., 2011). Importantly, meals and child care stipends were provided to reduce the burden on participants (Wadsworth, et al., 2011). However, the 14-hour long program over a series of weeks in a workshop setting makes it less accessible as participants would have to account for transportation and make a large time commitment. FRAME also is a couples-based program, which does not target individuals or people who have not made long-term relationship commitments.

To intervene with couples before they married, the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) was developed. PREP was designed for couples planning for

marriage to target communication and problem solving skills to improve marital functioning and prevent problems from arising (Markman et al., 1993). The intervention consisted of 5 hours of material that was completed over a number of sessions in small groups of 3 to 5 couples (Markman et al., 1993). Participants were taught practical skills like active listening and expressive speaking techniques and given homework between sessions to practice the material (Markman et al., 1993). Four years later, participants in the intervention demonstrated use of the communication and problem solving skills that correlated with less conflict, negative affect, withdrawal, and negative communication (Markman et al., 1993). While PREP demonstrated some positive outcomes for participating couples, it was designed for couples specifically, which does not reach individuals before they are in a committed relationship. It also may be difficult to have both partners commit to participating in the intervention given the intensive time commitment.

One study researched divorced individuals who had participated in PREP to further evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. Some of the recommendations from the participants included earlier intervention before making a marital commitment as it would be easier to break up and support for implementing skills outside of educational setting (Scott et al., 2013). Many participants also felt that even though they discussed their expectations for marriage in the intervention, they lacked important knowledge about the typical course of events in marriage (Scott et al., 2013). Participants responded that communication and conflict management skills were not taught in real-life situations as another limitation of the intervention (Scott et al., 2013). Interestingly, a majority of the participants expressed a desire for having known more about their partner before marrying them and reported feeling that they had married

too young (Scott et al. 2013). A prevention strategy that participants voiced, related to these

concerns, was to reach people before they make a commitment to marry, which makes it hard to

reconsider one's plans (Scott et al., 2013).

PREPARE/ENRICH is another couple program designed to prevent relationship

dissolution by teaching couples relationship skills to effectively deal with current or future

problems (Olson-Sigg & Olson, 2011). While the program was initially designed for premarital

couples, newer versions are designed for cohabitating, engaged, or married couples (Olson-Sigg

& Olson, 2011). The first component of the program was the couple inventory which is an

extensive assessment of the couple's personality, interpersonal dynamics, family system,

relationship strengths, and salient stressors (Olson-Sigg & Olson, 2011). The second component

involved a trained counselor that guided the couple through a series of exercises where the

couple learned and practiced relationship skills (Knutson & Olson, 2003). Couples who

participated in the PREPARE/ENRICH program demonstrated improved relationship satisfaction

and skills (Knutson & Olson, 2003). While PREPARE/ENRICH successfully improved couples'

relationship skills and satisfaction, this program is time intensive and solely couples based. The

program takes about 16 hours to complete. PREPARE/ENRICH is also designed specifically for

couples, leaving out individuals who could benefit from learning relationship skills before

entering into a committed relationship.

Getting the Love You Want (GTLYW) is a couples workshop designed to improve couple

communication skills, empathy, and increase positive and decrease negative behaviors (Schmidt

et al., 2016). The workshop used the Couples Dialogue to teach listening intently, mirroring the

partner's words, validating the partner's message, and empathizing. Unique to the GTLYW

Workshop is the emphasis on how childhood development affects current relationships. Over the course of the workshop, relationship satisfaction increased, use of negative communication patterns decreased, and use of communication patterns involving positive interactions increased (Schmidt et al., 2016). However, the improvements from participation in the GTLYW Workshop were time limited. While the program demonstrated positive effects during and immediately following the workshop, these benefits were not maintained three months later (Schmidt et al., 2016). In addition to the unsuccessful long-term effects, the workshop is time intensive requiring couples to attend three days of in-person group meetings, with a total of 15 to 20 hours of in-person participation (Schmidt et al., 2016). Last, the program is not accessible to young and single college undergraduates.

While most of the in-person relationship interventions are designed for couples, Within My Reach is a program that worked to address the gap in research on effective interventions that targeted individuals. The individual-oriented relationship education program taught participants how to cultivate healthy relationships, leave damaging relationships, and choose partners wisely (Rhoades & Stanley, 2011). Participants demonstrated increases in relationship skills and knowledge including better communication and conflict management (Rhoades & Stanley, 2011). The program requires 15 hours of coursework including time for group interaction, practicing skills, and personal reflection (Rhoades & Stanley, 2011). However, the class setting, in-person attendance requirement, and lengthy process make the intervention less accessible for many and especially to a large population like college undergraduates.

Online. Online relationship interventions have become increasingly available for couples and individuals to deal with current issues in their relationship and improve relationship

functioning and satisfaction. A computer-based intervention based on the PREP program (i.e., ePREP) was created for college students (Braithwaite & Fincham, 2007). The one hour intervention seeks to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, and improve relationship functioning (Braithwaite & Fincham, 2007). The ePREP curriculum targets risk factors within relationships by teaching participants communication and problem-solving skills (Braithwaite & Fincham, 2007). Participants reported a reduction in symptoms of depression and anxiety as well as improved relationship functioning (Braithwaite & Fincham, 2007). Those who participated in the ePREP intervention however, demonstrated no different results that who participated n the depression and anxiety focused computer-based preventive intervention (Braithwaite & Fincham, 2007). The presenting material of ePREP was limited (including only written text and picture without any audio or videos; Braithwaite & Fincham, 2007). Participants also had to have been or be in a relationship for at least four months to participate (Braithwaite & Fincham, 2007), which prevented the program from reaching single people, specifically college students.

Another program was designed to improve couples' satisfaction called OurRelationship couple program (OR-C). This eight-hour online program required couples to complete activities throughout the course and participate in four 15-minute calls with a staff member to check in on their progress (Doss et al., 2016). Participants who completed the program reported greater relationship satisfaction than other types of primary prevention interventions including in-person and virtual programs (Doss et al., 2016). Limitations of the program include the fee participants were required to pay prior to completing the program as well as the lengthy process that requires both couple members to participate. OR-C, while taking a couple-based approach, fails to reach individuals who have not made serious relationship commitments.

To account for this limitation, OurRelationship individual program (OR-I) was created. OR-I is a 4 to 6 hour online program designed for individuals developed from the couple program and included three online calls with a staff member about the program specifically (Doss et al., 2016). The individual program addresses issues including communication problems, emotional distance, a lack of trust or infidelity, fights about money or parenting, and difficulty in recovering from painful past events (Our Relationship, 2020). Participants reported higher quality of life and reduced relationship negatives during treatment (Nowlan, 2016). OR-I is not easily accessible due to a $50 fee for the self-guided course and $150 for the coach instructed course (Our Relationship, 2020). Also, while the OR-I is designed for individuals, it assumes participants are in a relationship. OR-I does not target young individuals before they are in a relationship to learn how to work on relationship issues before they arise. The focus of OR-I is less on preventing individuals from being in an unhealthy relationship, but more about how to work on unhealthy behaviors in a relationship.

In summary, current relationship interventions involve a lengthy process, often require a fee, and mainly target couples with a focus on decreasing unhealthy behaviors in a relationship rather than preventing individuals from being in an unhealthy relationship. This study addresses these limitations by creating an intervention that educates college women about family work distribution, teaches college women about effective communication in a romantic relationship, educates college women about a model of effective communication, and increases college women's confidence in communicating effectively with their future partner.

Study Hypotheses

The hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Participants who complete the intervention, compared to participants who read an adapted version of the intervention script (information only condition) and those in a no-intervention control condition, will have the most knowledge about family work distribution.

H2: Participants who complete the intervention, compared to participants who read an adapted version of the intervention script (information only condition) and those in a no-intervention control condition, will have the most knowledge about effective communication with a partner.

H3: Participants who complete the intervention, compared to participants who read an adapted version of the intervention script (information only condition) and those in a no-intervention control condition, will have the most knowledge about the PARTNERS Communication Model.

H4: Participants who complete the intervention, compared to participants who read an adapted version of the intervention script (information only condition) and those in a no-intervention control condition, will have the most confidence in their ability to communicate with their future partner.

Appendix B

Script for the PARTNERS Intervention

Hello! We are researchers at the University of Maryland. We want to educate young women about factors related to satisfaction in heterosexual relationships and how to communicate effectively with a current or future partner. By the end of this video, you will learn about the PARTNERS model and specific skills for how to communicate in romantic relationships.

Why is women's relationship satisfaction important?
- Women typically report lower relationship satisfaction than men.
- One study found that only around half of women were "very happy" in their marriages.
- More women consider leaving their romantic relationships than men.
- Most importantly, being dissatisfied in romantic relationships is strongly linked to depressive symptoms in women.

What relates to relationship satisfaction?
- Research suggests that communication and family work distribution are two key factors related to women's satisfaction in romantic relationships.

First, let's talk about COMMUNICATION.

- Many researchers consider healthy communication (defined as sharing thoughts and feelings in a positive way) as essential to a successful romantic relationship.
- Women often put more emphasis on open communication in their relationships than men.
- Negative communication in couples is related to women feeling depressed and dissatisfied - in fact, communication problems are a leading reason for divorce.
- On the other hand, positive couple communication and being able to deal with conflict in constructive ways improves relationship satisfaction for women.

- It's important to note that women who communicate directly are more successful in getting their needs met and feel more satisfied.
- Also, women who have male partners who communicate well have more equitable relationships and greater relationship satisfaction.

- When you think about your current or future relationship, it is helpful to ask yourself the following questions: Is your partner someone who…
    o   You can trust and count on to be there for you?
    o   Is easy to talk to about your thoughts, feelings and concerns?
    o   Really listens to you when you are speaking?
    o   Cares about your feelings?
    o   Can work through conflict and relationship problems constructively? and
    o   Is strongly committed to healthy communication in your romantic relationship?

Second, equally important to women's satisfaction in their relationships is FAMILY WORK DISTRIBUTION.

- Family work distribution is defined as the way in which couples share housework and childcare.
- You may think that it is too early to be thinking about family work distribution, but the skills that you learn today may be really useful in a current or future relationship.

- We know from research that women typically do the majority of family work in their relationships.
    o   On an average day, women do more housework, more childcare, more food preparation, and more cleanup than their male partners.
    o   Also, coordinating who will complete the household tasks often falls to the woman.
- This unequal work distribution often leaves women feeling dissatisfied.
    o   When the work distribution with their partners is not fair, women typically experience distress, negative interactions with their partners, and low marital quality.

- On the other hand, women feel greater relationship satisfaction when their work distribution is equal to that of their partner.
    o   As men do housework and are involved in raising their children - and do these well, women's relationship satisfaction increases.

- To summarize, one key to a satisfying romantic relationship is sharing the housework and childcare so that no one is responsible for doing more or directing what needs to be done; when both partners contribute equally, women are more satisfied.

- When you think about your current or future relationship, it is helpful to ask yourself the following questions: Is your partner someone who...
    o   Believes that sharing housework and childcare responsibilities is important?
    o   Is committed to dividing housework and childcare equally?
    o   Would take the initiative to do their share of the family work without being asked?
    o   Wants a true partnership where the woman is not expected to do more than her share of the family work?
    o   Is devoted to being an actively involved parent (if you decide to raise children)? and
    o   Is committed to doing their part to have a genuinely loving, equal and satisfying relationship?

To summarize, healthy communication and equal family work distribution are strongly related to being happy and satisfied in a romantic relationship. This is especially important if the couple decides to raise children. Women who have more equal family work distributions and a

relationship where partners communicate well about their thoughts, feelings and concerns are much more likely to be satisfied in their relationship and less likely to be depressed.

Now, we are going to share the PARTNERS Communication Model to help you learn skills for healthy communication in romantic relationships. These skills are important for a satisfying and rewarding relationship. This model was developed based on research conducted by scholars who study relationship functioning. The following skills will help you discuss areas of concern in a productive and healthy way. Conflict in relationships is natural and learning how to directly communicate about important issues could increase your relationship satisfaction.

- First, P - PREPARE
    - o Get ready - Think about the most important things you want to communicate.
    - o Choose a good time and place for the conversation.
- Second, A - ATTEND TO HOW YOU WILL TALK ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS
    - o Avoid criticizing or blaming your partner.
    - o Be empathic - understanding both perspectives is important in couple communication.
- Third, R - REMEMBER TO POINT OUT POSITIVES
    - o Stating what you appreciate and love about your partner can be really helpful when you begin an important conversation.
    - o You might say, "I really appreciate how you are always willing to talk with me about my concerns."

- Fourth, T - TALK WITH YOUR PARTNER AND USE "I" STATEMENTS
    - o Begin with "I" and share a feeling, then say what contributes to your feeling that way.
    - o For example, you could say:
        - ▪ I feel frustrated when you don't do your share around our apartment ....
        - ▪ I feel sad when you don't support me… or
        - ▪ I feel hurt when you won't talk to me when I'm upset...
    - o It's helpful to use "I" statements whenever communicating your thoughts, feelings or needs to your partner.

    - o When discussing your desired changes, be sure to directly state what **you** need and focus on the current issue.
        - ▪ Bringing up unrelated past concerns can be unproductive.

    - o Also, having these talks throughout the relationship as issues emerge is important - bringing a long list of complaints at one time can make it difficult to address the most pressing concern.

- Fifth, N - NOW, REALLY LISTEN TO EACH OTHER
    - o Both partners should give each other their full attention - no distractions or phones.
    - o Take turns speaking and really listening to what each person has to say.
    - o Remember to listen to understand, avoiding judgment or defensiveness.

o   It's often helpful to paraphrase or reflect back your partner's thoughts and feelings.

o   For example, after listening to you, your partner might say, "I hear that it's frustrating when I leave my dishes in the sink all day" or "I hear that it's irritating when I check my phone during important conversations".

o   If needed, you and your partner can restate your points to clear up any confusion.
o   It is best to postpone problem solving until both partners can restate the most important points.

- Sixth, E - ENGAGE IN ACTION PLANNING TO IMPROVE THE RELATIONSHIP
  o   Ideally, both partners will express a commitment to work on improving the relationship.
  o   Then, you can work together to develop an action plan for positive change.
    - First, explicitly name what needs to change
    - Second, try to agree on what will be changed and how to make these changes
    - Third, set specific and measurable goals (for example, "we will take turns making dinner each night" or… "at the end of each day, we will spend at least 30 minutes together")
    - Fourth, take action to meet your goals

  o   Remember to return to the action plan over time and check to make sure that the goals have been met.

- Seventh, R - REMEMBER THAT WOMEN OFTEN DO MORE
  o   As you negotiate in your romantic relationship, it is important to remember that women in heterosexual relationships often do more work and initiate more conversations related to the relationship.

  o   It's important that both partners contribute equitably as women are more happy and satisfied in equal relationships.

- Eighth, S - SPEAK UP TO ENSURE YOUR NEEDS ARE MET
  o   It is essential that you continue to advocate for what you need in your relationship.

  o   Pay careful attention if your partner is not listening, unwilling to change their behaviors, or not committed to improving the relationship.

  o   Most of us fall in love with several people throughout our lives, who you select for your forever partner is a really important choice.

    o   Current behaviors likely continue over time so if a partner is not meeting your hopes or expectations - and is unwilling to work to improve the relationship, it is possible that they might not be right for you.

    o   It is important to note that demeaning, controlling, monitoring, threatening, aggressive, or really jealous or possessive behaviors are signs of an unhealthy or abusive relationship. If you notice these behaviors, this website might be helpful: loveisrespect.org.

Now, we will provide the opportunity for you to think about how you might use the PARTNERS Communication Model.

First, think about how you might use the PARTNERS Communication Model if you feel like your partner is not doing their share with regard to cleaning the bathroom?

- How might you initiate a conversation about this concern?
- What specifically would you say to your partner?
- What specific plans for changes might emerge from this conversation?

Now, we will show you how we might apply the PARTNERS Communication Model to this example.

First, the acronym PARTNERS may help you remember the steps in the model.

- After choosing the most important thing you want to communicate as well as a good time and place to talk, start the conversation. Do not criticize or blame your partner - start with something positive.

YOU: Do you have a few minutes to talk? I've been thinking more about how regularly we clean our bathroom and wanted to talk to you about it.
PARTNER: Okay, sure

YOU: Thanks - I know we both do not like to talk about chores. I really appreciate how you are always willing to talk about my concerns.

YOU: I feel frustrated because the bathroom is really dirty and I was the last to clean it. I know that we have different expectations when it comes to how often we clean the bathroom. I prefer for the bathroom to be cleaned once a week and we alternate who cleans it. What do you think?
PARTNER: I really don't see why we would need to clean it each week, it doesn't get that dirty. One of us can just clean it whenever it really needs it.

YOU: I hear you saying that the bathroom seems clean enough and that we don't need a plan. That seems pretty vague to me. I feel like the bathroom gets pretty dirty over one week. I like to keep it clean, but because we don't agree on when it needs to be cleaned and when it doesn't, I end up having to clean it every week.

PARTNER: It's not like you *have* to clean it every week. Regular bathroom cleaning just doesn't seem necessary and there is always so much going on, it's just not a priority. But I know you're saying that a clean bathroom is one of your priorities and it's frustrating when I don't share this chore with you.

YOU: Yeah that's exactly right. So let's come up with a plan for how to work on this together.
PARTNER: Okay I can give it a try since it is so important to you.

YOU: I really need for us to share this responsibility. Could you start cleaning the bathroom every other week?
YOUR PARTNER: I can start rotating in, beginning this week.

As you negotiate how to make changes in your relationship remember that couples are more satisfied in *equal* relationships and that women typically do more.

Also, remember that it is important to continue to advocate for what you need in your relationship as one conversation often does not result in the desired change. Know that giving in and doing everything yourself, although it might seem easier in the moment, can lead to relationship dissatisfaction and even depression.

Now, let's try another example. How might you apply the PARTNERS Communication Model when you and your partner need to search for a new apartment, but he would rather play video games than contribute to the apartment search?

- How might you initiate the conversation?
- What specifically would you say about this concern?
- What specific plans for changes might you hope would emerge from this conversation?

After choosing the most important thing you want to communicate, as well as a good time and place to talk, initiate the conversation. Do not criticize or blame your partner - start with something positive.

YOU: Do you have some time to talk today? I'd like to talk about how we might spend some time together searching for a new apartment.
PARTNER: Okay yeah, I can talk now

YOU: I really love your input - you have such a good eye for design.

YOU: I feel upset when you choose to play video games instead of contributing to our apartment search. I feel like you're not appreciating all the time I'm putting into this.
PARTNER: I didn't know you felt that way...You know that playing video games is my way of relaxing.

YOU: I know that playing video games is relaxing and fun for you. I like that we have things we each enjoy doing on our own. Last night, I felt that when I wanted to spend time searching for

apartments with you, you chose to play video games. I don't want to force you to search for a new place, but I feel hurt thinking you'd rather let me do all the work while you play video games.

PARTNER: I think I know what you mean about last night and I can see how it would feel bad if I'm playing video games instead of contributing to the apartment search.

YOU: Yes, I want to spend time looking for a new place with you, and not feel like I have to compete with video games.

PARTNER: I don't want you to feel that way. I like playing video games, and I do want to look for a new place with you.

YOU: I would like to make a plan for how we can set aside regular time for us to spend looking for a new apartment together.

PARTNER: I'm not sure that I want to be that scheduled and I also don't want to stop playing. I'm not sure about the plan idea - what are you suggesting?

YOU: How about we take an hour searching for places online after dinner together each night, and spend all of Saturday afternoon touring the places we find?

PARTNER: How about a half hour? I really think we could get a lot done in 30 minutes.

YOU: Yeah, that would probably work - let's try this plan and see how it goes.

YOU: I would really appreciate you remembering this plan and sometimes initiating apartment searching so I don't have to remind you and tell you to spend time with me looking for a new place, ok?

PARTNER: Of course - seems fair.

YOU: Okay great, let's start with this plan tonight. I'm excited for us to find a new apartment together!

As you negotiate how to make changes in your relationship remember that couples are more satisfied in *equal* relationships and that women typically do more.

It is important to continue to advocate for what you need in your relationship as one conversation often does not result in the desired change. Expressing your needs in a relationship is essential and can lead to satisfaction for both you and your partner. Also, remember that giving in and doing everything yourself or being put in the position of having to remind your partner about what they need to do can feel really bad and may lead to relationship dissatisfaction and even depression. If a partner is not meeting your needs, hopes or expectations - and is unwilling to work to improve the relationship - they might not be right for you.

To summarize, **communication and family work distribution** are really important with regard to being happy and satisfied in a romantic relationship. Remember that heterosexual women who have more equal family work distribution and a relationship where partners communicate effectively about their thoughts, feelings and concerns are more likely to be satisfied in their relationship and less likely to be depressed.

Before we end, we would like to share a link for the PARTNERS Communication Model infographic and 12 questions that you might want to ask a future partner to see if they are right for you.

We wish you the best in your future relationships!

Appendix C

INFO GRAPHIC ON THE PARTNERS INTERVENTION

PARTNERS Communication Model
Trovato & O'Brien, 2021

PREPARE
PREPARE
Get ready - Think about the most important things you want to communicate
Choose a good time and place for the conversation

ATTEND TO HOW YOU WILL TALK
ATTEND TO HOW YOU WILL TALK ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS
Avoid criticizing or blaming your partner
Be empathic - understanding both perspectives is important

REMEMBER TO POINT OUT POSITIVES
REMEMBER TO POINT OUT POSITIVES
State what you appreciate and love about your partner
You might say, "I really appreciate how you are always willing to talk with me about my concerns"

TALK TOGETHER & USE "I" STATEMENTS
TALK WITH YOUR PARTNER AND USE "I" STATEMENTS
Use "I" statements to share your thoughts, feelings, or needs
Directly state what you need
Focus on the current issue, don't bring up a long list of complaints
Have these talks throughout the relationship as issues emerge

NOW, REALLY LISTEN TO EACH OTHER
NOW, REALLY LISTEN TO EACH OTHER
Give each other your full attention
Take turns speaking and listening
Avoid judgment or defensiveness
Postpone problem solving until partners can restate main points

ENGAGE IN ACTION PLANNING
ENGAGE IN ACTION PLANNING TO IMPROVE THE RELATIONSHIP
Explicitly name what needs to change
Try to agree on what to change and how to make these changes
Set specific and measurable goals and take action to meet goals

REMEMBER THAT WOMEN OFTEN DO MORE
REMEMBER THAT WOMEN OFTEN DO MORE
Women often do more family work
Both partners need to do their share
Women are more happy and satisfied in equal relationships

SPEAK UP
SPEAK UP TO ENSURE YOUR NEEDS ARE MET
Continue to advocate for your needs in your relationship
Choose your forever partner carefully
If a partner is hurtful, unwilling to do their share or work to improve the relationship, they might not be right for you
You deserve a happy and satisfying relationship!

12 Ways to Know Whether Your Partner Is Right for You

When you think about your current or future relationship, ask yourself

Is your partner someone who...

1. You can trust and count on to be there for you?

2. Is easy to talk to about your thoughts, feelings and concerns?

3. Really listens to you when you are speaking?

4. Cares about your feelings?

5. Can work through conflict and relationship problems constructively?

6. Is strongly committed to healthy communication in your romantic relationship?

7. Believes that sharing housework and childcare responsibilities is important?

8. Is committed to dividing housework and childcare equally?

9. Would take the initiative to do their share of the family work without being asked?

10. Wants a true partnership where the woman is not expected to do more than her share of the family work?

11. Is devoted to being an actively involved parent (if you decide to raise children)?

12. Is committed to doing their part to have a genuinely loving, equal and satisfying relationship?

Appendix D

Intervention Script for Information Only Condition

Hello! We are researchers at the University of Maryland. We want to educate young women about factors related to satisfaction in heterosexual relationships and how to communicate effectively with a current or future partner. By the end of this video, you will learn about the PARTNERS Model and specific skills for how to communicate in romantic relationships.

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- More women consider leaving their romantic relationships than men.
- Most importantly, being dissatisfied in romantic relationships is strongly linked to depressive symptoms in women.

Research suggests that communication and family work distribution are two key factors related to women's satisfaction in romantic relationships.

First, let's talk about communication.

- Many researchers consider healthy communication (defined as sharing thoughts and feelings in a positive way) as essential to a successful romantic relationship.
- Women often put more emphasis on open communication in their relationships than men.
- Negative communication in couples is related to women feeling depressed and dissatisfied - in fact, communication problems are a leading reason for divorce.
- On the other hand, positive couple communication and being able to deal with conflict in constructive ways improves relationship satisfaction for women.

- It's important to note that women who communicate directly are more successful in getting their needs met and feel more satisfied.
- Also, women who have male partners who communicate well have more equitable relationships and greater relationship satisfaction.

Second, equally important to women's satisfaction in their relationships is family work distribution.

- Family work distribution is defined as the way in which couples share housework and childcare.
- You may think that it is too early to be thinking about family work distribution, but the skills that you learn today may be really useful in a current or future relationship.

- We know from research that women typically do the majority of family work in their relationships.
  - On an average day, women do more housework, more childcare, more food preparation, and more cleanup than their male partners.

- ○ Also, coordinating who will complete the household tasks often falls to the woman.
- This unequal work distribution often leaves women feeling dissatisfied.
  - ○ When the work distribution with their partners is not fair, women typically experience distress, negative interactions with their partners, and low marital quality.

- On the other hand, women feel greater relationship satisfaction when their work distribution is equal to that of their partner.
  - ○ As men do housework and are involved in raising their children - and do these well, women's relationship satisfaction increases.

- To summarize, one key to a satisfying romantic relationship is sharing the housework and childcare so that no one is responsible for doing more or directing what needs to be done; when both partners contribute equally, women are more satisfied.

To summarize, healthy communication and equal family work distribution are strongly related to being happy and satisfied in a romantic relationship. This is especially important if the couple decides to raise children. Women who have more equal family work distributions and a relationship where partners communicate well about their thoughts, feelings and concerns are much more likely to be satisfied in their relationship and less likely to be depressed.

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First, P - PREPARE

- Get ready - Think about the most important things you want to communicate.
- Choose a good time and place for the conversation.

Second, A - ATTEND TO HOW YOU WILL TALK ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS

- Avoid criticizing or blaming your partner.
- Be empathic - understanding both perspectives is important in couple communication.

Third, R - REMEMBER TO POINT OUT POSITIVES

- Stating what you appreciate and love about your partner can be really helpful when you begin an important conversation.

Fourth, T - TALK WITH YOUR PARTNER AND USE "I" STATEMENTS

- Begin with "I" and share a feeling, then say what contributes to your feeling that way.
- It's helpful to use "I" statements whenever communicating your thoughts, feelings or needs to your partner.

- When discussing your desired changes, be sure to directly state what **you** need and focus on the current issue.
  - Bringing up unrelated past concerns can be unproductive.

- Also, having these talks throughout the relationship as issues emerge is important - bringing a long list of complaints at one time can make it difficult to address the most pressing concern.

Fifth, N - NOW, REALLY LISTEN TO EACH OTHER

- Both partners should give each other their full attention - no distractions or phones.
- Take turns speaking and really listening to what each person has to say.
- Remember to listen to understand, avoiding judgment or defensiveness.

- It's often helpful to paraphrase or reflect back your partner's thoughts and feelings.

- If needed, you and your partner can restate your points to clear up any confusion.
- It is best to postpone problem solving until both partners can restate the most important points.

Sixth, E - ENGAGE IN ACTION PLANNING TO IMPROVE THE RELATIONSHIP

- Ideally, both partners will express a commitment to work on improving the relationship.
- Then, you can work together to develop an action plan for positive change.
  - First, explicitly name what needs to change
  - Second, try to agree on what will be changed and how to make these changes
  - Third, set specific and measurable goals
  - Fourth, take action to meet your goals

- Remember to return to the action plan over time and check to make sure that the goals have been met.

Seventh, R - REMEMBER THAT WOMEN OFTEN DO MORE

- As you negotiate in your romantic relationship, it is important to remember that women in heterosexual relationships often do more work and initiate more conversations related to the relationship.

- It's important that both partners contribute equitably as women are more happy and satisfied in equal relationships.

Eighth, S - SPEAK UP TO ENSURE YOUR NEEDS ARE MET

- It is essential that you continue to advocate for what you need in your relationship.

- Pay careful attention if your partner is not listening, unwilling to change their behaviors, or not committed to improving the relationship.

- Most of us fall in love with several people throughout our lives, who you select for your forever partner is a really important choice.

- Current behaviors likely continue over time so if a partner is not meeting your hopes or expectations - and is unwilling to work to improve the relationship, it is possible that they might not be right for you.

- It is important to note that demeaning, controlling, monitoring, threatening, aggressive, or really jealous or possessive behaviors are signs of an unhealthy or abusive relationship. If you notice these behaviors, this website might be helpful: loveisrespect.org..

To summarize, communication and family work distribution are really important with regard to being happy and satisfied in a romantic relationship. Remember that heterosexual women who have more equal family work distribution and a relationship where partners communicate effectively about their thoughts, feelings and concerns are more likely to be satisfied in their relationship and less likely to be depressed.

We wish you the best in your future relationships!

Appendix E

Validity Checks and Inclusion Criteria

Validity Questions
1. Please select "agree" for this item.
     a. Knowledge about Partner Communication Measure
2. Please select "strongly disagree" for this item
     a. Self-Efficacy Measure

Inclusion Questions
1. Are you a woman between the ages of 18 and 22?

   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

2. Are you an undergraduate student at the University of Maryland, College Park?

   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

3. Do you identify as heterosexual (straight)?

   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

Appendix F

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FAMILY WORK AND COMMUNICATION
(adapted from Hill & O'Brien, in press)

Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Please do not look up or ask anyone else for the answers to these items.

For the items below, "family work" is defined as unpaid work that occurs in one's home (e.g., housework, childcare, chores).

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)
1. Having a satisfying relationship is not as important as picking a career I love.	o	o	o	o	o	o
2. Women who communicate directly are more successful in getting their needs met.	o	o	o	o	o	o
3. When selecting a career, I will consider the needs of my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o
4. A male partner's ability to communicate well does not strongly predict women's relationship satisfaction. (*)	o	o	o	o	o	o
5. My career choice will be based on my goals, not on my ability to balance work and love.	o	o	o	o	o	o
6. I will take a job that I find less satisfying if it means having more time for my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o

7. Communication problems are not one of the top causes of divorce. (*)

    o   o   o   o   o   o

8. Today, women and men do the same amount of family work. (*)

    o   o   o   o   o   o

9. Women who do the majority of the family work in their relationships are at risk for being very depressed.

    o   o   o   o   o   o

10. When selecting a career, I will take a lesser paying job if it means I am able to prioritize my relationship.

    o   o   o   o   o   o

11. Negative couple interactions increase when women do more family work than their male partners.

    o   o   o   o   o   o

12. It is likely that a woman would be depressed because of poor communication in her relationship.

    o   o   o   o   o   o

13. Taking a less demanding job to have more energy for my partner will not be an option.

    o   o   o   o   o   o

14. Women are most satisfied in their relationship when they

    o   o   o   o   o   o

divide family work equally with their partner.	

Family Work Subscale: 8, 9, 11, 14

Communication Subscale: 2, 4, 7, 12

Note. Items 1, 3, 5, 6, 10, and 13 are filler items taken with permission from Ganginis Del Pino et al. (2013) "The Planning for Career and Family Scale."

Note. (*) Indicates item should be reverse scored.

Appendix G

FAMILY WORK-RELATED DESIRED PARTNER CHARACTERISTICS

Please do not look up or ask anyone else for the answer to this item.

1. What are your top desired characteristics for a romantic partner (list no more than five)?
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.

Rating scale for each characteristic listed
(0) *No response*
(1) *Related to family work*
(2) *Unrelated response*

Appendix H

KNOWLEDGE OF FAMILY WORK – QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

1. What do you know about family work distribution in a romantic relationship? List three facts.
   1.
   2.
   3.

Rating Scale
(0) *Incorrect or irrelevant response*
(1) *1 correct fact reported*
(2) *2 correct facts reported*
(3) *3 correct facts reported*
(4) *More than 3 correct facts reported*

Appendix I

COMMUNICATION-RELATED DESIRED PARTNER CHARACTERISTICS

1. What are your top desired characteristics for a romantic partner (list no more than five)?
    1.
    2.
    3.
    4.
    5.

Rating scale for each characteristic
(0) *No response* (1) *Related to communication* (2) *Unrelated response*

Appendix J

KNOWLEDGE OF PARTNERS COMMUNICATION MODEL – QUANTITATIVE
ASSESSMENT
(adapted from the "Knowledge Regarding Appropriate Bystander Interventions" measure by
O'Brien et al., in press)

*Regarding a romantic relationship, rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the
following statements. Please do not look up or ask anyone else for the answers to these items.*

*For the items below, "family work" is defined as unpaid work that occurs in one's home (e.g.,
housework, childcare, chores).*

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)
1. It is best to begin problem solving as soon as there is conflict. (*)	o	o	o	o	o	o
2. Pointing out how my partner has made the same mistake over and over can help them see how important it is for them to change. (*)	o	o	o	o	o	o
3. Having a fulfilling career will be very important to me, even at the expense of future responsibilities to my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o
4. Setting specific relationship goals will help promote change.	o	o	o	o	o	o
5. If I feel that my partner is blaming me, I should defend myself. (*)	o	o	o	o	o	o
6. It is important to paraphrase my	o	o	o	o	o	o

partner's perspective before sharing my points.

7. The wishes of my partner will not figure into my career plans.

   o   o   o   o   o   o

8. Telling my partner "I feel frustrated when you don't listen to me" is a helpful way to share a concern. (M)

   o   o   o   o   o   o

9. Pointing out positive characteristics of my partner might seem manipulative if I am asking for changes. (*)

   o   o   o   o   o   o

10. Direct communication strategies are too assertive. (*)

   o   o   o   o   o   o

11. I will never change my career plans for a relationship.

   o   o   o   o   o   o

12. In relationships, it is best to just do my part to improve it and not worry about what the other person is doing. (*)

   o   o   o   o   o   o

13. It is best to express my needs very directly to my partner, even if this is annoying to them.

   o   o   o   o   o   o

14. When my partner is not doing their share of the housework, it is best to

   o   o   o   o   o   o

gently hint for them to do it. (*)

15. Any relationship that I am in will need to realize that my career plans come first.

   o   o   o   o   o   o

16. Focusing on the current issue, rather than bringing up past complaints, is most effective when asking for changes.

   o   o   o   o   o   o

17. I will give up some of my career goals for my relationship.

   o   o   o   o   o   o

18. If my partner says something untrue, I should immediately correct them. (*)

   o   o   o   o   o   o

19. Please select "agree" for this item.

   o   o   o   o   o   o

20. Blaming my partner for something that was their fault can help them see how they need to change. (*)

   o   o   o   o   o   o

21. I will make my career plans independently of what my partner might need.

   o   o   o   o   o   o

22. It is best to raise concerns to my partner right away, without planning ahead of time. (*)

   o   o   o   o   o   o

23. If I speak very gently about my needs to my partner, I will be more likely to get my needs met. (*)	o	o	o	o	o	o
24. Women do much more family work in their relationships.	o	o	o	o	o	o

Note. (M) Next to item indicates item has been modified from O'Brien et al., 2019. Modified with permission. (*) Indicates items that should be reverse scored.

Note. Items 3, 7, 11, 15, 17, and 21 are filler items taken with permission from Ganginis Del Pino et al. (2013) "The Planning for Career and Family Scale." Item 19 is a validity check.

Appendix K

KNOWLEDGE OF PARTNERS COMMUNICATION MODEL – QUALITATIVE
ASSESSMENT

1. Imagine that you are really upset with a future romantic partner because they did
   something that really hurt you. State specifically what you would do and/or say related to
   this very upsetting situation.

Rating Scale
(0) *Missing or incorrect responses*
(1) *Reported 0 points consistent with our intervention*
(2) *Reported 1 points consistent with our intervention*
(3) *Reported 2 points consistent with our intervention*
(4) *Reported 3 points consistent with our intervention*
(5) *Reported 4 points consistent with our intervention*
(6) *Reported 5 points consistent with our intervention*
(7) *Reported 6 points consistent with our intervention*
(8) *Reported 7 points consistent with our intervention*
(9) *Reported 8 points consistent with our intervention*

Appendix L

EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION SELF-EFFICACY
All items adapted from the "Bystander Self-Efficacy in Dating Violence Situations" measure by O'Brien et al., 2019.

How confident are you in each of the following?

For the items below, "family work" is defined as unpaid work that occurs in one's home (e.g., housework, childcare, chores).

I am confident that I can...	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)
1. Avoid criticizing my partner when they are frustrating me.	o	o	o	o	o	o
2. Come prepared to talk with my partner about a major concern that affects the future of our relationship.	o	o	o	o	o	o
3. Make sure that my partner and I share family work equally.	o	o	o	o	o	o
4. Work with my partner to figure out how to make necessary changes in the relationship when we disagree about what needs to change.	o	o	o	o	o	o
5. Communicate in a caring manner even when I am furious with my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o
6. Explicitly tell my partner that they need to change for the relationship to work.	o	o	o	o	o	o

7. Tell my partner that I am doing most of the family work.	o	o	o	o	o	o
8. Please Select "Strongly Disagree" for this item.	o	o	o	o	o	o
9. Wait for a good time to talk to my partner if I am too hurt to communicate in a caring manner.	o	o	o	o	o	o
10. Speak directly to my partner when I am frustrated that they are not doing their share of the family work.	o	o	o	o	o	o
11. Tell my partner to do more when they are not doing their share.	o	o	o	o	o	o
12. Wait for my turn to respond when my partner is saying something incorrect.	o	o	o	o	o	o
13. Ask my partner to do something for me even if it really inconveniences them.	o	o	o	o	o	o
14. Avoid speaking judgmentally even when I am angry with my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o
15. Tell my partner that women often do most of the family work and this is not ok in our relationship.	o	o	o	o	o	o

16. Use "I" statements when arguing with my partner.

   o   o   o   o   o   o

17. Express what I appreciate about my partner when I am really mad at them.

   o   o   o   o   o   o

18. Use the specific steps in the PARTNERS model when I am arguing with my partner.

   o   o   o   o   o   o

Note. Item 8 is a validity check.

Appendix M

CONFIDENCE IN RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION ITEM

On a scale from 1 to 10, how confident are you in your ability to communicate with a romantic partner about a concern in your relationship?

Not at all   Extremely confident
    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Appendix N

Coding Scheme for FAMILY WORK-RELATED DESIRED PARTNER CHARACTERISTICS

Question: What are your top desired characteristics for a romantic partner (list no more than five)?

Coding Categories

(0) Missing

(1) Believes that sharing housework and childcare responsibilities is important

(2) Is committed to dividing housework and childcare equally

(3) Would take the initiative to do their share of the family work without being asked

(4) Wants a true partnership where the woman is not expected to do more than her share of the family work

(5) Is devoted to being an actively involved parent (if you decide to raise children)

(6) Is committed to doing their part to have a genuinely loving, equal and satisfying relationship

(7) Other

(8) Irrelevant, bizarre response

Appendix O

Coding Scheme for COMMUNICATION-RELATED DESIRED PARTNER
CHARACTERISTICS

Question: What are your top desired characteristics for a romantic partner (list no more than five)?

Coding Categories

(0) Missing

(1) You can trust and count on to be there for you

(2) Is easy to talk to about your thoughts, feelings and concerns

(3) Really listens to you when you are speaking

(4) Cares about your feelings

(5) Can work through conflict and relationship problems constructively

(6) Is strongly committed to healthy communication in your romantic relationship

(7) Other

(8) Irrelevant, bizarre response

Appendix P

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your age?

   _____

2. What is your current gender identity?

   ☐ Female
   ☐ Trans female/trans woman
   ☐ Male
   ☐ Trans male/trans man
   ☐ Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming
      Other _____

3. Which of the following best represents your racial and/or ethnic heritage? Select all that apply.
   ☐ Black, Afro-Caribbean, African-American
   ☐ Latinx, Hispanic-American
   ☐ White Non-Hispanic, European-American
   ☐ Asian, Asian-American, Pacific Islander
   ☐ Native American
   ☐ Biracial/multiracial _____
   ☐ Other _____

4. Which of the following best represents your sexual orientation?
   ☐ Straight
   ☐ Bisexual
   ☐ Lesbian, gay
   ☐ Other_____

5. Have you chosen a major?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

         If YES, what major have you chosen?
         _____

         If NO, what majors are you considering? Indicate 2 potential options.
         _____

6. Relationship Status:
   ☐ Single

☐ In a relationship
☐ Engaged
☐ Married

7. If in a relationship, how long have you been romantically involved with your current partner?

_____Years _____ Months

8. What is your generational status?
   ☐ 1.5 generation (I was born in another country and moved to the U.S. as a young child)
   ☐ First generation (I was born in another country and moved to the U.S. as an adult)
   ☐ 2nd generation (I was born in the U.S., but my parent was born in another country)
   ☐ 3rd generation (I was born in the U.S and my parent was born in the U.S., but grandparent was born in another country)
   ☐ 4th generation or more (I was born in the U.S. and my parents and grandparents were also born in the U.S

9. How many classes have you taken that focus on romantic relationships
   ☐ None
   ☐ One
   ☐ Two
   ☐ Three
   ☐ More than three

10. How many classes have you taken that focus on romantic relationships
    ☐ None
    ☐ One
    ☐ Two
    ☐ Three
    ☐ More than three

11. Would you like to share anything else with the researchers? (Optional)

_____

_____

12. Would you be willing to be contacted by the researchers for future studies related to romantic relationships?

   ● Yes
   ● No