

Building a Bridge to Connect Marital Counseling Models and CPS

An Executive Summary of Martin's 1999 Master's Project

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Introduction

Statistics validate that marital relationships in the U.S are in trouble. A number of researchers (Baucom & Epstein, 1990; D'Zurilla & Goldfried, 1971; Fitzpatrick, 1988; Gottman, 1994, 1998; Jacobsen, 1984; Hahlweg, Baucom & Markman, 1988; Lloyd, 1990; Markman, Floyd, Stanley, & Storaasli, 1988; Pasch & Bradbury, 1998; Ruben, 1983; Stanley, Markman, & Blumberg, 1994) have identified problem-solving skills as critical for a successful marriage. Marriage therapists often give couples a problem-solving situation to work on so the therapist can observe and analyze the couples' behaviors.

Pertinent Background/Content

Martin noted that models used in marriage counseling primary purpose was to enhance couples' relationship skills by increasing their ability to problem solve to improve the marriage. Partners tended to respond positively toward their mates' effort to compromise and resolve issues.

Alex Osborn (1993), the founding father of Creative Problem Solving, discussed personal problem-solving and marital issues in his 1953 text *Applied Imagination* and said, in summary, "Married or single, active use of imagination [creativity] can enable everyone to get more out of life." (p. 394).

"There is little doubt that problem solving is an important skill for dyads in intimate personal relationships." (p. 3). However, there are numerous problem-solving models

used in marriage counseling with disadvantages and advantages. **The identification or development of an enhanced problem-solving process would be well used.** This study looked at the CPS model from creative studies and models from the field of marital therapy to identify opportunities for improvement.

“Martin (1997) identified several marital problem-solving models in a review of the literature and compared them, in summary, to the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) model. While some similarities were identified, those models appear to be based on pre-1971 and 1980 versions of CPS and do not reflect the range of tools and the structure of the current model”. (p. 2). He thought it “useful to explore what aspects of current versions of CPS [could] be incorporated into marital problem-solving models.” (p.2) This project examined four questions and made recommendations for ways to use CPS to enhance current methods of marital problem solving.

Questions that Guided the Study

1. In what ways are marital problem-solving models similar and dissimilar to the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) model?
2. What are the contingencies surrounding the use of marital problem-solving models and how do they compare to those of CPS?
3. What are the implications of the differences in structure and contingencies between marital problem-solving models and CPS?
4. In what ways might the marital problem-solving models be enhanced by the incorporation of elements of CPS?

Method of Analysis

Martin conducted literature searches to identify problem-solving models being used in the marital counseling field. His criteria for including a model in his study were the strength and number of citations, and usage for pre-marital and married couples for preventative and therapeutic counseling. He also used personal resources acquired during his training as a PREP presenter in 1997 that gave him a more in depth understanding of that model.

Process Mapping was used to compare each model with CPS, which was chosen as the benchmark model because of its complexity. "Process Mapping as a technique for process analysis and diagnosis in operations management (Osborn, C., 1996) consists of three phases and ten activities. This process was adapted and modified for use in this study. The original and adapted processes are outlined in Table 3." (p. 13).

Table 1. Process Mapping method outlines.

Process Mapping (Osborn, 1996)	Process Mapping as adapted for this study
1) Process Representation	1) Process Representation
a) Context-setting	a) Context-setting
b) Process decomposition	b) Process decomposition
2) Process Diagnosis	2) Process Diagnosis
a) Process specialization	a) Process specialization (identify function and purpose)
b) Analysis of explicit dependencies	
c) Dependency management analysis	b) Identify key contingencies
d) Trade-off analysis	
3) Process Innovation	3) Process Innovation
a) Identify implicit dependencies	a) Identify differences to CPS
b) Identify new coordination strategies	
c) Trade-off analysis	b) Trade-off analysis
d) Process redesign	c) Process recommendations

Table 2. Criteria for Process Innovation Analysis

Criteria	Points for consideration
1. Can the model be taught in an acceptable amount of time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time required for training. (This may be a function of the complexity, number of elements, and clarity.
2. Is the model easy enough to use that it might be used effectively for some period of time after training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relative complexity • Clarity of directions • Expected personal comfort during use
3. Is the model effective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence in the literature that the efficacy of the model has been established for dyadic relationship problem solving.

"Process Innovation was used to guide the examination of the contingencies around each model. (p. 14). Martin's paper is an examination of the first two criteria.

Martin identified five models but selected only two, CBMT and PREP, for an in-depth comparative analysis to CPS. CBMT was selected because of availability of information and its similarities to other behavioral models. "The PREP model was chosen based on the well-documented use and efficacy of PREP as a whole." (p. 16).

There are detailed charts and tables describing the steps of each model and the similarities and differences between CPS and CBMT, and CPS and PREP. The tables of advantages and disadvantages (trade-offs) were too lengthy to include in this summary but well worth the time to read the entire project for the in-depth analyses and explanations for each model.

Findings

1. In what ways are marital problem-solving models similar and dissimilar to the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) model?

SIMILARITIES: The subject models were intended to solve problems, had guidelines and structure, used divergent and convergent tools, and roots were from the early versions of problem solving work of Osborn and Parnes.

DISSIMILARITIES: CPS was used for varied forms of problem solving while CBMT and PREP exclusive use was for interpersonal problems in a dyad. CBMT and PREP were less complex with fewer steps than CPS and only could be used in a linear manner whereas CPS had the flexibility to be entered at different stages depending on the need of the user(s).

2. What are the contingencies surrounding the use of marital problem-solving models and how do they compare to those of CPS?

SIMILARITIES: All models required some degree of training and could be used individually or facilitated by someone else.

DISSIMILARITIES: Much more training was required for CPS than for CBMT or PREP. The CBMT trainer was involved in content while the CPS facilitator was discouraged from becoming involved in content. Communications guidelines and methods were necessary for the success of CBMT and PREP while structured communication was not a part of CPS. CBMT and PREP were found to be less thorough than CPS.

3. What are the implications of the differences in structure and contingencies between marital problem-solving models and CPS?

The simplicity of CBMT and PREP appeared to be easier to teach and learned but in reality left room for misunderstanding and misapplication.

4. In what ways might the marital problem-solving models be enhanced by the incorporation of elements of CPS?

Incorporation of CPS tools and invitational stems were suggested for CBMT and PREP models.

Summary and Conclusions

Martin concluded that the ideal model, one that was easy to teach and learn, and can be used in just about any conflict situation, did not exist. A one-size fit all model would probably not be developed. The author proposed developing a better model by creating a hybrid model based on the PREP and CPS models. "The ideal dyadic relationship problem solving model would be one that was easy to teach, easy to learn, readily used in any context no matter how emotionally charged, and would produce satisfactory results." (p. 44).

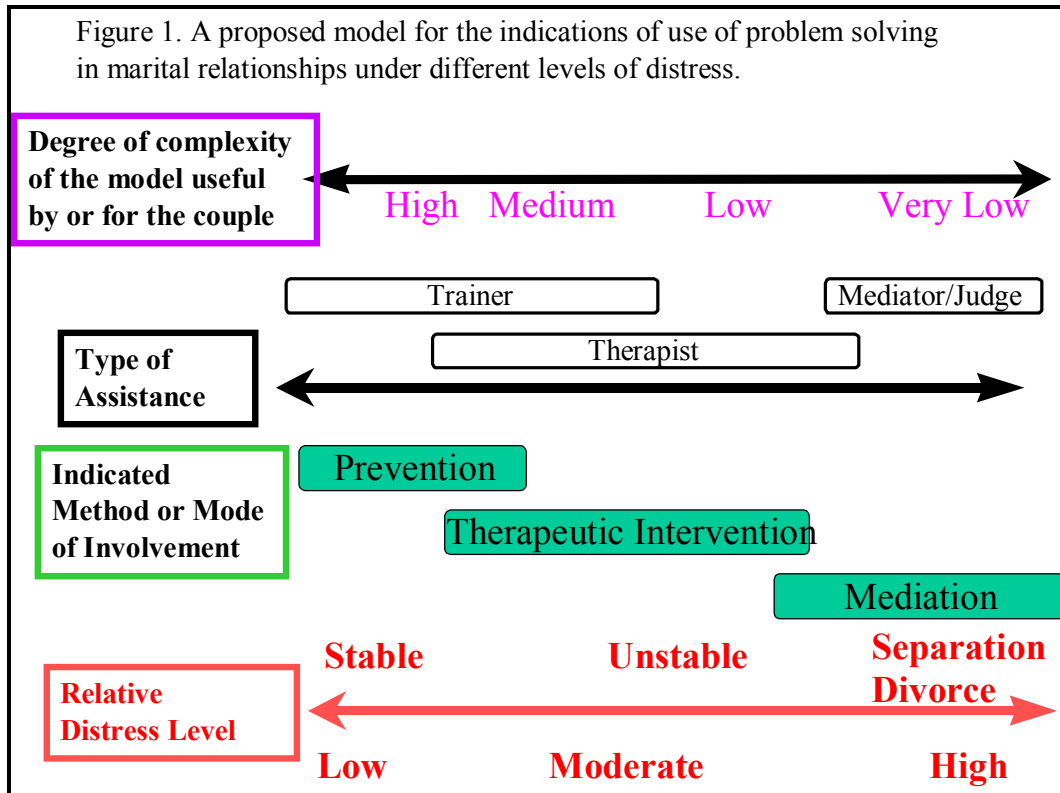
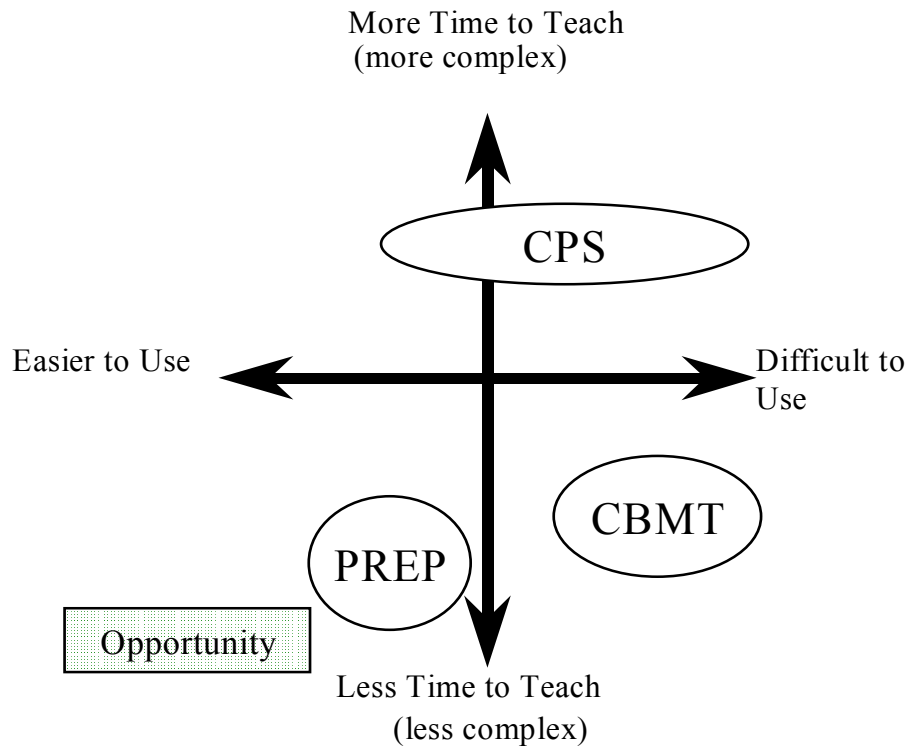


Figure 2. Relative ease of instruction and ease of effective use



"In search of the Opportunity model (see lower left quadrant of Figure 2.), it is recommended that a new hybrid model be developed based primarily on the PREP and CPS models. It would substantially retain the simplicity and linear flow of the PREP model while adding select tools, guidelines, stems, and methods from the current CPS model to enhance its performance without sacrificing its ease of instruction, ease of use, and efficacy." (p. 46 -47).

Martin's References

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