Research Background for PREP
(The Prevention and Relationship Education Program\(^1\))

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The following summary is available at this link:
http://www.box.net/shared/eerhl6vh4cstn59bd2

The Prevention and Relationship Education Program (PREP) is an empirically informed and rigorously tested model for teaching couples how to communicate effectively, work as a team to solve problems, manage conflicts without damaging closeness, and preserve and enhance commitment and friendship. PREP is used in many settings around the world, including community service settings, government programs, and religious institutions. To date we have trained over 20,000 individuals to become PREP Instructors in 28 countries.

The PREP Approach is based on over 35 years of basic science and outcome research in the field of marital health and success, including many studies conducted at the University of Denver and funded by the National Institute of Mental Health or the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (in the form of various grants awarded to Dr. Howard Markman, Dr. Scott Stanley, Dr. Galena Rhoades, and their colleagues).

Overview of Research Background

The extensive history of evaluation research on PREP focuses on curricula for couples (e.g., variations of PREP). There is less research focused on the new and emerging field of individually oriented relationship education, though studies are emerging in that field. Studies on Within My Reach (a curriculum from PREP built for individuals) are listed separately below.

- PREP has been reviewed by the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) and is listed in the U. S. Government’s (SAMHSA) registry of evidence-based programs and practices. PREP has been listed in the registry for years, and NREPP re-reviewed the evidence basis for PREP in 2013 and updated the information in the registry. http://legacy.nreppadmin.net/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=326

- PREP is one of only a few programs to be rated as efficacious in reviews of evidence on relationship education approaches (Jakubowski, Milne, Brunner, & Miller, 2004).\(^1\)

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\(^1\) Formerly, The Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program
• PREP is empirically informed, meaning that, to the extent possible, the strategies of PREP are based on sound, basic research on marital and family health.

• PREP is empirically tested in outcome evaluations. PREP has been evaluated by many research teams (at least 7) in numerous countries (at least 4).

• PREP is regularly refined based on new knowledge gained in the field.

• In many peer-reviewed, published outcome studies, couples receiving PREP have demonstrated benefits on a variety of dimensions, especially in communication quality and conflict management, but also on other dimensions such as confidence in their relationships and positive connection.

• A number of published outcome studies show that couples who took PREP had a lower rate of divorce or break-up compared to those not taking PREP. Such findings are rare in this field.

Evaluation Studies of PREP: Peer Reviewed, Published Papers on Evaluations that include variations of PREP.

[In all but two of these studies, there was evidence of gains in relationship quality, family functioning, or stability (lower divorce) for couples taking a variation of PREP. Some studies show greater impact on relationship quality (e.g., communication) and some show greater impact on relationship stability. A wide variety of samples, methods, and providers are reflected here.]


**Studies Focused on or Include Derivatives of PREP that Focus on Individuals (e.g., Within My Reach)**


Large-Scale Government Trial of Relationship Education and Support Programs to Low Income Couples

The citations below present evidence of positive impacts for variations of PREP used in two large federal studies. These are government publication rather than a peer reviewed journal publication. NOTE: While the overall results across sites in these multi-site studies were mixed, there is substantial evidence of effectiveness for adaptations of PREP in these large, randomized trials. If you have any detailed questions about these or other studies, you can inquire of Dr. Stanley, who knows the study details and findings, in depth.


Papers on Best Practices or Innovative Strategies in the Field of Couples Education by Scholars Associated with PREP


Papers on Key Issues in the Field of Couples Education by Scholars Associated with PREP


Examples of Studies that Empirically Inform Strategies Used in PREP

There are hundreds of studies that have been used to inform strategies built into PREP and adaptations of PREP. Not only has PREP been tested in rigorous evaluations by various research teams, but PREP is regularly updated and refined based on ongoing research in the field. A list sampling some of the studies that have informed strategies and refinements in PREP and related curricula is available upon request.

Researchers associated with studies on PREP and prevention at the University of Denver include Dr. Howard Markman, Dr. Scott Stanley, and Dr. Galena Rhoades. They and colleagues are very active in research on the basic science of relationships, authoring many peer-reviewed publications on factors such as communication, risk for divorce, commitment, cohabitation, family of origin risks, and so forth. Such research is used to inform the prevention strategies used in relationship education interventions.

We keep a growing and broad list of studies by those on our team and scores of other scholars. The list includes both outcome studies related to this field and all manner of basic science studies of the sort we find useful in our ongoing work (including, of course, the citations for all our basic science research). That list can be obtained at the link below. If you are interested in knowing about citations in our work on communication, commitment, cohabitation, etc., just search for our names within this list. If there is a particular citation of ours that you cannot obtain and would like a copy of, just send a note to Scott Stanley at scott.stanley@du.edu.

Big reference list here: [https://app.box.com/s/2l23r2i48brkn19b8ie9](https://app.box.com/s/2l23r2i48brkn19b8ie9)

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