

RE: *Gender-Inclusive Treatment of Intimate Partner Abuse, Second Edition: Evidence-Based Approaches* by John Hamel (2013)

I agree with several other researchers and program leaders in thinking that John Hamel has caused a great disservice to the field. His zealous promotion of the gender-neutral view of domestic violence has confused and disrupted 30 years of building some fundamental concepts, principles and practices. These gender-based practices are, moreover, corroborated by research in the criminal justice field and related fields, as well as in the domestic violence field, as our most recent book, *The future of batterer programs: reassessing evidence-based practice* documents.

I have not read Hamel's new edition of *Gender-inclusive treatment* that adds the assertion of being "evidence-based practice", but the author's summary of the previous edition goes to the heart of it: "Rich with research that shows women are abusive within relationships at rates comparable to men, the book eschews the field's reliance on traditional domestic violence theory and treatment, which favors violence interventions for men and victim services for women and ignores the dynamics of the majority of violent relationships."

Hamel appears to have little or no research experience himself as suggested in his naiveté towards the qualifications, limitations, and nuances of research he cites. And like many others promoting an agenda, he also ignores or misrepresents counter information and the broader research discourse. He has a tendency to be highly selective in the studies he uses to debunk gender-based program and over generalizes from them. He and his colleagues have misrepresented research that we've conducted. The research "evidence" that Hamel has been promoting through the journal he edits, *Partner Abuse*, and the conferences he organizes and attends furthers this assessment. His articles in *Partner Abuse*, and those of many of the other authors in the journal, strike me as mostly polemics. The caricatures of what they denounce as an ideological feminist approach just don't fit the field's evolution and current status.

The journal led by Hamel has set up a series of research review articles under the title, *Partner Abuse State of the Knowledge (PASK)*, which are also available at a PASK website. They are not "new research" as their publicity claims but rehash the research from the gender-neutral position. There is of course something to learn from all of this, but many of the reviews are so biased that they become misleading. The endorsement of the father's rights groups of Hamel's work and journal is also a concern. Hamel and his sympathizers admittedly are very well organized and vocal, and as a result have gotten a lot more attention and distraction than they probably deserve.

I do concede that some of Hamel's suggestions about assessment of couples and women's part in the violence may be helpful to some clinicians. But it does fall short in getting at the context and dynamics of women's violence and can be misleading in the long run. The Vista program (Lisa Larance) and Turning Points program (Melissa Scaia and Laura Connelly) are just two examples of programs for women who are violent or use force that offer a much more savvy and gendered treatment approach. They also

are truer to the broader research findings and interpretations about domestic violence and domestic violence intervention.

Moreover, the special issue of *Violence Against Women* (Vol.18, No. 9, 2012) is just one of many sources that lay out counter information to Hamel's claims. Our *The Future of Batterer Programs* also offers an extensive overview of the "evidence" supporting gender-based programs for domestic violence perpetrators. One section specifically addresses the leading studies on couples counseling and lays out the glaring limitations of them. These limitations apply to Linda' Mills recent article on Peace Circles for couples as well. There is of course plenty more to say on this subject, but I think most have reached the point of ignoring Hamel and his faction and keep working at what we know is a better way. One indication of this is Michael Paymar's new revision of the Duluth Model book, *Violent No More: Helping Men Who Batter and the Counselors Who Work With Them* (in press).