

PREPARE ENRICH

• *building strong marriages* •

Understanding Couple Typology

What are “Couple Types”?

Through research studies of thousands of premarital and marital couples, specific types of couples have been identified (see Figures 1&2). These types are based on statistical analysis of Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) scores across the nine core content areas of PREPARE/ENRICH. Couple types are one way to understand relationships and relational patterns. This multivariate approach can more adequately capture the complexity of relationships than analysis on one or two dimensions.

Vitalized Couple Type

Vitalized couples tend to have the highest Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) scores across most of the categories. They tend to have high relationship satisfaction and longitudinal studies have demonstrated they are the type least likely to divorce.

Harmonious Couple Type

Harmonious couples tend to have high PCA scores in most areas except Financial Management and Spiritual Beliefs. They have moderate relationship satisfaction and are at low risk for divorce.

Conventional Couple Type

Conventional couples tend to have lower PCA scores in the Interpersonal areas (Communication, Conflict Resolution) but higher scores in more external areas (Roles, Family & Friends, and Spiritual Beliefs). In spite of moderate to low relationship satisfaction, this type has a very low rate of divorce.

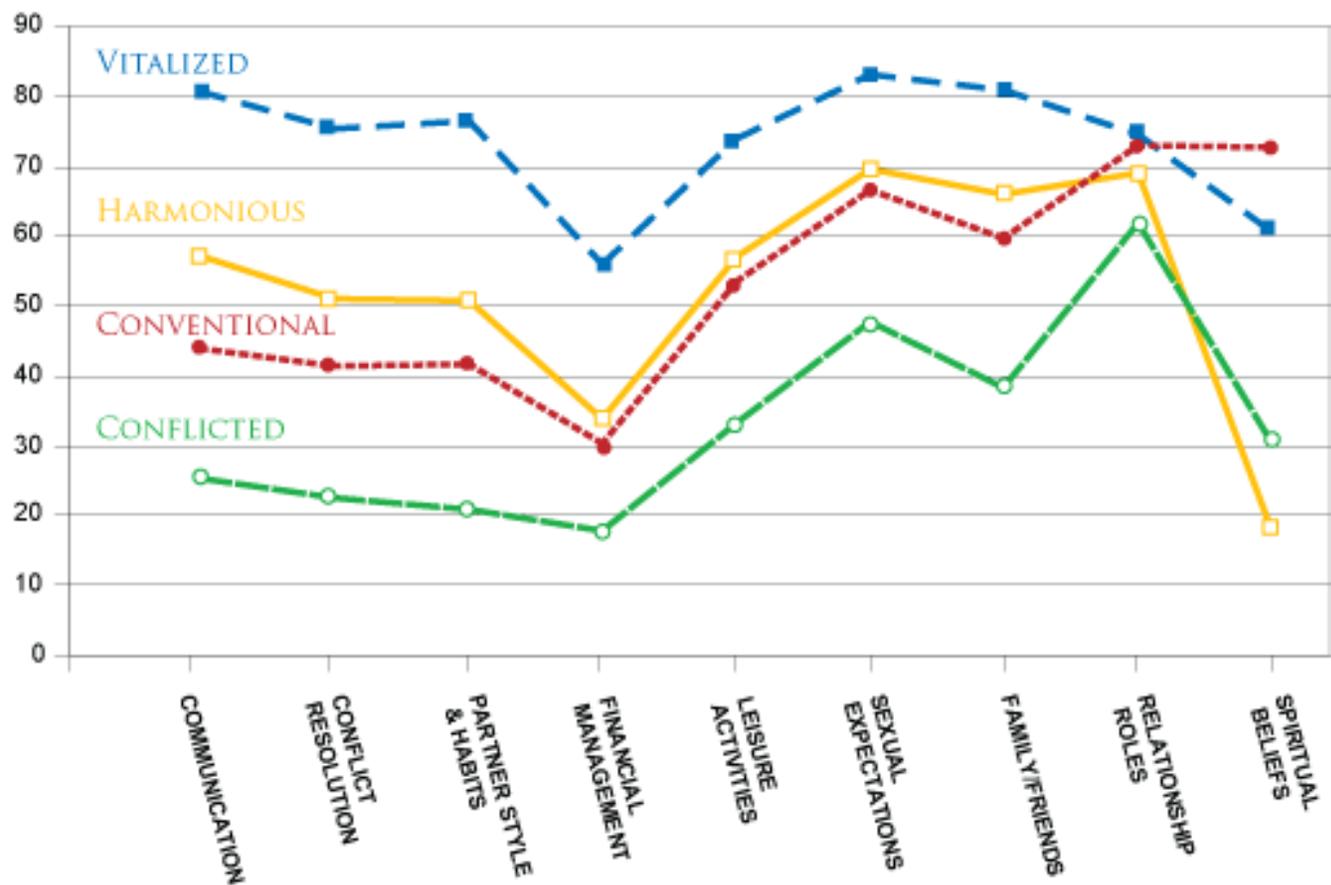
Conflicted Couple Type

Conflicted couples have the lowest PCA scores (for premarital or dating couples) across many of the categories. These couples tend to have low relationship satisfaction and high rates of divorce.

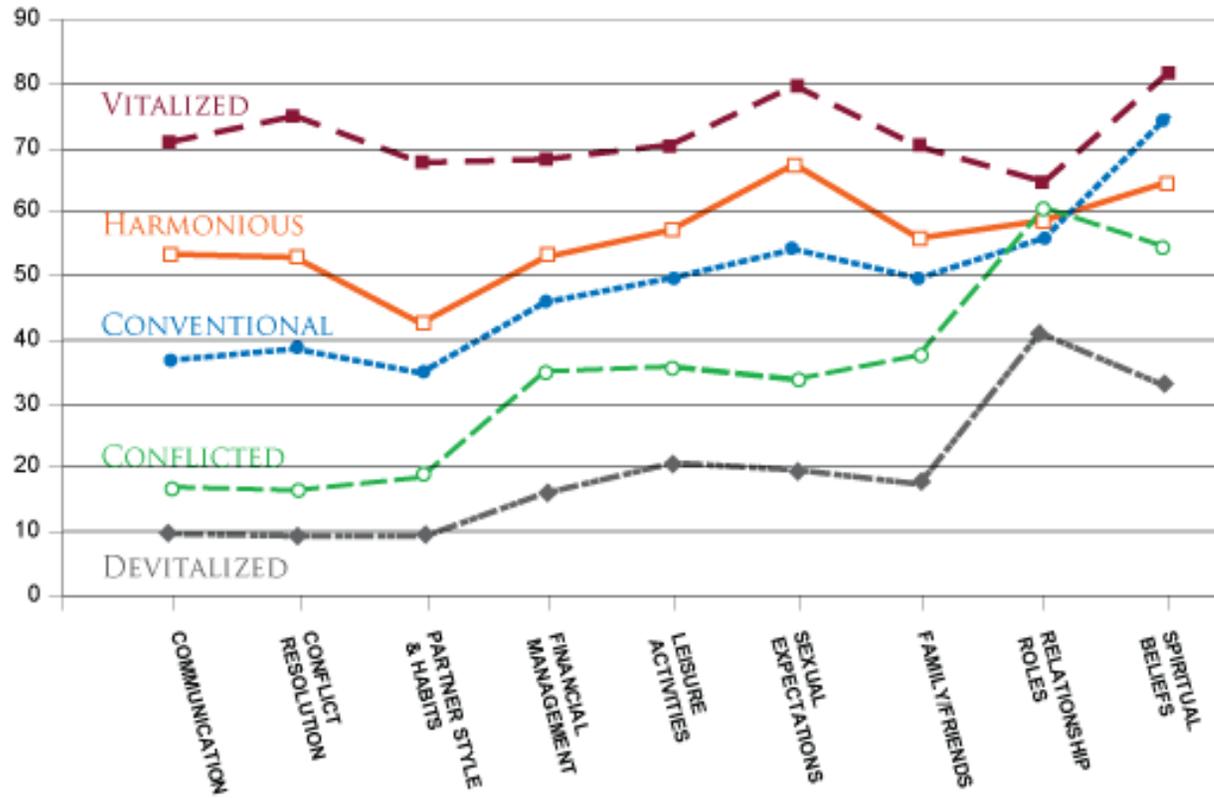
Devitalized Couple Type (*married couples only*)

The Devitalized couple type has been found for married couples only. Devitalized couples have the lowest PCA scores across most of the categories. These couples have the highest risk of divorce and tend to be unhappily married.

FOUR TYPES OF PREMARITAL COUPLES



FIVE TYPES OF MARRIED COUPLES



Are Couple Types Valid Across Different Ethnic Groups?

Allen and Olson (2001) studied a sample of 450 African-American married couples and discovered the same five marital types found in earlier studies with predominantly European-American married couples.

Another study by Shuji Asai (2003) examined 849 engaged Japanese couples. This study revealed four distinct premarital types that were comparable to the four premarital types found in a predominantly European-American sample of couples.

These and other studies suggest that marital types are valid across ethnic groups. For more details on these studies, see the Research section of [the PREPARE/ENRICH website](#).

Should “Couple Type” Be Shared with a Couple?

Facilitators decide whether or not they will share “couple type” information with their couple. One consideration is whether or not this information will benefit the couple. Facilitators who choose to share couple type information with their “conflicted” or “devitalized” couples may provide hope to these couples by sharing anecdotal examples of couples who have overcome challenges or by citing research on the dynamic nature of relationships and the ability of couples to improve the state of their relationships. Outcome research from couples who completed PREPARE/ENRICH found that over half of couples sampled improved their couple type by one “level” (after completing P/E and feedback sessions) and twenty-nine percent of couples (from the same sample) improved their “couple type” by two “levels”.

**For more information on Couple Types refer to your Facilitator’s Manual.*