

# Replacing Feminist Theory with Conflict Theory to address domestic violence within a more inclusive and holistic environment.

Adam J. A. Smith  
B.Soc.Soc  
30/01/2018

**Abstract:** *The domestic violence industry in western society has been guided exclusively by feminist ideology since its inception over 40 years ago. There is a real danger that this singular approach to the prevention of intimate partner violence may be limited in its capacity to assist victims effectively. With feminist advocates controlling the narrative around domestic violence they can ensure that their male counterparts receive no access to victim services, whilst simultaneously limiting female perpetrators access to programs that may improve their circumstances. Academic research indicates that there is a much broader causation to domestic violence than the proffered power and control theory and critics of the current gendered narrative point out a concerted effort by feminists to stop alternative solutions to intimate partner violence from gaining traction with wider society. By removing the feminist lens from the domestic violence industry, a plethora of alternative solutions to domestic violence can be explored and a non gendered, egalitarian approach to servicing could be implemented.*

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, Duluth, Feminism, Intimate partner violence

Domestic violence in Australia affects many members of society and most people will have encountered it at some point in their lives; either through personal experience, social and business connections or through mainstream media. This essay will explore how the domestic violence (DV) sector in western society has been influenced by feminist theory and how this theory has impacted the wider perceptions of intimate partner violence (IPV), both terms, DV and IPV will be used

interchangeably throughout the essay. The paper will then examine the findings to determine which methods are used to perpetuate a narrative of gendered violence in the home. In addition, it will argue that the feminist approaches to domestic violence interventions are harming the ability to ameliorate intimate partner violence. Once the current limitations of the feminist theory approach are identified, this paper will then explore the benefits which would present themselves if society were to adopt a conflict theory approach to intimate partner violence; and how this substitution of theoretical lenses could promote deeper discussions around IPV whilst encouraging a more diverse range of solutions to the problem.

During the past 40 years, feminist theory has dominated the domestic violence (DV) sector in western society and has been the major driving force behind reforms for reducing violence in the home (Houston 2017 p.217, Rizza 2009 p.130). Within this timeframe, the subject of intimate partner violence has been coaxed from the privacy of the family home and into the public sphere (Rizza 2009 p.127). Social theorists recognise that this change in the society's perception of DV has been largely due to the accomplishments of feminism and should be applauded (Houston 2017 p.219). With feminist theory spearheading the drive to criminalize violence within the home, the feminist movement has also framed intimate partner violence as the result of patriarchal oppression (Houston 2017 p.221). In applying feminist theory in this way, feminism has allowed for the entire expostulation of DV to be allotted exclusively to men (Houston 2014 p.217). This assertion has effectively allowed for other influencing factors such as gender (female), financial or emotional stress, culture, class and substance abuse to be ignored in cases of IPV (Mitchell 2011 p.6, Haselschwerdt, Hardesty & Hans 2011 p.1696).

In the 1970s, the newly formed DV sector saw the opening of the world's first battered women's shelters in Chiswick, U.K under the guidance of Erin Pizzey (Pizzey 2009 p.53, Pizzey 2014, Steel 1998

p.37), these refuges provided a place of safety for women and children escaping violent relationships. (Rizza 2009 p.127). However, within a short period of time, shelter volunteers recognized that many of these women would routinely return to their violent spouses (Rizza p.127). It was in response to this phenomenon that the first perpetrator programs were developed under the auspices of feminist theory which declared that “men need to control women” (Rizza 2009 p.127, Graham-Kevan 2007 p.214). A decade later in 1981, with the aid of Ellen Pence and Michael Paymar, the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) in Minnesota was tasked with the development of a more structured approach to modifying the behaviours of violent men (Gondolf 2010 p. 992). The result of their work would be christened the Duluth Model, named after the town in which the program was developed (Rizza 2009 p.127). This approach to domestic violence intervention would become the most commonly used program in the western world (Sanow 2003 p.4) and would eventually span over 57 countries (White Ribbon Australia 2018). This program was based exclusively on the dichotomous belief that men perpetrated domestic violence for only two reasons; power and control (Graham-Kevan 2007 p.214). The program would utilise a four-pronged approach in its delivery, consisting of perpetrator programs to prevent future assaults, lobbying for greater criminal interventions, aiding female victims, and working with courts, law enforcement and advocacy programs to ensure the integration of the Duluth doctrine into mainstream society (Graham-Kevan 2007 p.214). It was believed that this methodical tactic for battling DV would push back at the patriarchy with its psychotherapeutic feminist approach (Rizza 2009 p.127). The Duluth model succeeded in many aspects of its approach, by bringing together community organisations, law enforcement and the courts while also succeeding in its integration of domestic violence into the criminal system (Sanow 2009 p.135). However, the model did fail in its effort to re-educate violent men around their anomalous desire for power and control and the program resulted in little reduction in recidivism rates (Sanow 2003 p.4). This less than ideal outcome in re-education was most likely due to the programs oversimplification of the causes behind IPV (Rizza 2009 p. 126) and future research would indicate that there was a higher chance of decreasing the rates of violence

against women if society instead encouraged the patriarchal tenets of western chivalric values that the Duluth model was fighting so hard to abolish (Graham-Kevan 2007 p.215). Rizza (Rizza 2009 p.129) asserts that the Duluth model, despite overlooking mutual partner violence and being unsupported by scientific or empirical evidence was still widely implemented throughout Australia.

Violence within the home continues to hold media attention throughout western society with governments allocating millions of dollars in funding each year to address this issue. In Australia alone, the government has recently pledged support for this sector to the tune of \$1.73 billion over the 5-year period between 2015 and 2020 (Brandis 2017 p.28). As violence in the home gains public attention, current government funding is being complemented by ever increasing private donations. In 2016 four major Australian domestic violence awareness campaigns; The Luke Batty Foundation, ANROWS, Our Watch, and White Ribbon Australia received a total of \$16,862,668 to raise awareness of domestic violence against women in Australia; of which only \$1.9 million was utilised in awareness campaigning costs and the remaining \$15 million dollar balance was absorbed as company expenses (Edwards & Ward-Ambler, 2016) (Baker, 2016) (Thornton, 2016) (Weston, 2016). White Ribbon is the most prominent of these campaigns and originated in Canada after the shooting deaths of 14 women in 1989 during a terrorist attack at École Polytechnique by a young Muslim student named Ghamii Gharbi (Chun 1999 p.112). The emerging campaign has received overwhelming support from the government since its introduction here in Australia (Seymour 2017 p.1). White Ribbon Australia (WRA) utilises feminist theory under the Duluth model and promotes the ideology that violence in the home is the result of gender inequality, while advocating that violence is a method of control that men 'choose to use' in their relationships to maintain dominance over women (Seymour 2017 p.5, Houston 2014 p.245). Indeed, WRA Chief Executive Officer Libby Davies has publicly stated "We stop violence at the source, and the source is men" (Davies 2016). White Ribbon utilises its community engagement strategies by focussing its awareness campaigns primarily on middle to upper class women in an approach that could be

described as “too white and too polite” (Seymour 2017 p.9), as this approach can leave other minority groups such as Indigenous Australians without suitable representation. Under feminist theory, women are excused for violence within the home and their aggression explained away as the fear clouded judgment of a woman socially pressured into believing that being a wife is to be their greatest achievement (Houston 2014 p.244). The feminist ideology preaches that even a financially independent woman will choose to stay in an abusive relationship due to the inherent sexism of western society (Houston 2014 p.244). This feminist framework also goes on to relieve female perpetrators of their contributions to family violence through the promotion of the ‘victim blaming’ narrative (Houston 2014 p.246), and states that the only reasons women become violent is either in self-defence or due to their efforts to protect their children (Tyson, Kirkwood and McKenzie 2016 P.561).

The governing of the narrative surrounding the DV sector has allowed feminism to take on the role of the bourgeoisie and relegate an entire gender to the role of proletariat through its sexist approach to gathering supports only for female victims, which has effectively limited any supports for male victims with full backing from government policy, media reporting and support services (Hoff 2012 p.156). The results of this control can be seen in the release of the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Budget where all available money has been directed towards supporting women and children whilst actively excluding assistance to men (NSW Health 2016). These practical supports include housing options, victim counselling and legal assistance (NSW Ministry of Health 2016), and the denial of these supports for men leave a large proportion of victims homeless, mentally and emotionally damaged and lacking legal representation. This approach to funding DV support programs provides prestige to the federal government as it satisfies the desires of a culturally motivated public that inherently shows these disadvantaged men less consideration (Hall 2012 p.8). Although feminist theory has done a fantastic job of bringing to light the issues and ramifications of

domestic violence, there are concerns that the feminist driven domestic violence sector itself is also actively fighting to stop conflicting solutions to domestic violence from being explored (Straus 2007 pp.227-228).

Despite feminisms authoritarian approach to domestic violence, numerous studies have still been completed (Straus 2007 p.227, Feibert 2014) which demonstrate startling contradictions to the gendered narrative. This research consistently reveals gender parity in the perpetration rates of family violence (Harned 2001 p.26, Feibert 2014), and go on to determine that men and women have identical motivations for perpetrating violence within the home including, coercion, anger and punishment, rather than the proffered power and control motivation (Straus 2009 p.553, Straus 2011). One statistic that surfaces in many studies is the fact that women initiate violence in anywhere from 70% (Feibert 2014) to 83% of domestic incidents (Capaldi, Kim & Shortt 2007 p.103). This high rate of instigation could possibly be linked to societies acceptance and encouragement of violence by women towards men (Harned 2001 p.281).

One of sociology's most respected researchers, Murray Straus, identified significant bias within the gendered DV narrative, and raised questions around how feminist theory has managed to persist for so long despite over 30 years of study which identify more than just the proffered male dominance rationalization (Straus 2007 p.227). Straus identified seven distinct methods used by the DV sector to ensure that the gendered narrative is not deviated from. Firstly, these methods may suppress evidence, where researchers withhold information that contradicts the male only perpetrator anecdotes; secondly, they avoid the collection of data that contradicts the patriarchal dominance theory by omitting the questions in surveys that may lead to conflicting outcomes, or thirdly, they only cite studies that show male perpetration whilst ignoring studies that show gender parity (Straus 2007). Other methods identified by Straus include the fabricating of false conclusions by only

focussing on a small part of the data collected in a study or alternatively using the more underhanded approach of evidence created by false citation, or what he calls the 'woozle effect' in which a study will be cited under false conclusions, only to be re-cited by other sources from the flawed article (Straus 2007). Straus also describes instances where researchers either had their funding cut or research denied publication because it contradicted the idea that male dominance is the major cause for personal violence (Straus 2007). Finally, he concluded that if all the above methods fail, the sector will harass, threaten and penalize researchers who contradict feminist beliefs (Straus 2007). In addition to Straus' conclusions, meta-analytical reviews have determined that feminist surveys into domestic violence can be manipulated into showing a gendered result by utilising specially chosen participants from locations such as women's shelters or men undertaking violence treatment programs to achieve responses that will undoubtedly endorse existing beliefs (Archer 2000 p.651).

Evidence of manipulation over the feminist narrative on DV can be found in many areas throughout Australia and have been blatantly referred to in a media release from Our Watch, where the CEO Mary Barry herself recognised the importance of maintaining domination over the gendered view of IPV through media when she was quoted to say, "time and time again, national and international research tells us that the public is heavily influenced by the way violence against women is portrayed in our media" (Our Watch 2016), Mary was referring in this instance to the Walkley Awards, which rewards journalists for maintaining the gendered narrative in their writing of news articles. Indeed, some state governments in Australia have also sought to control the narrative around DV through the release of sanctioned media guidelines, which state that reporters are responsible for shaping public conversation in identifying DV as a gendered issue (Queensland Government 2014), or that reporting should be done to represent a significant gendered dimension (Roberts 2013).

Judicial Officer Bulletins have also been found to push the gendered narrative and specifically make mention that the driving factors behind DV are misogyny and the patriarchy as used by privileged men to subordinate women (Buxton-Namisnyk & Butler 2017). The Australian judicial system bias can extend to the sentencing preferences towards woman who murder their children, and allows for them to receive a more lenient sentence for the deliberate death of a child based on postpartum depression (Harris et.al 2007 p.85). This gender specific law concerning infanticide is only available to mothers despite evidence that both 10% of fathers and 14% of mothers can be affected by the condition (Scarton 2008 p.83). This reduction in charge effectively reduces the mothers crime from murder to manslaughter and results in much lower sentencing. In Australia, the age limit for the victim of this defence is 12 months (NSW Law Reform Commission 1997 p.99), but other western countries such as New Zealand have extended this benefit to mothers for up to 10 years (Ministry of Justice 2017). The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) credited 52% of all filicides to female perpetrators over the 2005 – 2015-year period (Australian Institute of Criminology 2015 p.2), a statistic which confirms that females are as equally capable of committing violent acts against other helpless family members and reveals a clear contradiction to the gendered narrative. Judicial prejudice is also present in relation to the punishment for the murder of a spouse, with research from the United States indicating that 12.9% of females will be acquitted of the murder of their partner as opposed to only 1.4% of men, in addition to these figures, females will receive an average sentence of 6 years instead of the 17 years served by male perpetrators (Hall 2012 p.15)

The influence of feminist theory is also present in the NSW police force where their code of practice clearly admits that men make up a significant portion of DV victims, yet goes on to declare that the state and federal governments are resolved to only eliminating violence against women and children (NSW Police 2013 p.15). The Code of practice also states that police are obliged to apply for apprehended violence orders (AVO's) on behalf of victims, even in the absence of victim consent,

and are encouraged not to arrest or charge both parties unless there are extenuating circumstances (NSW Police 2013 p.34). AVO's are commonly applied to perpetrators of DV based on one party having reasonable grounds to fear intimidation from the other party, or if they hold concerns that the other party will commit a violent offense in the future (NSW Police 2013 p.40). Although this sounds perfectly reasonable, further investigation reveals that male and females experience fear differently. This has been explored in various studies where men and women were subjected to the effects of fear conditioning. In 2009 a study conducted by Merz et. al found that when women experienced fear, their memory enhanced the traumatic event, whereas it impaired the memory of the same event in men (Merz Et al 2010 p.33). This study was again replicated in 2013 and found that in addition to the memory of fear in women being enhanced, it also found that this fear was amplified as the amygdala exaggerated the experience (Merz Et. al 2013 p.2538), these same responses to fear could not be replicated in males.

With these studies in mind, this natural manipulation of memory may well affect one of the key factors to the successful acquisition of an AVO and should demand a more in-depth evaluation into who has them auspiciously granted. These combined results of biased policy and fear conditioning could unfairly affect the eligibility of this common intervention strategy based on gender. In discussing the granting of AVOs it should also be acknowledged that advice published in a NSW Judicial Commission survey of magistrates found that 90% of respondents agreed that Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders were often used by applicants in family court proceedings as a tactic to aid their case and deprive their partner of access to children (Incidence and regulation of domestic violence in NSW 2000 p.22). This misuse of judicial authority was also confirmed in a survey of Queensland magistrates of which 74% also concurred that restraining orders are being used as a tactical weapon to control visitation rights of children to the opposing parent (Zimmerman 2015).

These statistics indicate that AVOs may themselves be used as another form of domestic abuse to maintain control over an ex-partner.

In previous paragraphs, this essay has discussed behaviour change programs for men and how they have failed to significantly impact the DV perpetration rates of males against women. Prior to the advancement of feminist theory, behaviour change programs for female DV perpetrators also existed and had proven themselves to be highly successful; one such treatment program was the Responsible Choices for Women Program that was run by the Calgary Counselling Centre (Tutty, Babins-Wager & Rothery 2006). This program was designed in 1991 by an Australian man, Alan Jenkins and was directed at the behaviours of women by focussing on violent outbursts and accepting responsibility for one's behaviour; it also addressed self-esteem and assertive behaviour; improving family relationships through stress reduction, increasing empathy and ceasing the physical abuse of their children (Tutty, Babins-Wager & Rothery 2009 p.776). The program saw significant improvements on almost every outcome that was measured, even though pre-program reports indicated that these women were previously in the clinical range for violence perpetration (Tutty, Babins-Wager & Rothery 2009 p.770).

This essay has explored the causes of domestic violence under feminist theory and the evidence uncovered indicates that the Duluth approach has been instrumental in bringing this topic into mainstream conversations. The evidence also indicates that there has been a total monopoly on intervention strategies which have allowed for the disregard of not only a plethora of contributing factors, but also encouraged the scapegoating of an entire gender while ignoring the suffering experienced by male victims. By altering the lens under which IPV is both assessed and engaged with; and converting to a less restrictive model such as conflict theory, society may be in a better position to implement more inclusive interventions.

Conflict theorists see society as different groups all competing to achieve a similar goal and believe that it is competition that encourages better outcomes overall (Hungerford 2008). In his research around conflict theory Jehn describes the initial belief that the absence of disagreement within management structures related to increased performance; but more recent investigations have concluded that conflict can increase decision quality, financial performance and organizational growth (Jehn 1995). Among the virtues that come with conflict theory are the benefits found when competition is encouraged, including increased choices, innovation, greater efficiency, economic development and growth, stronger democracy by dispersing economic power and greater wellbeing by promoting individual initiative and free association (Stucke 2013 p.166). Evidence suggests that these qualities of conflict theory, if applied to the current DV sector, would see great improvements in the use of financial expenditure from what we have seen exhibited in 2016 by the four previously DV awareness campaigners. Increased competition would also encourage these services to expand their understanding of the sector. Conflict theory application would allow for the abolition of the groupthink phenomena where unreasonable and inadequate knowledge or assessment can lead to inferior results and poorer interventions, it would likewise open discussions by increasing consideration of criticism and alternate solutions (Jehn 1995 p.260). By removing the monopoly that feminist theory holds over the causes behind DV, a conflict theory lens would see the re-examination of previously discarded studies which have identified more comprehensive explanations of IPV, and this in turn would undoubtedly lead to more inclusive and tailored interventions. Research indicates that effective use of conflict theory can encourage people to develop new ideas and approaches, encourage increased learning and yield higher quality solutions instead of smoothing over or avoiding issues that do not comply with a totalitarian consensus (Jehn 1995 p.260). The benefits of working under a conflict theory model may force the domestic violence sector to begin basing interventions on a more diverse range of evidence and increase the quality of those interventions through the increased scrutiny of conflicting claims.

Under a conflict theory lens, we are able to focus on causes that have been overlooked by the Duluth doctrine, reasons such as lack of empathy and miscommunication which have been previously forgotten as issues that can contribute to intimate partner violence. A Harvard study in 2015 identified that men and women who lack empathetic accuracy (EA) are more likely to have relationship issues and this lack of EA can cause tension and misunderstandings within the home and lead to aggression from either party (Cohen et.al 2015 p.705). This study went on to discuss how the lack of empathy toward one's partner can lead to increased aggression during conflict, as striking out against a loved one is easier if you do not have to imagine how they are feeling (Cohen et.al 2015 p. 707). The study also found a firm link between a man's inability to accurately identify his partner's hostility levels and that this lack of EA could escalate her physical and psychological aggression, or in other words, if she felt like he was not taking her emotions seriously, she would escalate that behaviour until he understood that she was angry, but this was not replicated when the genders were reversed (Cohen et.al 2015 p. 707).

By disregarding feminist theory, we are also able to openly discuss evidence which suggests that substance abuse is closely connected with violence in the home, especially where drugs and alcohol are used as a crutch for people who would not normally exhibit dominant behaviours (Baker 2016 pp 907-908). Adopting conflict theory would allow support services to explore the violence couples experience when under the influence of drugs and alcohol and how this causes impairment of communication skills, where one partner will misconstrue a comment and become angry, which regularly leads to more drinking and drug abuse, thereby increasing the frequency and severity of each argument in an ever-increasing spiral of violence (Baker 2016 p.912). Discarding the feminist theory lens would also allow for discussions around other consistent, yet controversial findings in studies which factor in both IPV and substance abuse to reveal that both men and women

perpetrate at similar rates (Reingle et. al 2013 p.189). Implementing the freedoms that come with conflict theory would allow services to discuss results where drug dependent detainees interviewed by police had more than double the rate of domestic violence in their lives than non-drug detainees (Mouzos & Smith 2007) to be included in talks around prevention strategies.

Domestic violence, when comprehensively examined, shows that social marginalisation and culture must also be considered as contributing factors due to the over representation of intimate partner violence within lower socio-economic groups (Evans 2005 p.38). Indeed, this correlation is often left ignored, even by feminist theory which echoes the entire premise of personal violence on the dyadic view of power and control (Graham-Kevan 2007 p.214). Data from the NSW Bureau of Statistics and Research reveals that domestic violence rates amongst Indigenous Australian women are six times higher than the national average, and male Aboriginals report rates at four times higher than their non-indigenous counterparts (Mitchell 2011 p.13). When comparing the hospitalisation rates of white Australians, we also see these numbers multiply significantly with Aboriginal males requiring medical attention at rates 27 times higher than white men, and Aboriginal women at a massive 38 times that of other females (Mitchell 2011 p.14). Alcohol was also found to be a contributing factor in 87% of Aboriginal intimate partner deaths as opposed to 44% of non-Aboriginal deaths (Australian Institute of Criminology 2009 p.3). While the Australian Government has recognised the relationship between power inequality and DV within Aboriginal communities, and has responded with intervention strategies based on the holistic understandings that poverty plays a significant role in family violence, it refuses to employ these same strategies for non-indigenous peoples (Evans 2005 p.41).

One of the more convincing arguments that can be presented as evidence to contradict the patriarchal narrative of family violence is the significantly higher rates of violence within lesbian

relationships; which, when compared to that of their gay male counterparts, show rates of violence to vary immensely depending on sex. These studies show that lesbian relationships report rates of violence of up to 56%, whereas gay men find themselves as victims in only 25% of studied cases (Waldner-Haugrud, Magruder & Vaden Gratch 1997 p.175). A recent meta-analysis also found that the perpetration of violence by a woman is the greatest predictor of her becoming a victim of intimate partner violence herself (Whitaker et. al 2007 p.941), which would seem to be reflected in the aggression rates of lesbian relationships where both partners have a higher capacity for violence (Waldner-Haugrud, Magruder & Vaden Gratch 1997 p.175). Here again we see room for a conflict theory approach that would see services specialising in gay and lesbian relationships working on more specialised interventions for IPV.

When domestic violence is identified as a human problem rather than a gender problem, we may be able to see some reduction in the rates and severity of this crime. One recurring issue that is found throughout western society is the lack of support for male victims and the traumatic experiences these men go through when they try to come forward and seek assistance for their dilemma. These men often find themselves re-victimized by the domestic violence advocates that engage in feminist theory modelling around IPV. These experiences include automatically being assigned the role of the perpetrator and being referred to behaviour change programs, being treated with suspicion and disbelief or being accused of using victim services as another method to inflict control over their female partners (Hines, Brown & Dunning 2007 p.64). This treatment of male victims reduces their desire to come forward and seek assistance out of fear of embarrassment, ridicule and lack of available resources (Drijber, Reijnders & Ceelen 2013 p.175). These men are also reluctant to seek assistance from the police due to shame, fear of not being taken seriously, and a deep belief that the police will not help them due to their gender (Drijber, Reijnders & Ceelen 2013 p.175). This lack of

reporting also has significant effect on the statistical data that feminist theory presents to ensure their ongoing dominance in the sector.

Prevention of IPV in relationships has been the final goal of the DV sector since its inception and interventions have usually focused on behaviour change programs which seek to address habits that have formed over a long period of time; but there is also another alternative which engages young people before those habits are formed and may prove a cost effective and beneficial approach to reducing levels of violence in the home (Langhinrichsen-Rohling & Capaldi 2012). This method of reducing domestic violence has been recognised to be most effective when delivered mutually to both sexes, in a way that targets broad risk factors such as peer and family based patterns of learned behaviour (Maalouf & Campello 2014 pp.622 -623). These findings also conclude that women appear to be the most influential partner in a relationship and thus more powerful and agentic than previously assumed (Langhinrichsen-Rohling & Capaldi 2012). This revelation that women can contribute significantly to the reduction of violence in the home reinforce the results of previous studies which conclude that females are as equally aggressive as males inside a relationship (Feibert 2013 p.405, Cohen et. al 2015 p.697) and also reveal that women are capable of being agents of change for their own wellbeing rather than merely accepting a victim status (Langhinrichsen-Rohling & Capaldi 2012). The positive results of this prevention program indicate a need for intervention to be explicitly directed at females as well as males, whilst ensuring the target audience is informed that the probability of personal violence by a woman increases the probability that her partner will respond in kind (Straus 2007 p.227) (Straus 2010 p.351).

Over the preceding pages, this essay has explored and exposed flaws in the feminist theory approach to DV and shown a comprehensive sample of many alternative provocations for IPV. Possibly the most important revelation highlighted in this paper is the undeniable fact that violence

is not a gendered crime and both males and females are equally capable of contributing fairly to intimate partner violence, therefore both sexes need to be targeted for intervention and education. It has underscored other substitutes to male behaviour change programs that have proven to be effective in reducing violence within the home and exposed the dangers of authoritarian control over the gendered narrative. The domestic violence sector has proven to be outdated in its beliefs and there are concerns that it has been corrupted at the expense of innocent lives. Feminist theories singular focus on patriarchal blame has allowed society to be blinded to many alternatives that would help reduce the number of deaths and traumatic experiences of those effected by this dreadful scourge on intimate relationships. DV is not a simple problem and as such, the solutions cannot be as simple as the current sector implies. For society to see significant improvements it will need to stop ignoring a large proportion of victims and cease focussing on only one method of intervention. The sector needs to be opened to scrutiny and competitive solutions must be sought out and tabled with support services encouraged to create individual and holistic interventions including supports for people experiencing mental health issues, couples facing financial or emotional stress and individuals with substance abuse problems. The feminist theory must be dismantled and removed from all aspects of the domestic violence sector and replaced with a model that encourages original thinking and competition in problem solving. If this fails to happen we will see a continuation of violence by women going unchecked and we will ensure that aggressive women have no option for rehabilitation while their victims continue to be ignored and forgotten by society. By creating opposition between services, conflict theory will inspire a deeper understanding of the problem and will result in more varied and all-inclusive interventions.

## References

Archer, J 2000, 'Sex Differences in Aggression Between Heterosexual Partners: A Meta-Analytic Review', *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol.126, No.5, pp. 651-680.

Baker, BJ, 2016, 'Annual Financial Report Report for the year ending 30 June 2016', Blackburn South: Luke Batty Foundations Limited.

- Baker, CK 2016, 'Dating Violence and Substance Use: Exploring the Context of Adolescent Relationships', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 31, no.5, pp. 900-919.
- Brandis, G 2017, 'The Australian', *Record funding to help curb domestic violence*, 04 April, p. 28.
- Buxton-Namisnyk, E & Butler, A 2017, 'What's language got to do with it?, learning from discourse, language and stereotyping in domestic violence homicide cases', *Judicial officers Bulletin*, Vol.29, No.6, pp. 49-52.
- Capaldi, DM, Kim, HK & Shortt, JW 2007, 'Observed Initiation and reciprocity of physical aggression in young, at-risk couples', *Journal of family Violence*, Vol.22, pp. 101 -111.
- Chun, WHK 1999, 'Unbearable Witness: Toward a politics of listening', *A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Vol.11, No.1, pp. 112 - 149.
- Cussen,T, Willow,B 2015, Domestic/family homicide in Australia, *Australian Institute of Criminology*, Canberra.
- Cohen,S, Schulz, MS, Lui, SR, Halassa M & Waldinger, RJ 2015, 'Empathetic Accuracy and Aggression in couples: Individual and Dyadic Links', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol 77, pp. 697-711.
- Douglas, EM & Hines, DA 2007, 'Characteristics of Callers to the Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men', *Journal of Family Violence*, Volume 22, pp. 63-72.
- Drijber, BC, Reijnders UJL & Ceelen, M 2013, 'Male victims of domestic violence', *Journal of Family Violence*, Vol 28, pp. 173-178.
- Edwards, AR & Ward-Ambler, I 2016, 'Annual Report July 2015 -June 2016', Sydney: Australian National Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS).
- Evans, S 2005, 'Beyond Gender: Class, poverty and domestic violence', *Australian Social Work*, Vol.58, No.1, pp. 36-43.
- Feibert, MS 2013, 'References Examining Assaults by Women on Their Spouses or Male Partners: An Updated Annotated Bibliography', *Sexuality and Culture*, Vol.18, pp.405-467
- Gondolf, EW 2010, 'The Contributions of Ellen Pence to Batterer Programming', *Violence Against Women*, Vol.16, No.9, pp. 992-1006.
- Graham-Kevan, N 2007, 'Domestic Violence: Research and Implications for Batterer Programmes in Europe'. *European Journal of Criminal Policy and Research*, Vol. 13, pp. 213-225.
- Hall, RE 2012, 'The Feminization of Social Welfare: Implications of Cultural Tradition Vis-a'-vis Male Victims of Domestic Violence', *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, Vol.39 No.3 pp. 6-27
- Harris, GT, Hilton, NZ, Rice, ME & Eke AW 2007, 'Children killed by genetic parents vs stepparents', *Evolution of Human Behavior*, Vol. 28, pp. 85-95.
- Harned, MS 2001, 'Abused Women or Abused Men? An Examination of the Context and Outcomes of Dating Violence', *Violence and Victims*, Vol.16, no.3, pp.269-285
- Haselschwerdt, ML, Hardesty, JL & Hans JD 2011, 'Custody Evaluators' beliefs about domestic violence allegations during divorce; feminist and family violence perspectives', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol.26, No.8, pp. 1694 - 1719.

- Hoff, BH 2012, 'US national Survey: more men than women victims of intimate partner violence', *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol.4, No.3, pp.155-163
- Houston, C 2014, 'How Feminist Theory Became (Criminal) Law: Tracing the Path to Mandatory Criminal Intervention in Domestic Violence Cases', *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law*, Vol. 21 no.217, pp. 217 - 272.
- Hungerford, G 2008, 'Conflict Theory', *Culturescope*, Vol. 87 pp.29-31
- Jehn, KA 1995., 'A multimethod examination of the benefits and detriments of intragroup conflict', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol.40, no.2, pp. 256-282.
- Langhinrichsen-Rohling, J & Capaldi DM 2012, 'Clearly we've only just begun: developing effective prevention programs for intimate partner violence', *Society for Prevention Research*, Vol. 13, pp. 410- 414.
- Maalouf, W & Campello, G 2014, 'The Influence of family skills programmes on violence indicators: Experience from a multi-site project of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in low and middle income countries. *Agression and violent behavior*, Vol.19, pp. 616-624.
- Merz, CJ, Tabbert, K, Scweckendiek, J, Klucken, T, Vaitl, D, Stark, R & Wolf, TO 2010, 'Investigating the impact of sex and cortisol on implicit fear conditioning with fMRI', *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, Vol. 35, pp. 33-46
- Merz, CJ, Wolf, OT, Scweckendiek, J, Klucken, T, Vaitl, D & Stark R 2013, 'Stress differentially affects fear conditioning in men and women', *Psychoendocrinology*, Vol 38, pp. 2529 - 2541.
- Ministry of Justice, New Zealand 2017, *Crimes Act 1961*, Wellington: New Zealand Government.
- Mitchell, L 2011, '*Domestic violence in Australia - an overview of the issues*', Parliament Australia: Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliamentary Library, 23 Nov 2011, pp.1-42
- Mouzos, J & Smith, L 2007, 'Partner violence among a sample of police detainees', *Trends and issues in crime and criminal justice*, Vol.337, pp. 1-6.
- NSW Health 2016, '*Domestic Violence and family Violence NSW Budget 2016 – 2017*' Viewed: 10 September 2017 < <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/about/budget/Documents/domestic-violence.pdf>>
- NSW Law Reform Commission 1997. *Report 83 (1997) - Partial Defences to Murder: Provocation and Infanticide*, Sydney: NSW Law Reform Commission.
- NSW Ministry of Health 2016, '*NSW domestic violence and family violence blueprint for reform 2016*
- NSW Police Force 2016, '*Code of Practice for the NSW Police Force Response to Domestic and Family Violence*', Parramatta: Operational Programs.
- Our Watch, 2016. *The Wakely Foundation for Journalism*. Viewed 19 December 2017, < <http://www.newsboost.com/newsroom/the-wakely-foundation-for-journalism/media-release-2016-our-watch-awards-now-open>>
- Pizzey, E 2009, 'Practice Report: A Comparative Study of Battered women and violence-prone women', *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol.1, no.2, pp. 53-61.

Pizzey, E 2014, 'Erin Pizzey and the forbidden narratives about domestic violence', *Psychotherapy in Australia*, Vol.20, No.3, pp.60-61

Queensland Government 2014, '*Domestic and Family Violence Media Guide*', Brisbane: Queensland State Government.

Reingle, JM, Jennings, WG, Maume, MO & Komro KA 2013, 'The Substance-Related Etiology of Teen Dating Violence Victimization: Does Gender Matter?', *Women and Criminal Justice*, Vol.23, No.3, pp. 185-208.

Rizza, J 2009, 'Beyond Duluth: A Broad Spectrum of Treatment for a Broad Spectrum of Domestic Violence', *Montana Law Review*, Vol.70, pp. 125 - 1461.

Roberts, A 2014, '*Reporting on Domestic Violence, A guide for ACT Media*', Canberra: Womens Centre for Health Matters.

Sanow, Ed, 2003, 'Goodbye, Duluth Model', *Law & Order*, Vol. 51, No.11, p.4.

Scarton, D 2008, 'Postpartum Depression Strikes New Dads as Well as Moms', *U.S. News & World Report*, Vol.145, No.7, p.83.

Seymour, K 2017, "Stand up, Speak out and act": A Critical reading of Australia's White Ribbon Campaign', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of 2015*, Vo.0 No.0 pp.1-18

Steel, K 1998, 'It's men who need help now', *Alberta Report*, Vol.35 No.44, p. 37.

Straus, MA 2007, 'Processes Explaining the Concealment and Distortion of Evidence on Gender Symmetry in Partner Violence', *European Journal of Criminal Policy and Research*, Vol.13, pp. 227-232.

Straus, MA 2009, 'Current controversies and prevalence concerning female offenders of intimate partner violence'. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, Vol.18, pp. 553-571.

Straus, MA 2010, 'Thirty Years of Denying the Evidence on Gender Symmetry in Partner Violence: Implications for Prevention and Treatment', *Partner Abuse*, Vol.1, No.3, pp. 332 - 363.

Straus, MA 2011, 'Gender symmetry and mutuality in perpetration of clinical-level partner violence: empirical evidence and implications for prevention and treatment', *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, Vol.16, pp.279-288.

Stucke, ME 2013, 'Is competition always good?', *Journal of Antitrust Enforcement*, Vol 1, No.1, pp.162-197.

Thornton, G 2016, '*Our Watch Annual Report 2015 -2016*', Melbourne: Our Watch.

Tutty, LM, Babins-Wagner, R & Rothery, M 2006, 'Group Treatment for Aggressive Women: An Initial Evaluation', *Journal of Family Violence*, Vol.21, pp.341-349

Tutty, LM, Babins-Wagner, R & Rothery, M 2009, 'A Comparison of women who were mandated and non-mandated to the "Responsible Choices for Women" group', *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, Vol 18, No.7, pp.770-793

Tyson, D, Kirkwood, D & McKenzie M 2016, 'Family Violence in Domestic Homicides: A Case Study of Women Who Killed Intimate Partners in Post-Legislative Reform in Victoria, Australia', *Violence Against Women*, Vol.23, no.5, pp.559-583

Waldner-Haugrud, LK, Vaden Gratch L & Magruder 1997, 'Victimization and perpetration rates of violence in gay and lesbian relationships: gender issues explored', *Violence and Victims*, Vol.12 No.2, pp. 173 - 184.

Weston, WR, 2016, '*White Ribbon Annual Report 2015-16*', Sydney: White Ribbon Australia.

Whitaker, DJ, Tadesse Haileyesus, MS, Swahn M & Saltzman, LS 2007, 'Differences in Frequency of violence and reported injury between relationships with reciprocal and nonreciprocal intimate partner violence', *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol.97 No.5, pp. 941-947.

White Ribbon Australia 2018, *White Ribbon Australia - The Beginning* , viewed 03 January 2018  
< <https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/about/history/>>

Zimmerman, A 2015. *Family Law Express.*, viewed: 26 December 2017  
<<http://www.familylawexpress.com.au/family-law-news/familyviolence/falseallegations/the-abuse-of-domestic-violence-orders-in-australia/2874/>>