

SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATION OF PREPARE/ENRICH

Historically, the items and scales in PREPARE/ENRICH have been rigorously tested for both reliability and validity, with excellent results. The national norm base is very large and a couple typology with premarital and married couples has been developed and validated with various ethnic groups. The norm base used is typically about 100,000 couples.

For more information and published research articles about PREPARE/ENRICH, go to the website www.prepare-enrich.com and click on “Research”.

High Levels of Validity:

Validity refers to the ability of an instrument to measure the characteristics it was designed to measure. A number of methods exist which attempt to assess validity and they have been used to validate the PREPARE/ENRICH Inventories.

Content or face validity is concerned with whether the items of a scale are relevant to the category being measured and whether the scale provides an appropriate number of items to adequately assess the concept under consideration. The PREPARE/ENRICH Inventories are intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of relationship functioning. An extensive review of the relevant literature was conducted prior to the construction of all versions of PREPARE/ENRICH to discover which areas were most often found to be problematic for couples. Scales were then developed to measure these various categories. The completed Inventory was submitted to a panel of clinicians who rated the relevance of the items for each of the subscales. In general, items from PREPARE/ENRICH were given high ratings in terms of their relevance to the factors being measured.

Concurrent validity determines the extent to which scores from a given instrument correlate with scores from an instrument assessing a similar dimension. Fournier (1979) found significant correlations between subscales of PREPARE and measures related to conflict, self-esteem, communication, empathy, equalitarianism, assertion, temperament, cohesion and independence. He also found significant correlations for all 12 subscales of PREPARE (Adaptability and Cohesion excluded) and the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (1959)—a classic measure of marital satisfaction. A full description of these concurrent validity procedures and results is found in Fournier (1979).

Construct validity seeks to address whether a scale accurately measures the theoretical construct it proposes to measure. A common means of assessing construct validity is factor analysis—a statistical procedure that evaluates the degree of interrelatedness among items

measuring the same factor. Theoretically, separate factors should emerge for each of the categories measured.

Results of factor analysis on PREPARE revealed 11 unique factors among the 12 assessed dimensions (Adaptability and Cohesion were excluded from the analysis). Personality Issues and Communication combined to form one factor, accounting for the discrepancy. Intrascale factor analysis revealed that most scales reflected one significant factor, supporting the unidimensional nature of the scales. A complete description of the factor analysis is found in Fournier (1979). In general, this procedure supported the construct validity of PREPARE, although subsequent revisions were made to further strengthen the instrument based on these findings.

Predictive validity assesses the ability of an instrument to accurately predict a specific outcome like a happy marriage or success in college. An important criterion for PREPARE is whether it is able to predict future marital happiness and stability. Two separate studies have evaluated the predictive validity of PREPARE to distinguish between couples who are happily married and those who are unhappily married three years after marriage. This is done by using the results from PREPARE that they completed three to four months prior to marriage.

Fowers and Olson (1986) studied 164 couples recruited through clergy who used PREPARE. Couples were divided into four groups based upon their marital status and the results of a marital satisfaction questionnaire: married satisfied (n=59), married dissatisfied (n=22), cancelled marriage plans (n=52) and divorced/separated (n=31).

Discriminant analysis was used to determine ability to correctly classify the couples by group using their PREPARE scores. Using both REV and PCA Scores, PREPARE was able to correctly distinguish between the married-satisfied group and the other groups in 80-90 percent of the cases (separated/divorced=91%; married-dissatisfied=88%; cancelled/delayed=84%). In other words, PREPARE scores were able to accurately identify about 80-85% of the time how happy or unhappy a premarital couple would be 3 years after marriage.

As hypothesized, significant differences were found between the married-satisfied group and separated/divorced couples in ten scales (all except Children and Parenting), cancelled/delayed couples in 7 scales (Realistic Expectations, Personality Issues, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Sexual Relationship, Family/Friends and Equalitarian Roles) and married-dissatisfied couples in 6 scales (Communication, Conflict Resolution, Leisure Activities, Financial Management, Sexual Relationship and Equalitarian Roles).

Larsen and Olson (1989) replicated this study later using 179 couples divided into the same four groups (married satisfied, n=49; married dissatisfied, n=57; cancelled/delayed, n=37;

separated/divorced, n=36). Analyses of variance found differences among the groups for 9 of 11 scales (all except Children and Parenting and Religious Orientation). T-Tests comparing the married-satisfied group with the separated/divorced group found significant differences for 8 variables (Realistic Expectations, Personality Issues, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Leisure Activities, Family/Friends, Equalitarian Roles and Religious Orientation).

Results of the discriminant analysis were similar to those of Fowers and Olson. PREPARE was able to distinguish between the married-satisfied group and the other groups in over 80% of the cases using either PCA or REV Scores (PCA: divorced/separated = 84%; cancelled/delayed= 76%; married-dissatisfied= 85%; Individual: divorced/separated= 77%; cancelled/delayed= 79%, married-dissatisfied= 75%).

Both studies indicate that PREPARE has excellent predictive validity. It is able to determine with 80-85 percent accuracy couples who will tend to be satisfied with their marriages and couples who are likely to experience difficulties. While PREPARE is not intended to predict the marital success of specific couples, these studies do suggest that couples experiencing difficulties identified through the Inventory are more likely to continue problematic patterns of behavior after marriage unless they implement measures to change those patterns.

Concurrent validity examines the relationship between a given scale and other scales which are generally accepted as measuring similar concepts. High correlations between the scales would suggest that the instrument under consideration is an acceptable measure of the variable of focus when compared with an outside criterion.

In a national study of 1,200 couples, Olson, McCubbin, et al. (1989) compared the Marital Satisfaction subscale of ENRICH with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale—a classic measure of marital satisfaction. Good evidence of concurrent validity was found with correlations of .73 for individual scores and .81 for couple scores.

When used in a clinical setting, an assessment instrument needs to have the ability to distinguish between functional and dysfunctional populations. Discriminant validity attempts to determine the ability of a measure to discriminate between two or more groups by categorizing them according to an external criterion, then determining the extent to which the instrument categorizes them in the same way.

Fowers and Olson (1989) did a validation study using the Marital Satisfaction item from the background section of ENRICH as the external criterion measure. Couples where both partners satisfied were placed in one group (n=2,664); couples where both partners were dissatisfied were placed in the other group (n=2,375). Cases with split responses were discarded from the analysis

(n=2,222). The resulting sample was randomly split for purposes of cross-validation (validation group n=2,514; cross-validation group, n=2,525).

Discriminant analysis was carried out on both the validation and cross-validation groups to determine if they correctly classified satisfied from dissatisfied couples. Using individual scores, 92.9 percent of the validation group and 91.7 percent of the cross-validation group were correctly classified. Using couple scores, 91.2 percent of the validation group and 90.1 percent of the cross-validation group were correctly classified. These analyses suggest that ENRICH as an excellent capacity to discriminate between stressed and non-stressed couples.

ENRICH also has high validity. It can discriminate with 85% accuracy between couples with marriage problems with those who are happily married (Olson, Olson-Sigg, and Larson, 2008).

High Levels of Reliability:

Reliability for PREPARE/ENRICH is high in all of its scales. The following tables outline the Alpha reliability for the many scales used in the assessment across married, engaged and dating couples. Table 1 describes the reliability for the Core Scales (alpha reliability of .60-.89).

TABLE 1: Alpha Reliability of Core Scales in PREPARE/ENRICH

Scale Name	Married (n = 8,162)	Engaged (n =16,694)	Dating (n = 3,350)
Idealistic Distortion	0.88	0.80	0.85
Communication	0.89	0.83	0.86
Conflict Resolution	0.82	0.78	0.83
Partner Style & Habits	0.89	0.85	0.88
Financial Management	0.88	0.77	0.76
Leisure Activities	0.82	0.79	0.81
Family & Friends	0.74	0.75	0.79
Roles-Responsibilities	0.85	0.64	N/A
Spiritual Beliefs	0.89	0.86	0.84
Children & Parenting	0.82	0.60	N/A

Sexual Relationship	0.88	0.78	0.78
Forgiveness	0.89	N/A	N/A
Marriage/Relationship Expectations	N/A	0.70	0.73
Character Traits	N/A	N/A	0.83

Table 2: Alpha Reliability of Relationship Dynamics Scales

Scale Name	Married (n = 8,162)	Engaged (n=16,694)	Dating (n=3,350)
Avoidance	0.80	0.75	0.78
Partner Dominance	0.85	0.82	0.85
Assertiveness	0.84	0.77	0.80
Self Confidence	0.80	0.77	0.78

TABLE 3: Alpha Reliability of Couple and Family Map

Scale Name	Married (n=8,162)	Engaged (n=16,694)	Dating (n=3,350)
Couple Closeness	0.91	0.78	0.85
Couple Flexibility	0.79	0.67	0.73
Family Closeness	0.91	0.91	0.91
Family Flexibility	0.71	0.71	0.70

Table 4: Alpha Reliability of SCOPE Personality Scales

Scale Name	Married (n=8,162)	Engaged (n=16,694)	Dating (n=3,350)
Social	0.77	0.75	0.75
Change	0.70	0.68	0.70
Organized	0.75	0.73	0.72
Pleasing	0.62	0.66	0.65
Emotionally Steady	0.76	0.73	0.74

Table 5: Alpha Reliability of the Customized Scales

Scale Name	Married (n=8,162)	Engaged (n=16,694)	Dating (n=3,350)
Intergenerational Issues	0.75	0.67	N/A
Cultural/Ethnic Issues	0.77	0.72	0.72
Health Issues	0.81	0.77	N/A
Role Transitions (Over 55)	0.89	0.82	N/A
Sexual Relationship (Over 55)	0.90	N/A	N/A
Spiritual Beliefs (Catholic)	0.85	0.85	0.87
Spiritual Beliefs (Jewish)	0.76	0.78	N/A
Spiritual Beliefs (Protestant)	0.87	0.90	0.86
Interfaith	0.79	0.67	0.73
Step Parenting (minor stepchild)	0.80	0.73	N/A
Parenting Expectations (no kids yet)	0.65	N/A	N/A
Parenting Expectations (Catholic)	0.70	0.67	N/A
Becoming Parents (Expecting)	0.57	0.50	N/A

Financial Management	0.88	N/A	N/A
Cohabitation Issues (Living together)	N/A	0.70	0.82
Previous Marriage (Previous divorce)	N/A	0.74	N/A
Sexual Expectations (Catholic)	N/A	0.72	N/A
Sexual Expectations (Protestant)	N/A	0.74	N/A

Table 6: Alpha Reliability for the Unique Scales

Scale Name	Married (n=8,162)	Engaged (n=16,694)	Dating (n=3,350)
Personal/Premarital Stress	0.89	0.90	0.89
Abuse	0.73	0.70	0.73
Commitment	0.74	0.69	0.70

Couple Typology for Premarital and Married Couples

PREPARE couple types are highly predictive of which couples eventually become separated /divorced, unhappily married or happily married (Fowers, Montel, and Olson, 1996). These four types are called Vitalized, Harmonious, Conventional, and Conflicted (see Figure 1). Five married couple types were identified using ENRICH (Olson and Fowers, 1993). The five types are called Vitalized, Harmonious, Conventional, Conflicted, and Devitalized (see Figure 2).

The couple typology was created by using the *positive couple agreement* (PCA) scores from the PREPARE and ENRICH Inventories using cluster analysis. Using data from 5,030 premarital couples who took PREPARE and 6,267 married couples who took ENRICH. It was validating to find that the four premarital types identified from the PREPARE inventory also emerged from the ENRICH inventory, with one additional type (Devitalized).

An important replication study of the types from ENRICH was done with a sample of 450 African-American married couples was completed by William Allen (1997). Cluster analysis replicated the same five types of couples from the Caucasian couples. This replication not only supported the five couple types, but the percentage of African American couples in the various types were very similar to the Caucasian couples

FOUR TYPES OF PREMARITAL COUPLES

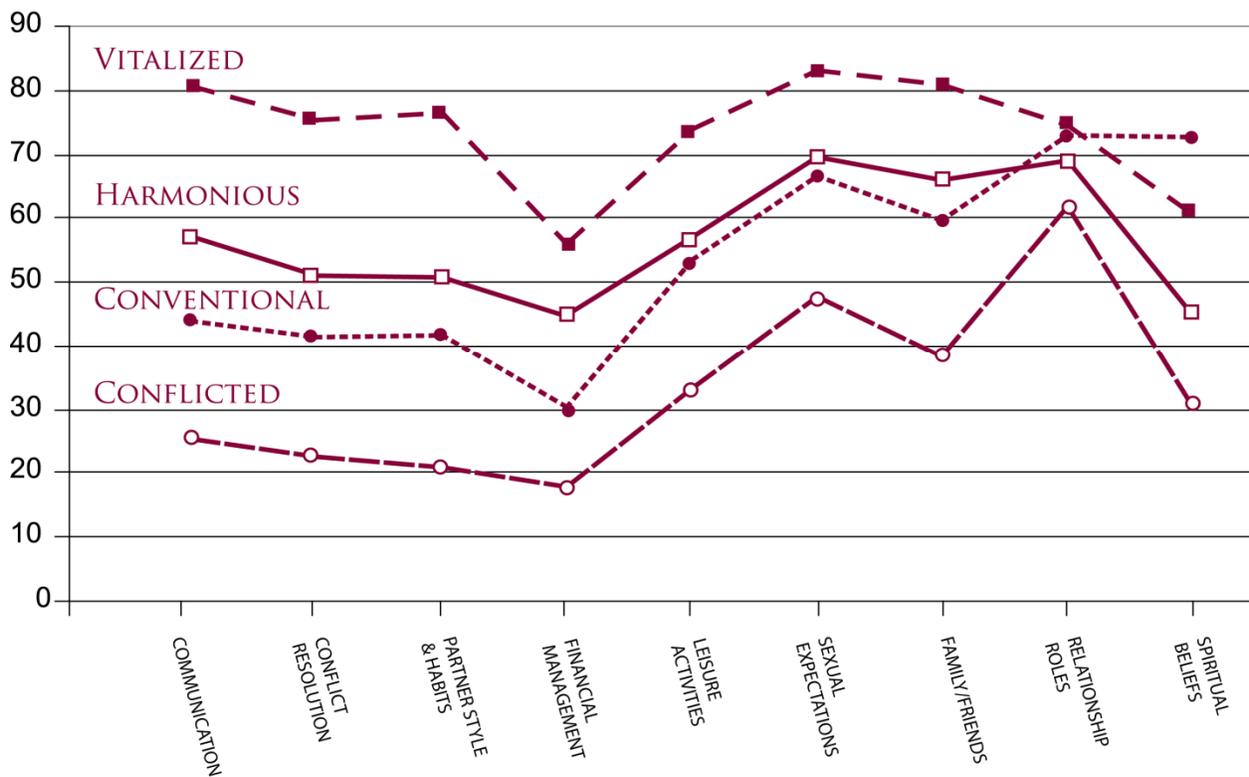


Figure 1. Four types of premarital couples based on PREPARE

Vitalized couples: The Vitalized couples were the happiest couple type because they had the highest positive couple agreement (PCA) scores on many of the areas. They had many strengths (high PCA scores) and few growth areas (low PCA scores).

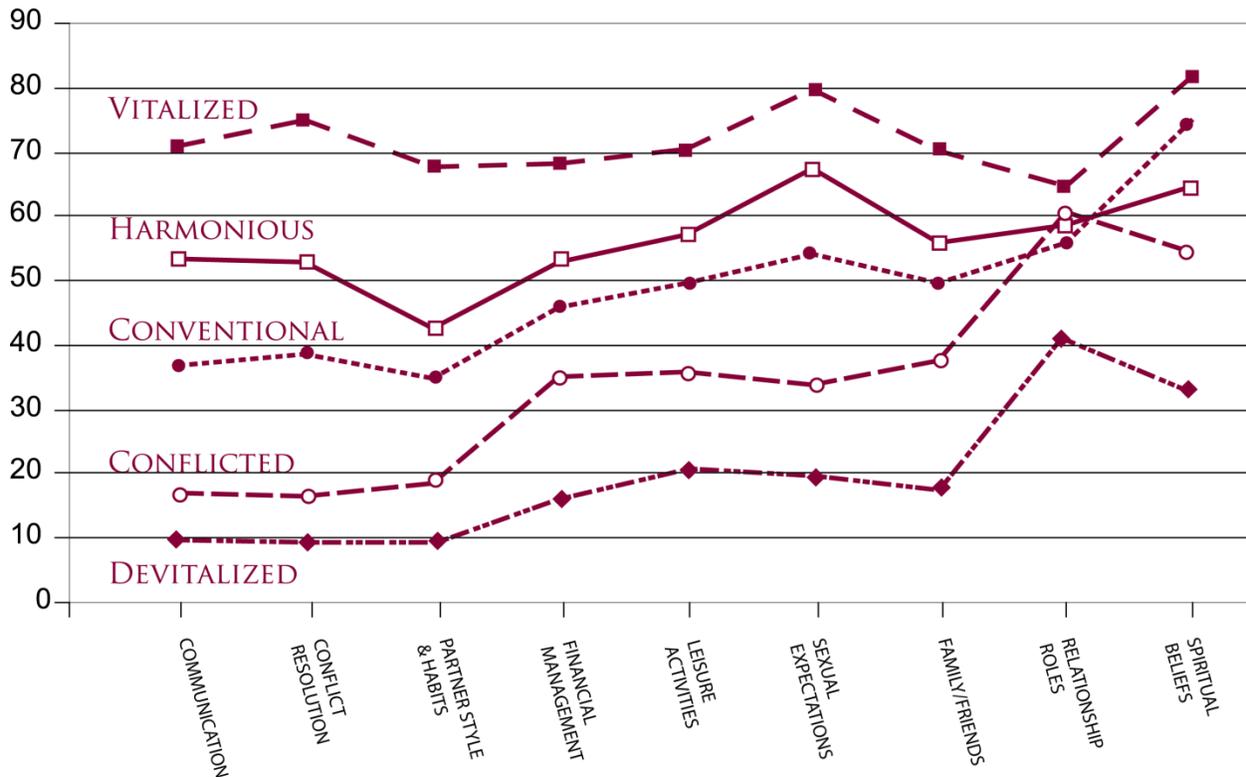
Harmonious Couples: The Harmonious couples had many strengths, but not as many as the Vitalized couples. They like many areas of their relationship, but often have low scores in the Children & Parenting area.

Conventional Couples: These couples are called traditional because they had more strengths in traditional areas including Children & Parenting, Family & Friends, Traditional Roles and Spiritual Beliefs. However, they had lower scores on more internal dynamics where they indicated problems with Personality Issues, Communication, and Conflict Resolution.

Conflicted Couples: These couples had numerous growth areas and few relationship strengths. They were called conflicted since they seemed to disagree about many areas and they had low scores on communication, conflict resolution and many of the other areas. As premarital couples, they are high risk for divorce and for married couples; they are a common type that seeks marital therapy (Fowers, Montel, & Olson, 1996).

Devitalized Couples (only from ENRICH): These couples had growth areas in almost all aspects of their relationship. They are typically very unhappy and have few strengths as a couple, although they might have had strengths earlier in their relationship. These couples are also a common type that seeks marital therapy.

FIVE TYPES OF MARRIED COUPLES



Validation of the Four Premarital Types from PREPARE

In order to validate the four premarital types, 328 premarital couples were followed for three years after marriage to assess their marital success (Fowers, Montel & Olson, 1996). These 328 couples were classified into the four premarital types and outcome measures focused on whether they were *happily married*, *separated/divorced* and *a group that canceled their wedding plans*.

The most significant validation of the value of the typology was the finding related to the marital outcomes of the premarital couples (see Table 7). As hypothesized, the *Vitalized* types of couples had the highest percentage of happily married couples (60%) and the lowest percentage of separated and divorced couples (17%). Conversely, the *Conflicted* types of couples had the most separated/divorced couples (49%) and least number of happily married couples (17%). The *Traditional* types had the lowest percentage of separated/divorced couples (6%), but the highest percentage of unhappily married couples (50%).

Table 7 Premarital types based on PREPARE and marital outcomes

Premarital Type	Happily Married		Unhappily Married		Separated Divorced		Total Percent	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Vitalized	38	60%	15	23%	11	17%	100%	
Harmonious	30	46%	19	29%	16	24%	100%	
Conventional	17	34%	25	50%	8	16%	100%	
Conflicted	10	17%	18	30%	32	49%	100%	
Totals	95		77		95		239	

There were 89 couples who *canceled their wedding plans* as a result of taking PREPARE and receiving feedback. As predicted, the highest percentage of those who canceled their wedding were from Conflicted types (35 couples; 40%) followed by Traditional types (23 couples; 26 %), then Harmonious types (20 couples; 22%) and least often were Vitalized types (11 couples; 12%).

VALUE OF PREPARE/ENRICH TO FACILITATORS AND COUPLES

The PREPARE/ENRICH Program offers a number of advantages for facilitators and for their couples who are completing the program.

For Facilitators:

- Provides a wealth of diagnostic information about a couple’s relationship.
- Enhances a facilitator’s ability to work with both premarital and married couples.
- Provides a detailed summary of important relationship issues.
- Provides facilitator with a perspective on both “his” and “her” view of the relationship and the amount of agreement between them.
- Offers an effective and efficient way to learn more about a couple.

For Couples:

- Helps increase awareness of both strength and potential growth areas.
- Stimulates discussion concerning issues vital to their relationship.
- Primes couple for learning valuable communication and conflict resolution skills.
- Functions as a preventive tool to help couples become aware of important issues before they turn into major problems.