OVERVIEW OF THE CUSTOMIZED VERSION

The Customized Version is an exciting new approach to couple assessment since it is tailor-made to each couple. While this idea was conceived years ago, it is only with the advent of the internet systems that it has become possible to create and to use this dynamic online system.

The Customized Version creates the most relevant variety of scales for each couple. Instead of the five versions we had in Version 2000, we now have the potential of several hundred versions of PREPARE/ENRICH. The five PREPARE/ENRICH inventories in Version 2000 were: PREPARE (for premarital couples), PREPARE—CC (for Cohabiting Couples), PREPARE—MC (for Marriage with Children), ENRICH (for married couples) and MATE (for couples over 55 years of age).

The Customized Version is based on background questions the couple answers about their relationship. The first main category is the stage of their relationship—whether they are dating, engaged or married. Additional questions relate to their age and whether there are children involved in the relationship.

All couples are given several core scales and they include 10 core scales from the previous versions of PREPARE/ENRICH, the Couple and Family Map, four scales in Relationship Dynamics, five new personality scales called SCOPE and a new Personal Stress Profile. The 10 core scales are the following: Idealistic Distortion, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Partner Style and Habits, Financial Management, Leisure Activities, Affection and Sexuality, Family and Friends, Relationship Roles, and Spiritual Beliefs.

New scales that were created for the Customized Version include Cultural/Ethnic Issues, Interfaith/Interchurch, Forgiveness and a variety of scales for parenting based on the age of the child and parenting situations (Becoming Parents, Children, Step Parenting, Intergenerational Issues). This includes just a sample of the new scales created for the Customized Version. A complete list of all the scales are in the next chapter.

NEW FEATURES IN THE CUSTOMIZED VERSION

One of the new features of the Customized Version is that specialized versions were developed for various groups. We have different versions for various religious traditions including Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. There is also a scale which can be selected for couples in an interfaith/interchurch relationship.

Many couples and facilitators have requested a brief report which contains some of the major results which the couple could review and keep. A 10 page Couple’s Report has been created which includes the core categories and Couple Type, the Couple & Family Maps, the SCOPE Personality scales, and the Personal Stress Profile.
Language translations for PREPARE/ENRICH have always been a challenge, but this has been overcome with the Customized Version. The goal is to ultimately have the Customized Version in many different languages. We have created an online translation system which will support multiple languages, allowing each person to take the inventory in the language they select. The facilitator can also choose the language in which they would like to print the Facilitator’s Report.

As a companion to the Customized PREPARE/ENRICH assessments, there is a Couple’s Workbook containing more than 20 exercises which cover 14 different content areas. In the workbook, there are six core Couple Exercises for giving feedback to couples. These couple exercises are designed to help the couple process and deal with the issues raised by the assessment. The six core Couple Exercises are:

1. Sharing Strength and Growth Areas
2. Creating a Wish List using Assertiveness & Active Listening
3. Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict
4. Couple & Family Map – Mapping your Relationship
5. Personal Stress Profile – Identifying Most Critical Issues
6. Personality Exercise – SCOPE out your Personality

In addition to these six couple exercises, the Customized Version contains many other exercises, many of which are new to the PREPARE/ENRICH Program. The new couple exercises include topics related to personality, stress, roles, expectations, and stepfamilies. The wide range of exercises allows the facilitator to further personalize the feedback experience to match the needs of each couple. These couple exercises are designed to be used in a feedback so that the couple can resolve current issues and learn skills to deal with future issues.

**PREPARING FOR AND ENRICHING MARRIAGE**

Marriage is perhaps the most complex and challenging of all human relationships. The joining of two people in a relationship which is intended to last a lifetime can involve great effort to develop and maintain.

There are many benefits for those who make the commitment to marriage and manage to maintain a successful relationship. Happily married couples tend to have better physical and emotional health, greater financial stability and increased wealth, more sexual satisfaction, and children that do better academically, relationally and emotionally than those of single or unhappily married couples (Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Antonovics & Town, 2004; Carlson, 2006). However, getting married is still very risky since the divorce rate continues to be at about 50%. The rate of divorce increases with the number of previous marriages. The rate of divorce is 40% first marriages, 60% for second marriages, and 73% for third marriages.

The number of people getting married is declining while the number of cohabiting couples continues to increase. There were approximately 2.3 million marriages and 1.2 million divorces in 2008. The percentage of people over 18 who are married has steadily declined, down 8% between 1970 and 2000. Cohabitation rates have risen by 1200% since the 1960’s. In 2008, it was estimated...
that approximately 6.6 million couples were cohabiting, and over half of all couples cohabited before marriage (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008).

The divorce rates reveal that too often, couples are not equipped to deal with the challenges they face in marriage. A significant proportion of married couples are surprised to experience serious marital conflicts early in their relationships.

Quality premarital preparation, like PREPARE/ENRICH, can reduce the risk of divorce and increase relationship skills and satisfaction. In a survey of 3,334 couples, premarital education programs were found to reduce divorce by 31% (Stanley, Amato, Johnson, & Markman, 2006). Participants with premarital education had higher marital satisfaction, higher commitment, and lower marital conflict.

A meta-analysis of 13 studies of premarital programs by Carroll and Doherty (2003) found significant improvement in couples who received premarital education.

In a systematic study of couples taking the PREPARE Program, couples who participated in the program improved their couple satisfaction and improved on 10 out of 13 areas of their relationship (Knutson & Olson, 2003). For more details, go to www.prepare-enrich.com and look under “Research.”

Similar outcomes have also been found in marriage education programs. In addition to experiencing improvement, participants report very high levels of satisfaction with these types of programs and indicate they would recommend them to other couples (Hawley and Olson, 1995).

GOALS OF USING PREPARE/ENRICH

• Help the couple explore their Relationship Strength and Growth Areas.

• Prime couples for feedback on their relationship.

• Promote honest and personalized dialogue about a couple’s relationship.

• Explore their couple relationship and their families-of-origin using the Couple & Family Maps.

• Help couples learn important skills in the areas of Communication, Conflict Resolution, Financial Management, and Stress Management.

• Provide a personality assessment and comparison of the two individuals.

• Increase insight and awareness in important areas such as Expectations, Sexuality, Spiritual Beliefs, Roles, and Personality Differences.

• Help couples develop personal, couple, and family goals.
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.

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:**

PREPARE has high validity in that it discriminates between premarital couples who get separated/divorced from those that are happily married with about 80-85% accuracy (Fowers and Olson, 1986). This study was done by Dr. Blaine J. Fowers and replicated in a separate study by Dr. Andrea S. Larsen (Larsen and Olson, 1989).

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 of PREPARE/ENRICH core category scores is high (alpha reliability of .75-.85).

Test/Retest Reliability of inventories is high (average correlation is .80).

**Large National Norm Base**

- 500,000 Couples for PREPARE
- 250,000 Couples for ENRICH

**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.

Five married couple types were identified using ENRICH (Olson and Fowers, 1993). The five types are called Vitalized, Harmonious, Conventional, Conflicted, and Devitalized.

See the Research Section of website for more details on reliability, validity, and other scientific studies. (www.prepare-enrich.com)
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.

INAPPROPRIATE USES OF PREPARE/ENRICH

While there are many reasons that PREPARE/ENRICH is useful to facilitators and couples, there are also ways in which the assessment should not be used.

- The assessment is not intended to predict the ultimate marital success or happiness of a couple, even though the scales have high predictive validity.
- The assessment cannot be passed or failed, although low scores on a majority of areas may indicate the need for further counseling.
• The assessment is not intended to replace professional judgment but rather to supplement it.

• The Facilitator’s version of the Computer Report should not be given to the couple. The Customized Version does include a Couple’s Report that can be given to the couple.

**RATIONALE FOR COUPLE PAYING FOR ASSESSMENT**

We generally suggest the cost of PREPARE/ENRICH be passed along to the couple. The primary reason for this is financial and emotional investment. When couples pay for the experience, we have found that it often assumes greater value to them.

For premarital couples, payment has the additional benefit of helping them focus directly on their relationship. Often, engagement is a period when couples are distracted by the externals related to the wedding itself and they fail to prepare adequately for a long-term marriage. A financial investment in the couple assessment underscores the value of “marriage preparation” as well as “wedding preparation.”

Taking an assessment also requires an investment of time, energy, and emotions into the relationship. Discussion of payment can provide an excellent opportunity for the facilitator and the couple to talk about the need for multiple investments in a growing relationship.

**PROFESSIONALS WHO USE PREPARE/ENRICH**

The following is a list of professional and lay facilitators who find the PREPARE/ENRICH materials of value in their work with couples.

• **Clergy/Pastoral Counselors:** typically deliver the majority of premarital training and perform weddings.

• **Mental Health Professionals:** such as professional counselors, psychologists, social workers, and marriage and family therapists. (Mental Health Professionals are eligible to complete a Self-Training option if they have a Master’s degree or a Doctorate in a counseling related field)

• **Marriage Educators:** lay people pursuing marriage education training, attend training workshops, and are experienced in working with couples through their church or community.

• **Relationship Coaches:** fee-for-service relationship consultants. Coaching grows out of the corporate consulting culture and involves a very proactive approach to relationship help with an emphasis on solving problems and learning new skills. Many coaches have professional
training in counseling or have been certified as a coach.

- **Marriage Mentors**: lay couples who receive training and work with premarital or married couples in an organized church or community setting.

- **Lay Counselors**: lay people who complete a lay counseling course through their church, such as Stephen’s Ministry, and volunteer to counsel others under the supervision of a pastoral counselor or counselor in their church or community.

- **Deacons/Elders**: Church leaders who are often in a position to oversee a marriage ministry.

- **Adoption Workers**: those who conduct home studies for adoption placement often use ENRICH for screening prospective adoptive parents.

## HISTORY OF PREPARE/ENRICH

### 1977—Original Version of PREPARE

**PREPARE (PREmarital Personal and Relationship Evaluation)**

PREPARE was originally developed in 1977 as a result of considerable research into relevant issues for premarital couples. The authors were David Olson, David Fournier and Joan Druckman. The first version had 11 content areas and 1 area assessing relationship idealism. The 12 original PREPARE areas are as follows:

- Idealistic Distortion
- Marriage Expectations
- Personality Issues
- Communication
- Conflict Resolution
- Financial Mgmt.
- Leisure Activities
- Sexual Expectations
- Children & Parenting
- Family & Friends
- Role Relationship
- Spiritual Beliefs

In 1978, David Fournier’s dissertation was a major validation study of PREPARE based on 1,000 premarital couples and 200 clergy. (Funds for the initial development of PREPARE were provided in part by Education for Marriage, Incorporated of Grand Rapids, Minnesota, directed by Ken Rudkin.) Fournier found that the PREPARE couple inventory was scientifically valid and reliable but noted that it could be improved in some ways.

### 1980—Second Version of PREPARE

Building on Fournier’s validation study, PREPARE was revised in 1980 to improve the scientific rigor and usefulness for counselors working with engaged couples. Of the original 125 items, 55 were retained, 42 were revised and 28 new items were developed in the second version.
1981—ENRICH (ENriching Relationship Issues, Communication & Happiness)

ENRICH was developed for married couples and was completed in 1981 by David H. Olson, David Fournier and Joan Druckman. ENRICH provides a framework for dialogue on important relationship issues for couples who are already married or in a long-term cohabitating relationship.

With ENRICH, the Realistic Expectations area was replaced by a Marital Satisfaction scale. In addition, two new scales on Marital Adaptability (change) and Marital Cohesion (togetherness) were developed based on the Circumplex Model of Family Systems. In developing ENRICH, the 125 items in PREPARE were reviewed for relevancy to married couples. Of the original 125 PREPARE items, 15 items were revised and 17 new items were added.

1981—PREPARE-MC (Marriage with Children)

PREPARE-MC was developed in 1981 to address the special concerns of couples who were planning to marry and already had children from a previous relationship. This version was based in part on the research with step couples done by Richard Schultz. Of the original 125 PREPARE items used in producing PREPARE-MC, 90 were retained, 25 were revised and 10 new ones were added.

1986—Third Version: PREPARE, PREPARE-MC and ENRICH

In the third version of PREPARE, items assessing Family-of-Origin were added using brief scales from FACES which is based on the Circumplex Model of Family Systems by David Olson, Candyce Russell and Douglas Sprenkle (1989). The two scales were used to assess family closeness (cohesion) and family flexibility (adaptability).

1995—MATE (Mature Age Transitional Evaluation)

MATE was designed as an inventory for couples over 50 who were planning to marry or are already married. It was developed by David Olson and Elinor Adams because of the growing number of couples over 50 who were getting married but found some PREPARE items were irrelevant to them. MATE contained three new areas that directly addressed the concerns of older couples. They were: Life Transitions, Intergenerational Issues and Health Issues.


In 1996, the fourth version of PREPARE/ENRICH was developed by David Olson and David Fournier and it contained the following improvements.

- The Couple Typology was added—4 premarital types & 5 marital types
- Four Interpersonal Scales added: assertiveness, self confidence, avoidance & partner dominance
- Abuse questions added
- Six Couple Exercises expanded
• Couple Workbook expanded into the Building A Strong Marriage workbook

2001—PREPARE-CC (Cohabitating Couples)

PREPARE-CC was developed to address the need for assessing the relationship of cohabiting couples. PREPARE-CC was based on the PREPARE and PREPARE-MC inventories, but includes 54 new or revised items and a new category entitled, “Cohabitation Issues”. PREPARE-CC was developed in response to user requests for an assessment specifically designed to explore the unique aspects of long term premarital relationships in which partners have already been living together.

2008—Fifth Version: PREPARE/ENRICH—Customized Version

In 2008, the Customized version was designed by David Olson & Peter Larson. It was introduced to dynamically create a tailor made set of scales for a couple based on how they respond to background questions regarding their relationship.

• This online system creates a customized version by using a set of core scales which is supplemented by several optional scales based on a couple’s stage and family structure.

• Other new features include the SCOPE personality scales (based on the 5 Factor Model from psychology) and a new Personal Stress Scale, a commitment section; and faith-based scales.

• The new Facilitator’s Report is easier to read and interpret and the couple also receives a brief Couple’s Report.

• Expanded couple exercises. In addition to the six core couple exercises, there are more couple exercises from 14 categories which facilitators can choose to download and use. This allows counselors to adapt the feedback process depending on the unique needs of the couple.

**CRITERIA FOR DEVELOPING THE CUSTOMIZED VERSION**

The following criteria were used in developing the Customized Version.

• Dynamic and Customized to Couple
• Online System
• Multiple Language compatibility
• Comprehensive
• Expanded content areas including Personality and Stress
• Focused on issues relevant to couples
• Sound scientific basis
  – High reliability and validity
  – Able to discriminate between happy and unhappy couples
  – National norms
• Designed for Couples at different stages
  – Dating
- Engaged
- Married
- Couples over the age of 55
- Unmarried Cohabiting Couples

- Practical and useful to couples
- Improved Facilitator’s Report & Couple’s Report
- Expanded Couple Exercises

The goal has been to make PREPARE/ENRICH the most relevant and valuable tool available for working with couples across the life cycle.

**DESIGN OF THE CUSTOMIZED VERSION**

The PREPARE/ENRICH Customized Version integrates the multiple versions of the previous inventories into one dynamic system automatically tailored to assess the relevant stage and structure of a couple’s relationship. Unlike previous assessment tools that assess overall couple functioning across a predefined inventory or set of scales, the Customized Version is dynamically generated by the computer system based on the individual characteristics of each couple.

Couple relationships are quite complex and take on many variations such as dating, engaged, cohabiting, married, stepfamilies, and older couples. Instead of using a static assessment tool, there are many scale variations in the PREPARE/ENRICH customized version couples may need based on their stage and family structure. This ensures maximum relevance for each couple’s relationship needs.

**Relationship Stage**

Relationship Stage is assessed by asking couples to identify if they are dating, engaged, or married. Each of these relationship stages presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities for couples.

- **Dating Couples** must evaluate the quality of their relationship as they attempt to determine their level of commitment to a future together. The Customized Version does not assume a dating couple will be getting married. Instead, it is designed to help them assess the health of their current dating relationship and consider their future together.

Beyond the normal core scales, dating couples also get a Character Traits scale, Finances, Relationship Expectations, and Stress scales revised for dating couples, and the SCOPE Personality section. Children & Parenting, and Relationship Roles, were dropped, while Cohabitation Issues, Interfaith/Interchurch, and Cultural/Ethnic Issues, are utilized in when relevant for the couple. Spiritual Beliefs can also be customized for Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish groups when indicated by the facilitator.

- **Engaged Couples** have said “yes” to marriage and a higher level of commitment, but most engaged couples spend too much time planning their wedding and too little time preparing for their marriage. The relationship stage prior to marriage tends to be an exciting and busy one.
Unfortunately, while many of those couples may be well prepared for the wedding, they are largely unprepared for the eventualities of marriage. Unrealistic expectations and reservations about exploring potential problems often contribute to difficulties in the early years of marriage. Marriage expectations are often unrealistically high. These couples must acquire the knowledge and skills to be ready for a successful marriage. They often have very limited insight into their own strength and growth areas.

The Customized Version of PREPARE/ENRICH presents engaged couples with all of the core scales plus a Premarital Stress scale and the SCOPE Personality section. Cohabitation Issues, Step Parenting, Previous Marriage, Health Issues, Intergenerational Issues, Role Transitions, Interfaith/Interchurch, and Cultural/Ethnic Issues are used in when relevant for the couple. The Spiritual Beliefs scale is customized for Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish groups when indicated by the facilitator.

• **Married Couples** enjoy the many benefits of married life together, but they also face the daily challenges of communicating effectively and resolving the issues involved with running a household, parenting children, and managing finances.

Along with the core scales, the Customized Version includes scales on Forgiveness, Personal Stress, and Personality for married couples. The standard Children and Parenting scale is interchanged with scales for Parenting Expectations, Becoming Parents, Intergenerational Issues, or Step Parenting when relevant. Health Issues, Role Transitions, Interfaith/Interchurch, and Cultural/Ethnic Issues are brought in when relevant for the couple. The Spiritual Beliefs scale is customized for Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish groups when indicated by the facilitator.

Whereas the focus of assessment with premarital couples tends to be preventive and educational in nature, evaluation with married couples is more varied. Some couples interested in enriching their relationships wish to use assessment tools as a means of learning more about their marriage. More often, evaluative instruments are used by counselors as a vital aid in marital therapy.
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Brief Description of Content Areas

Correction Scale - Idealistic Distortion

Core Scales

Relationship Dynamics

Personal Stress Profile

Couple & Family Scales

SCOPE Personality Scales

Customized Scales

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CONTENT AREAS

Each Core and Customized scale in the inventories is made up of 10 statements, referred to as “items”, which together assess a content area of couple relationships (e.g. communication, finances). This chapter briefly summarizes each of the areas in the PREPARE/ENRICH Customized Version, and provides some sample items from each scale. The following table provides a breakdown of the PREPARE/ENRICH Scales.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>DATING</strong></th>
<th><strong>ENGAGED</strong></th>
<th><strong>MARRIED</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correction Scale</strong></td>
<td>Idealistic Distortion</td>
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<td>Personal Stress</td>
<td>Premarital Stress</td>
<td>Personal Stress</td>
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<td><strong>Couple &amp; Family Map</strong></td>
<td>Couple Flexibility</td>
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<td>Interfaith/Interchurch</td>
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<td>Catholic Spiritual Beliefs</td>
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<td>Orthodox Christian Beliefs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jewish Spiritual Beliefs</td>
<td>Jewish Spiritual Beliefs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Customized Parenting Scales</strong></td>
<td>Parenting Expectations</td>
<td>Parenting Expectations</td>
<td>Parenting Expectations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Becoming Parents</td>
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<td>Children &amp; Parenting</td>
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<td>Intergenerational Issues</td>
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<td>Step Parenting Expectations</td>
<td>Step Parenting Expectations</td>
<td>Step Parenting Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Over 55 Customized Scales</strong></td>
<td>Health Issues</td>
<td>Health Issues</td>
<td>Health Issues</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role Transitions</td>
<td>Role Transitions</td>
<td>Role Transitions</td>
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<td><strong>Other Customized Scales</strong></td>
<td>Cultural/Ethnic Issues</td>
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<td>Cultural/Ethnic Issues</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cohabitation Issues</td>
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<td>Commitment</td>
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**CORRECTION SCALE**

- **Idealistic Distortion** assesses the tendency of individuals to answer personal questions in a socially desirable manner. It is based on the Edmonds Marital Conventionalization Scale. Originally there were 15 items in the initial version of PREPARE. This scale was reduced to seven items after reliabilities for the two versions were found to be virtually equivalent.

Higher scores (70 and above) indicate individuals are presenting their relationship in a highly favorable manner (e.g., seeing through “rose-colored” glasses). This may suggest an unwillingness to acknowledge problematic areas in the relationship and/or a defensive attitude in completing the Inventory. Low scores (30 and below) indicate a more realistic disclosure concerning relationship issues.

It is not uncommon for premarital couples to be somewhat idealistic and score lower on the Marriage Expectations scale. Higher scores in Idealistic Distortion for married couples can also indicate feelings of optimism and a positive attitude about the relationship.

**Sample Idealistic Distortion Items:**
- *My partner completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood.*
- *My partner and I understand each other completely.*

**Correction for Idealism on Core Scales**

A potential problem with self-report instruments similar to the PREPARE/ENRICH Inventories is the tendency for some individuals to respond in a manner which is socially acceptable. In order to adjust for this bias, each person’s individual score may be corrected downward on a core scale. One advantage of PREPARE/ENRICH is that it is the only couple inventory to systematically control for idealism. As a result the individual scores on each category are more valid.

**CORE SCALES**

- **Communication** measures each individual’s beliefs, feelings and attitudes about communication in his/her relationship. Items focus on the level of comfort felt by each partner in being able to share important emotions and opinions with one another, perceptions of their partner’s listening and speaking skills and perceptions concerning their own abilities to communicate with their partner.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect awareness and satisfaction with the level and type of communication existing in the relationship.

Individuals with high scores tend to feel understood by their partner and see themselves as being able to adequately express their feelings and opinions. Low scores (30 and below) reflect a deficiency in the level of communication essential to satisfactorily maintain a relationship and highlight the need to improve communication skills.
Sample Communication Items:
• I am very satisfied with how my partner and I talk with each other.
• My partner is a very good listener.

Conflict Resolution evaluates an individual’s attitudes, feelings and beliefs about the existence and resolution of conflicts in the relationship. Items pertain to the openness of partners in recognizing and resolving issues, the strategies and processes used to end arguments and the level of satisfaction with the manner in which problems are resolved.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect positive feelings about how well conflict is handled in the relationship. Low scores (30 and below) indicate concern about the number of conflicts and how disagreements are handled. Partners may feel their issues are difficult to resolve and/or may have a tendency to avoid disagreements.

Sample Conflict Resolution Items:
• Even during disagreements, I can share my feelings and ideas with my partner.
• At times I feel some of our differences never get resolved.

Partner Style and Habits assesses each individual’s perception and satisfaction with the personal habits and behavioral traits of their partner. Items focus on issues such as: temper, moodiness, and stubbornness. In addition, this scale considers a spouse’s general outlook, dependability and tendency to be controlling.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect approval of the characteristics of the partner and general satisfaction with their personal behavior. Low scores (30 and below) indicate a low level of acceptance and/or lack of comfort with their partner’s behavior.

Sample Partner Style Items:
• My partner has some personal habits that bother me.
• I am sometimes concerned that my partner appears to be unhappy and withdrawn.

Family & Friends assesses feelings and concerns about relationships with relatives, in-laws and friends. Items focus on the attitudes of family and friends toward the marriage, expectations regarding the amount of time spent with family and friends, comfort felt in the presence of the partner’s family and friends and perceptions of the situation as characterized by conflict or satisfaction.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect comfortable relationships with family and friends. Low scores (30 and below) suggest discomfort with family and friends and may imply this area is problematic for them.

Sample Family and Friends Items:
• My partner gets along well with most of my friends.
• My partner is too involved with or influenced by his/her family.
Financial Management focuses on attitudes and concerns about the way economic issues are managed within the couple’s relationship. Items assess the tendencies of individuals to be spenders or savers, awareness and concern with issues of credit and debts, the care with which financial decisions on major purchases are made, agreement regarding financial matters, money management, and satisfaction with their economic status. There are different scale versions for dating, engaged, married, and older couples.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect satisfaction with financial management and realistic attitudes toward financial matters. Low scores (30 and below) indicate a concern over the way finances are handled in the relationship.

Sample Financial Management Items:
- I am satisfied with our decisions about how much money we should save.
- We usually agree on how to spend our money.

Leisure Activities evaluates each individual’s preferences for using free time. Items focus on social versus personal activities, active versus passive interests, shared versus individual preferences and expectations as to whether leisure time should be spent together or balanced between separate and joint activities.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect compatibility, flexibility, and/or consensus about the use of leisure time activities. Partners have similar interests and are balanced in the use of their time between shared and separate activities. Low scores (30 and below) indicate dissatisfaction with the use of leisure time. Partners may have different interests and are concerned with the amount of time they spend together.

Sample Leisure Activities Items:
- My partner and I enjoy the same interests and recreational activities.
- My partner’s activities (television, computer, sports, etc.) interfere with our time together.

Sexual Expectations (for premarital couples)/ Sexual Relationship (for married couples) assess an individual’s feelings and concerns about affection and the sexual relationship with his/her partner. Items reflect satisfaction with expressions of affection, level of comfort in discussing sexual issues, attitudes toward sexual behavior, birth control/family planning decisions and feelings about sexual fidelity.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) indicate satisfaction with affection and a positive attitude about the role of sexuality in the relationship. Low scores (30 and below) indicate dissatisfaction with expression of affection and concern over the role of sexuality in the relationship. They may also reflect concerns over sexual fidelity, pornography, or previous sexual experiences.

Sample Sexual Items:
- I am completely satisfied with the amount of affection my partner gives me.
- I am concerned that my partner’s interest in sex might be different from mine.
Spiritual Beliefs assesses attitudes, feelings and concerns about the meaning of religious beliefs and practices within the context of the relationship. Items focus on the meaning and importance of religion, involvements in church/synagogue activities and the expected role religious beliefs will have in the marriage. The Customized Version offers both non-sectarian and group specific (e.g., Protestant, Catholic, Jewish etc.) versions of this scale.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) are indicative of high levels of spiritual compatibility and reflect the view that religion is a more important component of the relationship. Low scores (30 and below) reflect a more individualistic and less traditional interpretation of the role of religion.

A couple’s satisfaction with their spiritual beliefs is not necessarily indicated by either a high or a low score but by the amount of agreement partners report. If both male and female scores are either high or low, they will tend to be satisfied with the role of religion in their relationship. If one partner is high and the other is low, a low degree of harmony is suggested, indicating this area is potentially problematic.

Sample Spiritual Beliefs Items:
- We share very similar spiritual beliefs. (Standard version item)
- We rely on our spiritual beliefs during difficult times. (Standard version item)
- My partner and I feel closer because of our Christian faith. (Protestant version item)
- I understand what the Church teaches about marriage as a sacrament. (Catholic Version item)
- It is important to me to participate in a synagogue with my partner. (Jewish version item)

Marriage Expectations/Relationship Expectations assesses an individual’s expectations about love, commitment and conflict in his/her relationship. The intent is to assess the degree to which expectations about marriage and relationships are realistic and based on objective ideas. Marriage Expectations is designed for engaged couples, while Relationship Expectations is designed for dating couples.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) in this area reflect realistic expectations about relationship issues. Low scores (30 and below) suggest individuals are too romantic in their perception of marriage and their relationship.

Sample Marriage Expectations Items:
- I believe I’ve already learned everything there is to know about my partner.
- I believe that most of the difficulties we’ve experienced before marriage will fade after we’re married.

Relationship Roles (engaged couples) evaluates an individual’s beliefs, attitudes and feelings about marital and family roles. This scale is based on numerous studies that demonstrate equalitarian roles are positively related to successful marriage in our culture.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) suggest the individual’s values tend to be equalitarian in nature. Partners with high scores typically desire a shared approach to traditionally male/female roles. Low scores (30 and below) indicate the individual tends to value more traditional
male/female role behaviors and responsibilities.

Satisfaction with role relationships is suggested by the degree of agreement between partners. If both partners are either high or low on this area, they will tend to have a high degree of satisfaction with their roles. Conversely, one partner’s scoring high and the other low indicates disharmony, suggesting this area is potentially problematic. For this reason, there are no Special Focus Items in this category.

**Sample Relationship Roles Items:**
- In our marriage, I expect my partner to consult me when making important decisions.
- I am concerned about doing more than my share of the household tasks.

**Roles & Responsibilities (married couples)** evaluates an individual’s beliefs, attitudes and feelings about marital and family roles and responsibilities. This category measures satisfaction with how household chores and decision making are shared.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) suggest the individuals are satisfied with how roles and responsibilities are being handled. Low scores (30 and below) indicate less satisfaction with roles and responsibilities and may be concerned about how they share leadership and decision-making.

**Sample Roles & Responsibilities Items:**
- I feel good about how we have divided household chores.
- I am happy with how we share leadership in our relationship.

**Character Traits (dating couples only)** measures each individual’s level of satisfaction or concern regarding their partner’s character, values and behavior. It looks at various issues including dependability, goals, priorities, and how others are treated.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect approval of the values, character and behavior of one’s partner. Low scores (30 and below) indicate a low level of acceptance and/or lack of comfort with the values, character and behavior of one’s partner.

**Sample Dating Issues Items:**
- We have similar values and priorities in our approach to life.
- I often have to justify or make excuses for my partner’s behavior.

**Forgiveness (married couples only)** measures a couple’s perception of their ability to forgive one another following a conflict, betrayal, or hurt. It looks at how well they both request and grant forgiveness in their relationship. Taking responsibility, apologizing, re-establishing trust, and moving forward are important components of this scale.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) indicate a positive ability to request and grant forgiveness in the marriage. Low scores (30 and below) indicate dissatisfaction with the ability to request and/or grant forgiveness in the marriage. These partners tend to hold grudges, experience ongoing tension, and are more prone to bringing up old issues.
Sample Forgiveness Items:
• I feel closer to my partner after we work through a disappointment.
• My partner does a good job of apologizing and asking for forgiveness.

RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS

Four personal and interpersonal relationship dynamics are assessed in the PREPARE/ENRICH Customized Version. They are defined below:

■ Assertiveness — a person’s ability to express his/her feelings to their partner and be able to ask for what they would like.

Sample Assertiveness Items:
• To avoid hurting my partner’s feelings during an argument, I tend to say nothing.
• I can express my true feeling to my partner.

■ Self Confidence — focuses on how good a person feels about himself/herself and their ability to control things in their life.

Sample Self Confidence Items:
• I have a positive attitude about myself.
• I have little control over the things that happen to me.

■ Avoidance — a person’s tendency to minimize issues and reluctance to deal with issues directly.

Sample Avoidance Items:
• To end an argument, I tend to give in too quickly.
• I go out of my way to avoid conflict with my partner.

■ Partner Dominance — focuses on how much a person feels his/her partner tries to control them and dominate his/her life.

Sample Partner Dominance Items:
• Sometimes my partner seems to be too controlling.
• Sometimes I am concerned about my partner’s temper.

These scales are designed to increase the facilitator’s understanding of each partner and how each partner’s characteristics are related to the underlying couple dynamics. These four interrelated areas together provide a rather comprehensive picture of each partner.

Research has demonstrated (Olson and Olson, 2000) successful couples tend to be those in which both partners are high in self confidence, low in partner dominance, high in assertiveness and low in avoidance.
One goal in working with a couple is to try to help both partners become more assertive with each other. Increased assertiveness will positively affect the other three personal and interpersonal characteristics assessed in the Inventories. If each partner becomes more assertive, this will reduce partner dominance and the tendency to use avoidance and increase individual self confidence.

PERSONAL STRESS PROFILE

In our fast paced society, it is impossible to avoid stress in our lives. Stressors are external events that cause an emotional or physical reaction. The impact of the event depends on whether one views the event as positive or negative. When stress levels are high or chronic, it is common for physical symptoms (headaches, backaches) or psychological symptoms (anxiety, anger) to emerge.

There are 2 basic ways to cope with stress:

• **Eliminate the stressor**: Some stressors represent things that are controllable (working too many hours). In some cases, it is possible to make choices that actually eliminate the stressor (change jobs).

• **Change one’s reaction to stress**. When a stressor cannot be eliminated, it is important to look at how one reacts in response to the stressor. Learning and using healthy coping mechanisms can help individuals respond to stress in healthier ways.

Olson & Stewart (1995) developed the Coping & Stress Profile for assessment, counseling and research. The Customized Version of PREPARE/ENRICH incorporates 25 checklist items from the Coping and Stress Profile to produce a Personal Stress Profile for each partner. There are both married and premarital versions of the Stress Profile in the inventories. There is also a premarital version designed for engaged couples which includes 10 items targeting stressors associated with wedding planning.

While taking the inventory, individuals are directed to read through the checklist and indicate how often each item has caused them stress over the past year. The five point response scale ranges from “Never” to “Very Often.”

**Sample Checklist Items:**
• Your current housing arrangement
• Your Job
• Lack of sleep

**Sample Wedding Issues Items:**
• Cost of the wedding
• Dealing with your parents
• Feeling disorganized
COUPLE & FAMILY SCALES

- **Couple and Family Closeness** describe the level of emotional closeness experienced in a couple and among family and the degree to which they balance togetherness and separateness. Items deal with family members helping each other, spending time together and feelings of emotional closeness.

  *Couple Closeness* assesses a couple’s current relationship. *Family Closeness* measures closeness in the families-of-origin.

Very high scores reflect excessive closeness and overdependence on each other, which can be detrimental to healthy functioning. Moderate scores indicate a balance between togetherness and independence, a characteristic often found in well-functioning couples. Very Low scores suggest a lack of emotional closeness between people, which may also be problematic. If scores are either too low or too high (unbalanced), it indicates a couple are unable to balance their separateness and togetherness.

**Sample Family Closeness Items:**
- Family members felt very close to one another. (balanced closeness item)
- Getting together as a family was a low priority for us. (disconnected item)
- Family members felt pressured to spend more time with one another. (overly connected item)

**Sample Couple Closeness Items:**
- Our togetherness is a top priority for us. (balanced closeness item)
- We seldom do things together. (disconnected item)
- I feel guilty when I spend time away from my partner. (overly connected item)

- **Couple and Family Flexibility** measure the ability of a couple to change and be flexible when necessary. Items deal with leadership issues and the ability to switch responsibilities and change rules when needed.

  *Couple Flexibility* evaluates a couple’s current relationship. *Family Flexibility* assesses patterns of change in families-of-origin.

Very High scores reflect a tendency toward constant change, resulting in a lack of stability. Moderate scores reflect a balance between stability and change, a characteristic usually found in more functional relationships. Very Low scores suggest an inability to make changes when needed. If scores are either too high or too low (unbalanced), it indicates a couple lacks the capacity to make changes in a functional manner.

**Sample Family Flexibility Items:**
- Family members compromised when problems arose. (balanced flexibility item)
- It felt like our family had a rule for every situation. (inflexible item)
- There was a lack of leadership in our family. (overly flexible item)
Sample Couple Flexibility Items:
• We are creative in how we handle our differences. (balanced flexibility item)
• One or both of us becomes frustrated when there is a change in our plans. (inflexible item)
• We seldom seem to get organized. (overly flexible item)

SCAPE PERSONALITY PROFILE

The Customized Version of PREPARE/ENRICH includes a personality section based on the Five Factor Model of Personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Widiger & Trull, 2007). The acronym used in PREPARE/ENRICH is called SCOPE reflecting the five personality dimensions: Social, Change, Organized, Pleasing, and Emotionally Steady. There are 7 Items in each scale, all with alpha reliability in the statistically acceptable range. These dimensions are described in more detail in the SCOPE Personality chapter.

Social (S) — reflects an interest in people and social activities.

High Score: Individual is an extrovert, and enjoys people, activities, and groups.
Average Score: Individual may find social settings enjoyable, but also values privacy.
Low Score: Individual is reserved or introverted, and less interested in social activities.

Sample Social Items:
• I make friends easily
• I am the life of the party

Change (C) — reflects openness to change, personal flexibility, and interest in new experiences.

High Score: Individual is very flexible, unconventional, and open to new experiences.
Average Score: Individual balances new and creative ideas with more traditional approaches to life.
Low Score: Individual is more down to earth, practical, and less interested in new ideas or change.

Sample Change Items:
• I like to solve new problems
• I am comfortable with change

Organized (O) — reflects how organized and persistent a person is in their daily life, work, and pursuit of goals.

High Score: Individual is methodical, well organized, goal oriented and very reliable.
Average Score: Individual may be generally organized, but can also be flexible about their agenda.
Low Score: Individual is more spontaneous, less organized, and prefers not to make rigid plans.
Sample Organized Items:
• I am always prepared
• I make plans and stick to them

■ Pleasing (P) — reflects how considerate and cooperative a person is in their interactions with others.

High Score: Individual is very friendly, cooperative, and values getting along with others.
Average Score: Individual can be warm and cooperative, but occasionally is more competitive, stubborn, or assertive.
Low Score: Individual tends to be more assertive, less cooperative and more competitive.

Sample Pleasing Items:
• I accept people as they are
• I value cooperation over competition

■ Emotionally Steady (E) — reflects the tendency to stay relaxed and calm even when faced with stressful situations.

High Score: Individual tends to be more relaxed, calm, and less prone to distress.
Average Score: Individual will generally be calm and able to cope with stress, but may sometimes experience feelings of anxiety, anger, or depression.
Low Score: Individual is more emotionally reactive, moody, and may be prone to feelings of anxiety, depression, or anger in times of stress.

Sample Emotionally Steady Items:
• I rarely complain
• I often feel blue

CUSTOMIZED SCALES

■ Parenting Expectations (no children yet)/Children & Parenting (children together) measures an individual’s attitudes and feelings about having and raising children. Items reflect a couple’s awareness of the impact of children on their relationship, satisfaction with how parental roles and responsibilities are defined, compatibility of philosophies toward discipline of children, shared goals and values desired for the children and agreement on the number of children preferred. There are distinct scale versions for couples who don’t currently have children but plan to have them and for couples who already have children together. There are also slight modifications for the Catholic version of these scales.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect a consensus on childrearing values, satisfaction with the enactment of parental roles and responsibilities and a realistic evaluation of the impact of children on the relationship. Low scores (30 and below) indicate disagreement over values related to raising children, discomfort with perceptions of parental roles and responsibilities, and concerns over the impact of children on the relationship.
Sample Children & Parenting Items:
• We agree on the number of children we would like to have. (Engaged item)
• We give more time and energy to our children than to our marriage. (Married item)

■ Step Parenting Expectations (engaged)/Step Parenting Issues (married) measures agreement on issues related to having and raising children in a stepfamily. Items reflect a couple’s awareness of the impact of children on their relationship, satisfaction with how step parenting roles and responsibilities are shared and defined, compatibility of philosophies toward discipline of children, and agreement on how to provide for the children. There are unique Step Parenting scales for both engaged and married couples.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) reflect a consensus on childrearing values, satisfaction with the enactment of parental roles and responsibilities and a realistic evaluation of the impact of children on the relationship. Low scores (30 and below) indicate disagreement over values related to raising children, discomfort with perceptions of parental roles and responsibilities and concerns over the complexity of raising children in a step family.

Sample Step Parenting Items:
• The child(ren) have a positive attitude toward our marriage. (Engaged item)
• Child custody and visitation arrangements have caused problems for us. (Married item)

■ Intergenerational Issues (all children over 18) focuses on how much time, money and overall involvement the couple feels they need to provide to their children and/or their parents. The more a couple has resolved the issues resulting from being the “sandwich” generation, the higher they will score in this category.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) indicate how satisfied they are with the level of support they provide their children and their parents. Low scores (30 and below) indicate dissatisfaction or frustration with the level of support provided to their children and parents and the relationship with them.

Sample Intergenerational Issues Items:
• It has been challenging to help our adult children achieve their own independence (financial, housing, etc.).
• Our children and/or parents expect too much assistance from us.

■ Becoming Parents looks at a couple’s readiness for the transition to parenthood. This category explores feelings and expectations about roles, support networks, and how the challenges associated with caring for an infant will be managed as a couple has their first child.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) indicate partners feel ready and prepared for the transition into parenthood. Low scores (30 and below) indicate partners are concerned about becoming parents, and may not have the personal, social or financial resources they feel they will need to be effective parents.
**Sample Becoming Parents items:**
- We have a plan for how to manage the fatigue and stress associated with caring for a new baby.
- We have discussed and agreed on our childcare options (stay-at-home parent, daycare, etc.)

**Interfaith/Interchurch** measures how a couple from different faith traditions or churches will manage the differences in their practice and expression of spiritual beliefs. This category looks at the capacity for individuals to be respectful and loving toward one another, despite their differences. It also explores how they plan to manage their differences.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) indicate partners feel good about how they will manage and accept their differences in faith expression and practice. These individuals tend to focus on what they have in common, as opposed to highlighting differences. Low scores (30 and below) indicate partners are concerned about their religious differences, which are likely a source of tension in the relationship.

**Sample Interfaith/Interchurch Items:**
- We have discussed the challenges associated with raising children in an interfaith family.
- Despite our religious differences, we have found (or plan to find) a place of worship we can attend together.

**Cultural/Ethnic Issues** measures how concerned each individual is about differences in their ethnic or cultural background will negatively affect their relationship. This category looks at the capacity for individuals and their families to be respectful and accepting of one another’s background.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) indicate partners feel good about how they will manage and embrace their cultural/ethnic differences. These individuals respectfully view differences as adding richness and diversity to their lives. Low scores (30 and below) indicate individuals or their families are concerned about their differences, which are likely a source of tension in the relationship.

**Sample Cultural/Ethnic Issues Items:**
- My partner is very sensitive and respectful toward my cultural background.
- Differences in our ethnic/cultural background can sometimes strain our relationship.

**Health Issues (over 55)** assess a couple’s level of comfort with their current health and with how aging will affect their relationship. The more optimistic partners are about their own and their partner’s physical and emotional health, the higher their score will be in this area.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) indicate partners feel good about how they are currently handling health issues and are optimistic about how aging will affect them. Low scores (30 and below) indicate partners are concerned about current and future health issues and are pessimistic about the impact of aging on themselves and their partners.
Sample Health Issues Items:
• We both feel it is important to have an active and healthy lifestyle.
• My partner has some unhealthy habits that concern me.

Role Transitions (over 55) measures satisfaction with how roles and responsibilities are handled in the relationship of older couples facing transitions. More specifically, this category looks at how older couples feel about managing the role transitions associated with retirement. Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) suggest the individuals are satisfied with how responsibilities are being handled and feel good about upcoming role transitions. Low scores (30 and below) indicate less satisfaction with roles and responsibilities and may reflect concern about how leadership and decision-making will be shared.

Sample Role Transitions Items:
• As our lifestyle changes, I worry that power struggles may arise.
• We participate equally in setting new goals.

Previous Marriage measures concern that a previous relationship could interfere with the health and happiness of their marriage. This scale is designed for engaged couples where one or both partners have been previously divorced. It considers if both individuals have had enough time to work through past hurts, understand the reasons for previous break-ups, and feel confident in their current relationship.

Higher PCA and Individual scores (70 and above) suggest the individuals are confident they are ready to move forward and have a successful relationship. Low scores (30 and below) indicate less confidence in the relationship, and perhaps some fear that a previous partner could interfere with their marriage.

Sample Previous Marriage Items:
• We have both had sufficient time to work out the issues and hurts from our past relationships.
• Sometimes a former partner interferes with our relationship.

Cohabitation Issues evaluates each partner’s awareness of and reactions to the experience of living together. Items focus on how the couple has viewed cohabitation and whether the experience has negatively affected their relationship and expectations about marriage.

Research suggests cohabitation is not a good way to prepare for marriage (Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman, 2006). For this reason, even high PCA scores are not referred to as “strengths” for the couple. Instead, the term “less disruptive” is used when couples score higher in positive couple agreement.

Sample Cohabitation Issues Items:
• Living together has created some new issues for us.
• Living together has been more challenging than I had anticipated.