

Web-Based Marriage Education for Foster, Kinship, and Adoptive Couples

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Phase I Final Progress Report

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A. General Scientific and Technological Aims

Foster, kinship, and adoptive couples comprise a unique group of families that face extraordinary challenges that can, and do, have a large impact on a marriage; for example, trying to manage very disturbed child behavior problems stemming from abuse and neglect, dealing with the authority and unpredictability of the care system, balancing the need to advocate for and protect the child from birth parents, and being a different type of family that doesn't have the role models and support other families have from the community.

Adjusting to these realities is critical to maintaining a healthy marriage, protecting the family, and preserving the foster or adoptive placement. Marital education, especially at key points of transition, such as when a child is placed, could provide these couples with much needed social-communication skills to avoid negative interaction patterns and with the ability to bring their expectations into a healthy and consensual framework of reality. But standard family contexts and dynamics for intervention do not generalize to these couples.

The goal of the project is to develop a version of the PREP training that specifically addresses the needs of this population. The program is designed to be delivered online through FosterParentCollege.com, a training venue developed by Northwest Media that is enjoying widespread use by individual parents and agencies. Web-based training is rapidly becoming a preferred format for continuing education with this group because of the precious convenience it offers to these parents.

The proposed PREP training series will consist of 14 modules. In Phase I we produced a complete online version of content that blended the first two modules on identifying and assessing communication patterns in relationships and learning component skills of the curriculum's core communication techniques. The recruitment, implementation, and testing for the feasibility study were also conducted online.

B. Phase I Research Activities

Product Development

The media materials were developed in several stages by the development team, which included Richard Delaney, PI and co-writer; Lee White, Producer and co-writer. The production team (including Keith Qiao Jin, multimedia programmer; William Haldane, videographer, multimedia designer and editor; Kris Hansen, Web graphic designer; and Anton Cole, sound engineer) was assembled.

To begin the process, the development team worked with the content experts, Drs. Howard Markman and Scott Stanley from PREP to outline the specific points to be presented and identify case scenarios to be used. A multimedia script was developed in draft form that also included exercises and supplemental printable material. The script was reviewed and edited by the PREP content experts. The revised script was passed to the production team for a series of processes including audio scratch track recording and the wireframe assembly of the multimedia sequences prior to the production phase.

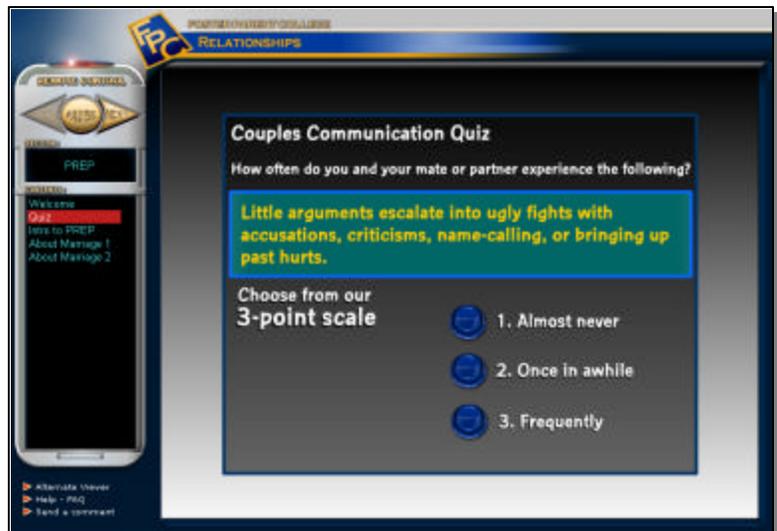
In the production phase, talent was hired for both images and voices. All recordings were made and assembled. Using Flash technology, the audio and visual elements were assembled and programmed as a draft version with the draft form of the interactive exercises. This created a pilot version of the product that was used with the focus group of foster parents and the content experts. After feedback was received from both the focus groups and content experts the final revisions were made, handouts were written and finalized. At this point the programmer, Qiao Jin, completed the online private journal for each viewer. The research department, headed by Dr. Pacifici, developed and tested the intervention questions. Dr. Pacifici worked with the programmer to modify our Web-based database management program for the study and to post the pre- and posttest measures

Instructional Content

In Phase I we wrote, produced, and evaluated a course on *Marriage Relationships*. The course consisted of four integrated instructional components, or chapters. Below we describe the topics, interactive activities and exercises, and printable handouts covered in each chapter. Chapter 1. PREP

- Welcome: The course begins with an introduction of the program's hosts, Drs. Howard Markman and Scott Stanley, the founders of PREP. The hosts provide brief background information about PREP and the overarching goals of the instruction. They also underscore that the program is intended to be educational, not therapeutic.

- Quiz: Viewers are asked to complete a brief interactive quiz (see figure to the right) about the risk status of their marriage. The hosts give some background information about the questionnaire, its purpose and limitations. The questionnaire is a standardized measure developed by Markman and Stanley called the Relationship Dynamics Scale. It consists of 8 items that ask



respondents to rate how frequently statements in each item currently apply to their marriage (1=almost never, 2=once in awhile, 3=frequently). Higher scores equate to higher risk. After answering all 8 items viewers see their total score and receive one of three possible contingent explanations of their score's meaning. Scores in the lowest range indicate lowest risk; scores in the middle range prompt cautions about the risk state of the marriage; and the highest scores indicate that there are some serious warning signs of the risk status of the marriage. All three feedback messages are tempered with a balanced consideration of caution and constructive outlook.

- Intro to PREP: The hosts explain that the goal of the course is to promote feeling safe in a marriage. They describe what that "feeling safe" includes. They then give an overview of the specific topics and components in the course. These include:
 - Printable handouts.
 - Understanding four essential communication danger signs in a marriage.
 - Learning a diffusing skill called Take a Break.
 - Learning a communication skill called the Speaker-Listener Technique.
 - Interactive activities. This includes a brief orientation to the various follow-up exercises, and how users can access and use their own online private journal.

The hosts caution viewers about the need to practice the skills being taught before using them, and they also refer viewers to a handout on *Day-to-Day Safety in the Family*.

- About Marriage #1 & #2: These segments give viewers a broad perspective on the highs and lows in a marriage, as well as facts and myths that sometimes contribute to these dynamics. The hosts pose a question about married life to a foster, adoptive, or kinship couple. The spouses each venture a guess on the correct answer from a multiple-choice list of 4 responses. The host then gives them an explanation about the correct answer

that addresses related misconceptions about marriage and married life and also how the information ties in to the themes of the course. The host refers viewers to learn more interesting information about marriages in a handout titled *More About Marriage*. The segment closes with a caution that the course does not address how to understand and treat serious marital problems.

Chapter 2. Signs

- **Danger Signs:** The host introduces the four basic communication danger signs of a marriage and puts their occurrence into a perspective of normal expectations.
- **Escalation #1:** The host defines the first communication danger sign, escalation. He shows a scenario that demonstrates it and then provides follow-up comments on the interactions of the couple in the scenario (see figure to the right).
- **Escalation #2:** Viewers then answer a brief series of true/false questions about the scenario they just viewed that test their understanding of escalation. When viewers click on an answer the host reveals the correct answer and provides an explanation. The segment closes with a recap of the elements of the communication danger sign, escalation.
- **Invalidation #1 & #2:** Same as above, applied to the second communication danger sign, invalidation.
- **Negative Interpretations #1& #2:** Same as above, applied to the third communication danger sign, negative interpretations.
- **Withdrawal and Avoidance #1& #2:** Same as above, applied to the fourth communication danger sign, withdrawal and avoidance.



Chapter 3. Communication

- **Take a Break #1:** The host identifies the first communication skill to help couples safely manage conflicts and differences. He briefly reviews when the skill can be used, what the skill does, the steps involved in using the skill, and gives basic rules that can optimize its use. The host then introduces a couple. Together, they look at a video clip that was taken in their home (with their permission) that captured a conflict they had at home. The host tells them that they can avoid such conflicts. He explains the Take-a-Break technique to the couple in detail, including how to recognize danger signs, when to use the technique, how to use it effectively, and what to do during a break. They watch the video scene again, but this time the couple has to identify the communication danger signs. During this interaction the host clarifies the technique and has the couple practice it. He gives them pointed feedback and corrections until the couple can successfully put the technique into practice.
- **Take a Break #2:** The host replays a conflict scenario of a couple from a previous segment, but this time the couple models using the Take-a-Break technique to avoid escalating the argument. He debriefs viewers on how the couple used the technique successfully. This includes a recap of the four steps of the technique.

- **Speaker-Listener Technique #1:** The host identifies the next communication skill and how it is intended to help. Guidelines for using the technique are also provided in a handout. Similar to the previous section, the host meets a resource couple. The couple explains how they handle conflicts with their children, but they are not yet clear about how they handle their marriage conflicts. Together they look at a video clip of themselves during a family meeting. The couple is relatively well-versed in conflict management. The host points out the key elements of the Speaker-Listener technique they successfully incorporated into their family meeting. The host recaps the basic elements of the technique and then translates it for use between adults (i.e., the spouses), instead of with children.
- **Speaker-Listener Technique #2:** This segment focuses on listening skills. The host continues working with the same couple on showing them the basic rules for being a good listener. He focuses in particular on paraphrasing and goes over with the couple the key steps and dynamics involved in effectively using this listening skill while re-watching their video clips. The host recaps the basic steps and rules of the technique.
- **Speaker-Listener Technique #3:** The host now works with the couple on how to implement the technique. He has them read scripted responses to their video clip scenarios that model the correct technique, with each spouse alternately taking the perspective of the listener. The host debriefs the viewers on why the technique was effective after each role play. In the last round, the couple role models the technique without a script. The host closes with a summary.
- **“Feeling” Exercise #1, #2 & #3:** These three exercises focus on how to state feelings as part of the speaker-listener technique. Viewers hear a story and have to select words that effectively express how they would feel in a similar situation. Viewers are presented with an array of either appropriate or vague feeling words. When they drop-and-drag their selection to complete the sentence, “I feel...” they automatically receive feedback about their selection.
- **“I” Statements #1 & #2:** The host explains the basic structure of an “I” statement, which is also used to objectively express feelings. Viewers listen to a scenario and have to select words that correctly fit the four basic elements of an “I” statement.
- **Paraphrasing:** Viewers listen to a series of comments and have to choose which of four possible choices is the most effective paraphrase of what was said. Clicking on a choice triggers feedback on the choice.

Chapter 4. Final Words

- The host recaps the main instructional topics and skills covered and provides a final role-modeling scenario of the proper use of the take-a-break and speaker-listener techniques, with follow-up feedback.

Process for Developing the Media Materials

The media for the course were integrated within an audio-visual ‘skin,’ which included the following elements:

- A viewing frame for presenting the visual components of the instructional content – photographs and bulleted text overlays from the sound track.
- A viewing frame that displayed the current narrator (either Dr. Stanley or Dr. Markman) in real-time audio and video.
- A navigational ‘remote control’ panel that identified the course chapters and topics, and that highlighted the current place in the course. Users could also re-view or move back to already viewed chapters. Clickable options let users convert the presentation to text-only, review FAQs, and send comments.

- The viewing frame contained identifying markers for the site and the course title, as well as a 'home' button that sent users to their account page which listed the printable handouts for the course.

Focus Group - Formative Review of the Program

A preliminary focus group was held to obtain feedback from three foster parent couples on a draft version of the PREP Marriage Education program. The couples were recruited through Portland State University Child Welfare Partnership's Training Center for Southern Oregon in Eugene. Based on information from a background information questionnaire they completed, all participants identified their racial background as White, and five of the six identified their ethnic background as Not Hispanic or Latino (one person omitted this question). Participants ranged in age from 31 to 52 years.

Following a brief introduction to the PREP program, a draft version – not yet animated and with one person reading many of the parts – was shown. On a feedback form, participants were asked to rate each section of the program immediately after viewing it. For each section, participants were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale how much they agreed that the material was clear, relevant to them, and relevant to others. In addition, participants wrote some useful comments on the form, and they also provided valuable feedback in a short group discussion after viewing the program. This feedback was taken into account in developing the final version of the program. For example, there was consensus about one scene (in the segment on Negative Interpretations) that the dialogue was too extreme, and it was later edited to tone it down. In another scene, which involved a role play, some felt it wasn't clear when the role play began. This led to adding a caption to the screen during the role play for clarity. The group's feedback on the interactive exercises was quite positive, without any suggestions for changes.

A woman in the group made the point that something should be said in the program about the importance of taking care of a marriage to *prevent* problems. All three couples agreed on the importance of making "couple time" in a marriage, and not just for conflict resolution. Emphasis was therefore added to the final program about the importance of *preventing* problems in a marriage or other long-term relationship.

Finally, the journal that is to be part of the program was described, along with some of the proposed prompts for the journal. One of the foster mothers said she thought it would be good to have questions like those to think about, but she didn't think she would write responses to them in the journal. Other group members agreed they, too, were unlikely to write in the journal.

The focus group session lasted almost 2½ hours, and group members were paid \$40 each for their participation.

Pilot Study of Study Measures

A Training Specialist with the Child Welfare Partnership of Oregon State University collected preliminary data from 10 foster, adoptive, and kinship parents for the three measures for the feasibility study that were developed in-house. The specialist recruited resource parents in four Department of Human Services locations (Coos Bay, Gold Beach, Medford, Lane County Branch) throughout Oregon as part of her ongoing training activities. After a brief introduction about the study and agreeing to participate, each participant completed all four questionnaires.

Two participants failed to complete the Background Information questionnaire. Of those that did, 6 were female; ages ranged from 34 – 64 years; none reported Hispanic background and all were White.

A questionnaire on knowledge of the PREP program that was written for this study consisted of 28 multiple-choice and true-or-false questions. Responses were reviewed to assess the difficulty level of items. Of the 28 items, 8 were dropped because they were judged to be too easy – none or one respondent answered the item incorrectly. No gross errors in the presentation of the questionnaire items were reported.

The study's other outcome measure that was written for the project was a questionnaire about the two main communications techniques taught in the PREP training segment.

Respondents read 10 very brief scenarios that depicted a communication conflict between spouses and were asked to indicate which of 4 possible responses would be the most appropriate. Five of the scenarios tested Take-a-Break skills and five tested paraphrasing skills (a central component of the Speaker-Listener technique). Two Take-a-Break and two paraphrasing items were dropped because, again, they were judged to be too easy – none or one respondent answered the item incorrectly. No gross errors in the presentation of the questionnaire items were reported.

Technical Development

All audio was recorded in-house according to previously approved scripts. The sound engineer cleaned, sweetened, filtered, and edited audio tracks on Cool Edit Pro 1.2a. Sound foley is added to the soundtrack.

The artists and Flash Animator developed animated characters and multimedia images to accent the storylines according to approved storyboards and wireframe. The Flash animator used final audio files and graphic elements to create a first rough-cut according to the script, using Macromedia Flash MX software. The entire team then reviewed this version and made appropriate revisions until reaching final approval.

The bulk of the production process was conducted using the Flash environment for quick turnaround for Web and DVD production and revision. Once approved, all files were authored for Web.

Project Evaluation

The purpose of the study in Phase I was to evaluate the effectiveness of *Marriage Relationships*, the first course of a proposed series of online courses for foster, adoptive, and kinship couples based on PREP's marriage education training. We wanted to assess whether the online training format was successful in improving participants' knowledge and skills and also whether participants were satisfied with various operational aspects of the course and online presentation.

Participants

Of the 100 parents who initially registered for the study, 25 did not complete their participation and were dropped from the study. Our final sample, therefore, included 75 participants, 38 in the treatment group and 37 in the comparison group. The sample was balanced by gender. Racially, 91% were White, and 8% were either Black, Asian, or Multiracial, with 4% reporting as Unknown. Ethnically, about 3% were Hispanic or Latino, with 8% Unknown or not reported. Participants ranged in age from 23 to 66 years, with a mean sample age of 44 years. With reference to education, about 17% completed high school and the remaining 83% had at least some college education or higher. The range for personal income was fairly evenly distributed, with the modal level at \$30,000-\$40,000.

Two-thirds of the sample was comprised of foster parents and one-third was adoptive parents. Three-quarters of the sample had between 1-5 years experiences as resource parents, while the remaining quarter ranged from 6-30 years experience. The vast majority (87%) were caring for between 1-3 children. Couples were married between 1 and 39 years; however almost one-quarter of the sample was married between 10-13 years. Almost one-half of the parents had never been divorced, while almost one-third reported one divorce. Only a few more couples reported having lived together prior to being married compared to those who did not.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Each parent received \$35 for being in the study. Parents also received a certificate from Northwest Media for completing 4 hours of training

Procedure

We recruited foster, adoptive, and kinship couples for our sample by sending an email announcement about the study to parents who had previously taken a course through FosterParentCollege.com. Our subscriber list contained over 13,000 subscribers. We also posted the announcement on the home page of the FosterParentCollege.com site. To be included in the study both spouses had to participate and have access to a computer with high-

speed Internet access. Interested parents were asked to respond by email. We received over 200 emails from interested couples in the first 24 hours after the email announcements were sent. We selected the first 100 qualified respondents (i.e., 50 couples) to participate in the study.

To control for extraneous sources of variability as well as threats to internal validity, we randomly assigned those who agreed to participate to either an intervention condition or a comparison condition. Couples in the intervention group viewed the PREP course, while couples in the comparison group viewed another course offered on FosterParentCollege.com on Visitation, which dealt with understanding and dealing with issues related to having children in care visit their birth parents. Participants in both groups received an email with instructions for logging in, which included the URL of the site, their login information (user name and password), a brief description of what the study activities for their group would involve, and contact information for Northwest Media.

Once on the site, participants reviewed the consent form and could choose whether to accept or not accept the terms of their participation. Before the course started, the site administrator registered all trainees in the study with unique user names and passwords that they needed to log in. Participants could access the course through any computer with a high-speed Internet connection and sound.

All study activities were conducted online using interactive measures and automated electronic data storage. After indicating their consent to participate in the study, participants in both groups completed a set of pre-test questionnaires, which included a background information questionnaire, knowledge questionnaires for *both* courses, a self-perception measure of communication skills and a measure of communication skills application. After completing the pre-test questionnaires, participants had one week to view their respective training course (the *Marriage Relationships* course for the intervention group or the *Visitation* course for the comparison group) and to complete a set of post-test questionnaires after they finished viewing the course. The post-test questionnaires were the same as those given at pre-test, without the background information questionnaire, but including user satisfaction questionnaire regarding their respective training course. At the beginning of the second week, all participants had the option of viewing the other course.

The following is a schematic of the study design:

	Week 1	Week 2
Intervention	Take Pretest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Background Information - PREP Knowledge - Visitation Knowledge - Marriage Communication Skills - PREP Communication Skills View PREP Take Posttest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PREP Knowledge - Visitation Knowledge - Marriage Communication Skills - PREP Communication Skills - User Satisfaction (PREP) 	View Visitation

Comparison

Take Pretest

- Background Information
- PREP Knowledge
- Visitation Knowledge
- Marriage Communication Skills
- PREP Communication Skills

View Visitation

View PREP

Take Posttest

- PREP Knowledge
- Visitation Knowledge
- Marriage Communication Skills
- PREP Communication Skills
- User Satisfaction (Visitation)

Measures

(Copies of all measures are included in Appendix A.)

1) *Background Information*

Project staff developed a 20-item background information questionnaire that includes questions regarding participants' age, gender, type of resource parent, race, ethnicity, education, income, religion, and marriage history.

2) *PREP Knowledge (PREP-K)*

Project staff developed a measure consisting of 20 multiple-choice and true/false items (see also Pilot Study of Study Measures section above) designed to assess basic concepts covered by the curriculum on marital relationship dynamics, communication problems, and communication skills.

3) *Visitation - Knowledge (Visit-K)*

Project staff developed a measure consisting of 20 multiple-choice and true/false items designed to assess basic concepts covered by the curriculum for the comparison group on issues related to pre-, during, and post-visitation dynamics.

4) *Marriage Communication Skills (MCS)*

A 20-item questionnaire adapted from PREP's standardized Marriage Education Questionnaire. Ten items form a Perception Scale that assesses how a spouse perceives the current use of communication skills in their marriage. Spouses read statements and indicate how much they agree with the statement on a scale of 1 to 5. Two items were dropped from this scale because they were not germane to the scope of content in Phase I. The remaining ten items form a Problem Reporting Scale that assesses how a spouse perceives the current frequency of communications problems in their marriage. Spouses read statements and indicate how much they agree with the statement on a scale of 1 to 3.

5) *PREP Communication Skills (PREP-C)*

Project staff developed a measure consisting of 6 items (see also Pilot Study of Study Measures section above) that posed a spousal conflict and asked respondents to choose the best response from a choice of 4 possible answers. Two of the questions dealt with the Take-a-Break technique and four dealt with paraphrasing, a central component of the Speaker-Listener technique.

6) *User Satisfaction/Usability - PREP*

A 26-item questionnaire was developed in-house to elicit participants' feedback on the appeal, clarity, and value of the intervention in three areas: the course content, personal relevance, and the Web site's functionality.

7) *User Satisfaction/Usability - Visitation*

A 24-item questionnaire was developed in-house to elicit participants' feedback on the course's appeal, clarity, and functionality.

Hypotheses

Our evaluation addressed three components of effectiveness of the training modules developed in Phase I: knowledge, communication skills, and program usability. We hypothesized that, controlling for pretest differences, there would be significant improvement for the intervention group on the PREP-K knowledge measure, and the Marriage Communication Skills and PREP Communication Skills measures. A .05 alpha level was used to determine significance in all statistical tests.

We also expected high satisfaction ratings for the intervention from a measure of usability. We set a criterion level for satisfaction with the course at 3.5 (on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is the worst and 5 is the best), because we felt it represented a high, but achievable, standard.

Results

Preliminary Analyses. We began by examining differences between our two experimental groups on all demographic information from the Background Information questionnaire. (Note: Race and ethnicity were the only two variables not examined, as the small number of non-white participants resulted in observed cell counts of less than five, making Chi-Square analysis inappropriate.) We conducted independent samples *t*-tests and/or chi-square analyses on all demographic information from the Background Information questionnaire to detect any systematic differences between the two groups. Using an alpha level of .05 we found no significant differences on any of the remaining background variables. (See Appendix B, Tables 1 and 2 for frequencies and means on the background information items.)

Assumptions of MANCOVA/ANCOVA. Our research design employed a pretest-posttest design with a control group. Because we used random assignment to groups, this experimental design was able to adequately control for all main threats to internal validity (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2001) and allow for more powerful statistical analyses through the use of a covariate.

Originally, we planned to evaluate the effectiveness of our intervention using a multivariate analysis, with all four dependent variables included. However, overlapping variance and unexpected relationships between the dependent measures made the use of a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) questionable (see Appendix B, Table 3, Correlations). Even moderately correlated dependent variables diminish the power of MANOVA, and the unexpected positive correlation between the problem reporting scale of the MCS and the PREP-C measure made the consideration of group comparisons on a linear combination of these measures theoretically implausible. Thus, we elected to use four, separate, univariate analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) to compare group performance on the variables under study, with pretest scores on the respective measures used as covariates. ANCOVA has superior power for detecting differences on single dependent variables within a study.

Given our choice of experimental design, many of the theoretical assumptions of ANCOVA were already met, primarily that we demonstrated an adequate control of sources of extraneous variability. However, before proceeding, we also needed to evaluate the statistical assumptions of this procedure: (a) univariate normality, (b) homogeneity of regression between the covariate and dependent variable, (c) reliability of the covariate(s), and (d) independence of group and covariate. The results of these tests are summarized below.

Using visual analysis of histograms, we found the distributions in pre- and posttest scores on all measures to approximate normality. No significant outliers were found, nor were there any ceiling or floor effects noted. We also used visual analysis of scatterplots to examine linearity of relations between and among the dependent variables and covariates. All scatterplots indicated moderate linear relations, and pretest scores (covariates) were highly correlated with the posttest scores across all measures (Range: $r = .63 - r = .86$, all $p < .01$).

We assessed the reliability of the newly developed measures (PREP-K and PREP-C), our covariates for two of the analyses, using equal-length Spearman Brown coefficients, and found modest evidence for internal consistency (.59 and .41, respectively). Stability of both of these measures was then assessed by examining the correlation between forms for pre- and posttest for the control group. Results were moderate for both measures ($r = .77$ for both PREP-K and PREP-C).

Salvia & Ysseldyke (2007) recommend reliability coefficients at or above .60 for use in group research decisions, however the ANCOVA procedure is robust to violations of the reliability of the covariate provided that the groups are equivalent at pretest. Because the former assumption was met, and there was modest evidence for the first, we began the ANCOVA model selection procedure.

Outcome Analyses. Results for each of the ANCOVA models are presented below, by measure. Because we conducted an analysis using a covariate, we considered multiple models and accepted the most parsimonious. The first model, unequal slopes and unequal intercepts, was abandoned in all four cases, because the differences in slopes across the groups were neither significant nor important (See Appendix B, Table 4, ANCOVA). We found the slopes in each ANCOVA model to be significantly different from zero. We therefore chose to analyze our data using ANCOVA model 2, assuming equal slopes and unequal intercepts.

Outcome Analyses

The main effect of the intervention on PREP-Knowledge was both significant and meaningful, $\eta^2 = .15$ and indicated that scores were, on the average, higher for foster parents who had participated in the intervention (see Appendix B, Table 5 for group means on all measures at posttest, and Table 4 for a summary of the ANCOVA results). Fifteen percent of the variability in posttest scores was due to the effect of the intervention.

Significant treatment effects were found for the Self-Perception subscale of the Marriage Communication Skills measure, but not for the Problem Reporting subscale. Ratings of skills self-perceptions learned in the PREP training were higher for those parents from the intervention group. Approximately seven percent of the variability in posttest scores was due to the effect of the intervention.

Improvement between the groups was also noted on the PREP-C measure, with posttest scores being, on average, higher for those who had completed the intervention.

User Satisfaction.

Our final analyses examined the user satisfaction data. Participants expressed great satisfaction with the training program, not only in their quantitative ratings on the satisfaction questionnaire items and in their responses to the questionnaire's open-ended items, but also in many emails at the end of the study.

Most of the items on the usability questionnaire fell into two general categories: feedback on the course and feedback on the Web site. Using a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), mean scores for all items in both components surpassed our standard of quality for the intervention (originally set at 3.5). To highlight a few of the findings, the mean for the Course Feedback Scale was 4.18. The confidence subscale mean was 4.29. Participants gave the highest rating to the feedback subscale item stating that the "This course taught me communication skills that I can use in my marriage" ($M = 4.37$). Among the confidence items, they gave their highest ratings to the statements that "I have confidence that my partner and I can talk about things constructively" and "I have greater confidence that we will be able to handle stresses that come our way in life" ($M = 4.58$ and 4.45 , respectively). The mean for the four-item Web site feedback scale was 4.39. (See Appendix B, Tables 6a and 6b for means on the individual feedback items and scales.) Several multiple-choice questions asked participants about their use of the personal journal and how much time they spent with the training. (Frequencies for these items are reported in Appendix B, Table 6c.)

Discussion

The development effort in Phase I produced the first two modules of a state-of-the-art multimedia marriage education training program for foster, adoptive, and kinship couples. The online version of the course was adapted specifically to reflect and resonate with the unique circumstances of these resource families. The Phase I product represented an exquisite blending and coordination of PREP's well-established and successful paradigm for marriage education and Northwest Media's expertise in adapting social learning training for media, especially in the areas of parent training and life skills.

Producing the media for the content, exercises, and handouts involved an extensive process of input and review among project team members. All anticipated production milestones were successfully achieved in Phase I. We designed, produced, programmed and tested two foundational modules of the program. The content and look of the course were fully consistent with the quality of programs already available on our training site FosterParentCollege.com and was fully consistent with PREP's approach.

This latest product also represented an evolution in the application of interactive media formats for us. For example, we used in-stream video instead of photo montage for the "talking head" portion of the narrative instruction, which greatly improved the fluidity of the presentation. We also created a number of variations that for finely integrated instruction concepts with modeling and applying them using story scenarios, expert interpretation, and a variety of practice exercises.

The focus group's formative feedback lent strong support to the instructional approach, topic, and interactive delivery format, while providing some key insights that helped clarify and steer the final development of the content in a clear and positive direction; for example, some of the language surrounding conflict in the story scenarios needed to be toned down and the emphasis on preventing problems was clarified throughout. Pilot-testing the measures with a group of resource parents allowed us to calibrate the difficulty level and clarity of individual items for the measures developed in house (Knowledge and PREP Communication Skills).

The study itself produced relatively simple and straightforward results. Parents in the treatment group made significant gains in their knowledge of the PREP content for the first two modules. These parents also showed significant gains in their own perceptions of the communication skills they learned, a critical antecedent for and component of behavioral change. In a brief measure that we constructed on the application of communication skills (Take-A-Break and the Speaker-Listener Technique), parents showed modest gains that did not quite reach significance. However, this may be further evidence that the process of translating knowledge and self-perceptions into applied skills was already beginning. (Note: Although the study design incorporated the use of a module on Visitation and related measures, the analyses were not germane for establishing feasibility for the PREP module and will be used at a later time to report on the efficacy of the Visitation module)

Satisfaction ratings were high in all areas of use, consistent with the previous focus group activity. Users found the presentation and information to be clear, realistic, and relevant.

Even though we anticipated that our strategy to recruit parents via email from our list of subscribers to FosterParentCollege.com would be successful, it far surpassed our highest expectations. Within hours of the announcement, we fulfilled our recruitment goals. In the past, recruiting subjects for our studies via traditional mail, telephone, and agency publications and meetings has been a drawn out and difficult process. The magnitude and swiftness of the response for this project not only gave us an indication of the extreme interest in this topic, but demonstrated the utility of using the Web as a means of connecting with this population.

In summary, we produced two finished training modules on marriage education in Phase I, replete with interactive multimedia instruction, case scenarios, exercises, and printable handouts. We recruited the project sample for the feasibility test in record time and with very low attrition. The study itself demonstrated that resource parents were able to successfully manage

the procedural aspects of the online training and that they significantly improved their knowledge and aspects of their communication skills. Satisfaction with the approach was consistently high.

Appendix A - Phase I Measures

BACKGROUND INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions about yourself.

1. What type of resource parent are you?
 Foster parent Kinship parent Adoptive parent
2. Gender:
 Female Male
3. Age: _____ years
4. Ethnic background: *(check all that apply)*
 Hispanic or Latino Not Hispanic or Latino Unknown
5. Racial background: *(check all that apply)*
 White Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 Black or African American Asian
 American Indian or Alaska Native Other: _____
 Unknown
6. Highest level of school completed:
 Junior High Associate Arts (AA) degree Doctorate (Ph.D.)
 High School / GED Bachelor's (BA/BS) degree
 Some college Master's (MA/MS) degree
7. Length of time as a resource parent: _____ years
8. Number of foster or adoptive children you are currently caring for: _____
9. Are you married now?
 Yes No
10. **IF YES**, how long have you have been married to your current partner: _____ years
11. **IF NO**, are you engaged or planning marriage now?
 Yes No

12. In the last six months have you filed for divorce or legal separation from your current spouse?
 Yes No
13. How many previous marriages have you had? _____
14. If you were married to someone prior to your current spouse, why did that marriage end?
 Death Divorce N/A
15. Are you currently living together with your spouse (that is, do you share the same address)?
 Yes No
16. Did you live together (that is, share the same address) before you got married?
 Yes No
17. **IF YES**, had the two of you already made a specific commitment to marry when you first began living together?
 Yes, we were engaged
 Yes, we were planning marriage, but were not engaged
 No
18. All things considered, how religious or spiritual are you? (*select the number from 1 to 7 that best describes you; "1" = "not at all," "4" = "somewhat," "7" = "very."*)
19. Have you engaged in any couple enrichment or therapy activities in the past year? (for example, relationship workshops, relationship counseling with clergy or therapist, couples groups, reading a book about improving relationships)
 Yes No
20. What is **YOUR** annual personal income? (Do **not** include your spouse's income.)
 Under \$9,999 \$10,000- \$19,999 \$20,000-\$29,999 \$30,000-\$39,999
 \$40,000-\$49,999 \$50,000-\$59,999 \$60,000-\$69,999 Over \$70,000

PREP KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONNAIRE

For each question, click on the answer you think is correct.

1. When taking a break from an argument, it's sometimes appropriate to think about what happened and let yourself worry about what might happen.
True.
False.
2. Putting your spouse down:
 - a. May sometimes be necessary to get past certain issues.
 - b. Never adds positive value to a situation or a marriage.
 - c. Is acceptable only when your partner puts you down.
 - d. Is an effective short-term solution, but can harm a marriage in the long-term.
3. When the chemistry between two people is right, maintaining a successful marriage over the long haul will be easy.
True.
False.
4. Paraphrasing is something the speaker should do to help the listener feel understood.
True.
False.
5. Rules for the Speaker in the Speaker-Listener Technique include:
 - a. Use "I statements" as the speaker.
 - b. Take turns using the floor.
 - c. Give the listener a chance to paraphrase.
 - d. All of the above.
6. Which of the following is NOT an appropriate action when "taking a break" from an argument?
 - a. Recognize that there is a communication problem.
 - b. Leave the room right away, and explain why later.
 - c. Agree with your partner on a time to continue the conversation.
 - d. Do something relaxing.
7. Four basic Communication Danger Signs that cause marital problems are:
 - a. De-escalation, Affirmation, Negative Interpretations, and Withdrawal and Avoidance.
 - b. Escalation, Invalidation, Negative Interpretations, and Withdrawal and Avoidance.
 - c. Intimidation, Affirmation, Escape, and Depression.
 - d. Irritability, Moodiness, Depression, and Anxiety.
8. When a couple is arguing and things are escalating, it's a good idea for one partner to ask the other partner to take a break.
True.
False.

9. One rule for being a good listener is:
 - a. Use the paraphrase as an indirect way to get your own opinion across.
 - b. Don't interrupt the speaker.
 - c. Look interested even if you're not paying close attention.
 - d. All of the above.

10. "Emotional safety" in a marriage means:
 - a. Feeling free to talk openly.
 - b. Never having a disagreement.
 - c. Not ever feeling criticized.
 - d. All of the above.

11. Assuming the worst about your partner's thoughts and motives can best be described as which kind of communication problem?
 - a. Withdrawal.
 - b. Negative Interpretations.
 - c. Escalation.
 - d. Invalidation.

12. When a partner quickly agrees with the other partner just to end the argument, this is a subtle sign of withdrawal.
 - True.
 - False.

13. Living together before marrying usually makes for a more successful marriage.
 - True.
 - False.

14. Taking a brief break when communication starts to heat up is:
 - a. Designed to infuriate your partner.
 - b. A way to cool the argument down.
 - c. Likely to muddle communication.
 - d. All of the above.

15. When one partner shows disrespect for the other's opinions or feelings, it is best described by which type of communication problem?
 - a. Invalidation.
 - b. Negative Interpretations.
 - c. Intimidation.
 - d. Confrontation.

16. When partners trade negative comments that keep getting stronger, they are demonstrating a communication problem best described as "withdrawal."
 - True.
 - False.

17. Negatively interpreting a partner's communication can lead to:
- a. Getting to the bottom of a conflict.
 - b. Seeing what you expect to see.
 - c. Setting some general limits on what you will or won't discuss.
 - d. All the above.
18. It's more important to manage negative emotions in a marriage when your partner is upset than when you are upset.
- True.
 - False.
19. Research suggests that negative patterns predict how a marriage turns out more than positive patterns.
- True.
 - False.
20. When partners start to argue, there are rules to follow to allow the couple to talk without fighting.
- True.
 - False.

VISITATION KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONNAIRE

For each question, click on the answer you think is correct.

1. What can a foster parent do to help a foster child feel calm during visits?
 - a. Keep asking her during the visit if she is nervous or scared.
 - b. Encourage her to take an object that makes her feel calm and strong.
 - c. Tell her beforehand that the birth parents might not show up again.
 - d. Make it clear to her that you do not approve of the birth parent's life-style.

2. Which is NOT a good way to handle difficult behaviors after a visit?
 - a. Remind yourself that it has nothing to do with you personally.
 - b. Track how long it takes for your child to settle down after returning.
 - c. Get your foster child immediately involved in a large family party or activity.
 - d. Try to learn what your foster youth needs after a visit to help them transition back to your home.

3. Visits between foster youth and their birth parents are encouraged because such visits can provide a reassuring, safe setting to ease the worries they have about each other.
True
False

4. If birth parents don't show for a visit, foster parents should take control and insure that they show for the next visit.
True
False

5. What safety measure can be taken when a birth parent has a substance abuse problem?
 - a. Require the birth parent to check in with the child welfare worker prior to the visit.
 - b. Have the visits supervised.
 - c. Require the birth parent to obtain clean drug screens prior to visits.
 - d. All of the above

6. Foster parents of younger children can address inconsistent visits by:
 - a. Scheduling meetings with the birth parents to discuss the problem.
 - b. Telephoning the birth parents the day before the scheduled visit.
 - c. Taking care of all the details so the parents' true motivation is no longer an issue.
 - d. Delay mentioning the visit to the child until shortly before it's ready to begin.

7. With shared parenting, birth parents and siblings usually move into the same foster home with the foster child.
True
False

8. After visits, children may feel being let down, anger, disappointment, or grief and loss.
True
False

9. How should foster parents help a child cope with the stress of a visit?
 - a. Have an open-ended talk with the child to find out the child's needs.
 - b. Avoid talking about the child's stress.
 - c. Give the child consequences for acting out.
 - d. Talk to the birth parents about it.

10. Which of the following is NOT a role of foster parents during the visitation process?
 - a. Explaining to the child when and where a visit will occur.
 - b. Transporting the child to the visit.
 - c. Making the final decision about what a visit should be like.
 - d. Assisting the child with his or her feelings about the visit.

11. Which is a likely outcome for a child during a visit if the child had been abused by the birth parent?
 - a. The child may be fearful during the visit.
 - b. The child may want to see the parent.
 - c. The child may feel emotionally overwhelmed.
 - d. All of the above

12. If alcohol abuse on the part of the birth parent is a risk during visits, which of the following is false?
 - a. A safety issue exists for the child and safety measures should be put in place.
 - b. The foster parent should not make excuses to the child about the birth parent's behavior.
 - c. There is nothing foster parents can do to protect the child during visits with birth parents.
 - d. The foster parent can empathize with the birth parent.

13. If a child says he wants to go home, but he is backsliding behaviorally, he actually may be trying to sabotage a return to his birth home.
True
False

14. If your foster child is involved with a therapist:
 - a. Keep your input to the therapist to a minimum.
 - b. Schedule appointments for the child right after visits with their birth parents.
 - c. Inform the child that you expect them to work on their problems with the therapist.
 - d. Ask the child what he or she discussed with the therapist after each appointment.

15. What is the appropriate role for supervisors during visits?
 - a. Let the birth parents do the parenting.
 - b. Use the visit as an opportunity to demonstrate proper parenting to the birth parents.
 - c. Use the visit to discuss parenting with the birth parents.
 - d. Encourage the birth parents to vent their frustrations and fears.

16. In general, youth express their feelings:
 - a. By talking to their birth parent.
 - b. By acting out through their behavior.
 - c. By talking to their foster parent.
 - d. By writing about them.

17. Foster parents can best prepare a child for a visit by helping them:
- Organize things they want to show their birth parents such as school papers.
 - Figure out what they want to ask their birth parents.
 - Make the site safe, predictable and comfortable.
 - All of the above.
18. Ideally, discussions about safety measures should include the child and the child's case worker.
- True.
False.
19. Behaviors such as bed-wetting, defiance, acting out and chemical usage:
- Should be punished.
 - Are ways a child copes with pre-visit stress.
 - Are signs that visits with the birth parents are not beneficial to the child.
 - Are not normal for a child in these circumstances.
20. For youth who will not be returning to their parents, court-ordered visitations are important in that they provide an opportunity for children and birth parents to come to terms with their loss.
- True
False

MARRIAGE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Read each of the following statements and click the answer that best describes your view.

	Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	Strongly Agree
1. I believe we can handle whatever conflicts will come up in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
2. We have the skills a couple needs to make a marriage last.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When discussing issues, I re-state in my own words what my partner says in order to make sure I understand him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When our talks begin to get out of hand, we agree to stop them and talk later.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I interrupt my partner when we are arguing.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When discussing a problem, we try to focus on that problem rather than going into other problem areas.	1	2	3	4	5
7. When discussing issues, I allow my partner to finish talking before I respond.	1	2	3	4	5
8. When discussions threaten to boil over, we stop them and take a time out.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel we can talk calmly about anything.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel I can really open up to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
		Almost Never	Once in Awhile	Frequently	
11. Little arguments become ugly fights with blaming, put-downs, name-calling, or bringing up past hurts.	1	2	3		
12. My partner criticizes my opinions, feelings, or desires.	1	2	3		
13. My partner seems to view my words or actions more negatively than I mean them to be.	1	2	3		

	Almost Never	Once in Awhile	Frequently
14. When we have a problem to solve, it is like we are on opposite teams.	1	2	3
15. When we talk and I get angry, I am tempted to lash out.	1	2	3
16. When we argue, one of us withdraws...that is, doesn't want to talk about it anymore; or leaves the scene.	1	2	3
17. I insult or swear at my partner.	1	2	3
18. My partner insults or swears at me.	1	2	3
19. I shout or yell at my partner.	1	2	3
20. My partner shouts or yells at me.	1	2	3

PREP COMMUNICATION SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE

Read each scene and circle which response you feel would be the best.

Scene #1

Duncan and Cathy are foster parents.

- Duncan: The caseworker just called. I told her Friday's okay for the home visit.
Cathy: Oh no, Jamie's got a doctor's appointment at the same time.
Duncan: That's news to me. You call the caseworker back and cancel!
Cathy: I don't take orders. It's your mess... you clean it!

What would be the best response for Duncan (circle one)?

- a) Let's take a break. Can we talk about this in a half hour?
- b) Let's stop, ok?
- c) Please, I really can't do it now.
- d) Enough for now. You're too angry.

Scene #2

Ricardo and Carmela are adoptive parents.

- Ricardo: Can't you get little Raffi to stop crying? It's driving me crazy. Do I have to get up every time and make a scene before you'll do something? I can't think when that kid cries like that.

What would be the best response for Carmela (circle one)?

- a) I'll calm him down, but not until you ask nicely.
- b) It seems Raffi's crying is really bothering you, and you want me to deal with it now.
- c) Maybe you could help by seeing what's bothering him.
- d) You're just going to have to get used to it.

Scene #3

Belinda and Zach are kinship parents.

- Belinda: I'm missing \$10 from my wallet again.
Zach: Don't look at me.
Belinda: I'm not, you idiot. I'm thinking it's Jen.
Zach: Did you ever think that maybe you spent it?
Belinda: Drop dead!

What would be the best response for Zach (circle one)?

- a) Why don't you take a break and think about how nasty you just were to me.
- b) If you can't talk nicely to me, I am out of here.
- c) I wish you would just calm down.
- d) Let's take a stop action. Can we talk about this in 15 minutes?

Scene #4

Margaret and Matt are foster parents.

Margaret: I just can't stand the way Wendi makes eyes at you. I mean I know she's only 14, but wow... And you just let her do it. Meanwhile, she gives me grief and ignores me.

What would be the best response for Matt (circle one)?

- a) I hear you.
- b) So you think Wendi's coming on to me and that I'm letting her get away with it.
- c) I know you think Wendi is coming on to me.
- d) How about if you go calm down and we talk later?

Scene #5

Sofie and Steve are foster parents.

Sofie: I just got a call from Children's Services and Bobby's birth parents are gonna be there for the visit. They were so mean last time.

Steve: Oh c'mon! Big deal. Please... don't go making trouble where there isn't. Remember how upset Bobby was last time after you spoke out.

What would be the best response for Sofie (circle one)?

- a) Let's call Children's Services and tell them this is not a good idea at this point.
- b) So you would like me to be nice to them for Bobby's sake.
- c) I think we have to be more realistic about this.
- d) I really wish you would stop accusing me.

Scene #6

Alice and Todd are foster parents.

Alice: Hey, I don't think it's fair that you get to kick back and watch TV when you get home from work and while I have to put it in high gear with getting the kids cleaned up, putting things away, and preparing dinner.

Todd: I know, but I'd like to relax for awhile.

Alice: I'm at my wits' end. I need help.

What would be the best response for Todd (circle one)?

- a) Didn't you get enough sleep?
- b) I can use a lot of help, too.
- c) I'm sorry, I can't help right now.
- d) Sounds like you're tired too and need my help with the kids before dinner. Is that it?

PREP USER SATISFACTION

*Read each of the following statements and click how much you agree or disagree with it.
"1" means strongly disagree and "5" means strongly agree.*

Feedback about the course

1. This course gave me useful background information about marital issues especially for resource parents.
2. This course helped me to better understand communication problems in my marriage.
3. This course taught me communication skills that I can use in my marriage.
4. The examples and stories used in the presentation were realistic.
5. The instructional exercises were helpful.
6. The printouts were helpful.
7. The online instruction was better than other types of training I have received.
8. I would recommend this course to other resource parents.
9. I would like to receive more training on foster, adoptive, and kinship care issues.
10. Overall, I found this was valuable training.
11. I know how to handle relationship conflicts better than I did before.
12. I have training that will help me make my marriage better.
13. I have confidence that my partner and I can talk about things constructively.
14. I think my partner and I will work more as a team.
15. I have greater confidence that we will be able to handle stresses that come our way in life.
16. Did you use the personal journal provided along with the course?
 Yes No
17. IF YES, did you find it helpful?
 Very helpful Kind of helpful Not helpful
18. What aspect of the course did you find most helpful? *(Type your comment)*
19. What aspect of the course did you find least helpful? *(Type your comment)*

*Read each of the following statements and click how much you agree or disagree with it;
“1” means strongly disagree and “5” means strongly agree.*

Feedback about the Web site

20. I would use a Web site like this frequently.

21. The presentation was easy to follow.

22. I was able to navigate the Web site easily.

23. I did experience technical problems with the Web site.

24. How much time did you spend with the training?

Less than 1 hour 1 to 2 hours 2 to 3 hours 3 hours or more

25. What difficulties did you have using the Web site? *(Type your comment)*

26. Do you have any comments or suggestions to the producers about this project? *(Type your comment)*

VISITATION COURSE – USER SATISFACTION

*Please read each of the following statements and click how much you agree or disagree with it.
“1” means strongly disagree and “5” means strongly agree.*

Feedback about the course

1. This course helped me understand the importance and impact of visits with birth parents.
2. This course helped me understand what the different issues are before, during, and after visits.
3. This course helped me learn strategies for setting up successful visits and how to handle difficult emotions and situations concerning visits.
4. The visual stories were realistic.
5. The online instruction was better than other types of training I have received.
6. I would recommend this course to other parents.
7. I would like to receive more training on foster, adoptive, and kinship care issues.
8. Overall, I found this was valuable training.
9. Did you use the personal journal provided along with the course?
 Yes No
10. IF YES, did you find it helpful?
 Very helpful Kind of helpful Not helpful
11. What aspect of the course did you find most helpful? *(Type your comment)*
12. What aspect of the course did you find least helpful? *(Type your comment)*

Feedback about the Web site

13. I would use a Web site like this frequently.
14. I found the Web site too complicated.
15. I thought the Web site was easy to use.
16. I would need technical support to use a Web site like this.
17. I thought the different segments and handouts for the course were well integrated.
18. I found the Web site had too many inconsistencies.

19. I think most people would learn to use this Web site very quickly.

20. I found it difficult to get around the Web site.

21. I felt confident using the Web site.

Please follow the directions for answering each of the following.

22. How much time did you spend with the training? (*Check one*)

Less than 1 hour 1 to 2 hours 2 to 3 hours 3 hours or more

23. What difficulties did you have using the Web site? (*Type your comment*)

24. Do you have any comments or suggestions to the producers about this project? (*Type your comment*)

Appendix B – Phase I Tables

Table 1

Sample Demographics - Part 1

Item	Control Group		Intervention Group		Total Sample	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>
Type of Resource Parent						
Foster Parent	75.7	28	57.9	22	66.7	50
Adoptive Parent	24.3	9	42.1	16	33.3	25
Gender						
Female	48.6	18	52.6	20	50.7	38
Male	51.4	19	47.4	18	49.3	37
Ethnic Background						
Hispanic or Latino	0.0	0	5.3	2	2.7	2
Not Hispanic or Latino	97.3	36	84.2	32	90.7	68
Unknown or Not Reported	2.7	1	10.5	4	6.7	5
Racial Background						
White	100.	37	81.6	31	90.7	68
Asian	0.0	0	2.6	1	1.3	1
Other	0.0	0	5.3	2	2.7	2
Multiracial	0.0	0	2.6	3	4.0	3
Unknown	0.0	0	7.9	1	1.3	1
Highest Level of School Completed						
High School/GED	16.2	6	18.4	7	17.3	13
Some College	35.1	13	42.1	16	38.7	29
Associate Arts (AA) Degree	16.2	6	13.2	5	14.7	11
Bachelor's (BA/BS) Degree	18.9	7	18.4	7	18.7	14
Master's (MA/MS) Degree	10.8	4	7.9	3	9.3	7
Doctorate (Ph.D.)	2.7	1	0.0	0	1.3	1
Married Now?						
Yes	97.3	36	97.4	37	97.3	73
No	2.7	1	2.6	1	2.7	2
If not married, engaged or planning marriage now?						
Yes	100.	1	0.0	0	50.0	1
No	0.0	0	100.	1	50.0	1

Table 1, *continued**Sample Demographics - Part 1*

Item	Control Group		Intervention Group		Total Sample	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>
Filed for divorce or separation in last 6 months?						
No	100.	37	100.	38	100.0	75
If previously married, why did that marriage end?						
Death	2.7	1	7.9	3	5.3	4
Divorce	45.9	17	39.5	15	42.7	32
N/A	51.4	19	52.6	20	52.0	39
Currently living with spouse?						
Yes	100.	37	100.	38	100.	75
Lived together before marriage?						
Yes	51.4	19	63.2	24	57.3	43
No	48.6	18	36.8	14	42.7	32
If yes, had you committed to marriage when first lived together?						
Yes, we were engaged	47.4	9	58.3	14	53.5	23
Yes, planning marriage but not engaged	21.1	4	29.2	7	25.6	11
No	31.6	6	12.5	3	20.9	9
Any couple enrichment or therapy activities in past year?						
Yes	21.6	8	26.3	10	24.0	18
No	78.4	29	73.7	28	76.0	57
Your annual personal income (not including spouse's)?						
Under \$9,999	18.9	7	15.8	6	17.3	13
\$10,000 - \$19,999	8.1	3	5.3	2	6.7	5
\$20,000 - \$29,999	8.1	3	7.9	3	8.0	6
\$30,000 - \$39,999	16.2	6	26.3	10	21.3	16
\$40,000 - \$49,999	16.2	6	5.3	2	10.7	8
\$50,000 - \$59,999	10.8	4	13.2	5	12.0	9
\$60,000 - \$69,999	5.4	2	10.5	4	8.0	6
Over \$70,000	16.2	6	15.8	6	16.0	12

Note. Group and total percentages are based on the valid number of cases for each variable. Independent samples *t*-tests and/or chi-square analyses were conducted on all demographic variables except ethnicity and race to detect any systematic differences between groups. The small numbers of Hispanic and non-White subjects resulted in observed cell counts of less than five, making chi-square analysis inappropriate for ethnicity and race. Using an alpha level of .05 we found no significant differences between groups on any of the other background variables.

Table 2

Sample Demographics - Part 2

Item	Control Group		Intervention Group		Total Sample	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age (in years)	43.27	9.37	45.13	10.03	44.21	9.69
Years a resource parent	5.00	6.25	3.95	2.50	4.47	4.73
Number of foster or adoptive children currently caring for	2.41	2.14	2.08	1.26	2.24	1.75
If married, years married to current partner	14.11	7.79	14.84	9.68	14.48	8.74
Number of previous marriages	0.70	0.812	0.87	1.10	0.79	0.96
On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very), how religious or spiritual are you?	5.41	1.54	5.42	1.57	5.41	1.54

Note. Group and total means are based on the valid number of cases for each variable.

Table 3

Correlations between Dependent Variables at Posttest

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. PREP-K	_____	.38**	-.14	.20	.71**	.45**	-.17	.20
2. PREP-C		_____	-.22	.25*	.30**	.63**	-.21	.18
3. MC-Sk			_____	-.71**	-.12	-.16	.69**	-.64**
4. MC-PR				_____	.17	.10	-.54**	.86**
5. PREP-K					_____	.54**	-.09	.20
6. PREP-C						_____	-.19	.12
7. MC-Sk							_____	-.61**
8. MC-PR								_____

Note. Pretest scores are listed first in the table. PREP-K = PREP Knowledge; PREP-C = PREP Communication Skills; MC-Sk = Marriage Communication Skills – Perception Scale; MC-PR = Marriage Communication – Problem Reporting Scale.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 4

Results of Equal Slopes and Unequal Intercepts ANCOVA for Outcome Measures

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	η^2	<i>P</i>
Group * PREP-K(pre)	1, 71	2.03	.03	.16
Group – PREP-K ^a	1, 72	12.20**	.15	<.00
Group * PREP-C(pre)	1, 71	4.13	.06	.05
Group – PREP-C ^a	1, 72	2.44	.03	.12
Group * MC-Sk(pre)	1, 71	1.30	.02	.26
Group – MC-Sk ^a	1, 72	5.20*	.07	.03
Group * MC-PR(pre)	1, 71	3.14	.04	.08
Group – MC-PR ^a	1, 72	0.65	.01	.43

^a ANCOVA Model 2 is used, assuming equal slopes and unequal intercepts.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .00$.

Table 5

Mean Performance on Dependent Measures at Posttest

Scale	Intervention Group			Control Group		
	<i>M</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>n</i>
PREP-K ^a	.83*	.01	38	.77*	.01	37
PREP-C ^b	.86*	.02	38	.81*	.02	37
MC-Sk	4.18	.06	38	3.97	.07	37
MC-PR	1.33	.03	38	1.30	.03	37

Note. Estimated means are reported.

* Difference is significant at $p < .00$.

^a PREP-K scores are reported as the percentage of items correct out of all questions.

^b PREP-C scores are reported as the percentage of items correct out of all case study questions.

Table 6a

User Satisfaction – PREP Course

Means and Standard Deviations for Course Feedback Items and Scale

On a 5-point scale, where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*, please rate how much you agree or disagree with each statement about the course.

Course Feedback Item:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
This course gave me useful background information about marital issues especially for resource parents.	4.16	0.92	38
This course helped me to better understand communication problems in my marriage.	4.05	1.23	38
This course taught me communication skills that I can use in my marriage.	4.37	0.88	38
The examples and stories used in the presentation were realistic.	3.82	1.27	38
The instructional exercises were helpful.	4.21	0.88	38
The printouts were helpful.	3.95	0.93	38
The online instruction was better than other types of training I have received.	3.92	1.10	38
I would recommend this course to other resource parents.	4.29	1.04	38
I would like to receive more training on foster, adoptive, and kinship care issues.	4.18	0.93	38
Overall, I found this was valuable training.	4.29	1.04	38
I know how to handle relationship conflicts better than I did before.	4.03	1.26	38
I have training that will help me make my marriage better.	4.08	1.19	38
I have confidence that my partner and I can talk about things constructively.	4.58	0.64	38
I think my partner and I will work more as a team.	4.34	0.78	38
I have greater confidence that we will be able to handle stresses that come our way in life.	4.45	0.80	38
Course Feedback Scale (mean of all 15 items above)	4.18	0.77	38
Feedback Subscale (mean of first 8 items above)	4.10	0.82	38
Confidence Subscale (mean of last 5 items above)	4.29	0.80	38

Table 6b

User Satisfaction – PREP Course

Means and Standard Deviations for Web Site Feedback Items and Scale

On a 5-point scale, where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*, please rate how much you agree or disagree with each statement about the Web site.

Web Site Feedback Item:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
I would use a Web site like this frequently.	4.03	1.08	38
The presentation was easy to follow.	4.68	0.53	38
I was able to navigate the Web site easily.	4.71	0.57	38
*I did experience technical problems with the Web site.	4.16	1.35	38
Web Site Feedback Scale (mean of 4 items above)	4.39	0.54	38

*Scoring on this item was reversed.

Table 6c

Frequencies – Use of Personal Journal and Time Spent on PREP Course

Item	Total Treatment Group	
	%	<i>N</i>
Did you use the personal journal provided along with the course?		
Yes	18.4	7
No	81.6	31
IF YES, did you find it helpful?		
Very helpful	28.6	2
Kind of helpful	57.1	4
Not helpful	14.3	1
How much time did you spend with the training?		
Less than 1 hour	2.6	1
1 to 2 hours	5.3	2
2 to 3 hours	65.8	25
3 hours or more	26.3	10