

## Setting the record straight on Duluth.

Posted on [February 6, 2017](#) by [Dalrock](#)

I've quoted from the Duluth Model document [Countering Confusion about the Duluth Model](#) in several posts, and the more I look at it the more astounded I am as to just how open the Duluth Model organization is regarding their philosophy and their goals. This is a document intended to refute criticisms against the model, and is published on the organization's official website ([theduluthmodel.org](http://theduluthmodel.org)). The document opens with (all emphasis below are mine):

*Recently, **the “Duluth Model” of working with men who batter has received serious criticism, despite being the pre-eminent model internationally.** Much of the criticism is based on flawed research that is contradicted by other better-designed, more comprehensive studies. **Here the authors respond directly to misinformation generated by 1) a 2003 study from the National Institute of Justice of the U.S. Department of Justice; 2) an analysis of batterer treatment models by Babcock, Green, and Robie (2002); and 3) unsubstantiated criticism of the philosophy underlying the Duluth Model by Dutton and Corvo (2006).** The authors, both of whom have worked with the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota, rebut inaccurate assumptions and myths about what the model is and how it works and challenge the ethics, as well as the efficacy, of avoiding criminal justice sanctions and relying solely on resource-intensive mental health treatments for batterers. Changing historically entrenched battering behavior is difficult, the authors explain, but the Duluth Model prioritizes victim safety and autonomy.*

For the purpose of this post, I'll focus on their response to Dutton and Corvo, which begins on page four with an outline of the first set of charges the Duluth Model organization wants to set the record straight on:

### *Critical Review of Dutton and Corvo*

*In their 2006 article, “Transforming a Flawed Policy : A Call to Revive Psychology and Science in Domestic Violence Research and Practice,” Donald Dutton and Kenneth Corvo grossly misrepresent the Duluth curriculum when they write **“according to the Duluth Model, all [men] must be treated as patriarchal terrorists regardless of differences in how the violence developed.”** They further state that “essentially, the Duluth Model views every man convicted as equivalent to the worst man convicted without gradations or nuance,” and **“the primary goal of this model is to get male clients to acknowledge ‘male privilege ’ and how they have used ‘power and control’ to dominate their wives.”***

Astoundingly, what follows is not even an attempt to refute the bolded portions above, but instead:

1. Confirmation that the philosophy and mechanics of the model are as Dutton and Corvo have accused.
2. An explanation of why this is a good thing.

The following is the unedited response\* in the paper to the claims I quoted above. Search carefully for any refutation of what Dutton and Corvo assert:

*Interestingly, Dutton and Corvo place quotation marks around power and control and male privilege as if they don't exist, but that is for a later discussion.*

***The underpinnings of the Duluth curriculum do come from a historical analysis.*** *When Europeans came to this continent, they brought religion, laws, and economic systems that institutionalized the status of women as the property of men through marriage. From the church to the state, there was not only acceptance of male supremacy, but also an expectation that husbands would maintain the family order by controlling their wives. Various indiscretions committed by wives were offenses to be punished by husbands. This system of male dominance (like any social structure where one group oppresses another) was perpetuated by: a) a belief in the primacy of men over women; b) institutional rules requiring the submission of women to men; c) the objectification of women which made violence acceptable; and d) the right of men to use violence to punish with impunity (Dobash and Dobash 1983).*

*The status quo of male domination remained fully intact until the early twentieth century when state legislatures began to make wife beating unlawful. However, the practice of men using violence to control women didn't diminish. In the late 1960s, the Women's Movement began challenging the state to intervene in domestic violence cases and women and some men began to confront the concept of male supremacy in the home. In the 1970s, the Battered Women's Movement emerged as the voice of victims and advocates to challenge psychological theories about the causes of violence and explanations of why victims often stayed in abusive relationships.*

*Do all men who batter want to dominate women? This is a complicated question. Clearly, many men who batter believe that women should be submissive to men and there are others who share a variation of these sexist beliefs—"The man is the head of the household" or "You can't have two captains of one ship." **However, there are other men who batter that don't believe that their wives or girlfriends should be subservient because of their gender, but they still batter. These men use violence to control their partners because they can and violence works.** Violence ends arguments. Violence is punishment—it sends a powerful message of disapproval.*

The final bolded part above is the most comical, as it explains that even when men don't use violence as a tool of the patriarchy, they are still using violence as a tool of the patriarchy! This is merely restating (with approval) the accusation they ostensibly set out to refute:

*Donald Dutton and Kenneth Corvo grossly misrepresent the Duluth curriculum when they write **"according to the Duluth Model, all [men] must be treated as patriarchal terrorists regardless of differences in how the violence developed."***

The defense continues:

*Some mental health practitioners are now repackaging old psychological theories in opposition to analyses that indicate that culture and socialization shape the way men who batter think and act in intimate relationships. Although there is much of value in mental health theories that can assist the healing of victims and perpetrators alike, **we do not see men's violence against women as stemming from individual pathology, but rather from a socially reinforced sense of entitlement. We***

***believe that the beliefs and attitudes possessed by men who batter can be changed through an educational process.***

Try to find a contradiction between this defense of the model, and the claim by Dutton and Corvo repeated below. This is a defense of *why it is good* that the goal of the model is as Dutton and Corvo describe, not a refutation of the description of the goal itself:

***the primary goal of this model is to get male clients to acknowledge ‘male privilege’ and how they have used ‘power and control’ to dominate their wives.***

Next they raise a new set of accusations by Dutton and Corvo that they want to set the record straight on:

*Dutton and Corvo claim “the Duluth Model maintains an ineffective system where resources are diverted from other potential program responses, e.g., joint treatment of violence and chemical dependency or mutuality of partner violence.” They go on to state “**mandatory arrest policies are a product of the ideologically driven view that since domestic violence is always strategic, always intentional, always unidirectional, and always with the objective of female domination by men, that it must be contravened by the power of the state. Once one removes this ideological presumption, the rationale for mandatory arrest disappears.**”*

And again, instead of refuting the bolded claim above, the Duluth Model organization confirms the claim and justifies the model:

*They cite research on mandatory arrest policies in Milwaukee and other cities that apparently fails to demonstrate that mandatory arrest reduces recidivism (Shepard 1992). What they don’t tell us is that the cities chosen for this research had very poor prosecution rates and lacked a tight coordinated community response, which is the cornerstone of the Duluth Model. It is axiomatic that arrest without prosecution, meaningful sentencing, jail, the threat of jail and counseling will usually be less effective in reducing violence because offenders will get the message that the criminal justice system and society as a whole don’t take domestic violence seriously. And, although arrests alone may not reduce recidivism to the level we would hope for, critics of pro-arrest policies would never argue that we should stop arresting rapists or thieves who assault their victims if arrests don’t measurably reduce recidivism for those violent offenders.*

*From a public policy perspective, not arresting batterers essentially decriminalizes domestic violence and condemns a victim to either live with the violence or (as in the “bad old days”) be forced to press charges against an abusive spouse. **Doing away with pro-arrest policies targeting the predominant aggressor (a core component of the Duluth Model) reduces the total number of arrests but increases the proportion of dual arrests.** Dual arrests have proven ineffective in stopping violence, and they also have the unfortunate consequence of making victims more reluctant to call the police when further acts of violence occur.*

Again, they are in agreement with Dutton and Corvo; they explain that if it police were permitted to respond to each domestic violence incident based on the facts (instead of Duluth's ideologically driven model identifying the man as an abuser), the police would:

1. Arrest fewer men.
2. Arrest more women!

This brings us to the next point by Dutton and Corvo that Duluth wants to set the record straight on:

*Dutton and Corvo also contend that the “best designed studies” (Ehrensaft, Moffitt, and Caspi 2004; Moffitt et al. 2001) indicate that intimate partner violence is committed by both genders with equal consequences. They point to these studies to buttress their argument that marriage counseling is an appropriate treatment to end domestic violence.*

In this case they do at least make an effort to refute the quoted claims. But this is a disagreement on data and interpreting studies. In the process of making their argument they further reinforce Dutton and Corvo's claims about the ideological nature of the Duluth model:

*We respond that, even if surveys comparing rates of perpetration by gender are accurate, proponents of the argument that women are as violent as men fail to account for the impact of the violence (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. 1995; Cascardi and Vivian 1995), the severity of the violence (Hamberger and Guse 2002), the level of fear experienced by the person being assaulted (Barnett and Thelen 1995; Hamberger and Guse 2002), or motivation for the violence.*

*In an emergency room study, gender differences among a cohort of injured patients found that men initiated violence in far greater numbers than women (Phelan et al. 2005). One hundred percent of female respondents versus 39 percent of the male respondents reported being injured in a domestic violence incident. Thirty-six percent of women reported being intimidated by their partner's size while none of the men reported being intimidated by their partner's size. Seventy percent of women reported that they were very strongly afraid during partner-initiated violence while only one man reported experiencing this degree of fear. The majority of men (85 percent) reported not being afraid at all when their female partners initiate violence. From experience, police officers and domestic violence advocates have long understood the contextual differences between the violence of men and women, yet proponents of the “women are as violent as men” agenda downplay the significance of gender differences in the ways that men and women use violence (Dutton and Corvo 2006; Mills 2003).*

**Opponents of a feminist analysis of domestic violence** continue to argue their theory that women are as violent as men and that the level of mutual violence calls out for changing arrest and prosecution policies as well as advocating for marriage counseling to stop the violence. This may be an attractive theory to some in the mental health field and “men's rights” activists. The problem is that practitioners who endorse couples' counseling while one person is still intimidating or using violence against another ignore the very real risk of violent assaults following counseling sessions. Most psychologists and therapists who have knowledge of domestic violence dynamics would concede that marriage counseling is ineffective if one party is a batterer and has

*power over the other. How can a victim be honest about what is happening in the relationship or talk about the violence when she fears physical retribution?*

*Dutton and Corvo's notion that women are as violent as men or that most domestic violence cases are mutual assaults simply distorts the reality that any law enforcement officer, emergency room nurse or doctor, or domestic violence advocate can validate from their experiences with victims. In 1998, national statistics showed that women were the victims in nearly three out of four of the 1,830 murders attributable to intimate partners in the United States (Rennison and Wechans 2000). That year, women experienced about 900,000 violent offenses by an intimate partner, and men, 160,000. Even if there is some underreporting by men, the claim that men and women commit assaults in equal numbers and with equal severity defies common sense. It is simply untrue. We acknowledge that women use aggression and violence in intimate relationships and not always in self-defense. But we also contend that relying on family conflict studies that utilize the Conflict Tactics Study (CTS)—which simply counts acts of violence without accounting for the circumstances under which these acts occur and the size and strength of the people involved—is deceptive (Kimmel 2002). In a conflict study, a push in response to a beating would be scored as one conflict tactic for each party.*

*While there are women who kill their male partners for reasons other than self-defense, the numbers pale in comparison to men who kill their female partners when the female partner is trying to end an abusive relationship. In 2006, the U.S. Department of Justice reported that the number of men murdered by an intimate since 1976 had dropped by 70 percent. One third of female murder victims were killed by an intimate, while only three percent of male murder victims were killed by an intimate.*

***Stating that domestic violence is gender neutral is not only disingenuous, but also has serious public policy implications.*** *How often do you read about a woman killing her husband and the couple's children because the man is trying to leave the relationship? How many men are raped by an abusive woman as an act designed to punish or retaliate? Yet in city after city, male batterers stalk and murder their partners. Men and women use violence in very different ways, and therefore our response must be different.*

\*I've included much longer quotes than normal in this post because quoting the full response is the only way to show that they never do get around to refuting the claims Dutton and Corvo make about the nature of the model itself.