

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: **REAL PARTNERSHIP IS POWERFUL:
UNDERSTANDING WHAT WOMEN WANT AND
WHAT THEY KNOW ABOUT FAMILY WORK AND
COMMUNICATION**

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Women provide the vast majority of unpaid family care, resulting in relationship dissatisfaction, depressive symptoms, thwarted career advancement, and diminished earning power (Cooke & Hook, 2018; Jung & O'Brien, 2019; Woods et al., 2019). The PARTNERS video intervention (Trovato & O'Brien, 2022) was created to educate heterosexual college women about family work distribution and healthy partner communication. The intervention was effective in improving knowledge of family work and communication and enhancing confidence in communicating with a partner for 303 college women. This study builds upon prior research by Trovato and O'Brien (2022) to assess specific differences in knowledge of family work, desired partner characteristics, and communication resulting from the PARTNERS intervention, as well as to identify ways to improve the PARTNERS intervention. Results of this study indicated that that the PARTNERS intervention educated undergraduate women about family work inequity between women and men and the effect of family work distribution on women's relationship satisfaction, changed their desired partner characteristics to align with communication-related factors, and taught women key PARTNERS communication strategies. Future directions for research and clinical implications are discussed.

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UNDERSTANDING WHAT WOMEN WANT AND
WHAT THEY KNOW ABOUT FAMILY WORK AND COMMUNICATION**

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	ii
List of Tables.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Method.....	13
Results.....	18
Discussion.....	25
Appendices.....	50
References.....	78

List of Tables

Table 1: Demographics

Table 2: Knowledge of Family Work Qualitative Responses

Table 3: Desired Partner Characteristics Qualitative Responses

Table 4: Knowledge of Communication Qualitative Responses

Real Partnership is Powerful: Understanding What Women Want and What They Know About Family Work and Communication

Renowned former Supreme Court Justice, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, notably stated “Women will have achieved true equality when men share with them the responsibility of bringing up the next generation.” Justice Ginsburg astutely captured the role unequal family work plays in perpetuating gender inequality between women and men. Women provide the vast majority of unpaid family care (Brenan, 2021; DeGroot & Vik, 2020; Kamp Dush et al., 2018; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2016; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022), which can have devastating effects on their lives. Unequal family work is associated with relationship dissatisfaction, depressive symptoms, thwarted career advancement, and diminished earning power (Cooke & Hook, 2018; Jung & O’Brien, 2019; Pedersen, 2017; Woods et al., 2019). Women’s disproportionate share of family work increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and as a result, intensified economic inequality between women and men and exacerbated women’s mental health concerns (Alon et al., 2020; Collins et al., 2021; Dang & Nguyen, 2020; LeanIn, 2020; Power, 2020). Heterosexual women are at particular risk for negative outcomes associated with performing the majority of family care, given that lesbian and gay couples report more equal divisions of household labor and emotion work (Goldberg, 2013; Smart et al. 2017; Umberson et al., 2015) and more communication about household chores (Brashier et al., 2013; Brewster, 2017). The choice of a future romantic partner affects the degree to which equitable family work and healthy communication exist in a relationship, which then plays a role in women’s vocational success and mental health.

The PARTNERS video intervention (Trovato & O'Brien, 2022) was created to educate heterosexual college women about family work distribution, healthy couple communication, and the PARTNERS model of communication. A mixed methods experiment with 303 heterosexual college women found that the innovative intervention was effective with regard to educating women about family work and effective communication and improving their confidence in communicating with a romantic partner. The purpose of this study was to build upon prior research by Trovato and O'Brien (2022) to assess the degree to which specific aspects of college women's knowledge of family work, desired partner characteristics, and knowledge of healthy communication differed as a result of participating in the PARTNERS intervention, and to inform efforts to improve the PARTNERS video intervention for use in future research. Ultimately, these findings will enhance future interventions to increase relationship satisfaction, reduce depression, equalize family work distribution, and advance vocational success for women.

Underlying Theory

Two theories formed the theoretical foundation for this study: Social Role Theory and Equity Theory. Gender roles contribute to maintaining the division of labor through the socialization process (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Perceived differences between women and men shape gender role beliefs that contribute to socially constructing women and men's social roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Gender role beliefs stem from observing women and men's behaviors and inferring that they possess complementary abilities that prepare them for gender specific roles (Diekmann et al., 2017; Eagly & Wood, 2012). As women and men perform culturally and environmentally constructed gender roles, society deems these as inherent differences between women and men (Eagly & Wood, 2012). "Communal" characteristics encompass family work

and emotion work, which are inequitably assigned to women, and have become typically associated with being feminine (Eagly et al., 2000; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2018). Family work has become reflective of women's gender roles, in part, because women have typically performed the majority of housework, childcare, and emotion work due to societal expectations (Eagly & Wood, 2012). However, gender is not a fixed characteristic or property, but is actually performed and something individuals "do" rather than have (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Due to the social consequences of deviating from one's gender role, socially constructed gender identities become a standard by which women and men regulate their behavior and perform their gender (Eagly et al., 2000; Eagly & Wood 2012). Women "doing" gender is observed in the form of maintaining the majority of family work responsibilities. Social role theory informs the inequitable distribution of unpaid care work between women and men by demonstrating the way gender role beliefs and stereotypes contribute to maintaining the unequal division of labor.

Equity theory explains the distressing effect that inequitable family work distribution has on women who perform the majority of unpaid family care. Equity theory assumes that an experience of inequity either to one's benefit or detriment causes feelings of emotional distress (Adams, 1965). An equitable relationship is one in which no partner under or over benefits, and thus contributes to less distress and more relationship satisfaction (Hatfield & Traupmann, 1980; Hatfield & Rapson, 2012). Women experienced more negative and less positive emotions when they perceive inequity in the division of household labor (Lively et al., 2010; Sprecher, 2018). Individuals who performed the majority of household labor were more likely to experience distress, which was closely associated with depression, as well as anger and rage (Lively et al., 2010). Relationship inequity also was associated with lower relationship satisfaction and happiness (Sprecher, 2018). Emerging adults anticipate being most satisfied in equitable

relationships where household work, paid work, power, and decision making are shared equally (Sells & Ganong, 2017). Equity theory contributes to explaining that the most satisfying relationships are equitable ones in which no partner has the advantage.

Unpaid Family Work

Women working full-time outside of the home still maintain the majority of family work (Pew Research Center, 2015). Fathers are often engaged in leisure while their partner manages children's schedules and activities (Pew Research Center, 2015) and uses her leisure time to complete routine housework and childcare (DeGroot & Vik, 2020; Kamp Dush et al., 2018). In addition to using their leisure time to perform the majority of family work, women are more likely than men to make adjustments in their employment hours when childcare demands increase (Collins et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic increased the share of women's family work as women with children, who already did more than fathers, increased their time performing housework and childcare to accommodate homeschooling needs and the lack of childcare during the pandemic (Carlson et al., 2022). Family work inequity is associated with harmful outcomes for women including increased stress and poverty, and reduced physical, mental, relational, and economic well-being (Hamel & Salganicoff, 2020; Hess, et al., 2020; Jung & O'Brien, 2019). Unequal family work remains an ongoing obstacle for women's relationship satisfaction, mental health, and vocational success.

Relationship Dissatisfaction

Relationship dissatisfaction is a key consequence of unequal family care. Women overall report lower marital happiness and global marital satisfaction compared to men (Boerner et al., 2014; 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). Only 57.4% of women and 62.8% of men reported that their marriages were very happy (Smith et al., 2015), and about 40 to 50% of U.S. married couples divorce (American Psychological Association, 2020). As women perceive inequity in the division of household labor, they experience greater distress, negative interactions with their partner, relationship conflict, and lower levels of marital quality (Chong & Mickelson, 2016; Newkirk et al., 2017; Ogolsky et al., 2014). Relationship dissatisfaction among women has been linked to depression (Whitton & Whisman, 2010; Woods et al., 2019). Importantly, women's relationship satisfaction is related to family work distribution and increases as the distribution becomes more equivalent (Barroso, 2021; Carlson, 2022; Chong & Mickelson, 2016; Ciciolla & Luthar, 2019; Pedersen, 2017).

Vocational and Economic Well-Being

Not only does women's inequitable share of family work impair relationship functioning, but it also negatively affects vocational and economic well-being (Jung & O'Brien, 2019). Mothers working full or part-time are twice as likely as working fathers to report that being a parent has made it harder for them to advance in their careers, and 40% of full-time mothers report that they always feel rushed (Pew Research Center, 2015). The time women might spend towards vocational and economic pursuits is spent providing a disproportionate share of family work. This inequity harms women through the associated loss of money and time (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020). Unpaid family work is a longstanding contributor to the wage gap between women and men as greater involvement in family work is associated with lower wages (Cooke & Hook, 2018, Carlson & Lynch, 2017; Glauber, 2015; Jung & O'Brien, 2019; Kleven et al. 2019; Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020; White House Council of Economic Advisers, 2015). Low earning power puts women at greater risk of financial instability, which is a primary barrier for women

attempting to leave harmful relationships (Breiding et al., 2017; Goodman et al., 2016). The increasing care needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated economic inequality between women and men as mothers were more likely than fathers to reduce their working hours, stop working altogether or to permanently lose their jobs as a result of the pandemic (Alon et al., 2020; Collins et al., 2021; Dang & Nguyen, 2020; LeanIn, 2020; Power, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Women's disproportionate share of unpaid family care contributes to severe consequences to their careers and earning potential.

Thoughtful Choice in Romantic Partner

Given the deleterious effects an inequitable relationship may have on women's relationship satisfaction, mental health, vocational success, and economic well-being, it is important for women to make thoughtful choices regarding their romantic partner. Sandberg, in her book *Lean In* (2013), said that choosing a romantic partner is not just a personal decision but also one that affects a woman's career. Research shows that women's partners have a powerful effect on their lives. A study examining the connection between women's partners and women's vocational outcomes found that men's preferences regarding their partner's stay at home versus employment hours predicted women's decisions (Stertz et al., 2017). Similarly, women's expectations regarding their male partners' engagement in childcare influenced whether women envisioned themselves in nontraditional careers and roles (Croft et al., 2019), lending support to the impact of men's family-work related characteristics on women's vocational aspirations. Women's expectations of their male partner's share of family work also affect their future expectations of involvement in housework and childcare, which can subsequently impact women's career choice, aspirations, and plans (Ganginis Del Pino et al., 2013). One study of women in STEM majors found that women successfully balance their educational and career

goals with their romantic relationship when their male partner expected to share an equitable division of family responsibilities (Barth et al., 2016). Men's engagement in childcare and domestic labor benefit women's personal aspirations by providing them with flexibility to pursue their career goals (Croft et al., 2015).

Importance of Desired Partner Characteristics

The choice of romantic partner has a significant impact on women's lives. Thus, it is important for women to carefully consider partner characteristics when they choose a partner. Individuals' ideal partner characteristics are predictive of their later partner's actual character traits (Gerlach et al., 2019). Research suggested that romantic partners higher in conscientiousness are preferred (Figueredo et al., 2006), and that having a highly conscientious partner is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, income, and promotion due to that partner managing household responsibilities and providing the other with more time and energy towards their career (Solomon & Jackson, 2014). Responsive partners who demonstrate understanding, validation, and care are associated with relationship satisfaction, such that lower levels of partner responsiveness were related to decreased relationship satisfaction (Smallen et al., 2021). An understanding partner who listens and communicates well may be associated with women's relationship satisfaction. Research examining young adults' family-oriented partner preferences found that preferring a family-oriented partner was related to wanting to perform fewer chores, and those who believed they would find a family-oriented partner also expected to do less child-care (Askari, et al., 2010). However, women believed that they were less likely to find a family-oriented partner compared to men, which may have contributed to their expectation of performing an inequitable share of family work (Askari et al., 2010). This demonstrates the effect that women's desired partner characteristics can have on their expected engagement in

housework and the importance of making thoughtful choices regarding a future romantic partner. Thus, the current study investigated women's specific desired partner characteristics to better understand how their preferences differed as a result of the innovative intervention designed to improve knowledge of family work and communication.

Communication

Partner communication contributes to equal and satisfying romantic relationships. Communication with potential future partners about family work distribution can enable women to learn about their partners' values and intent regarding equity in a relationship, and then make informed choices regarding their romantic partner. Communicating with one's partner about family work distribution is important because young adult women often expect to perform more housework and childcare in their future relationship compared to men (Dernberger & Pepin, 2020), even if they ideally wished for an egalitarian division of household labor (Askari et al., 2010). Research shows that women's ability to communicate about their needs affected household work distributions, and their partner's communication quality determined whether women perceived equity and felt satisfied in their relationship (Carlson et al., 2022). Direct communication strategies were associated with greater change toward the desired outcome (Miller & Carlson, 2016; Overall et al., 2009), whereas 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). Communicating effectively about family work may improve women's relationship satisfaction through equalizing household work distributions, which could advance women's vocational success. Thus, empowering women to articulate the need for equity in family work distribution before an inequitable balance is established in their relationship is critical and could have important implications for women's

career advancement and financial security.

Given the importance of family work equity and healthy communication for women's romantic relationships and vocational success, the current study sought to analyze women's knowledge of family work distribution, their desired partner characteristics, and effective couple communication. To communicate about family work distribution with a current or future partner, college women must first understand what family work is and how it affects women's romantic relationships. Because inequitable family work contributes to relationship dissatisfaction, which is not uncommon in romantic relationships and is linked to depression, it was important to analyze what college women know about family work distribution. Analyzing participant responses regarding knowledge about family work provided insight as to how their knowledge differed as a result of the PARTNERS intervention and what specific knowledge was gained. After learning about family work distribution and how it affects women's relationships, women may use this to inform conversations about family work with a current or future partner. Thus, knowledge about healthy communication is key and was studied. Knowledge about family work distribution and effective communication also may inform what characteristics college women may seek in a future partner. Analyzing participant responses regarding their desired partner characteristics provided insight as to how their preferences differed as a result of the PARTNERS intervention. Understanding the degree to which the intervention enhanced women's knowledge of family work, their desired partner characteristics, and knowledge of communication also will enable us to improve the effectiveness of the PARTNERS intervention.

Prior Study Overview and Findings

A prior study examined the efficacy of the PARTNERS video intervention (https://go.umd.edu/PARTNERS_video) that was created to educate heterosexual college women

about family work distribution, communication in a romantic relationship, and the PARTNERS model of communication (Trovato & O'Brien, 2022). To develop the intervention, a comprehensive examination of the literature and existing relationship interventions was conducted to gather information that could be used to shape the content of the intervention. Next, a list was compiled of the most salient communication skills and strategies in several empirically supported interventions (The Conversation Project, 2020; Gottman, 2004; Gottman et al., 2014; Gottman & Silver, 2012; Harrington, 1999; Markman et al., 2010; PREPARE/ENRICH, 2019). The authors sorted the list of communication skills and strategies into themes that were used to create the 8-step model for how to communicate with a current or future partner (i.e., PARTNERS: **P**-Prepare, **A**-Attend to how you will talk about your concerns, **R**-Remember to point out positives, **T**-Talk with your partner and use "I" statements, **N**-Now, really listen to each other, **E**-Engage in action planning to improve the relationship, **R**-Remember that women often do more, **S**-Speak up to ensure your needs are met). Following the development of this model, the authors collaboratively wrote the script for the three-part intervention (see Appendix B).

The PARTNERS intervention was organized into three segments. The first segment educated participants about constructs related to relationship satisfaction, highlighting the ways family work distribution and communication influence women's satisfaction and well-being in their romantic relationships. The second segment described the 8- step PARTNERS communication model. The final segment provided two case examples that demonstrated how to apply the PARTNERS model to a conflict often experienced in romantic relationships.

The PARTNERS intervention was created with an online video-based format, given the positive impact videos can have on improving learning outcomes. Video is a successful education method (Brame, 2015; Cookson et al., 2020; Pulukuri & Abrams, 2021). Research on

student learning outcomes in a psychology course found that the use of animated instructional videos was associated with improved test scores and self-reported retention of the material (Cookson et al., 2020). Question-embedded videos, compared to text-book learning are more successful in improving student's learning (Pulukuri & Abrams, 2021). Compared with written or face-to-face communication in medical contexts, short, animated videos have successfully improved patient understanding (Feeley et al., 2023). The effectiveness of the PARTNERS intervention may be increased by incorporating a video-based approach in contrast to solely relying on a reading-based intervention.

A mixed-methods experiment found that the video intervention was effective with regard to educating college women about family work, effective communication, and improving their confidence in communicating with a romantic partner (Trovato & O'Brien, 2022). Those who participated in the intervention or read a partial script were the most knowledgeable about family work distribution, communication, and the PARTNERS model, when compared to participants in the control group. Participants exposed to the intervention had the highest relationship communication self-efficacy. Specifically, participants exposed to the intervention and partial script listed more correct facts about family work distribution and more family work-related desired partner characteristics at posttest compared to participants in the control group. Participants who received the intervention, compared to those in the partial script and control groups, named the most communication-related desired partner characteristics and the most communication strategies consistent with the PARTNERS model at posttest. These analyses simply examined the frequency of responses that contained facts about family work, desired partner characteristics related to family work and communication, and communication steps that were consistent with the PARTNERS communication model. However, the specific content of

the responses was not studied.

Therefore, the current study extended beyond prior research and conducted an in-depth qualitative analysis of the content of the responses provided about knowledge of family work, desired partner characteristics, and knowledge of PARTNERS communication steps, and the degree to which these differed across the three conditions at posttest. We hypothesized that, when compared to participants in the partial script and control conditions at posttest, participants who received the PARTNERS intervention would provide responses that contain more content related to family work distribution, desired partner characteristics, and knowledge of communication strategies consistent with the PARTNERS intervention.

Specifically, we hypothesized that participants in the intervention condition would provide responses with more knowledge of family work consistent with the PARTNERS model in the following themes: "Equal share," "Women do more family work than men," "Family work effects women's satisfaction/happiness," "Partners should communicate about family work distribution," and "Women direct/organize chores." Participants who received the PARTNERS intervention would report desired partner characteristics more related to family-work and communication consistent with the following themes: "Equitable," "Shares housework/childcare," "Communicates well," "Empathic/understanding," "Listens well," and "Willing to change/compromise." Participants in the intervention condition would provide responses with more knowledge of communication consistent with the following steps of the PARTNERS model: "Prepare," "Attend to how you will talk about your concerns," "Remember to point out positives," "Share thoughts, feelings, concerns with your partner and/or use "I" statements," "Now, really listen to each other," "Engage in action planning to improve the relationship," "Remember that women often do more," and "Speak up to ensure your needs are

met.”

This study improved our understanding of what college women learned from the intervention, their desired partner characteristics, and their ability to apply the PARTNERS model to conflict situations in romantic relationships. Furthermore, findings from this study identified areas of the intervention that require further development. The PARTNERS intervention has potential to educate women about family work distribution and couple communication and improve their confidence when communicating with a romantic partner. This study maximized this potential by providing a nuanced understanding of the outcomes of the intervention and identifying empirically-based recommendations for improving the PARTNERS video intervention.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were 303 heterosexual, cisgender, college women at a predominantly white institution who were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: PARTNERS video intervention (n=112), partial script (n=96), and control (n=95). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 22 years, with 21 years old being the most common (34.3%) and 22 years old being the least common (6.9%). In comparison to the University of Maryland undergraduate population's racial diversity, white students were overrepresented in the sample as white students comprise 39.5% of the University of Maryland student body (University of Maryland Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment, 2023). Black participants comprised 10.9% of the sample, with 10.6% Latinx participants, 21.8% Asian/Pacific Islander participants, and 60.4% White participants (see Table 1 for demographic information). Women were enrolled in a variety of college majors with psychology being the most common (32.3%),

followed by biology-related (14.5%), and criminology/criminal justice (8.9%) majors. Participants were single (51.8%) or currently in a romantic relationship (46.9%). The majority took at least one class focused on communication (52.1%) and no classes focused on romantic relationships (81.2%).

Procedure

The PARTNERS Intervention study recruited undergraduate women at the University of Maryland between the ages 18 and 22 who identified as heterosexual and cisgender and were able to read and write in English. Participants were recruited through the University of Maryland Psychology Department subject pool, personal contacts, and emails to classes. The invitation to participate in the study contained a link to an online Qualtrics survey that included three open-ended questions assessing desired partner characteristics, knowledge of family work, and knowledge of the PARTNERS communication model. They then were randomly assigned to either the video intervention, partial script, or control conditions. Students assigned to the intervention condition watched an online video intervention (22:51; see Appendix B). The students in the partial script condition were asked to read a partial version of the intervention script (participants read at their pace; see Appendix C). The control group watched a video relating to romantic relationships consisting of a couple's hiking trip (17:49; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywF9Ft5fq6k>). After the assigned task, each participant completed the same three open-ended questions. Upon completion of the study, participants received either one SONA credit or a \$10 Amazon gift card.

Measures

The directions for the open-ended questions asked participants not to look up or ask anyone else for the answers. The qualitative assessments were generated by the authors to

prompt participants to consider their knowledge of family work, desired partner characteristics, and knowledge of communication. The Hill and O'Brien (2021) measure of Qualitative Assessment of Knowledge of Grief, CARES Intervention Steps and Resources informed the development of these items relevant to the PARTNERS intervention.

Knowledge of Family Work. The qualitative assessment of participants' knowledge of family work asked participants to respond to the following open-ended question: "What do you know about family work distribution in a romantic relationship?" Participants were limited to three responses to this question (see Appendix D).

Desired Partner Characteristics. Participants were asked the following open-ended question to assess their desired partner characteristics: "What are your top desired characteristics for a romantic partner?" Participants were limited to listing no more than five characteristics (see Appendix E).

Knowledge of PARTNERS Communication Model. The final open-ended question was designed to assess knowledge of effective communication according to the PARTNERS Communication Model. Participants were 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" (see Appendix F).

Demographics. Participants indicated their age, gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, college major, relationship status, duration of past or current romantic relationship, generational status, and number of classes taken that were focused on communication or relationships (see Table 1).

Data Analyses

Directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was used to analyze responses to the three qualitative questions administered in a prior mixed methods randomized controlled trial evaluating the effectiveness of the PARTNERS Intervention (Trovato & O'Brien, 2022). This deductive approach to qualitative analysis informed and tested support for the a priori coding categories. The researchers identified initial coding categories from the PARTNERS model, which was the framework used for the categories for the coding (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The responses were placed into categories by coders using the predetermined codes. Participant responses that could not be categorized within the initial categories received a new or "other" code. Using predetermined codes informed by the PARTNERS intervention allowed the authors to assess the degree to which the data corresponded with the PARTNERS framework. This approach has been used successfully in other research to test and analyze open-ended qualitative data (Jankauskaite et al., 2021; McDermott et al., 2023; O'Brien et al., 2021).

A coding team consisting of four undergraduate-level coders, a graduate student in counseling psychology, and a professor in counseling psychology completed the qualitative coding. All undergraduate coders were pursuing or recently completed undergraduate degrees in psychology. Coders completed training on research methods and ethical practices in research in psychology.

Coding schemes were initially developed based on the topics addressed in the intervention, the categories of the PARTNERS model, and an initial review of the responses by the graduate student and professor. The undergraduate coders were trained by the graduate student in a team or individual setting on the initial coding schemes. The responses were blinded so coders would have no knowledge of the participants' experimental condition or whether the responses were provided at pre- or posttest.

After training, the coders were asked to independently code a set of 5 to 20 participant responses. The graduate student then checked the codes and provide a consensus code for responses that did not match, seeking feedback from her faculty mentor on confusing responses. After consensus was reached on the first set, the two coders completed subsequent sets of codes. The graduate student provided feedback, discussed discrepancies, and conducted further training after each set of codes had been completed and then gave the coders the next set of responses to code.

The coding schemes were revised and updated as the graduate student checked the codes to reflect additional themes that emerged and to provide clarifying examples for the coding categories. After completing the initial coding of responses to knowledge about the PARTNERS communication model, a revised coding rubric was created to enhance clarity and new undergraduate coders were trained to code responses regarding knowledge of the PARTNERS communication model. Cohen's κ values were calculated to assess the level of agreement between the raters for responses to each of the three qualitative assessments. There were moderate levels of agreement between the raters on the knowledge of family work assessment for each of the three responses at pre- and posttest, with Cohen's κ values ranging from .72 to .85, $p = .00$. Strong levels of rater agreement were found for the five responses to participants' top desired partner characteristics at pre- and posttest, $\kappa = .85$ to .94, $p = .00$. Strong levels of agreement were found for the raters' responses to the knowledge of communication assessment at pre- and posttest, $\kappa = .92$ to .94, $p = .00$.

To address the potential for researcher bias in the coding process, the graduate student and her advisor ensured that the coding occurred with no knowledge of the experimental condition; the advisor created the coding key for the experimental condition and pre- or posttest

status and kept the key on a password protected computer. When the advisor was consulted about challenging responses, the graduate student shared responses independent of their coding category. Also, the research team engaged in conversations about qualitative analyses and the importance of independent coding to reduce researcher bias.

To analyze the qualitative data, three contingency tables were created to summarize the frequencies of responses to the questions about family work distribution, desired partner characteristics, and couple communication strategies reported by participants in each condition at pre- and posttest. Themes with ten or fewer responses in any condition at either pre- or posttest were not included in the tables for knowledge of family work, desired partner characteristics, and knowledge of communication. For the knowledge of communication analysis, all coding themes associated with the PARTNERS intervention, regardless of number of responses, were included on the table because one focus of the study was to enhance knowledge regarding the specific steps in the PARTNERS intervention. After coding was completed, similar themes were combined, e.g., responses regarding equity and those relating to the sharing of housework and childcare. Patterns and themes across the coding categories were examined by the graduate student, her advisor, and a research team comprised of graduate and undergraduate students.

Results

Qualitative Analyses

Using the frequency tables, we first examined what specific family work knowledge, desired partner characteristics, and knowledge of communication were reported by college women at pre- and posttest (see Tables 2, 3, and 4). We defined 'most frequently' as themes that accounted for at least 30% of the responses, 'moderately' as themes accounting for 20 to 30% of the responses, and 'least frequently' as themes accounting for fewer than 20% of the responses.

Second, we assessed how responses to the knowledge of family work, desired partner characteristics, and knowledge of communication assessments differed across the conditions at posttest (see Tables 2, 3, and 4). For this analysis, a difference in responses between conditions was defined as equal to or exceeding 10% percentage points. Differences greater than 25% were considered large, whereas differences between 10% to 25% were described as moderate.

Knowledge of Family Work

We first sought to understand what college women knew about family work distribution at pre- and posttest. At pretest, *Role in the home/Gender role expectations* and *Other* responses were the most frequently endorsed themes, while *Family work should be shared/equal* and *Women do more family work than men* were moderately reported among those who received the intervention at pretest. Among those who received the partial script, *Family work should be shared/equal*, *Role in the home/Gender role expectations* and *Other* responses were most frequently reported at pretest. The control group most frequently endorsed *Family work should be shared/equal* and *Other*, while only moderately endorsing *Role in the home/Gender role expectations* at pretest. *Family work effects women's satisfaction/happiness*, *Partners should communicate about family work distribution*, and *Women direct/organize/coordinate chores* were among the least frequently reported themes among those in the intervention, partial script, and control groups at pretest. Participants in the partial script and control groups reported *Women do more family work than men* infrequently. Other emerging themes including *Both partners provide for the family*, *Partners should help each other*, and *Not sure* were infrequently endorsed by those in the intervention, partial script, and control groups.

At posttest, the most frequently reported themes among those receiving the intervention and partial script included *Women do more family work than men* and *Family work effects*

women's satisfaction/happiness. Partners should communicate about family work distribution and Other responses were moderately endorsed among those in the intervention group at posttest. Family work should be shared/equal, Women direct/organize/coordinate chores and other themes were least frequently reported by those in the intervention group at posttest. Participants in the partial script group moderately endorsed Family work should be shared/equal, Partners should communicate about family work distribution, and Other responses, while Women direct/organize/coordinate chores and other themes were infrequently reported at posttest. Participants who were in the control condition endorsed Family work should be shared/equal, Women do more family work than men, and Other responses most frequently, whereas Family work effects women's satisfaction/happiness, Partners should communicate about family work distribution, and Role in the home/Gender role expectations were provided on a moderately frequently basis. Those in the control group endorsed Women direct/organize/coordinate chores, Both partners provide for the family, Partners should help each other, and Not sure the least frequently at posttest.

Differences between groups emerged with regard to the family work-related facts reported by participants at posttest (see Table 2). There was a strong group difference in the facts relating to the themes Women do more family work than men and Family work effects women's satisfaction/happiness for the intervention and partial script participants, when compared with the control group. Moderate differences emerged between the intervention and partial script groups on Family work should be shared/equal and Family work effects women's satisfaction/happiness, where participants in the intervention reported Family work should be shared/equal less frequently and Family work effects women's satisfaction/happiness more frequently, compared to those in the partial script. Participants in the intervention condition

reported *Family work should be shared/equal* less frequently than the control group, but no differences emerged between the partial and control group on this theme. Participants in the control group reported knowledge related to *Role in the home/Gender role expectations* moderately more frequently, relative to the partial script and intervention groups, and reported *Women direct/organize/coordinate chores* moderately less frequently compared with those in the partial script, but not the intervention group. No differences were found between the intervention and partial script groups on *Women do more family work than men* or *Role in the home/Gender role expectations*. There also were no differences across conditions for the *Partners should communicate about family work distribution* theme at posttest.

Desired Partner Characteristics

At pretest, *Funny, Attractive, Caring/Compassionate, Kind, Smart* were most frequently reported desired partner characteristics by those in the intervention group. *Honest, Loyal, Driven, and Sociable* were moderately endorsed by participants in the intervention group at pretest, while family work and communication-related characteristics were infrequently reported. Among those who received the partial script condition, *Funny, Caring/Compassionate, Kind, Honest, and Smart* were most frequently reported, *Attractive, Driven, and Sociable* were moderately reported, and family work and communication-related characteristics were infrequently reported at pretest. Participants who received the control condition endorsed *Funny, Attractive, Caring/Compassionate, and Kind* most frequently, *Empathetic/Understanding, Honest, Loyal, Smart, Driven, and Sociable* moderately frequently, and family work and communication-related characteristics including *Communicates well* and *Listens well* infrequently at pretest. The following desired partner characteristics were infrequently endorsed by participants in the intervention, partial script, and control groups at pretest: *Thoughtful/Considerate, Respectful,*

Trustworthy, Responsible/Mature, Romantic/Passionate/Physical Affection/Intimacy.

At posttest, *Communicates well, Funny, Caring/Compassionate, and Kind* were the most frequently endorsed themes by participants in the intervention group. *Empathetic/Understanding, Honest, and Loyal* were moderately reported by those in the intervention, while *Equitable/Shares housework and childcare, Listens well, Attractive, Sociable, Thoughtful/Considerate, Respectful, Trustworthy, Smart, Driven, Responsible/Mature, Romantic/Passionate/Physical affection/Intimacy* remained infrequently reported at posttest. Participants who received the partial script condition reported *Communicates well, Funny, Caring/Compassionate, and Honest* most frequently, while *Empathetic/Understanding, Kind, Loyal, Smart, and Driven* were endorsed moderately frequently at posttest. *Equitable/Shares housework, Listens well, Attractive, Sociable, Thoughtful/Considerate, Respectful, Trustworthy, Responsible/Mature, and Romantic/Passionate/Physical Affection/Intimacy* were infrequently reported by participants in the partial script at posttest. Participants in the control group most frequently endorsed *Funny, Caring/Compassionate, Kind, and Sociable* and moderately endorsed *Empathetic/Understanding, Attractive, Honest, Loyal, and Smart*. Apart from *Empathetic/Understanding*, control participants infrequently reported family work and communication-related characteristics at posttest. Also *Driven, Thoughtful/Considerate, Respectful, Trustworthy, Driven, Responsible/Mature, and Romantic/Passionate/Physical affection/Intimacy* were infrequently reported among those in the control group at posttest.

There were differences across conditions with regard to the desired partner characteristics reported at posttest (see Table 3). The strongest group differences emerged in *Communicates well*, where intervention and partial script participants reported this characteristic more frequently when compared with those in the control condition; no difference was found between

the intervention and partial script groups. Intervention participants moderately endorsed *Equitable/Shares housework* more frequently than those in the control condition and *Listens well* more frequently than those in the control and partial script groups. Participants in the control condition reported *Funny*, *Attractive*, and *Sociable* moderately more frequently than those in the partial and intervention groups, while no differences were found between the intervention and partial script participants regarding these characteristics. Moderate differences emerged between the control and partial script groups, where participants in the control group reported *Kind* more frequently, and *Honest* and *Driven* less frequently than those who received the partial script condition. No differences were found between the intervention and control or intervention and partial script groups with regards to *Kind* or *Driven*. The intervention, relative to participants in the partial script, endorsed *Honest* moderately less frequently and *Responsible/Mature moderately* more frequently, however no difference was found between the control and intervention on these characteristics. No differences were found across conditions on the following desired partner characteristics: *Empathetic/Understanding*, *Caring/Compassionate*, *Thoughtful/Considerate*, *Loyal*, *Respectful*, *Trustworthy*, *Smart*, or *Romantic/Passionate/Physical affection/Intimacy*.

Knowledge of Communication

Among those in the intervention, partial script, and control groups, *Share thoughts, feelings, concerns with your partner and/or use "I" statements* and *Other communication strategies* were the most endorsed themes at pretest. *Prepare* was moderately reported by those in the intervention and partial script groups, but infrequently reported by those in the control, while *Take time to calm down* was moderately reported by those in the intervention and control groups, but infrequently among partial script participants. The following themes were

infrequently endorsed among the conditions at pretest: *Attend to how you will talk*, *Remember to point out positives*, *Now really listen to each other*, *Engage in action planning*, *Remember that women often do more*, *Speak up*, *Speak calmly*, *Take time to calm down*, *Ask for/Expect an apology*, and *Why questions/Accusatory statements*.

Share thoughts, feelings, concerns with your partner and/or use "I" statements and *Other* communication strategies remained among the most frequently endorsed themes across participants in the intervention, partial script, and control at posttest. *Prepare* also was among the most frequently reported communication themes by the intervention and partial script participants at posttest, and moderately reported by those in the control condition. *Attend to how you will talk* and *Remember to point out positives* was moderately endorsed by those in the intervention and partial script conditions, but infrequently endorsed among those in the control. *Now really listen to each other*, *Engage in action planning* were most frequently reported by those in the intervention group, moderately reported by those in the partial script group, and least frequently reported by those in the control group at posttest. *Remember that women often do more* and *Speak up* remained infrequently endorsed by participants in the intervention, partial script, and control groups at posttest. Other communication themes remained infrequently endorsed at posttest, apart from participants in the control group who moderately reported *Take time to calm down*.

Differences across the groups emerged with regard to key PARTNERS steps reported at posttest (see Table 4). Strong differences were observed between the intervention and control groups with participants in the intervention group endorsing *Remember to point out positives*, *Now really listen to each other*, and *Engage in action planning* more frequently than those in the control condition. Intervention participants, relative to those who received the partial script,

reported *Now really listen to each other* and *Engage in action planning* moderately more frequently, however no difference was found between the intervention and partial script groups with regard to *Remember to point out positives*. A strong difference between the control and partial groups emerged with participants in the partial group reporting *Remember to point out positives* more frequently than participants who received the control condition. Participants in the intervention and partial script groups, relative to the control, reported *Prepare* and *Attend to how you will talk* moderately more frequently. However, no differences were found between the intervention and partial script groups with regard to these strategies. Moderate differences also were found between the control and partial script groups. Participants receiving the partial script condition reported *Share thoughts, feelings, concerns with your partner and/or use "I" statements* and *Now really listen to each other* more frequently and *Take time to calm down* less frequently compared to those in the control group. No differences were found with regard to the PARTNERS steps *Remember that women often do more* and *Speak up* or additional themes including *Speak Calmly*, *Ask for/Expect an apology*, *Why questions/Accusatory statements*, or *Other* communication strategies.

Discussion

Findings from this study suggested that the PARTNERS intervention educated undergraduate women about family work inequity between women and men and the relationship between family work distribution and women's relationship satisfaction, changed their desired partner characteristics to align with communication-related factors, and taught women key PARTNERS communication strategies. Specifically, exposure to the PARTNERS intervention and partial script educated college women that women do more family work than men and that this relates to women's satisfaction and happiness. Watching the PARTNERS intervention video

prompted college women to reconsider their most desired characteristics based on what they had learned about family work and communication, and to report fewer general personality traits, such as funny, attractive, and sociable at posttest. College women who watched the PARTNERS intervention video or read a partial version of the script learned key PARTNERS communication strategies to apply in conversations with their current or future romantic partners. Thus, our hypotheses were partially supported.

The understanding of what college women specifically learned and did not learn has salient implications for how the PARTNERS video intervention may be improved and for discerning the power of the intervention to educate women about the importance of family work, desired partner characteristics that contribute to more equal and satisfying relationships, and healthy communication strategies. This research is grounded in the crucial recognition that women's choice of romantic partner, division of family work, relationship functioning, mental health, and vocational well-being are deeply interconnected. Claudia Goldin, recent winner of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for her extensive research on working women, drives home the connection between women's partners and vocational wellbeing saying, "So, the advice that I give to women is that we're often told that we don't negotiate well with our employers. The most important negotiation you can do is with the person, man or woman, with whom you're going to spend the rest of your life" (Levitt, 2021, 50:07). The PARTNERS intervention helps educate women about the importance of family work and the choice of their romantic partner and empowers women to negotiate an equitable romantic relationship, which has salient implications for many dimensions of their life.

Knowledge of Family Work. The intervention video and partial script were particularly effective in teaching college women that women do more family work than men and that unequal

family work distribution relates to women's happiness and satisfaction in their romantic relationship. Participants who watched the PARTNERS intervention video, relative to those who received no intervention or read a partial version of the script, less frequently reported that partners should distribute family work equally, suggesting that the PARTNERS intervention goes beyond merely educating college women that family work should be equitable. The intervention imparts a deeper understanding of the importance of family work equity (e.g., because women do more than men or because it effects their relationship satisfaction). The full intervention was necessary for a comprehensive grasp of the psychological repercussions of unequal distribution of family work for women. It is possible that participants did not endorse a high frequency of equitable sharing of family work due to traditional gender role expectations that some college women may hold concerning their future relationships. To account for this perspective, the intervention video might emphasize that even if women decide to work within the home, their partners should contribute in a meaningful way to family work. The intervention video also might clarify the importance of family work being equitable rather equal (e.g., couples might not exactly split each household chore, but rather ensure comparable time completing family work tasks.) For women adhering to traditional gender role norms, incorporating educational content in the intervention video about fiscal challenges associated with supporting a household with only one employed partner could be beneficial. This is particularly relevant, considering that single earner households are more prone to fall within lower-income brackets compared to multi-earner households (Pew Research Center, 2022).

The low frequency with which participants who received the intervention and partial script reported knowledge of the importance of communicating about family work and that women often direct and organize household tasks indicate that this was not learned by those

watching the intervention video or reading the partial script and may need to be further emphasized in the PARTNERS intervention. The wording of the prompt did not elicit responses about the importance of communication and participants may not have retained information about women being responsible for the mental load of family work distribution, especially given that this was not elaborated in the examples in the PARTNERS intervention video. Future revisions to the intervention could incorporate educational components addressing the emotional labor associated with family work that is disproportionately assumed by women. Revisions to the video also might include examples depicting women directing and organizing household chores in their relationship and illustrations of the negative effect a lack of family work communication has on women's relationships and mental health. The effect of unequal family work distribution on women's career advancement and economic earning power could be integrated into the PARTNERS intervention video to further advance awareness of the consequences of inequitable divisions of labor. Participants who watched the PARTNERS intervention or read a partial version of the script reported knowledge of societal gender roles less frequently compared with those who received the control, suggesting that the intervention video and partial script imparts an understanding of the concept of family work, resulting in fewer instances of women reporting knowledge of traditional gender roles. Conversely, those in the control group tended to conflate family work with conventional gender roles for women and men.

Desired Partner Characteristics. The greater frequency with which intervention participants endorsed partner characteristics related to family work equity and communication suggested that the PARTNERS intervention has the power to align women's desired partner characteristics with family work and communication-related factors related to relationship satisfaction. The PARTNERS intervention may empower women to make thoughtful choices

regarding their romantic partner, which could improve their future relationship satisfaction, as research supported that women's partner's communication quality affected whether they perceived equity and felt satisfied in their relationship (Carlson et al. 2020). The stronger endorsement of family-work related characteristics by those who watched the PARTNERS intervention video also may empower young women in their career plans and decisions, given that women's expectations of their partner's share of family work influenced the degree to which women envision themselves in nontraditional careers and roles (Croft et al., 2019). It is possible that college women who watch the PARTNERS intervention video might use these family work and communication-related characteristics to inform their choice of romantic partner, as research supported that individuals' ideal partner characteristics were predictive of their later partner's actual character traits (Gerlach et al. 2019). The intervention might build on the significance of family work and communication-related partner characteristics by providing additional examples illustrating women identifying these characteristics in their choice of a partner or providing examples of what it looks like for a partner to be equitable and communicate well.

It is important to note that across the conditions at both pre- and posttest, very few responses to the desired partner characteristics question related to family-work distribution. It is possible that even after watching the PARTNERS intervention video or reading a partial version of the intervention script participants did not connect the significance of equitable family work distribution with the traits they desire in a partner. The common association of family work with women's responsibilities, as indicated by gender role theory (Eagly et al., 2000), may have played a role in the lack of emphasis on family work-related characteristics within their ideal partner attributes. Another possible factor contributing to the relatively low emphasis on family work-related partner characteristics could be the developmental stage of the participants, given

that the majority were 21 years of age. Women in this stage of emerging adulthood might be less inclined to recognize the significance of family work in their choice of a romantic partner, given that they are less likely to be in a committed relationship (Brown, 2020) where they might share the same living space as their partner or have children. To reinforce the importance of partner characteristics related to family work in the context of young women's relationships, it might be helpful to provide examples in the intervention that resonate with their current situations and connect these to potential future scenarios that could affect women's relationship satisfaction. For instance, highlighting how a partner's support during challenging times like exams could be indicative of their willingness to share responsibilities with children in the future.

Participants in the intervention and partial script groups, relative to the control, reported wanting a funny, attractive, or sociable partner less frequently, suggesting that watching the PARTNERS intervention video or reading a partial intervention script encouraged women to consider other characteristics in a relationship. It appears that watching the PARTNERS intervention video prompted college women to reconsider their most desired characteristics based on what they had learned about family work and communication. Thoughtful decision-making and deliberation in partner selection was related to stronger dedication and relationship quality (Owen et al. 2013). The lack of differences across groups with regard to broad desired partner characteristics such as respectful, trustworthy, loyal, driven, smart, romantic, and physically affectionate was consistent, given that the intervention did not specifically target these traits.

Knowledge of Communication. Participants in the intervention and partial script groups, relative to the control, more strongly endorsed key PARTNERS communication strategies, suggesting that the intervention and partial script were successful in educating women about the

importance of preparing for the conversation, attending to how you will talk, pointing out positives, and really listening to your partner. Listening to each other and engaging in action planning were the most strongly endorsed strategies by participants who watched the PARTNERS intervention compared with those who read a partial version of the intervention script or received no intervention. Asking participants to think about how they might respond in specific situations with a romantic partner and then providing examples of couples using the model in the intervention, components that were excluded from the partial script, appeared to be particularly effective in educating women on the importance of really listening to each other and action planning with their partner. Additionally, the video format in the PARTNERS intervention, as opposed to the partial intervention script, may have offered a more interactive learning experience that facilitated learning of these key PARTNERS steps.

Collectively, the findings indicated that the PARTNERS intervention has the power to teach women effective communication strategies for use in romantic relationships. Advancing women's knowledge of healthy communication strategies could have important implications for their ability to engage in conflict constructively, which was related to higher relationship satisfaction (Babcock et al., 2013). The PARTNERS intervention could serve as a model for other interventions as it demonstrates that providing information and modeling examples is effective in improving knowledge of key communication strategies. It is important to note that sharing one's thoughts, feelings, and concerns and using "I" statements was the most frequently endorsed communication strategy across all three conditions at both pre- and posttest. College women may already know the importance of sharing their thoughts, feelings, and concerns with their partner, but may not have knowledge of how to do this effectively, as demonstrated by the low frequencies of responses related to healthy communication strategies across conditions.

Very few participants across the three conditions reported that they would remember that women often do more or continue to speak up in advocating for their needs, suggesting the need for further development of these steps in the PARTNERS intervention video and a greater emphasis on the importance of these steps when communicating about family work-related concerns. Perhaps the examples of couples using the PARTNERS model could explicitly model what these steps look like in a conversation to reinforce their importance in communicating with a partner. For example, the couple case scenarios could include a depiction of a follow-up conversation regarding the family work concern if the woman's partner was not following through on the action plan they previously discussed. The moderate to low frequencies with which PARTNERS steps including attending to how you will talk and remembering to point out positives were reported may suggest attention differences between participants, such that those who did not highly attend to the intervention video reported PARTNERS steps with lower frequencies than those engaged in the intervention. Perhaps the nature of the intervention video did not provide enough opportunities to solidify their knowledge of the PARTNERS steps and may underscore the need for interactive learning opportunities that could improve their mastery of the steps, such as writing prompts to promote viewers to reflect on their learning. Another explanation for this may be that college women watching the PARTNERS intervention video or reading the partial intervention script found communication about family work less applicable to their current lives given many of them may not navigate these concerns with a partner at their age. Future revisions to the intervention video could provide practical examples related to cohabitating with a roommate or addressing interpersonal conflict with a friend to illustrate effective communication strategies for college women that could translate well to interactions with a future romantic partner.

Limitations

The study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the qualitative assessments may not have been effective in eliciting thorough responses from participants. Further development of these assessments could require more specificity in responses (e.g., go beyond a single word to provide a further definition of your desired partner characteristics). The knowledge of communication assessment also might be improved by having participants relate the prompt back to their own life (e.g., think about a conflict in your own life with a romantic partner or close friend and imagine what you would do and/or say related to a very upsetting situation). It also is possible that participants did not respond honestly to the open-ended questions. Participants might have experienced a sense of shame or stigma when disclosing specific desired partner characteristics. Additionally, there could have been a tendency to report healthy communication strategies due to social desirability bias, even if they might not realistically employ these strategies in actual conversations with a partner.

The a priori coding process used to analyze the data introduces more room for researcher bias, given that the data is interpreted through pre-determined coding themes. Different themes might have emerged had we looked at the data without the predetermined themes. The lack of detail in participant responses may have resulted in incorrect placement of the data into the coding themes and coding inconsistencies between the raters. For example, vague responses could make it challenging to determine whether the responses to family work knowledge demonstrated general awareness of societal gender roles for women and men compared with the explicit awareness that women often do more family work than their male partners. Additionally, while 651 participants clicked on the survey link, only 303 completed the survey and met the validity requirements. It is possible that participants were deterred by the estimated completion

time, lacked interest, or anticipated discomfort related to the research topic. This might signify that the moderately lengthy video intervention may not be easily accessible to college women, especially in an era where the prevalent trend on social media is quick video consumption, often lasting only a few seconds to a couple of minutes. A limitation of having a homogenous sample of primarily white heterosexual, cisgender women is that the findings are not generalizable to other populations. The experiences and perspectives of individuals from diverse backgrounds, such as those from different racial or socioeconomic groups, likely differ from those of the participants. The sample predominantly consisted of individuals majoring in psychology who may be more knowledgeable than non-psychology majors regarding interpersonal relationships and the psychological impact of unhealthy relationship and communication dynamics.

Furthermore, the intervention was designed for straight women and is not directly applicable to men or LGBTQ+ individuals. The information provided on communication in romantic relationships and the development of the PARTNERS model did not specifically address multicultural communication styles, which may vary among different racial/ethnic groups, especially in interracial couples. Also, it is possible that the PARTNERS intervention video is limited in its appeal to college women who may not relate to the importance of family work equity in their relationship, particularly if they do not cohabit with their partners and are not contemplating future romantic relationships or parenthood.

Future Research

Future research may focus on assessing whether family work knowledge, family work and communication-related desired partner characteristics, and knowledge of healthy communication strategies translates into actual behaviors for college women when communicating with (or addressing conflicts with) a romantic partner. Post-intervention follow-

up assessments should be implemented over a period of weeks asking women to report on their experiences and behaviors communicating with their romantic partner to determine whether they implemented the specific knowledge they learned from the intervention in their partner interactions. Further research also could examine the degree to which using the PARTNERS communication model improves relationship satisfaction and affects career aspirations for women in graduate school, women who are returning students, or women in middle adulthood with long-term partners. A longitudinal study following the implementation of the PARTNERS intervention could assess women's mental health, relationship satisfaction, and career aspirations over time. The PARTNERS intervention also could be studied with couples to examine the degree to which they are able to apply their knowledge of family work and communication gained from the intervention to role plays related to conflict in relationships to investigate the effect that the intervention might have on women's male partners. Future research should assess the long-term effects of the PARTNERS intervention on women's desired partner characteristics and the degree to which they translate into chosen partner's characteristics.

To enrich the sample's diversity, future research could benefit from recruiting participants through UMD student groups such as The Black Student Union, the Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) community, or the Coalition of Latinx Student Organizations. Further research also is needed to address multicultural differences in relationship communication for interracial couples and specific predictors of relationship satisfaction and quality for LGBTQIA+ couples. Conducting research to adapt the intervention for diverse cultural communication norms, for example, could further enhance the PARTNERS intervention, making it more inclusive and applicable to diverse groups of women. Researchers also could adapt the intervention specifically for young men to improve their knowledge of family work, healthy

communication, and the importance of equity in romantic relationships, with the goal of having men become more equitable partners. Additionally, future assessments could be developed using the themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis to assess knowledge of family work, desired partner characteristics, and knowledge of communication quantitatively. For example, an assessment could be developed regarding desired partner characteristics that measures how likely these desired attributes are to foster equitable and satisfying relationships.

Counseling and Educational Implications

This research could be used to inform future development and dissemination of the PARTNERS intervention. The PARTNERS intervention could serve as a fiscally sustainable model for early prevention programming to educate young women about the importance of equitable family work, healthy communication, and thoughtfully selecting a romantic partner. Findings demonstrating the effectiveness of the partial intervention script also support written dissemination strategies, such as developing a pamphlet, worksheet, or infographic that could be distributed to college women through campus programming events or in clinical settings. The PARTNERS intervention and research could be disseminated through campus partnerships with the University of Maryland Counseling Center, the Center for Healthy Families, the Department of Residential Life, University Chaplains, the University Career Center, or the Department of Sorority and Fraternity life to educate university counselors, staff, and students. The PARTNERS intervention also could be incorporated into workshops for small-scale in-depth use on other college campuses or in local community spaces reaching various populations of women.

Counselors could use the PARTNERS intervention in therapeutic or other clinical settings with clients presenting with family work or communication-related concerns. The PARTNERS intervention might be used to prompt analysis in a clinical setting of a client's

gender role socialization in the context of current or past romantic relationships. Greater awareness of college women's desired partner characteristics, knowledge of family work, and healthy communication may inform counselors' work with clients who are navigating relationship conflict or making decisions regarding a romantic partner. The PARTNERS intervention could also be utilized in career counseling with women planning for career and family to empower them to make thoughtful choices regarding their romantic partner and negotiate equitable divisions of labor in their relationships, which could subsequently advance their career aspirations and outcomes.

Summary of Proposed Changes to the PARTNERS Intervention

Given the findings of the current study, following is a list of recommendations for future researchers to use in improving the intervention.

Knowledge of Family Work

- Offer insights on the probability that both partners will need to work outside the home to financially support a family
- Revise language regarding family work equity to "equitable" rather than "equal" to reflect individual variation and needs with regard to specific division of labor
- Include education regarding the effect of inequitable family work distribution on women's vocational and economic well-being
- Integrate examples illustrating the problem of unequal family work distribution and the negative effects on women in contrast to a depiction of equitable relationships
- Provide further discussion and depiction of the cognitive and emotional labor women provide in directing, organizing, and coordinating family work tasks

Desired Partner Characteristics

- Emphasize the importance of family-work related characteristics
- Provide examples of characteristics related to equitable family work and communication (e.g., takes initiative with family work tasks, career-supporting) and depict women identifying family work and communication-related characteristics in their choice of partner
- Prompt viewers to pause the video and reflect on the following: “Really think about what you want in your future partner”
 - Ask them to write down their top five desired partner characteristics
- Ask participants to think about their desired partner’s family work and communication-related characteristics with prompts such as the following:
 - How does your partner navigate their roommate concerns?
 - What would your partner be like to live with from their roommates’ perspective?
 - What kind of support would you want from your partner when going through a challenging time?
 - How would you like your partner to respond in situations of conflict?
 - How will you decide whose career takes priority?
- Prompt viewers to write down their top five desired partner characteristics at the end of this section of the intervention video

Knowledge of Communication

- Provide examples of what not to do in contrast to healthy communication styles, such as criticizing or blaming one’s partner, asking why questions or using accusatory statements, as opposed to pointing out positives, demonstrating empathy, and restating the partner's main points

- Emphasize steps *Remember that women often do more* and *Speak up* in the intervention video
 - Explicitly model what these steps look like in a conversation in the case examples
 - Depict the step *Speak up* providing an example of what a follow-up conversation about the family work concern might look like and how to go about advocating for one's needs in the relationship say more
- Encourage viewers to pause the video asking them to take a moment to write and reflect on the PARTNERS steps with guiding prompts such as the following:
 - Write down the steps you learned
 - Circle the steps you would like to work on in your communication
 - Add a star next to the steps you feel confident you could use in a conversation with your current or future partner

Conclusion

To conclude, inequitable family work distribution, partners' characteristics, and couple communication have powerful implications for women's relationship satisfaction, mental health, and vocational well-being. The PARTNERS intervention taught college women important knowledge regarding inequitable family work distribution, informed their desired partner characteristics to be more aligned with family work and communication-related traits, and taught women key strategies for healthy communication. This study not only serves as an in-depth analysis of what was specifically learned from the PARTNERS intervention, but also provides research-informed strategies to improve the effectiveness of the video intervention. It is our hope that this research contributes to enhancing future interventions to increase relationship satisfaction, reduce depression, equalize family work distribution, and advance vocational

success for women. Only then can we create a more just society where women achieve the “true equality” that Justice Ginsburg powerfully envisioned.

Table 1.*Demographics (n = 303)*

Variable	Total %	n
Age (years)		
18	21.5	65
19	19.5	59
20	17.8	54
21	34.3	104
22	6.9	21
Race/ethnicity		
Black, Afro-Caribbean, African-American	10.9	33
Latinx, Hispanic-American	10.6	32
White Non-Hispanic, European-American	60.4	183
Asian, Asian-American, Pacific Islander	21.8	66
Native American	0.7	2
Biracial/multiracial	4.6	14
Other	2.0	6
Major		
Psychology	32.3	98
Biology-related	14.5	44
Criminal Justice and Criminology	8.9	27
Public health-related	7.9	24
Environmental Science-related	6.3	19
Neuroscience	4.3	13
Business-related	4.0	12
Engineering-related	4.0	12
Government and Politics	4.0	12
Information Science	3.0	9

Communication	3.0	9
Education-related	3.0	9
Language Studies-related	2.3	7
Economics	2.0	6
Hearing and Speech Sciences	2.0	6
Animal Sciences	1.3	4
Journalism	1.3	4
Mathematics-related	1.3	4
Public Policy	1.3	4
Undecided	6.6	20
Other	8.5	26
Relationship Status		
Single	51.8	157
In a relationship	46.9	142
Engaged	1.0	3
Married	0.3	1
Generational Status		
1.5 generation (I was born in another country and moved to the U.S. as a young child)	9.9	30
First generation (I was born in another country and moved to the U.S. as an adult)	2.6	8
2nd generation (I was born in the U.S., but my parent was born in another country)	36.0	109
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)	14.5	44
4th generation or more (I was born in the U.S. and my parents and grandparents were also born in the U.S.)	37.0	112
Communication-Focused Classes Taken		

None	23.8	72
One	52.1	158
Two	14.5	44
Three	3.3	10
More than three	6.3	19
Relationship-Focused Classes Taken		
None	81.2	246
One	12.9	39
Two	3.6	11
Three	1.3	4
More than three	1.0	3

Table 2.

Qualitative Responses from Participants to the Following Prompt: What do you know about family work distribution in a romantic relationship?

	Control		Partial Intervention		Intervention	
Fact about Family Work Distribution	Time 1 (n = 95)	Time 2 (n = 95)	Time 1 (n = 96)	Time 2 (n = 96)	Time 1 (n = 112)	Time 2 (n = 112)
PARTNERS INTERVENTION FACTS						
Family work should be shared/equal	41.1% (39)	35.8% (34) _a	35.4% (34)	26% (25) _a	27.7% (31)	13.4% (15) _b
Women do more family work than men	18.9% (18)	35.8% (34) _a	19.8% (19)	74% (71) _b	29.5% (33)	75.9% (85) _b
Family work effects women's satisfaction/happiness	10.5% (10)	21.1% (20) _a	10.4% (10)	62.5% (60) _b	14.3% (16)	75% (84) _c
Partners should communicate about family work distribution	13.7% (13)	20% (19) _a	8.3% (8)	22.9% (22) _a	10.7% (12)	27.7% (31) _a
Women direct/ organize/ coordinate chores	1.1% (1)	1.1% (1) _a	0.0% (0)	12.5% (12) _b	0.9% (1)	3.6% (4) _{ab}

	Control		Partial Intervention		Intervention	
Fact about Family Work Distribution	Time 1 (n = 95)	Time 2 (n = 95)	Time 1 (n = 96)	Time 2 (n = 96)	Time 1 (n = 112)	Time 2 (n = 112)
OTHER THEMES						
Both partners provide for the family	9.5% (9)	4.2% (4) _a	12.5% (12)	1.0% (1) _a	5.4% (6)	0.0% (0) _a
Role in the home / Gender role expectations	27.4% (26)	26.3% (25) _a	31.3% (30)	9.4% (9) _b	34.8% (39)	10.7% (12) _b
Partners should help each other (does NOT imply equitable share of family work)	14.7% (14)	12.6% (12) _a	10.4% (10)	6.3% (6) _a	9.8% (11)	3.6% (4) _a
Not sure	15.8% (15)	4.2% (4) _a	17.7% (17)	1.0% (1) _a	17.9% (20)	0.9% (1) _a
Other	42.1% (40)	42.1% (40) _a	43.8% (42)	26% (25) _b	38.4% (43)	21.4% (24) _b

Note. Frequency percentages that do not share subscripts within the same row differ by 10% or greater.

Table 3.*Qualitative Responses from Participants When Asked to List their Top Five Desired Partner Characteristics.*

	Control		Partial Intervention		Intervention	
Desired Partner Characteristic	Time 1 (n = 95)	Time 2 (n = 95)	Time 1 (n = 96)	Time 2 (n = 96)	Time 1 (n = 112)	Time 2 (n = 112)
FAMILY WORK						
Equitable / Shares housework and childcare	0.0% (0)	1.1% (1) _a	0.0% (0)	10.4% (10) _{ab}	0.9% (1)	12.5% (14) _b
COMMUNICATION						
Communicates well	13.7% (13)	17.9% (17) _a	7.3% (7)	47.9% (46) _b	8% (9)	55.4% (62) _b
Empathetic/Understanding	20% (19)	21.1% (20) _a	16.7% (16)	25% (24) _a	16.1% (18)	25% (28) _a
Listens well	3.2% (3)	3.2% (3) _a	3.1% (3)	7.3% (7) _a	1.8% (2)	19.6% (22) _b
CARING, KIND, THOUGHTFUL						
Caring/Compassionate	38.9% (37)	45.3% (43) _a	49% (47)	45.8% (44) _a	43.8% (49)	41.1% (46) _a
Kind	47.4% (45)	40% (38) _a	38.5% (37)	29.2% (28) _b	38.4% (43)	34.8% (39) _{ab}
Thoughtful/Considerate	10.5% (10)	11.6% (11) _a	18.8% (18)	19.8% (19) _a	16.1% (18)	13.4% (15) _a

	Control		Partial Intervention		Intervention	
Desired Partner Characteristic	Time 1 (n = 95)	Time 2 (n = 95)	Time 1 (n = 96)	Time 2 (n = 96)	Time 1 (n = 112)	Time 2 (n = 112)
HONEST, LOYAL, RESPECTFUL, TRUSTWORTHY						
Honest	28.4% (27)	26.3% (25) _a	36.5% (35)	38.5% (37) _b	26.8% (30)	25% (28) _a
Loyal	24.2% (23)	21.1% (20) _a	32.3% (31)	27.1% (26) _a	27.7% (31)	22.3% (25) _a
Respectful	16.8% (16)	15.8% (15) _a	17.7% (17)	18.8% (18) _a	17.9% (20)	19.6% (22) _a
Trustworthy	13.7% (13)	13.7% (13) _a	16.7% (16)	14.6% (14) _a	15.2% (17)	11.6% (13) _a
SMART, DRIVEN, RESPONSIBLE						
Smart/Intelligent	29.5 (28)	26.3% (25) _a	34.4% (33)	22.9% (22) _a	31.3% (35)	19.6% (22) _a
Driven	24.2% (23)	14.7% (14) _a	27.1% (26)	25% (24) _b	27.7% (31)	19.6% (22) _{ab}
Responsible/Mature	8.4% (8)	6.3% (6) _{ab}	3.1% (3)	5.2% (5) _a	8% (9)	16.1% (18) _b
OTHER						
Funny/Humorous	56.8% (54)	58.9% (56) _a	59.4% (57)	41.7% (40) _b	58% (65)	39.3% (44) _b
Attractive (e.g., tall, athletic, muscular, nice smile)	33.7% (32)	26.3% (25) _a	26% (25)	11.5% (11) _b	40.2% (45)	15.2% (17) _b
Sociable	25.3% (24)	33.7% (32) _a	20.8% (20)	9.4% (9) _b	21.4% (24)	11.6% (13) _b
Romantic/Passionate/ Physical Affection/Intimacy	5.3% (5)	6.3% (6) _a	8.3% (8)	4.2% (4) _a	9.8% (11)	5.4% (6) _a

Note. Frequency percentages that do not share subscripts within the same row differ by 10% or greater.

Table 4.

Qualitative Responses from Participants to the Following Prompt: 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.

	Control		Partial Intervention		Intervention	
Communication Strategy	Time 1 (<i>n</i> = 95)	Time 2 (<i>n</i> = 95)	Time 1 (<i>n</i> = 96)	Time 2 (<i>n</i> = 96)	Time 1 (<i>n</i> = 112)	Time 2 (<i>n</i> = 112)
PARTNERS STEPS						
1. Prepare	18.9% (18)	28.4% (27) _a	25% (24)	46.9% (45) _b	22.3% (25)	50% (56) _b
2. Attend to how you Will talk	8.4% (8)	10.5% (10) _a	7.3% (7)	21.9% (21) _b	7.1% (8)	23.2% (26) _b
3. Remember to point out positives	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0) _a	0.0% (0)	26% (25) _b	0.0% (0)	29.5% (33) _b
4. Share thoughts, feelings, concerns with your partner and/or use “I” statements	76.8% (73)	74.7% (71) _a	78.1% (75)	85.4% (82) _b	73.2% (82)	76.8% (86) _{ab}
5. Now really listen to each other	9.5% (9)	13.7% (13) _a	14.6% (14)	29.2% (28) _b	17% (19)	39.3% (44) _c
6. Engage in action planning	11.6% (11)	17.9% (17) _a	13.5% (13)	24% (23) _a	11.6% (13)	46.4% (52) _b
7. Remember that women often do more	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0) _a	0.0% (0)	1.0% (1) _a	0.0% (0)	3.6% (4) _a
8. Speak up	3.2% (3)	3.2% (3) _a	6.3% (6)	2.1% (2) _a	0.9% (1)	6.3% (7) _a

	Control		Partial Intervention		Intervention	
Communication Strategy	Time 1 (<i>n</i> = 95)	Time 2 (<i>n</i> = 95)	Time 1 (<i>n</i> = 96)	Time 2 (<i>n</i> = 96)	Time 1 (<i>n</i> = 112)	Time 2 (<i>n</i> = 112)
OTHER THEMES						
Speak calmly	3.2% (3)	9.5% (9) _a	4.2% (4)	12.5% (12) _a	6.3% (7)	11.6% (13) _a
Take time to calm down	23.2% (22)	21.1% (20) _a	12.5% (12)	9.4% (9) _b	21.4% (24)	11.6% (13) _{ab}
Ask for/Expect an apology	12.6% (12)	6.3% (6) _a	8.3% (8)	2.1% (2) _a	5.4% (6)	0.9% (1) _a
Why questions / Accusatory statements	10.5% (10)	9.5% (9) _a	9.3% (9)	3.1% (3) _a	13.4% (15)	0.9% (1) _a
Other	44.2% (42)	37.9% (36) _a	50% (48)	33.3% (32) _a	52.7% (59)	37.5% (42) _a

Note. Frequency percentages that do not share subscripts within the same row differ by 10% or greater.

Appendix A

Review of Literature

This literature review is divided into five subsections. The first section discusses social role theory and equity theory which provide the theoretical foundations for this study. The second section addresses the issue of unequal family work and its associated outcomes with women's relationship satisfaction, mental health, careers, and economic well-being. The third section reviews the literature on desired partner characteristics. The fourth section describes the literature on communication and its association with partner choice and family work distributions. The fifth section discusses the prior PARTNERS study, main findings, and how the current study builds on prior research. The literature review concludes with the research questions and hypotheses for this study.

Theoretical Framework

Social role theory and equity theory form the theoretical foundation for this study. Social role theory explains the connection between gender roles that maintain the inequitable division of labor between women and men. Societal beliefs concerning women and men create stereotypes that constitute gender roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Gender role beliefs are formed through observations of women's and men's behavior and incorrectly inferring that these behavior differences in society support inherent differences between women and men, even though the division of labor is dependent on the cultural, environmental, and societal conditions (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Women and men's behaviors or roles that they occupy in society become stereotypic and further support their prescribed gender role (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Women's disproportionate engagement in activities such as housework and childcare is viewed by society as a result of intrinsic differences between women and men (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

As a result, women are thought to possess communal attributes, while men are assigned agentic characteristics (Eagly & Wood, 2012). “Communal” qualities are those that encompass family caring, nurturing, and friendly behaviors which are inequitably assigned to women and have become stereotypically associated with being feminine (Eagly et al., 2000). Family work aligns with the “communal” characteristics that are disproportionately assigned to women (Eagly et al., 2000). The division of labor between women and men is a reflection of the belief that women and men possess complementary abilities represented in culturally constructed gender roles which are maintained through the socialization process (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Traditional gender role ideology constructs a family work distribution where women are responsible for performing the house and family work typically associated with being feminine (Erickson, 2005). Because women historically and currently perform the majority of housework and emotion work due to cultural conditions, these responsibilities have become characteristic of women's gender roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

It was proposed that the gendered division of family work persists because it demonstrates the degree to which women and men have performed gender “appropriately” (Erickson, 2005). West and Zimmerman (1987) notably explained that gender is actually performed by women and men such that gender is not a fixed characteristic or property, but rather something individuals “do.” Gender socialization facilitates gender role performances by promoting women and men to take on the personality traits and skills consistent with their gender identity (Eagly et al., 2012). One's gender identity becomes a standard by which women and men regulate and adjust their social behavior to maintain their gender performance congruent with their gender role (Eagly et al., 2012). Thus, closer matches between one's behavior and the standard yields positive emotions and higher self-esteem whereas conflict

between the two causes negative emotions and lower self-esteem (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Family work responsibilities are consistently associated with women's social role. Emerging adults reported that women with young children should have the choice to work and that their partners should "help" women with childcare, implying that family work is primarily women's responsibility to manage (McConnon et al., 2022). Family work may be disproportionately placed on women because it is characterized as a female-typed task and women and their partners might make the assumption that these responsibilities fall under a woman's role within the relationship, thus maintaining the inequitable division of labor.

Equity theory also informs this study by explaining the distressing effect that occurs from relationship inequity. Equity theory originated from the exploration of the consequences associated with injustice in various human exchanges (Adams, 1965). As the theory developed, it also was applied to intimate relationships (Hatfield & Traupmann, 1981; Lively et al., 2008; Walster et al., 1978). A primary assumption of equity theory is that experiences of inequality either to one's benefit or detriment causes feelings of distress that will increase as inequity continues to be experienced (Adams, 1965). Consistent with this assumption, individuals either overbenefitting or underbenefitting in the distribution of household labor reported more negative emotions compared to their partners who reported the distribution as fair (Lively et al., 2010). More specifically, women who perceived inequity in the division of household labor were more likely than men to experience more days of negative emotions including anger (Lively et al., 2010). Research examining equity within the family has found that experiencing family work inequity was related to increased depression and marital conflict and lower marital satisfaction and happiness (Lively et al., 2008). An equitable relationship is one in which no partner under or over benefits, but rather receives equal "relative gains" (Hatfield & Traupmann, 1981). Research

suggested that emerging adults anticipated being most satisfied in equitable relationships where neither partner has the advantage (Sells & Ganong, 2017). Heterosexual women and men 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). The majority of participants also wanted to be in an equal relationship where housework, paid work, power, and decision making were equal (Sells & Ganon, 2017). Equity theory informs the essential nature of equitable relationships to contribute to less distress and more relationship satisfaction.

Unequal Family Work Distribution and Outcomes

Consistent with the historical trends of the division of labor, women currently perform the majority of family work (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2016; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Specifically, 21% of men performed housework such as cleaning or laundry compared with 49% of women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Similarly, among adults in households with children under age 6, women spent more than twice the amount of time men spent on providing physical care (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). COVID-19 intensified these trends as increasing care needs due to the pandemic were disproportionately assumed by women. To accommodate homeschooling needs and the lack of childcare during the pandemic, women with children who already did more than fathers, increased their time performing housework and childcare (Carlson et al., 2020). Women working full-time alongside their partners still maintain the majority of family work. A little over half of dual-income households (54%) reported that mothers manage more family work than fathers including children's schedules and activities (Pew Research Center, 2015). As couples transition to parenthood, fathers had more leisure time than their partners and were more likely

than mothers to be engaged in leisure while their female partners performed routine housework and childcare (Kamp Dush et al., 2018). Similarly, a recent qualitative study examining women's family work distributions, found that women performed the majority of family work responsibilities and used their leisure time to do so, and this work often goes unnoticed and unappreciated (DeGroot & Vik, 2020).

Relationship Dissatisfaction and Depression. Women overall reported lower marital happiness and global marital satisfaction compared to men (Boerner et al., 2014; Jackson et al., 2014; Lewin, 2017). In 2014, only 57.4% of women and 62.8% of men reported that their marriages were very happy, which was a 7% decrease in women's marital happiness from two years prior (Smith et al., 2015). Women were less likely than men to be very happy in their relationship (Lewin, 2017), and while one study found that 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). Compared to fathers, mothers were more stressed, more tired, and less happy (McDonell et al., 2019). Relationship dissatisfaction was not uncommon in couples' relationships, and about 40-50% of U.S. married couples divorce (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Relationship dissatisfaction among women was linked to depression (Whitton & Whisman, 2010; Woods et al., 2019). A study examining relationship satisfaction found that women with highly variable relationship satisfaction had higher levels of depressive symptoms (Whitton & Whisman, 2010). A reciprocal relationship between relationship dissatisfaction and depressive symptoms was found in women demonstrating that dissatisfaction may be a contributing factor to depressive symptomatology (Woods et al., 2019). Importantly, women's relationship satisfaction was related to family work distribution. Women were more likely to

report feeling very satisfied with family work distributions in which their partner did more or when they shared it equitably, compared to a distribution in which women did more of the household labor (Barroso, 2021).

Furthermore, women's relationship satisfaction and contentment with the division of housework increased as their male partners performed more routine housework; both women and men's satisfaction increased when the number of shared tasks increased. Research showed that the fathers' share was particularly important, given that the father's share of childcare was strongly associated with the couple's satisfaction with the division of labor (Carlson, 2022). Similarly, fathers' share of housework and emotion work predicted marital well-being for women (Pedersen, 2017). The quality of engagement in family care also was predictive of women's relationship satisfaction. Women's perception of father-child relationship quality predicted both women's and men's marital quality (Galovan et al., 2014). Women reported higher marital satisfaction when their partners were skilled at childcare (Pedersen, 2017). Also, when new mothers perceived the division of labor to be fair, they reported fewer negative interactions with their partner and greater relationship satisfaction (Chong & Mickelson, 2016).

Inequity in family work distribution and couple responsibility contributed to relationship dissatisfaction (Carlson, 2022; Chong & Mickelson, 2016). Perceiving inequity in the division of labor increased negative interactions with one's partner and decreased relationship satisfaction (Chong & Mickelson, 2016). During the transition to parenthood, working mothers' perceptions of fairness in the division of childcare were associated with relational conflict (Newkirk et al., 2017). Feeling solely responsible for their child's wellbeing was associated with women's lower partner and life satisfaction and more feelings of emptiness, while higher responsibility for household routines was associated with women feeling overwhelmed by the parenting role

(Ciciolla & Luthar, 2019). Women who performed the majority of housework compared to women with an equal family work distribution with their partners experienced less relationship satisfaction (Ogolsky et al., 2014). One study demonstrated that women experienced lower marital quality when they believed in an equal division of household labor, but perceived inequity in the actual division. This supported the idea that as women perceived inconsistency between the ideal division of family work and the real division of responsibilities their relationship satisfaction decreased (Ogolsky et al., 2014). Also, inequity in childcare distribution between women and men negatively impacted women's happiness. Research examining the care context, which includes the type of childcare activity, where the activity takes place, who is present, and the amount of care provided, fully explained the difference in happiness between mothers and fathers (McDonnell et al., 2019).

Vocational and Economic Well Being. Family work inequity not only impacts women's relationship satisfaction and associated mental health, but also impairs their vocational and economic well-being. Forty-one percent of working mothers, compared to 20% of working fathers, reported that being a parent has made it harder to make career advancements, and 40% of full-time working mothers reported that they always feel rushed (Pew Research Center, 2015). Women's disproportionate share of family work responsibilities contributed to the longstanding wage gap between women and men as greater involvement in unpaid family work was associated with lower wages (Cooke & Hook, 2018, Jung & O'Brien, 2019; Glauber, 2015; Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020; White House Council of Economic Advisers, 2015).

Women incurred significant wage penalties for performing housework on employment days (Cooke & Hooke, 2018). As women's time performing housework decreased, their wages increased (Cooke & Hook, 2018). Women with three or more children suffered wage penalties

well into their 40s and 50s compared to women with 2 or less children (Kahn et al., 2014).

Research on the financial penalty associated with motherhood found that it remained fairly stable and worsened for women with only one child (Jee et al., 2019). Low-earning women paid the highest wage penalty associated with motherhood (Glauber, 2015). The loss of money and time associated with performing the majority of unpaid family work was one of the many harmful consequences to women (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020). Low earning power contributed to a greater risk of financial instability, which was a primary barrier for women attempting to leave abusive relationships (Barnett, 2000; Breiding et al., 2017). Financial stability is critical to women's ability to leave abusive relationships (Goodman et al., 2016), thus the negative impact to women's earning power from performing the majority of family work can have far-reaching consequences.

The increasing care needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated economic inequality between women and men as women with children were substantially more likely than fathers to reduce their work hours (Collins et al., 2021), and were more likely to stop working altogether (Alon et al., 2020, U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). This is consistent with the prior trend that fathers were less likely than mothers to make adjustments in their employment hours when childcare demands increase (Raley et al., 2012). The expectations placed on women to fulfill increasing care needs contributed to women's disproportionate poverty (Hyde et al., 2020). Women's inequitable share of unpaid family care contributes to severe consequences to their careers and earning potential.

Choice of Romantic Partner and Desired Partner Characteristics

Women's choice of romantic partner has a powerful effect on their lives. A study examining women's influence on their vocational outcomes found that men's preferences

regarding their partner's stay at home versus employment hours predicted women's decisions (Stertz et al., 2017). Similarly, research examining women's expectations of their male partner's engagement in childcare found that women primed to believe that men would assume caregiving responsibilities were more likely to envision becoming the primary economic provider of a future family, compared to when they were primed to expect men not to readily engage in childcare (Croft et al., 2019). Women's expectations of their male partner's share of family work influenced their future expectations of engagement in unpaid family care, and women's expectations of involvement in housework and childcare can impact their career plans and decisions (Ganginis Del Pino, et al., 2013). A study on the influence of romantic partners on women STEM majors found that women in STEM majors successfully balanced their educational and career goals alongside their romantic relationship because their male partner expected to share an equitable division of family work responsibilities (Barth et al., 2016). This research supports the impact men's family work-related characteristics could have on women's vocational aspirations.

Given how important it is to choose a partner carefully, it is critical that women consider their preferred partner characteristics. A study examining the predictive validity of ideal partner characteristics found that, among the participants who entered into a relationship during the study, their ideal partner preferences predicted the actual characteristics of their later partners (Gerlach et al., 2019). This lends support to the idea that college women's family work-related and communication-related desired partner characteristics could influence whether their future partner possesses these qualities. Research on partner characteristics has found that partners high in conscientiousness were preferred (Figueredo et al., 2006). A study examining the effects of partner's personality traits found that having a highly conscientious partner was associated with

higher levels of job satisfaction, income, and promotion, which may be explained by partners managing more household responsibilities and thus providing the other partner with more time and energy towards their career (Solomon & Jackson, 2014). Smallen et al. (2021) found that among new parents, lower responsiveness from one's partner generally predicted declines in relationship satisfaction. This research demonstrates the importance of a partner who responds with understanding, validation, and care especially through the stress of transitioning to parenthood. Research on young women's ideal versus expected participation in family work also found that they ideally wished to complete fewer chores than they expected to actually perform (Askari et al., 2010). The discrepancy in young women's ideal versus expected participation in housework and childcare may be explained by their perceived unlikelihood of finding a family-oriented partner (Askari et al., 2010), demonstrating the effect their expected partner characteristics may have on their expected engagement in family work.

One's choice of partner may be predictive of whether family work is distributed equitably. Because inequitable family work contributes to relationship dissatisfaction, which is not uncommon in romantic relationships and is linked to depression, it is important to understand what college women want in a partner and what they know about family work distribution. Thus, this study will investigate how college women's desired partner characteristics differed across conditions to determine the effect of the PARTNERS intervention designed to educate young women about family work and healthy communication.

Communication

Healthy couple communication about family work distribution with their partners could empower college women to make thoughtful choices regarding their romantic partner. Research examining how individuals approach relationship decisions found that participants who engaged

in thoughtful decision-making and were deliberate in their partner selection reported higher levels of dedication and relationship quality with their current partners (Owen et al., 2013). Individuals who were thoughtful in their romantic partner decision-making may have initiated earlier discussions about shared values and expectations including those related to housework and childcare (Owen et al., 2013). Empowering young women to communicate effectively about family work with a partner may not only reduce family work inequity in their relationship, but also improve their relationship functioning. A study examining the division of housework, relationship satisfaction, and partner communication, found that the quality of women's communication with their partners predicted how the couple distributed housework, while their partner's communication quality determined whether women perceived equity and felt satisfied within their relationship (Carlson et al., 2020).

Research on specific communication strategies demonstrated that direct communication may be particularly effective. Overall et al. (2009) found that direct communication strategies were associated with greater change as reported by male partners and perceived by women, whereas indirect strategies produced little to no change. However, direct communication strategies compared with positive-indirect strategies were perceived as unsuccessful in promoting change for women and their partners (Overall et al., 2009). While direct communication may feel less effective than communicating indirectly, this research demonstrated that direct communication produced greater change. Similarly, women who were more direct in their communication regarding housework and limits were more successful in achieving the desired outcome and greater satisfaction with the arrangement (Miller & Carlson, 2016). Also, engaging in conflict constructively was important for women's marital satisfaction (Babcock et al., 2013). Communicating about family work distribution also may address the

notable discrepancy between women versus men's perceptions of equity. Men were more likely than women to report that the division of family responsibilities was shared equally, even as men engaged in more leisure time than their partners (Pew Research Center, 2015). Articulating the need for family work equity before inequity arises in their relationship is essential and may have important implications for their relationship satisfaction, career advancement, and financial security. Thus, the current study also will analyze college women's specific knowledge of communication and investigate how their knowledge differed across conditions at posttest.

Prior Study Overview and Findings

Prior research examined the efficacy of the PARTNERS video intervention in educating college women about family work distribution, effective couple communication, and a model of effective communication, and increasing college women's confidence communicating effectively with their future partner (Trovato & O'Brien, 2022). Heterosexual, cisgender, college women between ages 18 and 22 years old were recruited for the prior study and randomized into one of three conditions: intervention ($n = 112$), partial script ($n = 96$), and control ($n = 95$). The final sample consisted of 303 women. Participants in the intervention watched the PARTNERS video intervention. Participants assigned to the partial script read the PARTNERS intervention script with the case examples and interactive questions removed. Participants in the control watched a video of a couple's hiking trip. Each participant also completed a pre- and posttest survey containing qualitative and quantitative measures assessing knowledge of family work distribution, knowledge of communication, knowledge of a model of effective communication, and relationship communication self-efficacy. The measures contained the following three qualitative open-ended questions: "What do you know about family work distribution in a romantic relationship?" "What are your top desired characteristics for a romantic partner?" and

“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.”

The prior research assessed the degree to which participants' responses to qualitative questions about their knowledge of family work, desired partner characteristics, and knowledge of the PARTNERS model aligned with what was taught in the intervention video. For the desired partner characteristics question, the coders indicated the degree to which a response was indicative of family work or communication. The assessment of participants' knowledge of family work was coded by indicating whether a response reported a correct fact about family work distribution or not; and for the question on participants' knowledge of the PARTNERS communication model, the coders indicated the number of different PARTNERS steps included in the response. The qualitative analyses revealed that participants exposed to the intervention and partial script had more knowledge of family work and reported more family work-related desired partner characteristics compared to participants in the control group at posttest. Participants who received the intervention, compared to those in the partial script and control groups, reported the most communication-related desired partner characteristics and the most communication strategies consistent with the PARTNERS model at posttest.

These analyses simply examined the frequency of responses that contained facts about family work, desired partner characteristics related to family work and communication, and communication steps that were consistent with the PARTNERS communication model. However, the specific content of the responses was not studied. The specific content of the responses was not studied. Therefore, the current study will extend beyond prior research to conduct an in-depth qualitative analysis of the content of the responses provided about

knowledge of family work, desired partner characteristics, and knowledge of healthy communication, and examine the differences across conditions at posttest. Findings from this study will improve our understanding of what college women learned from the intervention, their desired partner characteristics, and their ability to apply the PARTNERS communication model in their relationships, as well as allow us to identify empirically-based recommendations for improving the PARTNERS intervention video.

Research Questions and Study Hypotheses

The research questions and associated hypotheses were as follows:

Q1: What specifically did college women know about family work distribution at pre- and posttest?

Q2: How did knowledge about family work distribution differ across conditions at posttest?

H1: When compared to the participants in the partial script and control conditions at posttest, participants who completed the PARTNERS intervention would provide responses about family work knowledge more consistent with the PARTNERS intervention. Specifically, participants in the intervention condition would provide responses consistent with the PARTNERS model in the following themes: "Equal share," "Women do more family work than men," "Family work affects women's satisfaction/happiness," "Partners should communicate about family work distribution," and "Women direct/organize chores."

Q3: What specific partner characteristics were listed as desirable at pre- and posttest?

Q4: How did desired partner characteristics differ across conditions at posttest?

H2: When compared to participants in the partial script and control conditions at posttest, participants who completed the PARTNERS intervention would report desired partner

characteristics more related to family-work and communication as taught in the intervention. Specifically, family work and communication-related partner characteristics included the following: "Equitable," "Shares housework/childcare," "Communicates well," "Empathic/understanding," "Listens well," and "Willing to change/compromise."

Q5: What specifically did college women know about healthy partner communication at pre- and posttest?

Q6: How did knowledge about healthy partner communication differ across conditions at posttest?

H3: When compared to participants in the partial script and control conditions at posttest, participants who completed the PARTNERS intervention would provide responses with more knowledge of communication consistent with the PARTNERS intervention.

Specifically, knowledge of healthy couple communication consistent with the PARTNERS model included responses that are coded under the following themes:

"Prepare," "Attend to how you will talk about your concerns," "Remember to point out positives," "Talk with your partner and use "I" statements," "Now, really listen to each other," "Engage in action planning to improve the relationship," "Remember that women often do more," and "Speak up to ensure your needs are met."

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...
 - 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?

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.
- When you think about your current or future relationship, it is helpful to ask yourself the following questions: Is your partner someone who...
 - 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?

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
 - 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.
 - 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
 - Begin with "I" and share a feeling, then say what contributes to your feeling that way.
 - 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...
 - 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.

- 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”.
 - 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 (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
 - 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.

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!

The PARTNERS Intervention can be viewed here: https://go.umd.edu/PARTNERS_video

Appendix C

Partial Intervention Script

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.

- 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.

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.

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

- 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 D**KNOWLEDGE OF FAMILY WORK**

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

Appendix E**DESIRED PARTNER CHARACTERISTICS.**

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

Appendix F**KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNICATION**

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.

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