

The Portrayal of Domestic Violence in the Broadway Musical *Chicago*:
Historical Context, Musical Analysis, and Musical Theater as Violence Prevention

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	pg. 4
Chapter 1: Domestic Violence Definitions, Theories, and Prevention Methods.....	pg. 8
Domestic Violence Definitions.....	pg. 8
Prevention Method Exploration.....	pg. 20
Arts-Based Domestic Violence Prevention.....	pg. 28
Chapter 2: Analysis of <i>Chicago</i> and its Meaning Throughout the Years.....	pg. 41
Part 1: Analysis of <i>Chicago</i> Within the Context of When It Was Written - 1975	
Analysis of the Initial Act of Violence Within <i>Chicago</i>	pg. 42
Victim Blaming in “Cell Block Tango”: “He had it coming”.....	pg. 46
Roxie and Domestic Violence Legislation in the 1970s.....	pg. 49
Amos as a Victim of Domestic Violence.....	pg. 55
Part II: Analysis of the 2002 <i>Chicago</i> film	
Background on Changes in Domestic Violence Legislation and Social Programs from the	
1970s to the Early 2000s.....	pg. 62
Changes to the Initial Act of Violence in the Film.....	pg. 66
Sexualization of “Cell Block Tango”.....	pg. 72
Anti-Essentialism and Roxie in the Legal System in 2002.....	pg. 75
Amos and Male Victimhood Today.....	pg. 78
Chapter 3: Domestic Violence Prevention and the Musical <i>Chicago</i>	pg. 81
Torn Ticket’s Production of <i>Chicago</i> in 2017: Directorial Decisions and Their	
Implications Today.....	pg. 82

Domestic Violence Prevention and *Chicago* - Intervention Methods.....pg. 87

Results.....pg. 94

Discussion.....pg. 104

Weaknesses of the Intervention and Improvements for the Future.....pg. 106

Further Developments for the Future.....pg. 110

Conclusion.....pg. 117

Appendix.....pg. 118

Bibliography.....pg. 125

Introduction

Late November of 2014 I sat in the theater of the high school from which I had graduated a year ago. I had returned to watch my little sister perform in her first high school musical, *Little Shop of Horrors*, in which she played one of six “Doo-Wop Girls:” sassy street urchins who musically narrated the twisted story. Hours ago, I had been on the plane from Tufts to Minneapolis where I was doing reading for my Women’s Health class. That week, we were focusing on Domestic Violence (DV) and on the plane I read first hand accounts of survivors and a police report for the case of a woman who was murdered by her abusive husband. It was a sobering plane ride. Thus, when I sat down in the theater that evening, I was ready to be immersed in a musical story in which I could forget the true horrors of violence in the world. Unfortunately, my experience was not so pleasant: *Little Shop of Horrors* actually depicts several instances of DV throughout the musical and in one scene, I found myself surrounded by an audience *laughing* as they witnessed the main female character, Audrey, be verbally and emotionally abused by her sadistic boyfriend. The musical constantly made comedic references to Audrey’s abusive situation and while the whole audience seemed to find them funny, I was highly disturbed by the fact that any portrayal of this kind of DV could be laughed at in this way.

Domestic violence is a real and pressing public health issue, not a joke to be laughed at and glossed over. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) states that one out of every three women and one out of every four men will be abused in some way at some point in their lifetime. What is more, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state that 1.5 million women and 830,000 men are abused annually. Cases of domestic violence can be fatal as well: 30-40% of women murdered in the US annually are killed by an intimate partner or

former partner and 67-72% of those cases were preceded by DV against the female partner (Campbell, Baty, Laughon, & Woods, 2009). Additionally, the effects of DV last far beyond the incidences of abuse themselves, manifesting in both a decrease in physical and mental health. Physically, women who experience DV may live with “a combination of ongoing stress and exacerbations of acute stress related to episodes of physical, psychological, and sexual violence” (Campbell, Baty, Laughon, & Woods, 2009) resulting biological symptoms such as hypertension, migraines, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), and Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs). In terms of the impact of abuse on mental health, compared with the general population, abused women have a significantly higher mean prevalence rates of depression, suicidality, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), alcohol abuse, and drug abuse (Campbell, Baty, Laughon, & Woods, 2009). In fact, 66% of post-abused women continued to have PTSD symptoms, despite being out of their abusive relationships, on average of 9 years (Campbell, Baty, Laughon, & Woods, 2009).

Thus, witnessing the audience of Edina High School’s *Little Shop of Horrors* laugh in the face of abuse left me feeling confused, and the feeling stuck. I needed to understand why it was that DV could be found so acceptable as to be humorous in any situation. As I thought more about the abuse in *Little Shop of Horrors*, I began to realize that it was far from the only musical that portrayed DV - and in a problematic way at that. After some research, I discovered that of the top ten most popular musicals to be performed in high schools, 50% deal with DV in some way (National Public Radio, 2016). Throughout the last year, I also compiled a list of over 30 musicals that portray DV within the show (SEE APPENDIX I). This got me thinking: how does the portrayal of DV in musical theater both reflect and shape our views about this public health

issue? Many times DV is shown in a problematic way in musical theater - both in the presentation of the violence itself and the way it is used as a device for the plot of the show as a whole. In many cases, perhaps the portrayal is the product of another time, as I will explore in great depth in Chapter 2 with the musical *Chicago*. But then what does it mean for the understanding of Domestic Violence as a social issue that we are still performing these shows, unchanged, today? I argue that by performing these problematic shows, we are continuously perpetuating harmful beliefs and attitudes towards DV. If this is in fact the case - and we do not want to stop performing these musicals - what, then, can be done to address these problematic portrayals both for the cast and the audience who come to see the show? Within this paper, I develop an intervention to address that question, exploring how musical theater can be used as a platform for violence prevention.

To begin, in Chapter 1 I establish definitions of DV and explore theories for why perpetrators become abusive and why victims stay in abusive relationships. With these definitions and theories, I hope to establish a foundational understanding of DV to apply to my analysis of the musical *Chicago* in Chapter 2. For the remainder of Chapter 1, I examine different DV prevention methods from standard public health methods to arts-based methods. I then use this understanding of different prevention methods to synthesize my own intervention, the methods of which are laid out in Chapter 3. In Chapter 2, I analyze the 1975 musical *Chicago*, written by Fosse, Kander, and Ebb, to determine what within the scenes that portray DV is problematic. Finally, within Chapter 3, I synthesize what I explored in Chapter 1 regarding DV prevention methods and the scenes I established to be problematic within Chapter 2 to develop my own domestic violence prevention program to be implemented in conjunction with

Tufts University's spring 2017 production of the musical *Chicago*. Further in Chapter 3, I reveal how my intervention successfully enhanced knowledge of DV and shifted attitudes towards the abuse portrayed within the show, concluding by proposing improvements and additions to the program for the future.

Chapter 1:

Domestic Violence Definitions, Theories, and Prevention Methods

Domestic Violence Definitions

To lay the foundation for this project, I will begin by exploring various definitions of Domestic Violence (DV), synthesizing the information into the definition of DV I will use in this paper. Further, in this section, I define who can be considered a victim of DV as well as theories for why perpetrators engage in DV how DV functions in a relationship, and why victims would remain in an abusive situation. I will shed light on debates within the literature to highlight the complexities of a Public Health issue that has been the object of debate for decades. Ultimately, my goal for this section is to provide a comprehensive understanding of DV to apply as a framework for my analysis of the musical *Chicago* in the following chapter.

Within the literature, it is clear that there is no single agreed upon definition for domestic violence. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) defines “Domestic Violence” as follows:

Domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and emotional abuse. The frequency and severity of domestic violence can vary dramatically; however, the one constant component of domestic violence is one partner’s consistent efforts to maintain power and control over the other.

("What is Domestic Violence?", 2017)

Similarly, Margi Laird McCue in her book "Domestic Violence: A Reference Handbook" defines DV as "the emotional, physical, psychological, or sexual abuse perpetrated against a person by that person's spouse, former spouse, partner, former partner, or by the other parent of a minor child. Abuse may include threats, harm, injury, harassment, control, terrorism, or damage to living beings or property" (McCue, 1995). Michael Johnson claims that there are four types of DV: "coercively controlling tactics (various kinds of abuse used to maintain power), situational couple violence (arises out of specific instances), mutual violent control (each member of the couple trying to control the other), and intimate terrorism" (Goodman, 2012). While Joseph Biden's Delaware law defines DV as the occurrence of one or more of the following: "Actual physical injury or sexual offenses; Threatening physical injury or sexual offense; Damaging, destroying, or taking properties; Trespassing; Child abuse; Kidnapping; Unlawful imprisonment; Interference with custody; Causing fear or emotional distress; Any other conduct that a reasonable person would find threatening or harmful" (Davis, 2008).

It is also important to note that "battering" is its own specific term, a category of DV defined as "a process of deliberate intimidation intended to coerce the victim to the will of the victimizer" (McCue, 1995). In his book "Domestic Violence: Intervention, Prevention Policies, and Solutions," Richard Davis emphasizes that battering can occur without physical assault and that a batterer is not out of control but rather is willfully controlling their partner. While coercion and control are defined as "the use of force or threats to compel or dispel a particular response" and "structural forms of deprivation, exploitation, and command that compel obedience" respectively (Goodman, 2012).

Pence and Dasgupta refer to five different types of perpetrators and DV situations: Batterers, Resistive/Reactive Violence, Situational Violence, Pathological Abuse, and Antisocial Abusers (Pence, Dasgupta, 2006). Pence and Dasgupta define Battering as follows: “an ongoing patterned use of intimidation, coercion, and violence as well as other tactics of control to establish and maintain a relationship of dominance over an intimate partner” (Pence, Dasgupta, 2006). In this kind of DV, systems of dominance are normalized and abuse is a constant within the relationship. Next, Pence and Dasgupta define “Resistive/Reactive Violence” as “resisting domination and battering by using force themselves. Goals are to escape and/or stop violence being perpetrated against them and/or establish a semblance of parity in relationship to protect themselves” (Pence, Dasgupta, 2006). Within this kind of abusive situation, the initial victim uses force only after the original perpetrator. The third kind of abusive situation defined is “Situational Violence” in which violence is used to “express anger, disapproval, or reach an objective” (Pence, Dasgupta, 2006) but with this kind of DV it follows no continuous pattern of coercion or lingering fear from the victim. The next kind of DV is “Pathological Abuse” in which the perpetrator “abuses alcohol or drugs, suffers from mental illness or physical disorders, or has neurological damage” (Pence, Dasgupta, 2006), which causes the outburst of violent behavior. Finally, the final kind of abuse defined is “Antisocial Abuse” in which “individual has little understanding of the consequences of their behaviors and no feeling of shame or remorse regarding their violence” (Pence, Dasgupta, 2006). Pence and Dasgupta emphasize in their article “Re-examining Battering” that any of these kinds of DV can be lethal.

While there are variations between specific definitions of DV, there are key components that remain throughout: DV is not limited to physical violence. Rather, emotional abuse, sexual

abuse, threats of abuse, coercion, stalking, and economic abuse are recognized as equally being DV. Additionally, there is an emphasis on DV as *repeated* acts of any of these kinds of violence, though isolated violent events can, and often do, build into DV.

There is less consensus on who can be considered a victim of DV. For example, McCue's "Domestic Violence: A Reference Handbook" (1995) describes victims of Domestic Violence as "that person's [(the batterer's)] spouse, former spouse, partner, former partner, or by the other parent of a minor child." Joseph Biden's Delaware law defines DV victims as "'family' or 'household members'" (Davis, 2008). Thus, the majority of definitions define DV victims as intimate partners or those that live in the home of the abuser, which is why often DV is considered synonymous with the term "intimate partner violence." However, leading scholars on DV take a more expansive view of DV victims. Richard Davis, for example, explains in his book "Domestic Violence: Intervention, Prevention Policies, and Solutions" that Domestic Abuse is not limited to romantic partners but rather abuse can be parents to children, sibling to sibling, against the elderly, and against the disabled. Thus, for the purpose of this paper, I will expand my definition of DV to include not only romantic partners (of all genders and sexualities), but also abuse against children, siblings, the elderly, and the disabled.

Additionally, while many definitions of DV cite "power and control" as the driving force behind abuse used, Richard Davis claims that "there is little doubt that the issues of power and control are not the only cause of domestic violence" (Davis, 2008). He cites three big picture reasons for why people use violent behavior:

1. To change the behavior of another in order to suit their own purposes
2. Revenge, retribution, jealousy, or seeking justice for a real or perceived wrong

3. To defend or advance their perceived standing in the family or community
(Davis, 2008).

While this seems a comprehensive theory for the different reasons one may use violence against another, since the beginning of the movement to expose and criminalize DV, many theories have emerged as to why one partner is abusive to the other and why the other partner would “choose to stay” in that abusive relationship. When many of these theories first emerged, there was the idea that men were the only abusers and women the only victims, thus when I explain the early theories, I will cite the original gender roles the theories conceived of. It is important to note all of the theories surrounding DV in the way in which they were originally presented even if today they have proven to be inaccurate or not showing the whole picture. These theories were very prominent and widely accepted in American society as a comprehensive understanding of the manifestation of DV when many of the musicals featuring DV the most heavily were written (SEE APPENDIX I for more about the timeframe of many musicals portraying DV). Thus, it will be important to examine how past theories were reflected in the shows and thus still presented today.

The earliest theory for why women stayed in a relationship with an abusive spouse was established by Freudian theorist Helene Deutsch in the 1930s and presented the idea that women were inherently masochistic and therefore found it sexually fulfilling to be abused by their husbands (McCue, 1995). In 1964, John Snell, Richard Rosenwald, and Ames Robey had an article published in a professional journal of psychology, which confirmed the early Freudian theory citing their findings that women who speak out against their husbands’ abuse were “aggressive, masculine, frigid,... and masochistic” (McCue, 1995). This idea of female

masochism even continued into the late 1980s. A 1987 survey showed that 38% of Americans believed women were at least partially responsible for their battery and 41% believed they were a little masochistic to stay in the relationship (Goodmark, 2012). Thus began a long history of placing blame on the victim when studying the causes of DV.

While many people pushed back on this view, many still took a very singular view of the issue. The first of the pushback theories to gain significant traction was established in the mid 1970s and was called the “Theory of Learned Helplessness.” This theory focused on behavior rather than individual pathologies and demonstrated the idea that due to repeated abuse, women learned to become victims (Goodmark, 2012). This “learned helplessness” is a coping strategy that comes out of repeated violent abuse and the looming threat of continued abuse in which women detach themselves as a means of dealing with this continuous abuse (Follingstad, Neckerman, & Vormbrock, 1988). As a result women lose a feeling of invulnerability and develop a depression that manifest itself in a complete feeling of helplessness (Follingstad, Neckerman, & Vormbrock, 1988). Unfortunately, this coping strategy results in the victim’s inability to take immediate action to stop the abuse as they feel as if there is nothing that can be done (Follingstad, Neckerman, & Vormbrock, 1988). However, this theory has largely been dismissed as a good explanation today as it was largely “rooted in assumptions and observations rather than facts” (Goodman, 2012).

The “Theory of Learned Helplessness” developed further into a theory called “Battered Woman Syndrome,” established in 1984 that similarly presented the idea that women suffering from abuse had low self-esteem, were more depressed, and perceived others as controlling their lives (McCue, 1995). However, this theory was rejected by many as it reinforced sexist

stereotypes about women's passivity. Both of these theories were firmly rooted in the idea of the patriarchy that feminists of the 1970s and 1980s were trying to establish as a social order that set men at a higher status as women and gave men the right to exert their power over women in any way they could. Specifically this idea was pushed by Dominance Feminists (a movement I will explore and explain in greater detail in Chapter 2) who wanted to affirm the idea that the patriarchal power structure was forcing women into the role of the subversive victim.

This idea of the passive, helpless victim also manifested itself in theories that sought to explain how DV worked. The first such theory was the "Cycle of Violence Theory" (Goodman, 2012). This theory stated that there were three phases of DV that would occur in a cyclical pattern. The first was called the "tension building phase" (Goodman, 2012). In this phase, no violent action has yet taken place but there is a feeling that the batterer is upset and violent behavior is imminent. The victim is "walking on eggshells" in this phase, hoping not to do anything that will cause the batterer to release their violent behavior. The second phase that inevitably follows is the "acute battering phase." Something has happened that finally sets the batterer over the edge and he violently abuses his partner. When this theory was established, there was a heavy focus on physical assault as the main form of DV so the "acute battering phase" implies that the victim experiences physical violence. Finally, comes the "honeymoon phase." The batterer says that he is sorry and treats the victim with an overwhelming amount of love. The victim feels as though the batterer has really changed his ways and decides to give him another chance. All is well until the couple enters the "tension-building phase" when the victim again feels as though the batterer could become dangerous. But by that time, the victim is already locked in this vicious cycle of violence (Brewster, 2002).

There are many issues with this cycle of violence the first being that it focuses primarily on physical abuse and fails to capture the complexities of emotional and sexual assault and how those forms of violence manifest themselves within a DV relationship (Goodman, 2012). Additionally, the cycle reflects the Dominance Feminist view of women as trapped and passive victims with no agency within the relationship (Goodman, 2012). Women are unable to create change as they are trapped inside the cycle. What is more, this cycle tends to be taken very literally in court and thus because it does not demonstrate any of the complexities of a true DV relationship, has the ability to discount many people's experience with DV.

To combat this notion of a victim as a passive subject with no agency within the patriarchy, the "Survivor Theory" was established in 1993. This theory attempted to explain why women would stay in a harmful relationship without labeling women as passive or weak. Thus, Survivor Theory is the idea that having determined that help is not available, women subjected to abuse may come up with the rational conclusion that they are more likely to survive if they endure (Goodman, 2012). Therefore, it is not a failure on the part of the individual women but rather a failure of the system that has limited resources to help (Brewster, 2002). However, while "survivor" is definitely stronger language than helpless victim, all of these theories are still focusing on why women do not leave as if leaving is the ultimate goal, which also oversimplifies the issue (Goodman, 2012). Additionally, spending so much energy attempting to explain the behavior of the victim can lead to a form of victim blaming (McCue, 1995). Rather than looking at the behavior of men themselves, these theories represent an "enormous amount of effort to explain male behavior by looking at the characteristics of women" (McCue, 1995).

While many of these theories do focus on the behavior of women rather than the actions of men, theorists have more recently attempted to explain the different reasons why men would abuse their partners. In 1994, Stuart established that there are three types of male abusers: “family only, borderline/dysphoric, generally violent/antisocial” (Goodman, 2012). Goodman describes “family only” violent men as those with no mental illness and in which the violence is confined solely to the family. The second kind of abuser is the “dysphoric/borderline,” which is defined as a man who suffers from depression and anger and is more violent than the “family only” man though the violence is typically confined to the family. One who is “dysphoric/borderline” is psychologically distressed. The last type of abuser, the “generally violent/antisocial” abuser, is defined as a man more likely to be a substance abuser who has committed more serious violent crimes (including psychological and sexual abuse) (Goodman, 2012). This kind of man is typically violent towards all people, not just within the family. Again, however, by specifically talking about the three types of *men* who abuse their wives, a heteronormative, intimate partner standard is established, which erases the experiences of homosexual couples, female on male violence, and other forms of family battering (parent to children, sibling to sibling, against the elderly, and against the disabled).

Other theories look at how society at large has shaped a culture in which violence seems to be an acceptable way to deal with issues, broadly called the “Systems Theory.” Within the Systems Theory, however, there are different ideas of how the social system manifests itself in an abusive relationship. Within the family there is the idea that violence is a product of a familial system based off the notion that each family member has a specific role (McCue, 1995). If a family member challenges the system, another member has to retaliate to regain balance in the

system and one method of regaining balance is through the use of violence (McCue, 1995). Dominance feminists see a larger system at play: the patriarchy, which is the idea that male domination of women in the sexual sphere was the primary vehicle for women's continued subordination in society (Goodman, 2012). The leader of the dominance feminist movement claimed that within the patriarchal society, women were taught to act submissive in order to survive.

However, some scholars disagree with the idea that the patriarchy is the overarching system driving high rates of abuse as the ratio of male to female victims of DV is largely equal (Straus, 2009). Straus stresses in his article about the "Gender Symmetry" of DV that the most prevalent pattern of abuse is "mutual violence" - meaning each member of the relationship, (male and female, when looking at a heteronormative relationship) behave abusively towards each other - and when violence is not mutual, female-only and male-only partner violence occur with relatively equal frequencies among married couples (Goldenson, Geffner, Foster, & Clipson, 2007). While the statistics regarding men as victims of DV have been available for almost four decades, DV definitions, theories, and programs heavily feature a gender biased language in which the victim is gendered as female and the perpetrator is gendered as male. Straus suggests that the reason for this bias is that advocates fear that if statistics that show incidence of violence being relatively equal among men and women, support for services of female victims could be undermined. This is important to consider because while the incidence of abuse is relatively equal for both male and female victims, women are much more likely to sustain serious injury from abusive situations than men (Straus, 2009).

However, Straus speaks to a need to advocate for male DV victims not only for the sake of the men in abusive relationships but the women as well. By supporting the end of female perpetrated DV, Straus is in no way attempting to undermine support for female victims. Rather, he expresses that ending partner violence by women is an essential step in preventing violence against women, as female violence evokes retaliation and contributes to legitimizing male partner violence (Straus, 2009). Because mutual violence is the most common form of violence, if, within a heterosexual relationship, a woman strikes a man, the man is likely to strike her back as retaliation. Thus, providing resources for both female batterers and male batterers equally could reduce the retaliation against mutual violence for both men and women. Additionally, Straus stresses that “a focus on preventing minor violence by women as well as men reflects the belief that all violence in relationships is wrong, regardless of whether it causes injury, fear, or distress in the other person” (Straus, 2009). It is important to condemn the use of any sort of violence in a relationship, not only (and importantly) the extreme physical violence, but the minor violence that likewise causes pain and distress.

Within the discussion of the patriarchy and “gender symmetry” in understanding of how DV functions, a group that is commonly and detrimentally ignored are those that are in non-heterosexual relationships. When DV was developing as a public health issue, there was a well believed myth that violence rarely occurred in same-sex relationships, as lesbian relationships were believed to be more “peaceful and egalitarian” and gay males were thought to be more “enlightened and sensitive” (Elliot, 1996). However, statistics show that in fact same-sex couples fall victim to DV at roughly the same rate as heterosexual couples with the incidence rate of DV being between 25-50% in same-sex couples (Alexander, 2002). This high

incidence of DV in same-sex couples further points to DV being less of an issue of gender but rather an issue of power (Elliot, 1996). What is more, same-sex couples face great difficulties when it comes to receiving treatment and support for abuse. LGBTQ-identifying people in same-sex relationships often hesitate to report abuse due to a fear of being persecuted by the community and authorities for their sexual identity (Mendez, 1996). This is a particular concern for LGBTQ-identifying people in rural communities and people of color who sometimes fear even more severe mistreatment in the criminal justice system than in their abusive relationships (Mendez, 1996).

Unfortunately, the many complexities surrounding the general lack of understanding about the manifestation of DV in same-sex relationships is beyond the scope of this project. The vast majority of musical theater shows focus on heterosexual relationships and those that portray same-sex couples largely do not deal in any way with abuse. This is especially true for this thesis, in which I am focusing my attention almost entirely on scenes in *Chicago* in which abuse occurs between heterosexual couples. For the future, I hope to expand my work to analyze the very few musicals that do portray complex same-sex relationships on stage.

As theories and definitions develop, DV remains as pressing of an issue as ever. The 2015 Domestic Violence Counts National Summary measured the volume of those seeking assistance for DV from 1,752 out of 1,894 identified DV programs in the United States ("National Network to End Domestic Violence | Domestic Violence Counts: Census 2015 Report", 2017). The survey shows that on September 16th, 2015, 71,828 victims sought assistance from these DV programs in the United States. Of that 71,828, 21,322 called a DV hotline - with the National Domestic Violence Hotline answering on average more than 14 calls

a minute - and 27,708 attended prevention and education trainings ("National Network to End Domestic Violence | Domestic Violence Counts: Census 2015 Report", 2017). While tens of thousands of were sufficiently supported by these programs and services, there were still 12,197 unmet requests for services that day, 63% of which were for housing with causes for unmet needs largely being due to a reduction in federal funding for these DV programs ("National Network to End Domestic Violence | Domestic Violence Counts: Census 2015 Report", 2017). The sheer volume of people seeking relief from abusive situations in one day - and the large percentage of people who are unable to receive services - speaks to the need to seek out effective Evidence-Based Public Health DV prevention methods with the goal to reduce the number of people who find themselves in abusive situations.

Prevention Method Exploration

Primary prevention can be defined as the prevention of a disease before it occurs - the act of targeting for change “factors that can cause a particular problem behavior or disease in order to break the chain of causation” (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009). Within this section, I examine established public health intervention and primary prevention programs for DV. I explore methods for delivering the most effective intervention both to the general population as well as those most at risk for encountering DV both as a victim and a perpetrator. Throughout this section, I wish to establish what public health practices generally have determined to be key components to a successful DV prevention program in order to apply them to the arts-based prevention program I would like to develop.

When looking at DV as the “problem behavior” or “disease,” prevention programming can take many forms and can be done on many different levels. Gordon cites three categories for prevention effort: “Universal,” in which the prevention program is targeted towards and advocates for a general population, “Selective,” in which the prevention effort is designed for groups whose risk is above average, and “Indicated,” in which prevention programs are targeted towards those individuals/groups at the greatest risk (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009).

A universal approach to prevention is important for changing the attitudes and beliefs towards DV of the population as a whole and for promoting community discussion of the issue as, according to McCue (1995), “the greatest impediment to the prevention of DV has been the curtain of silence surrounding the issue” (McCue, 1995). Universal programs have the benefit of targeting a whole community for change as “primary prevention of Intimate Partner Violence [(IPV)] must focus on creating a safe environment and establishing behaviors that do not condone IPV through inaction on community and societal levels” (Campbell, Baty, Laughon, & Woods, 2009). Remaining silent on the issue of DV means an inherent lack of knowledge and understanding of the issue within a population. Without knowledge and understanding of DV, abuse becomes more difficult to identify and those that find themselves within an abusive relationship may be unaware that they are experiencing abuse. Silence on the issue could mean that resources for assisting victims remain undisclosed and survivors may find themselves unaware of the ways in which they can receive help. Furthermore, by remaining silent about DV within the population as a whole, there is a risk that said silence will result in a failure by the community to take action to prevent and halt DV. By failing to take any action against DV, a community is effectively condoning DV behaviors as nothing is being done to stop the abuse.

The inaction demonstrating that this kind of intimate partner violence is not worth being addressed and is normal within our society.

Therefore, one extremely important component of DV prevention is “awareness and education programs directed at the general public” (McCue, 1995) with the goal of informing the community as to what DV entails in order to resist the normalization of violence and promote concrete action to halt abusive behaviors. Educational and awareness programs are can be effectively implemented in established educational settings such as schools and are, in fact, most effective when they are directly incorporated into the regular educational environment (Kisiel et al., 2006). These education programs are further enhanced when they incorporate interactive skills-based components and provide participants with opportunities to develop strong positive relationships with others, including parents and peers (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009). One method for prevention that is highly effective in incorporating these important elements is an arts-based approach for prevention - specifically music- and theater-based programs - which I will explore in great detail later in this chapter. Arts-based violence prevention programs place special emphasis on interactive learning and community and communication building.

In terms of what specifically to address within DV prevention programing, M. Straus suggests educating the public on the most common forms of DV and emphasizing the burden of DV based on gender. Statistically speaking, as the most common form of DV is mutual and minor violence (Goldenson, Geffner, Foster, & Clipson, 2007), it is important for universal education programs reaching the majority of the population to focus heavily on this form of abuse. Straus stresses that since severe partner violence is already recognized as unacceptable (Straus, 2009), education effort does not need to emphasize this kind of violence. Additionally,

prevention of minor violence may prevent escalation into more severe forms of violence (Straus, 2009). To achieve these educational goals, Straus promotes the following as the most important messages for DV prevention: First, assert that, except in self-defense, physical violence is not acceptable and explicitly state this applies to girls and women as well as boys and men. Second, increase promotion of positive messages about relationships as prevention methods will be most successful if they focus on healthy relationships (Straus, 2009). Thus, universal educational programs should focus on the most common and most accepted form of DV: minor and mutual violence.

A second overarching component of DV prevention focuses on the Selective Category of prevention effort in which groups whose risk of being affected by the pathology is above average is targeted (Gordon, 2015). For DV prevention, this involves targeting specific risk factors that make people more likely to become a victim or a perpetrator of DV. However, a key challenge for this category of prevention is concretely defining who is more at risk. Knowing whom to target for Selective category of prevention and when is tricky but can provide more direct and targeted prevention. This addresses the drawback of a Universal category of prevention, which is that resources go into delivering an intervention to many member of the population who would never have used dating violence anyway (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009). As becoming a victim of DV can occur at any age, it is difficult to define objectively when to best begin an effective prevention program, as it is important for prevention programs to begin at an age when said program will be relevant but before the problem sets in (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009). The Linkage Study shows findings that serious dating behavior begins, on average around eighth grade and that 7% of sixth graders, 11.12% of seventh graders, and 11.32% of eighth

graders indicated they had hit someone they were dating during the previous months (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009). Thus, intimate partner violence seems to begin early in dating behavior and can continue for a lifetime. However, within this population of people who engage in DV, what are the factors that put people most at risk?

Some of the greatest risk factors for DV perpetrators and victims include: exposure to child abuse and maltreatment; trauma symptoms; attitudes that are accepting of dating abuse; late childhood and early adolescent antisocial behavior; exposure to harsh parenting practices; exposure to inconsistent discipline (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009); and witnessing parental abuse as a child (Goldenson, Geffner, Foster, & Clipson, 2007). Thus, Selective prevention with the goal of specifically addressing these risk factors can include: (1) Changing the family context by promoting improved parenting skills related to discipline, supervision, and monitoring; and (2) preventing behavioral precursors to dating violence such as antisocial behaviors, aggression, delinquency, and alcohol or substance use (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009). Targeting these specific risk factors within DV prevention programming, has the potential to stop violent tendencies before engaging in DV even becomes a possibility.

The last category for prevention effort is Indicated prevention programming designed for individuals and groups at the highest risk of engaging in abusive behavior (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009). When looking at DV, it is important for interventions especially, but prevention as well, to target specific kinds of perpetrators of DV. There are many different kinds of perpetrators and certain intervention techniques work of only certain kinds of abuse. The first type is broadly batterers, or those that engage in patterns of abuse in order to systematically retain power over their victim (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006). For batterers, the most effective

intervention and prevention methods include (1) changing beliefs by engaging batterers in education programs, public education campaigns, or empowerment workshops with victims (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006); (2) creating consequences both legal and social (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006) such as real threats of incarceration (legal) or resisting normalization of abuse within a community so batterers are fully perceived as criminals (social); (3) Provide external monitoring (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006) including not only monitoring by official law enforcement but promoting action within communities so community members may be able to recognize and report signs of violent behaviors; and (4) create equality in gender roles (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006) as patriarchal attitudes lead to the belief that DV is an acceptable way to maintain control in a relationship.

The second type of DV to be specifically addressed is Resistive/Reactive Violence in which the victim uses violence against the original perpetrator as a means to resist abuse or get out of an abusive situation (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006). Ways to stop or prevent this kind of violence include: (1) creating new options for victim (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006) such as new techniques for conflict management and negotiation that do not escalate violent behavior into further violence; (2) End battery against the victim (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006) that way the victim will not feel the need to physically retaliate if there is no violence initially taken against them; and (3) make viable resources available to the victim (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006) such that the victim does not need to feel trapped in the abusive relationship so much so that they resort to violence themselves.

The third type of DV is Situational Violence, the most common form of DV, in which violence arises not out of a systematic pattern of abuse but out of a specific circumstance or

event. If situational violence begins to occur over and over, it is no longer situational violence but rather battery and must be treated as such. Some methods for approaching situational violence specifically include: (1) create new behavior options (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006) again, such as conflict management and negotiation that do not escalate an emotional situation to violent behavior; and (2) resolve circumstances that lead to the use of violence perhaps by providing counseling programs such as anger management (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006).

The fourth type of DV to target under Indicated prevention programming is pathological violence in which the abuser suffers from some outside pathology which ultimately leads to their use of violence. Pathology can include mental illness such as bipolar disorder, narcissistic personality disorder, etc., or abuse of alcohol or drugs. Ways to prevent pathological abuse include (1) providing treatment for the pathology (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006) such as mental health counseling for mental illnesses or rehabilitation for alcohol and drug abuse; (2) create alternative behavior options (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006) such as conflict management and negotiation skills that can diffuse situations that have the potential to become violent; and (3) create consequences (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006) by instilling the possibility of being arrested for violence or establishing that one would be separated from their partner for their use of violent behavior.

Ultimately, after reviewing forms of prevention across the three categories key components of DV prevention can be synthesized into the following key points: DV prevention programs should (1) Be comprehensive (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009). Programs should address various risk factors at different levels of prevention (universal, selective, indicative) for the most far reaching results; (2) Prevention programs should incorporate interactive, skill-based

components (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009) that enhance peaceful conflict resolution and respectful communication skills (Kisiel et al., 2006). It is important for programs to be interactive rather than just lecture- or reading-based to engage participants for the best results; (3) Programs for DV prevention should provide participants with opportunities to develop strong positive relationships with others, including parents and peers (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009). Building a community that understands DV and is actively taking steps to prevent DV within the community is important to resist normalization of the issue (McCue, 1995); and lastly (4) prevention programs should be socioculturally relevant (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009) to best engage the community and ensure lasting interest in prevention.

For this project, I will propose a universal, arts-based DV prevention approach that can be easily implemented in educational environments from middle schools to universities. The theater - and music - based program that I have developed emerged from a synthesis of previous arts-based violence prevention programs that I will discuss throughout this chapter before laying out my specific program in Chapter 3. Importantly, these arts-based programs are educational programs designed to improve knowledge and change attitudes towards DV, interactive with skills-based components, and provide participants with opportunities to develop strong positive relationships with others. Additionally, they provide a safe environment in which participants can learn peaceful conflict resolution skills, respectful communication, and non-bullying behaviors. All of these components add up to being in line with previous research on what constitutes best practice for DV prevention within the field of Public Health.

Arts-Based Domestic Violence Prevention

Now that I have looked generally at effective DV prevention programs, I will dive specifically into arts-based prevention programs and how they have been used to prevent/reduce violent behavior and enhance prosocial behavior. In this section, I will touch briefly on the function of theater and music culturally and individually to give background to the assumption that music and theater have “power” in society to affect individuals. This affective “power” can be used to evoke emotions, which can, in turn, influence action, the basis for many of the interventions I will explore. I examine both theater- and music-based programs, hoping to synthesize what I present about both and apply that understanding to developing my intervention that uses musical theater as a platform for violence prevention.

Music and Theater serve a far greater purpose than mere entertainment. They are deeply ingrained in social and political thought and feeling and even have the potential to shape these cultural forces. Augusto Boal, creator of Theater of the Oppressed (which I will discuss in more detail later in this section) said of theater that it is “the representation of the real rather than the mere reproduction of it. The image of the real is as real as the image” (Boal, 2006). Theater (and music) have the power to represent human actions, thoughts, and emotions rather than to simply show them in another form (Boal, 1974). And while a story portrayed on stage may be fictional, the human actions, thoughts, and feelings portrayed within the narrative are in no way less *real*. This ability of the arts to portray humanity can serve a greater function in society. Ieva, et. al, authors of “Using Music Videos to Enhance Empathy in Counselors in Training” describes the arts thus: “Humanities that include film, drama, and music engage not only the intellectual but also emotions that may be helpful in achieving a deep understanding of the experience of others” (Ieva et al., 2009). Throughout this section, I will explore how through their portrayal of the

human experience, the arts have the ability to evoke empathy and compassion, allowing the audience to gain an understanding of the situation of others. Then I will examine how this ability can be applied further to develop more comprehensive DV prevention programs.

Not only can the arts help the audience to understand others, they can also allow for a deeper understanding and appreciation for the self, creating an environment in which we can examine our own actions and emotions to change what needs to change. In his book, "The Aesthetics of the Oppressed," Boal describes theater as follows: "Theater organizes human actions in time and space to discover who we are and what we can become. Theater can be a mirror and if we don't like what we see, we can rehearse modifications. Theater is an art that reveals our identity and a weapon that preserves it" (Boal, 2006). These art forms allow us to examine the actions of characters and engage in real human emotions outside our own narrative. Participating in theater allows us to explore different characters and personalities and rehearse for how we want our own lives and characters to be. Gladdings, an advocate for the arts in counseling, adds "the arts are a primary means of assisting individuals to become more in touch with themselves in order to experience the connectedness between mind and body" (Gladding, 1992). Thus, the arts allows for individual reflection and the ability to become more connected with one's own feelings and desires.

Besides the ability of the arts to engage the individual and individual understanding of self, the arts are able to bring individuals together to engage a community. Contrary to what some believe, the arts are not isolated in the realm of entertainment or "art for art's sake." Rather, the arts are entrenched in the workings of society and therefore often portray topics of political and social importance. As a result, "political affiliation transforms theater into a public

arena where performers and audience can engage with political issues in such a way that theater can actually have an impact on life and make a difference in the world” (Baiocchi, 2006).

Theater (and other forms of the humanities) by engaging with political and social issues can allow for performers and audience members to grapple with difficult issues in a safe environment where productive discussion of issues can begin. The arts can be a powerful tool for sending a political or social message that has the ability to affect change in the lives of those that experience it (Gordon, 2015). Thus, “the theater is not an innocent state of make believe but is part of a coercive economy” (Baiocchi, 2006). In other words, theater can potentially persuade audience members to think a certain way based on what they experience theatrically (Baker, 2008). With this idea in mind, “many social programs use theater as a tool to provoke community dialogue and envision a better future” (Brigell, 2010). Consequently, people are also brought together by the arts in order to form said community, “drawing people together across time and space” (Cohen-Cruz, 2006).

All of these positive social factors of the arts - their ability to evoke feelings of empathy and understanding in the audience member, their power to shape individual reflection and action, and the way in which they help to form a community and provokes dialogue within, allowing for the envisioning for a better future - aligns well with the key features of DV prevention techniques explored in the previous section. In fact, “theater-based techniques of [violence] prevention represent an alternative learning approach that integrates multiple modalities for learning” (Kisiel et al., 2006). A “notable advantage to theater-based approaches to Youth Violence Prevention is that theater is an engaging forum allowing students to act out, break down, analyze stages of a violent scene in a vivid manner within a contained, safe environment”

(Kisiel et al., 2006). Thus, within this section, I will analyze already existing theater-based and music-based violence prevention methods in order to synthesize the data into a prevention method that can be applied to musical theater. Specifically within this project I will be working to apply these prevention methods to Torn Ticket II's production of *Chicago*.

One form of social justice theater that has been extraordinarily influential to the development of theater-based violence prevention tactics is Augusto Boal's "Theater of the Oppressed." Theater of the Oppressed is a system of theatrical rehearsal and performance developed by Augusto Boal with the goal of "seeking the transformation of society in the direction of liberation of the oppressed" (Boal, 2006). The theatrical method combines "memory and imagination to reinvent the past and to invent the future. The form encourages reflection and transformation on individual and collective levels to soften the boundaries between life and art" (Lacy, 2006). One of the main components of the program is the idea of "rehearsing for reality." Bogad (2006) says of the notion, "Theater of the Oppressed expands the role of the rehearsal to help people at any level of political commitment not only to rehearse direct confrontation but to use improv to decide what their problems are, what they want, and what they are able to do about it" (Bogad, 2006). The objective within the idea of "rehearsing for reality" is that people who participate in Theater of the Oppressed can use the framework of theater to rehearse for their own lives. Within the safe environment that is the theater, they can work through conflicts they might face in their daily lives and even figure out what those conflicts are. Participants can rehearse conflict resolution skills and ways to improve communication that can be applied to real life.

Within the framework of Theater of the Oppressed, there are three different forms: Image Theater, Forum Theater, and Legislative Theater (Boal, 1974). Image Theater can be defined as “bringing people together in a common space to creatively, nonverbally, and dialogically express and develop their perceptions of the world, power structures, and oppressions” (Bogad, 2006). This method of Theater of the Oppressed is an exploration about the systematic oppression that can occur in society and then rehearsing ways to resist that oppression. Within this form, improv games and other kinds of theater games are played in order to explore the personal and communal feelings that emerge from the group. This form of Theater of the Oppressed could be very effective in both DV prevention and intervention. This kind of exploration can be used to uncover various systems that keep DV so prevalent in society and then can work through ways to resist them. For example, one of the greatest risk factors for DV is “attitudes that are accepting of Domestic Violence” (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009). Thus, improv games could be used to explore what those attitudes entail and how to fight against those attitudes that continue to perpetuate the use of DV.

The second form of Theater of the Oppressed is Forum Theater, which can be defined as providing a safe space, protected from ramifications, to experiment with “potentially contentious methods” (Bogad, 2006). This form of Theater of the Oppressed, involves playing theater games in which participants can express emotions and actions that would be viewed as controversial or harmful if expressed in regular society (Boal, 1974). By expressing these potentially contentious behaviors in this created safe space, participants will be able to get this behavior “out of their system,” so to speak, in order to avoid engaging in this potentially problematic behavior in real life. This method of Theater of the Oppressed could be a very good method to use as an

intervention for batterers or for people at risk for becoming batterers. This would allow batterers to express their negative emotions that cause them to use violence against a partner in a safe space. Then within the space, discussion could be had about how to change those problematic behaviors.

The final form of Theater of the Oppressed is called Legislative Theater and is defined as theatrical exploration that “can help a movement develop a parliamentary agenda” (Bogad, 2006). While I will not be focusing on this particular form of Theater of the Oppressed for my own prevention methods within the context of this project, this form of Theater of the Oppressed could really benefit the continued struggle of DV criminalization in court. This particular form of Theater of the Oppressed arose out of political unrest within Boal’s community in Brazil and their desire to make concrete change within society using their theater-based methods (Boal, 1974). The community would come together to devise a scenario for improved legislation, which Boal would record and tweak to make real legislation that could be proposed in court (Boal, 1974). Though “perhaps the theater is not revolutionary in itself, but it is surely the rehearsal for the revolution” (Brigell, 2010). Thus, though the theatrical activities alone may not bring about concrete action, such activities provide the safe space to develop ideas for revolutionary action and rehearse for their implementation. As the DV criminalization movement in the United States continues to fight for Anti-Essentialism and reform in court, the Legislative Theater method could provide an outlet for further discussion and development of legislative options.

Theater of the Oppressed is a form of theater that can be very applicable to real social movements - “networks of people engaged in sustained, continuous, collective action using methods beyond established institutional procedures” (Bogad, 2006) - and some researchers

already have. Forms of Theater of the Oppressed have been incorporated into Youth Violence Prevention Programming with great positive effects. In a study done by Kisiel et al., (2006), they cited crucial components of Youth Violence Prevention (YVP) programs as follows: (1) Interactive participation to teach students the application of skills and values in daily life; (2) Fostering relationship between students, staff, and family; (3) Reward positive behaviors; and (4) total school involvement (Kisiel et al., 2006). Additionally, within the study, the main goals were to (1) increase knowledge and awareness of the issue of violence; (2) Development of self-regulation skills; (3) Opportunities for practice, application, and feedback; and (4) Ongoing social support for desired changes in behavior (Kisiel et al., 2006). These key components and goals support the key aspects of DV prevention I cited earlier in the chapter.

To achieve these crucial components, the study implemented a theater-based program led by Urban Improv, a Boston-based theater troupe that specializes in the use of Theater of the Oppressed. The goal of the troupe within this study was to provide children with interactive opportunities to rehearse youth conflict scenarios with the hope that this rehearsal process will enhance real life ability to solve problems in a non-violent manner (Kisiel et al., 2006). This closely follows Boal's goals for Theater of the Oppressed with the ability to rehearse positive behavior changes in a safe and supportive environment (Boal, 1974). The program also aims to achieve key components of DV prevention by providing "interactive opportunities" to improve conflict resolution and communication strategies within their supportive community.

Urban Improv led the workshops as follows: First, the actors would act out a scene related to the topic of the week, something specific within the realm of violence prevention. Next, the director would stop the scene at a critical point (usually when violent behavior is just

about to take place) and allow the students to replace an actor in the scene (Kisiel et al., 2006). That way, the students are the ones making the pivotal decision in the scene, usually whether to engage in violent action or not. Finally, the group holds a discussion on the choices that were made in the scene and the action that follows (Kisiel et al., 2006). The workshop allows for direct interaction between students, their peers, and leaders of the group, which not only engages the students fully in the exercise, but helps to build the safe community. Additionally, the discussion at the end of the exercise, gives students time to reflect and the leaders a space to provide concrete information about the scenario, contributing to an increase of knowledge about the issue and the ability to change attitudes and beliefs towards violence.

This study was conducted with fourth grade students across 14 school in the Boston area with 7 schools receiving the YVP program and 7 schools, matched in demographics and acting as a comparison (deliberately did not receive the program) (Kisiel et al., 2006). Though, this program is not about preventing DV specifically, bullying or violent behavior in younger children can be a factor in predicting future uses of violence in intimate partner relationships (Goldenson, Geffner, Foster, & Clipson, 2007). The results of this prevention program are very relevant and applicable to more prevention programs focusing specifically on DV.

After, the implementation of the program, researchers evaluated how participation in the nine weeks with Urban Improv affected aggression and externalizing behavior, prosocial behavior (such as assertiveness, cooperation, and self control), and scholastic attention and engagement (Kisiel et al., 2006). They found that there was a significant reduction in disciplinary problems in the children that participated in the program as compared with the control (Kisiel et al., 2006). Not only did development of aggressive behavior halt in students who had received

the program, but participants showed an increase in prosocial behaviors such as cooperation, assertion, and self control compared to the control (Kisiel et al., 2006). Additionally, those that were exposed to the Urban Improv workshops showed improved academic functioning. “The program used a variety of techniques including discussion as well as role-play and experimental activities. The researchers found that the program increased knowledge about these topics and improved attitudes of both boys and girls who participated...” (Brigell, 2010). Thus, participating in this theater-based violence prevention workshop halted the development of aggressive behavior, increase knowledge and awareness of the issue, improved academic functioning, and promoted prosocial behavior.

Another form of the humanities that has been shown to be able to increase pro-social behavior and evoke greater empathy is music. Music has been referred to as “a unique route to evoking emotions in the auditory domain” (Ieva et al., 2009) and has been frequently used to alter moods, express emotions, and alleviate stress. Music can set an atmosphere, assist in socialization, and help one learn about another’s culture in place or time (Ieva et al., 2009). Ieva et al. examine this ability music has to evoke certain emotional responses to be used to increase empathy in counselors in training through the use of music videos as a springboard for discussion. While this study explores how music can enhance counselor’s understanding of their patients, I think the same understanding can be applied to transmitting knowledge about DV in order to increase deeper understanding of and shape attitudes towards the issue. Additionally, while these authors are looking at music combined with film (music videos), I believe that similar points can be made about combining music and theater (musical theater). The authors say of this technique, “when the [music] video is used as a discussion springboard, students will gain

a deeper understanding of the intended material” as “the arts can promote communication and help counselors feel a part of something they’ve never experienced” (Gladding, 1992). Thus, music mixed with a visual medium can help with the greater understanding of a serious issue in a community that has never experienced the issue first hand.

The basis for the idea that music promotes a greater understanding is the idea that music has the great ability to evoke a deep emotional response. Ieva et. al cite two different levels of empathy: The first is cognitive empathy, defined as “one’s ability to understand another’s perspective intellectually” (Ieva et al., 2009). The second is emotional empathy, defined as “one’s emotional response to another’s emotions” (Ieva et al., 2009). This kind of empathy can be evoked using “expressive strategies” to make people feel an empathetic response on the gut level (Ieva et al., 2009). This is the kind of empathetic response that can be evoked when participants are exposed to certain music videos as a “tool to promote students’ moral and ethical decision making skills, expressing a wide range of emotions in a safe environment” (Ieva et al., 2009). This technique for evoking empathy allows counselors in training to reflect on the emotions that these videos make them feel in a learning environment.

In order for the music videos to be used in an education manner, however, there is an important procedure to follow. While these music videos may evoke empathy on their own, in order to truly increase knowledge and understanding, a discussion of and reflection on the video must follow viewing. Ieva et al. suggest beginning by providing lyrics for the song in a written out form before showing the video. Then, once the video has been shown, authors suggest providing 5-10 minutes for students to reflect on what they heard and saw in the music video, asking students to pay close attention to feelings evoked in them by characters and the music

(Ieva et al., 2009). Ieva et al. say that allowing time for cognitive reflection and emotional processing is critical in evoking deeper understanding of difficult and emotional issues. Once time has been given for reflection, there is a need for guided discussion of what was seen. To do so, an instructor facilitates a discussion on students' experiences with the video, asking some of the following prompts:

1. Invite students to express thoughts and feelings as well as their emotional response.
2. What was your initial reaction?
3. What feelings come up for you?
4. What images stand out to you?
5. What was your physical reaction?
6. What thoughts came up as you watched?
7. Do you identify with any of the characters?

Asking these discussion questions allows students to explore their empathetic reaction to the music video in an organized and constructive way that can lead to a deeper understanding of the issues shown in the video. In Chapter 3, I will look at how these questions can be adapted for my intervention program, in which I pose these questions for members of the *Chicago* audience as a way to increase critical thinking about the portrayal of DV within the musical.

Not only does music have the ability to evoke empathy and understanding but listening to music with prosocial lyrics can influence concrete prosocial action as well. In his article "Effects of songs with prosocial lyrics on prosocial thoughts, affects and behavior," Tobias Greitemeyer found that listening to songs with prosocial lyrics (as opposed to neutral) increased prosocial thinking, led to more interpersonal empathy, and even fostered helping behavior (Greitemeyer,

2009). To determine whether listening to music with prosocial lyrics could affect not only thought and emotion but evoke concrete action as well, Greitemeyer played participants either lyrically prosocial music or lyrically neutral music then had a research assistant give participants two Euros (Greitemeyer, 2011). The research assistant told participants that they could keep the two Euros or donate the money to a non-profit organization. The research assistant then indicated to a box in which participants could leave donations and then left the room. Greitemeyer found that participants who had listened to prosocial music were more likely to donate their money to the non-profit than those that had not (53% of prosocial participants compared to 31% of neutral participants) (Greitemeyer, 2011). Thus, not only can music evoke empathy, that empathy can translate to concrete prosocial action for the short term. Music with prosocial lyrics can inspire people to act charitably, pointing to music's potential to systematically promote positive social action.

The arts serve a far greater purpose in our society than mere entertainment. Theater-based social programs, such as Theater of the Oppressed, allow participants to gain a greater understanding of systematic oppression through theatrical exploration. Then through exploration, participants are able to rehearse situations in which they resist oppression, with the goal of applying the rehearsal to real life. This system creates a safe space where participants can explore different emotional states without the same ramifications of real life. This program can be readily applied to DV prevention as participants can rehearse conflict management and communication skills that can help to protect against becoming a victim or perpetrator of DV within a safe and supportive environment. Participants work closely with their peers and leaders,

which also provides opportunities to form strong positive relationships with others, an important component of DV prevention.

Additionally, involvement with musically-based programs can help with the development of emotional empathy, allowing for a greater understanding of issues such as DV when they are portrayed musically. This empathetic reaction that music can evoke can also provide a platform for further discussion of the issue and can even promote concrete prosocial action in the short term. However, irresponsible representation of social issues within music and theater can also evoke negative beliefs and attitudes towards those social issues. In the next chapter, I will explore the irresponsible representations of DV in the musical *Chicago* and the implications of these representations on potential interpretation of DV situations by the audience.

Chapter 2

Analysis of *Chicago* and its Meaning Throughout the Years

Part I: Analysis of *Chicago* Within the Context of When It Was Written - 1975

In Part I of this chapter, I analyze Fosse, Kander, and Ebb's 1975 musical *Chicago* through the lens of DV, taking into account the cultural context in which the show was written. I will look specifically at four instances of abuse or related behavior in the show: the initial act of violence in which Roxie Hart murders her lover Fred Casely to define the kind of violence shown on stage and its larger purpose within the show; the musical number "Cell Block Tango" for the way in which the song points blame at the victim and makes a joke out of female abusers; the treatment of Roxie as a "victim" of DV in the legal system within the song "We Both Reached for the Gun;" and finally the circumstances of Amos Hart as a victim of DV perpetrated by his wife, Roxie. For every scene I unpack within this part, I will perform a three-part analysis: a description of what is being portrayed in the show, the projected aim of the authors with that portrayal, and an analysis of what is actually conveyed to the audience. With this three-part analysis, I place my discussion within the context of the 1970s when the show was written, incorporating historical information about the state of DV as a legal and public health issue at the time. Ultimately, I will use this analysis to uncover the issues with the portrayal of DV within the musical as a whole to highlight the most prominent issues in the show. I will then use that knowledge to develop discussion questions for my intervention program.

Analysis of the Initial Act of Violence Within *Chicago*

The musical *Chicago* opens with an introduction by ENSEMBLE MEMBER #1, who begins the show with the following line: “Welcome. Ladies and Gentleman, you are about to see a story of murder, greed, corruption, violence, exploitation, adultery, and treachery - all those things we all hold near and dear to our hearts. Thank you” (Kander, Ebb, & Fosse, 1975). The show begins with a disclaimer - almost a trigger warning about what is to be seen; but with a twist. ENSEMBLE MEMBER #1 lists all of the things the audience is about to see, which are meant to be associated with both physical and emotional pain. And yet, the list closes with the sarcastic statement “all those thing we all hold near and dear to our hearts,” setting up the satire for the rest of the show. All of these things we traditionally associate with pain, are going to be glamorized and exploited for entertainment value. And yet, before the show even begins, this last line implies that these violent and painful activities are already “near and dear to our hearts;” that already in society we buy into news about these activities as entertainment and are therefore exciting by the idea of witnesses more of these sinful acts.

This introduction, therefore, leads perfectly into the opening number, “All That Jazz,” in which, in the midst of a flashy and catchy song and dance number, an adulterous affair leads to murder. The song begins with Velma Kelly, a famed jazz singer imprisoned for the murder of her husband and sister, and the rest of the company singing seductively about going out on the town to engage in the jazz music scene. Halfway through the piece, Roxie enters with her lover, Fred Casely, who casually asks, “Listen, uh, your husband ain’t home, is he?” To which Velma - still dancing with the rest of the company - replies mockingly, “No, her husband is not at home” and the ensemble laughs (Kander, & Ebb, 1975). Velma and the company are outside of the action of

the story while this number is being performed. They know exactly what is going on with Roxie and Fred and they comment on the action through song and dance as outside observers.

The singing and dancing of “All That Jazz” continues while Fred and Roxie have sex on the other side of the stage. The stage directions state that “The ‘action’ between ROXIE and FRED is very mechanical” (Kander, Ebb, & Fosse, 1975). After the ensemble finishes another verse of “All That Jazz,” the focus goes back to Roxie and Fred as they finish the “action” and Fred prepares to leave. The lines are as follows:

Roxie: So that’s final, huh, Fred?

Fred: Yeah, I’m afraid so, Roxie.

Roxie: Oh, Fred...

Ensemble Women: Oh, Fred...

Fred: Yeah?

Roxie: Nobody walks out on me.

(ROXIE shoots him.)

Fred: But sweetheart -

(ROXIE shoots him again.)

Roxie: Don’t “sweetheart” me, you son-of-a-bitch!

Fred: Roxie, please -

(ROXIE shoots him again... FRED dies)

Roxie: Oh, I gotta pee.

(ROXIE exits)

(Kander, Ebb, & Fosse, 1975)

Roxie brutally murders her lover, Fred Casely, when he states that he is done with their affair by shooting him three times as he begs for mercy. Roxie's violent actions occur with almost no provocation, other than that Fred wants to leave her, - which is hardly grounds for murder - and thus Roxie can be interpreted as an incredibly violent and dangerous abuser. After she shoots him once, he pleads with her twice and her only response is "Don't 'sweetheart' me you son-of-a-bitch!" (Kander, Ebb, & Fosse, 1975). She feels no sympathy for him as he dies in front of her eyes and then all she can say afterwards is "Oh, I gotta pee," demonstrating that even after she witnesses someone die at her own hands all she can think about are her own needs. However, not only does this line demonstrate Roxie's selfish tendencies, but it adds a humorous element to her character, serving to humanize her more in the eyes of the audience.

The abuse seen within this opening number is an example of Situational Couple Violence, violence that arises to express anger, disapproval, or reach an objective that is not a part of some continued pattern of abuse (Straus, 2009). When Fred expresses his desire to leave the relationship, Roxie engages in the ultimate form of physical Intimate Partner Violence when she murders him in cold blood. She is clearly trying to express her anger at the situation and reinforce the notion that nobody walks out on *her*. Additionally, Roxie can be labeled as an abuser who displays anti-social tendencies (Dasgupta and Pence, 2006), as she murders someone largely unprovoked and then feels no remorse or sympathy for the person as he dies in front of her eyes. The only time she appears to be regretful in the show is when the officer who arrests her tells her she could get hanged for her crime. However, in that situation, her regret stems from her fear of losing her own life. She has no ability to think outside of her own situation or feel for

other people in a real and human way. This therefore, strongly points to Roxie as being within the “Anti-Social” category of abusers.

Though Fosse, Kander, and Ebb were most likely not thinking categorically about what kind of abuser Roxie might be, this violent opening of the show is clearly meant to do two things: set the plot in motion and characterize Roxie, the main character (I hesitate to use the word protagonist) throughout the show. This initial act of violence sets off the story, which follows Roxie’s journey in prison as she manipulates her way through the legal system to gain fame and fortune (Kander, Ebb, & Fosse, 1975). Murder is portrayed by Fosse, Kander, and Ebb as something glorified by the press as reporters fight to hear Roxie’s juicy and dramatic story of the violent event. In this way, Fosse, Kander, and Ebb are using this act of violent abuse as a device for their greater goal of satirizing the heartlessness and manipulation of the media within society (Kander, Ebb, & Fosse, 1975). The initial violent action also serves to characterize Roxie as a cold, calculating, selfish murderess who nonetheless is capable being humorous (as evidenced in her last ridiculous line of the scene, “I gotta pee”) and thus sympathetic, or at least somewhat likable, to the audience members.

It is important to note that while this level of violence to open a show is, in some ways, meant to be very shocking, both this use of humor in the “I gotta pee” line but most especially the music that is the backdrop for this violent action taking place serve the function of lightening the mood, setting up the satirical attitude towards violence and manipulation that the show displays. *Chicago* is a dark comedy and the music is what allows the show to portray such heavy themes of intimate partner violence in the opening number and still convey to the audience the dazzling excitement the show will continuously evoke. Due to the music that accompanies Fred’s

murder and the mocking attitude that Velma and the rest of the company take towards the action in the song, Fred's murder is never scary. Rather embedded within this flashy, catchy, jazzy, and energetic Vaudeville-esque number of "All That Jazz," the violence is set up as part of the entertainment itself - a theme that recurs throughout the entire show (Kander, & Ebb, 1975). Embedding the murder within the song "All That Jazz" lets the audience know how they are meant to interpret what they are seeing. The sultry music sets the tone for a show that is dangerously dazzling and exciting as the music is meant to diminish the disturbing impact of the violence on stage, manipulating the audience into accepting the violence as part of the entertainment.

Victim Blaming in "Cell Block Tango": He Had It Coming

After Roxie is arrested and the story continues, Roxie and the audience are introduced to the women's prison, Illinois's Cook County Jail, through the number "Cell Block Tango" (Kander, & Ebb, 1975). This musical number shows the stories of six different "murderesses of the Cook County Jail," including jazz singer Velma Kelly, and their reasons for murdering their significant others. The first, Liz, murdered Bernie, the man she lived with and with whom she was presumably engaged in some sort of intimate relationship, because of the obnoxious way he would chew gum. After threatening him in an attempt to get him to stop popping his gum, she shoots him in the head. The second, Annie, found out that her boyfriend had six wives and poisoned him with arsenic. The third, June's, husband accused her of adultery and so she stabbed him. The fourth, Hunyak, tells her story in Hungarian and the only words understood by the English speaking audience is "Not guilty." Hunyak maintains in her story that she did not

actually commit the murder that she was accused of. The fifth, Velma Kelly murdered her husband and sister when she discovered them having an affair. Finally, the sixth, Mona, murdered her boyfriend after finding out that he was cheating on her with multiple other women and men.

Throughout the song, after every woman's story is told, there is a melodic refrain that recurs professing that every man the women murdered "had it coming" and that "he only had himself to blame." Essentially, suggesting that if the murder victim had not done something to provoke the women, they would not have been killed. The number also pokes at the audience as the women suggest that "if you'd a been there / if you'd a seen it / I betcha you would have done the same" (Kander, & Ebb, 1975). All of the women justify their abusive behavior by telling the audience that it was the fault of the men as it was they who wronged the women first.

However, this extreme level of victim blaming is not meant to be disturbing, rather every story, except for Hunyak's, ends with a description of the murder that is meant to be humorous: "I fired two warning shots. Into his head (Liz)." "You know some men just can't hold their arsenic (Annie)." "And then he ran into my knife. He ran into my knife ten times (June)." "I was in such a state of shock I completely blacked out I can't remember a thing. It wasn't until later when I was washing the blood off my hands that I even knew they were dead (Velma)." "I guess you could say we broke up because of artistic differences. He saw himself as alive, and I saw him dead (Mona)" (Kander, & Ebb, 1975). It is clear that the endings of these stories are meant to make the situation seem absurd. Thus, when the women tell the audience to imagine the situation from their perspective and dare them to believe that they would have committed murder

as well, Fosse, Kander, and Ebb meant for this notion to be ridiculous - the idea that one would ever murder their spouse just for chewing gum, for example.

One potential complication for the presentation of this song as something humorous, is that murders of this nature do occur and thus the song is making light of something that very seriously happens. What is more, it is perhaps the gender of the murderers that seems to justify this song as something “absurd.” Imagine if this song were sung by six men saying that women they abused and murdered “had it coming.” I do not think that audience members would find that notion at all funny. This therefore raises the question, why, when women are put in the position of dangerous and psychotic abusers that blame their victims for their horrible deeds, are audience members not unsettled? Perhaps men abusing and murdering women seems much more common and pressing than women murdering and abusing men. For that reason, it would seem especially humorous putting women in that position of the dangerous “masculine” abuser as there was a belief in the general public that women would not actually be found in that position (Straus, 2009). Studies have shown, however, that while the acceptability of men abusing women has decreased dramatically since data was first collected in 1968, there has been no change in perceived acceptability of female partner violence (Straus, 2009). This is, thus a potentially dangerous belief that the show reinforces. Statistics that began to emerge in the 1980s showed that female abusers and women murdering male intimate partners was not as uncommon as was previously believed and demonstrating that there is a higher amount of “gender symmetry” when it comes to perpetration of DV (Straus, 2009). Thus, the show perpetuates false beliefs about the incidence of female violence.

Roxie and Domestic Violence Legislation in the 1970s

Before the 1970s, it was believed that DV was a private family affair and thus abusing your spouse was not illegal as law enforcement had no place in interfering with that kind of private business (Davis, 2008). When law enforcement received a call from a woman about physical violence, police would come to the home, take the man for a walk around the block, then return him to his home with his wife (Keilitz, 2002). In fact, before the 1970s the prevailing theory on why DV existed was that women who were abused were inherently masochistic and could not be sexually fulfilled unless they were physically abused by their husbands (McCue, 1995).

Beginning in the 1970s, however, feminist ideas were becoming more visible and new theories surrounding DV were being proposed (as I explored in chapter 1) and there was a greater push to make DV a political issue (Goodman, 2012). The most salient theory at the time became the “Theory of Learned Helplessness,” established in the 1970s by Martin Seligman, which suggested that women who were victims of continuous abuse learned to detach themselves from their situation as a means of coping with the continued violence (McCue, 1995). As a result, women would develop a depression that manifested itself in a complete feeling of helplessness. However, while this theory was important in dismantling the idea that abused women were inherently masochistic, it remains problematic as it served to paint female victims as weak, passive, and afraid (Goodman, 2012). Additionally, the development of the theory was inherently flawed as it was largely based on observations rather than empirical evidence (Brewster, 2002) but it was a step in the right direction for the cessation of completely blaming the victim for their abuse and for beginning the process of criminalizing DV.

The “Theory of Learned Helplessness” became very influential for a prominent feminist movement that was beginning to gain traction: The Dominance Feminists led by Catherine MacKinnon, a graduate of Yale Law School. MacKinnon believed that American society was inherently patriarchal and that within this patriarchal society, women are taught to be submissive to survive. Specifically, male domination of women in the sexual sphere was the primary vehicle for women’s subordination. Thus, the “Theory of Learned Helplessness” fit it very well into the Dominance Feminist theory as the “Theory of Learned Helplessness” similarly declared that DV was a means of the dominant male to keep the female in a subversive position, turning women weak and helpless with male violence to maintain their patriarchal power and control (Goodman, 2012). Thus, when advocating for DV victims in court, MacKinnon employed the “Theory of Learned Helplessness” to help her case.

Along with presenting the “Theory of Learned Helplessness,” another method the Dominance Feminists used to convince the largely white, heterosexual male legislative system that DV was an important issue that needed legal attention was to paint victims as relatable to the court. In the early 70s, it was widely believed that the majority of victims of DV were women of color of a lower socioeconomic class with a lower level of education (Goodman, 2012). Dominance Feminists, however, wanted court members to see that DV could happen to their wives, sisters, mothers, and daughters as well and thus pushed the notion that DV was prominent in all socioeconomic and racial spheres (Keilitz, 2002). However, this idea working in conjunction with the promotion of the “Theory of Learned Helplessness” served to create an essentialized victim of DV: a white, middle class woman in a heterosexual relationship who is weak, dependent, and afraid of her abuser (Goodman, 2012).

It is important to note, that while this idea of the essentialized victim certainly did not represent all victims of DV - perhaps not even a majority of victims who present their cases in court - the work that Dominance Feminists did was foundational in making DV a legal issue at all. The “Theory of Learned Helplessness” was largely rejected as a theory explaining DV victimization in the 80s but it has remained the foundation for much of the DV legislation still in place (Goodman, 2012). This has had predictably negative consequences as many victims who do not fit the essential victim within the Learned Helplessness framework have failed to have their stories recognized in the court system. What is more, lawyers representing victims of DV would recommend victims change their stories to appear more sympathetic, more like the essential victim in court, thereby erasing the true experiences of victims. But despite these flaws to come, within the context of the mid-1970s, Dominance Feminism and the “Theory of Learned Helplessness” were groundbreaking movements that were extremely instrumental in making DV a legal concern. This disclaimer in mind makes analyzing Roxie as an essentialized “victim” in *Chicago* problematic - both in the way in which the idea of the essentialized victim is mocked and the fact that Roxie is made out to be a victim when she is not.

Roxie enters the legal scene upon hiring her defense lawyer Billy Flynn, a well respected attorney who has never lost a case defending a female client. Upon meeting Roxie, Billy immediately instructs her on how to make herself into an essential victim to gain sympathy from the press and the court. He tells her that her grounds for killing Fred was that it was self-defense - they “both reached for the gun.” Billy twists the story, telling Roxie to claim that she was the one leaving and that Fred got violent and threatened to kill her but when they reached the gun she got it first. Firstly, Billy is enforcing the notion of “Resistive/Reactive Violence” by dictating

that Roxie shot him only as a way to resist battering (Pence, & Dasgupta, 2006). What is more, in the release to the press that is shown through the song “We Both Reached for the Gun,” Billy works to make her seem like the perfect victim: wealthy, weak, and frightened. In other words, essentializing her into the 1970s idea of what a DV victim should look like.

In the number that follows the meeting, “We Both Reached for the Gun,” Billy continues his manipulation of Roxie. The whole number “We Both Reached For the Gun” is meant to be performed as a Vaudevillian puppetry act, in which Roxie begins the song as a “ventriloquist dummy” with Billy controlling her words and actions (Fosse, Kander, Ebb, 1975). This begins when all the reporters arrive and Billy lets Roxie introduce herself to the reporters. She starts out portraying the sweet character they agreed on but finishes her introduction with “I guess you want to know why I shot the bastard,” veering dangerously into the territory of an angry victim, which is not taken sympathetically by the legal system. Thus, Billy snaps at her, “sit down dummy” and the stage direction says “(BILLY *grabs* ROXIE *and sits her on his knee like a ventriloquist's dummy*)” (Kander, & Ebb, 1975). The rest of the song is sung with the actor who plays Billy singing as if Roxie is speaking.

The song begins with the reporters asking about Roxie’s history to which she replies that she is from Mississippi and her parents, who are now dead, were “very wealthy” (Kander, & Ebb, 1975). Immediately, her rank is established, and though Roxie is actually of a lower socioeconomic class, painting her as wealthy makes her more sympathetic and relatable to these reporters of a higher socioeconomic class. Additionally, Billy makes her out, very explicitly to be physically weak when the reporters ask “Did you fight him?” Billy replies as himself “He had strength and she had none,” and then as Roxie “and yet we both reached for the gun” (Kander, &

Ebb, 1975). In this phrase Billy very clearly states that Roxie had no strength in relation to the man that she murdered. This also completely erases Roxie's true character as throughout the show she is clearly portrayed as empowered and the instigator of the violence. But a strong victim would not be a believable victim at this time and thus Billy diminishes her physical strength. Thirdly, Billy hits the last requirement of a DV victim when the reporters ask "How you feelin'" Billy as Roxie replies "Very frightened" (Kander, & Ebb, 1975). In order to be a "true" DV victim one must admit to feeling afraid, which Billy ensures that Roxie states plainly. Thus, throughout the song, Billy manipulates Roxie into the essentialized DV victim.

The one time within the song Roxie speaks for herself is after the reporters ask "Are you sorry?" and Roxie responds in her own voice "are you kidding?" (Kander, & Ebb, 1975). This outburst of Roxie's own feelings comes about halfway through the song and it allows the audience to see that she is still, in fact, this strong, sardonic, cold-blooded person who very clearly feels no remorse about her murderous actions. However, immediately after she speaks that line, Billy regains control over her and continues throughout the rest of the song to speak for her and to portray her as the essentialized victim.

In this song, both the manipulation of the media's sympathies and the manipulation of Roxie as a victim is very clear. With Billy speaking for her, he is completely rewriting her narrative and if ever she slips into her own personality, he gets frustrated and has to regain control of her narrative. The way in which the song is intended to be performed clearly shows the manipulation in a stylized, surreal way: to show how Roxie has become a puppet to the way in which Billy wants to portray her, Roxie is shown onstage as a *literal puppet*. She and Billy perform the number as a ventriloquist act with Roxie moving her mouth as Billy speaks for her.

Clearly, Fosse, Kander, and Ebb mean for this number to be a critique of the way in which the members of the media manipulate a story, disseminating to the public only what the media chooses to share. Coming within the context of the 1970s Watergate scandal, this critique of the media makes sense. Many people felt as if the media had lied to them and kept the truth from them exactly like what Billy Flynn does in this song. Reporters are merely puppets for this flawed system of reporting on lies and half truths and this number is meant to mock that idea.

Thus, within this number, the painting of Roxie as an “essentialized” victim is merely a device for the critique the media. This becomes harmful, however, as Fosse, Kander, and Ebb appear to be mocking the idea of essentializing a victim to gain legal sympathy. In 1975 when the show was written, the essential victim was a necessary method for advocates of DV legislation to gain traction in court. By mocking this notion, this number is pushing back on that progress being made. The number is mocking the very process that DV advocates, such as the Dominance Feminists, were trying to establish as legitimate.

Additionally, the mid-1970s being a very critical time for legitimizing the stories of victims of DV means that Fosse, Kander, and Ebb painting women who claim to be victims as liars within this number is also very harmful. The 1970s was the first time that DV was becoming a public issue recognized as being extremely detrimental to women in abusive relationships. Before 1970s, research done on DV claimed that female victims of DV were masochistic, cold, and callous. Essentially, it was a woman’s fault for being a victim. Women who called the authorities for help with an abusive were dismissed and abuse was allowed to continue as men were allowed to do whatever they pleased within the private sphere. In the 1970s, however, women were finally gaining support for speaking out against violent husbands

and DV advocates were working hard to have the stories of victims be believed and accepted by the general public. Thus, when during this critical time, *Chicago* is showing women who claim to be victims of DV as legitimately violent themselves, lying about having been abused to get their way, the show is reinforcing the idea that a female victim of DV is not legitimate or believable. Thus, Fosse, Kander, and Ebb's seemingly innocent mocking of the press could have had, at the the time, very harmful consequences on the perception of female victims of DV.

Amos as a victim of Domestic Violence

Within the musical *Chicago*, an unnoticed victim of DV throughout the show is Roxie's husband Amos. Because Roxie's abusive manipulation of Amos does not manifest itself physically, there is a potential to overlook Amos as a victim of abuse. Additionally, the character of Amos is depicted as foolish and naive, which further deters from the real fact that Amos is a victim of abuse. What is more, within the context of the 1970s when the show was written, male victims of abuse were not recognized as legitimate. Culturally, it was believed that men were inherently the perpetrators of abuse, as it was their right and their role within the patriarchy to maintain control over the household. Many of the new theories surrounding DV that emerged within the 70s such as the "Theory of Learned Helplessness" or the "Power and Control Wheel" used male pronouns when discussing the abuser and female pronouns when discussing the abused, further reinforcing the notion that only women could be victims and men perpetrators.

In *Chicago*, Amos is introduced in the second number of the show where he is seen taking the blame for the murder of Fred Casely as Roxie sings on the other side of the stage about how wonderful he is for taking the blame. However, as soon as the police officer reveals

that the deceased is Fred Casely, Amos realizes that Roxie must have been having an affair with him and tells the police officer the real story. Roxie's song changes into a vicious attack on Amos's character and as the number ends she storms across the stage, verbally berating Amos for telling the cops on her, saying "You double-crosser! You said you'd stick! You goddamn disloyal husband!" (Fosse, Ebb, Kander, 1975). This first interaction that Roxie and Amos have together clearly shows how Roxie is unafraid to insult Amos and his intelligence without fear of retribution not only just to Amos but in front of a police officer too. This line also assumes that Roxie used some sort of manipulation to get Amos to cover for her, establishing the power dynamic in their relationship in which Roxie maintains coercive control. The situation demonstrates a systematic pattern of coercion and control in which Roxie is trying to maintain power over her husband Amos.

This pattern is further demonstrated in Act I Scene 6 when Roxie needs money from Amos in order to hire Billy Flynn as her defense attorney. Roxie employs psychological manipulation to get what she wants from Amos, promising him that she'll make up for all of her wrongs when she gets out of jail, promises she never intends to keep. She tells him that she never stopped loving him and that she finds him "so manly and so attractive... so sexy" (Kander, Ebb, Fosse, 1975) to get the money that she needs when clearly she does not feel this way at all. All the while, Roxie throughout the scene, Roxie is casually tap-dancing, using her "fancy footwork" to get her way. Amos's reaction implies that this sort of "tap dance" to get something from him is something she does often when at the start of the scene, he starts by telling Roxie "I'm tired of your fancy footwork" (Kander, Ebb, Fosse, 1975). This implies a systematic pattern of coercion that Roxie often employs to get her way. At the end of the scene, after Roxie employs numerous

manipulation tactics - beginning by appealing to Amos through compliments and affection and ending by harshly yelling at him - Amos gives in and agrees to provide the money for Roxie.

This scene is clearly meant to drive the plot forward and further establish Amos and Roxie's relationship through a light, seemingly comedic, entertaining dialogue and dance number. Fosse, Kander, and Ebb establish through this scene that while Roxie is technically financially dependent on Amos (as most women in the 1920s were financially dependent on a man), she is easily able to control him as evidenced by the fact that she is quickly able to get from him what she wants while all the while tap dancing. The music underscoring the scene is light and bouncy, nothing that would suggest that any sort of abuse or harmful manipulation is taking place.

Nonetheless, this scene does in fact demonstrate psychological manipulation as a part of an ongoing pattern of such manipulations and economic abuse. The abusive behavior, however, is again demonstrated in a stylized, performative way. As Roxie tap dances, she manipulates Amos in an attempt to control his economic resources for her own gain. It is easy to overlook this coercion as something problematic, however, when it is placed within the context of a light and entertaining dance number. That in itself is dangerous if audience members fail to recognize this behavior that Roxie is employing as abusive towards Amos, which it is. She is clearly using coercive tactics to gain and maintain power over his actions and his economic resources. And though at first in the scene he protests, he quickly gives in further demonstrating the fact that Roxie has all of the control within the relationship. However, the light and bouncy music setting the tone of the scene, imply that this kind of manipulation is not dangerous or harmful. When in reality for Amos, if he believes what Roxie says that she loves him and will be good to him when

she gets what she wants, he is getting set up to be very hurt emotionally when Roxie fails to act on the false promises she made. Amos also gives up most of his money to get her Billy as a lawyer and is therefore left in extreme financial stress as a result. Thus, this manipulation by Roxie leaves Amos broke and without the woman he sacrificed everything for when she takes his money for her own gain and leaves as soon as she gets out of prison.

Roxie continues to lie to Amos throughout the show, telling him that she is pregnant when really she is not, saying that she loves him and wants to raise a family with him when she has no intention of doing so - all to gain sympathy from the press and get her released from prison. Throughout the show, Amos becomes no more than a tool for Roxie in her great claim to fame and fortune but Amos is still portrayed as having real feelings that get crushed by Roxie's actions. And yet, the audience is meant less to feel sympathy and compassion for Amos but rather to think of him as a comedic character, laughable in his pathetic sadness.

Throughout the musical, Fosse, Kander, and Ebb work hard to portray Amos as much more comedic than he is sympathetic, depicting his falling for Roxie's manipulation as foolish and naive rather than something to be genuinely concerned about. The ultimate example of this in the show is at the very end. Roxie has just been pronounced "not-guilty" but when another woman murders her husband and mother in law right outside the courthouse, Roxie is forgotten by the press and left alone with Amos. The following interaction takes place:

AMOS: Roxie?

ROXIE: What do you want?

AMOS: I'd like you to come home. You said you still wanted me. I still love you. And the baby. Our baby...

ROXIE: Baby? Jesus what do you take me for? There ain't no baby

AMOS: There ain't no baby?

ROXIE: That's right

AMOS: Roxie, I still love you

ROXIE: They didn't even want my picture. I don't understand that. They didn't even want my picture.

AMOS: My exit music please...

[MUSIC the ORCHESTRA doesn't play]

AMOS: ... Okay.

Within this closing scene, Fosse, Kander, and Ebb are clearly trying to send a very straight forward message about Amos as a character: he let himself get manipulated and duped and is therefore undeserving of even the dignity of exit music. Every other named character of note within *Chicago* up to this point had received "exit music" - basically a recapitulation of a main theme they sung in the show played by the orchestra - to signify their grand exit of the stage and summarize the impact they have had on the plot thus far. Amos, however, has been systematically set up throughout the musical as undeserving of attention so that this final moment in which not even the orchestra will validate his personhood within the world of the musical becomes the final, and anticipated, comedic downfall of the character.

While Fosse, Kander, and Ebb clearly mean for Amos to be a comedic character in the way in which he is constantly overlooked and manipulated throughout the show, there are potentially dangerous implications for this interpretation - a double-edged sword, with negative implications for both men and women in the portrayal. Roxie is clearly portrayed as the one with

all of the power in the relationship and is constantly coercing Amos into giving her what she wants. Amos is clearly a male victim of abuse that is systematically painted as pathetic and sad throughout the show for having lost control within the relationship and finding himself a victim. The greater implication being that when a man loses control of the household to his wife, he is seen as foolish, less of a man, unworthy of love and attention. Amos “lets himself” get knocked around and manipulated by his wife and is therefore not dignified enough even to receive exit music let alone any sympathy from the other characters or the audience.

By emasculating Amos in this way, there are two other harmful messages being sent to the audience: first, by portraying Amos as “less of a man” because he is a victim of DV, it could discourage male victims to report their abuse. In this situation, it is a circular system of harmful thought: if showing male victims of abuse as “lesser men” onstage becomes the norm within this show, audience members may perceive that what is being shown onstage is a reflection of societal norms as a whole. The portrayal of male victims in this way then becomes internalized by audience members, perpetuating this idea as a greater societal norm. Then, when this is performed and accepted over and over, the portrayal becomes a reflection of an accepted norm that male victims of abuse are in some way lesser men. Secondly, the only man in the show characterized as a charismatic, influential, and successful is Billy Flynn who is in reality a manipulative abuser of his power. When the only two important men in the show are a masculine abuser and an emasculated victim, it begs the question: does this mean that a “real man” has to be aggressive and assertive to achieve success? This has the potential to perpetuate the idea that men have to assert power and control over those around them to be considered a “real man.” This

norm has the potential to become dangerously reinforced in the same circular system of harmful thought.

What is more, the depiction implies that when a woman is in the position of the systematic abuser, it is not something to be seen as dangerous or concerning in any real way. By making the victim of female abuse humorous and sad, and portraying Roxie abusing Amos within the context of a light and bouncy tap dance, female perpetration is thus portrayed as trivial and inconsequential in *Chicago*. Watching Roxie systematically abuse Amos is not supposed to be disturbing within the context of the show and that in and of itself is a disturbing concept. Of course in the 1970s, people were not thinking of women as abusive and yet female perpetration was still happening then and it is still happening now. By Fosse, Kander, and Ebb portraying female abuse as inconsequential and not something to feel disturbed by, the idea of female abusers as truly dangerous is glossed over and diminished. There is therefore great risk that the audience would not recognize the relationship between Roxie and Amos as truly abusive, especially in 1975 when the show first came out. Or further, that audiences would indeed buy into the idea that this kind of abuse is trivial and not something to be truly concerned about. This is problematic as by failing to recognize the relationship between Roxie and Amos as abusive, there is a risk that audience members would be similarly unable to recognize this kind of abuse in their own lives.

Part II: Analysis of the 2002 *Chicago* film

Within this part, I will explore how much has changed legally and culturally with respect to DV between 1975 when *Chicago* was first written and 2002 when a movie adaptation of the musical was released. I will explore those societal shifts with regard to DV and apply them to an analysis of the 2002 film version of *Chicago* to show how the meaning of the violence portrayed with the musical has changed over time. The film also makes slight alterations to the story and the way the violence is portrayed from the original stage version. I will examine those changes and discuss their meaning and interpretation using the same three-part analysis from Part I. The goal of this section is to determine what alterations were progressive in their portrayal of DV and what scenes still have the potential to convey harmful beliefs and attitudes about DV. I will also discuss how changes in society can really shift the interpretation of the musical when looking through the lens of DV.

Background on Changes in DV Legislation and Social Programs From the 1970s to the Early 2000s

Beginning in the late 1980s, DV incidence rates were being measured across the United States for the first time. Between the time when *Chicago* first premiered in 1975 and when the film came out in 2002, 31,260 women and 20,311 men were murdered by an intimate partner (Davis, 2008). In spousal killings between 1981 and 2001, 41% of the murderers were women (Davis, 2008). The National Violence Against Women survey conducted by the National Institute of Justice and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that about 1.5

million women and 830,000 men are victims of DV in the United States each year (Brewster, 2002). Thus, incidence of DV and intimate partner homicide have remained high and a pressing public health issue throughout the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Not only that, but these statistics measured nationally for the first time show very clearly that the rate of men who are victims of abuse is much higher than was believed by the public before the 1980s. And with 41% of spousal murderers between 1981 and 2001 being women and 47,000 men injured by their partners between 1993 and 1998 (Straus, 2009), *Chicago* remained as relevant as ever.

While DV rates have remained high throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, many things have changed surrounding DV as a public health and legal issue between when *Chicago* was first written in 1975 and when it was adapted into a film in 2002. To start, the criminalization of DV which, as I explained in the previous part, began in the mid-1970s when *Chicago* was written and continued to gain traction throughout the late twentieth century. The first changes that were made legally had to do largely with the way in which police officers handled cases of DV when they were called to intervene. Before the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was rare that a police officer would arrest a perpetrator of DV if they were called to the scene (Straus, 2009). There were no standard arrest procedures for DV and police received no special training on how to handle DV situations. The Minneapolis DV experiment of 1981-1982 was the first study to look at short-term effects of arrest in DV cases and found that simply arresting the perpetrator when police arrived on the scene was almost twice as effective as other interventions for reducing battering (Roberts, & Kurst-Swanger, 2002).

There was no national legislation on police arrest policy in cases of DV, however, until 1985 with the court decision in *Thurman v. The City of Torrington*, which served notice to police departments around the country to treat DV as they would any crime in which the victim and the perpetrator do not know each other (Roberts, 2002). Before this ruling, police often did not want to arrest the batterer when they were called to intervene in a DV situation. However, *Thurman v. The City of Torrington* was a case in which Tracey Thurman asked for police protection from her abusive husband repeatedly for an 8-month period. Her husband was never arrested, however, and the police never believed her to be in enough danger to intervene. In a final, extraordinarily violent outburst from her husband, Tracey called the police but it took the authorities 25 minutes to arrive on the scene, giving her abuser plenty of time to repeatedly kick Tracey's head as she lay bleeding on the floor as a result of multiple stab wounds to the face, neck and chest. The incident left her partially paralyzed and both physically and emotionally scarred. She sued the city for the police department's inability to protect her and received \$2.3 million in compensation (Roberts, & Kurst-Swanger, 2002).

After this court ruling, further legal action on how police officers should handle DV cases began rolling out, throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s. Between 1985 and 2000, many police departments began mandating that training session on family violence should be a part of their police academy curricula (Roberts, & Kurst-Swanger, 2002). These local mandates hit the national level in 1991 when the federal Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) of the United States Department of Justice began funding and providing technical assistance to state police training academies (Roberts, Kurst-Swanger, 2002). This act provided the preliminary resources to begin teaching officers how to handle DV situations specifically, providing officers with special

training of how to protect victims while properly punishing perpetrators. Additionally, within this time period, mandatory and warrantless arrest laws became a major part of improved police response to battering (Roberts, Kurst-Swanger, 2002). Many police departments now require all officers to arrest a DV suspected perpetrator when “the victim exhibits signs of physical injury, when a weapon is involved in the commission of a DV act, or when there is probable cause to believe that the named accuser has violated the terms of a restraining order or no-contact court order” (Roberts, Kurst-Swanger, 2002). These warrantless arrest laws thus required or strongly encouraged police officers to take concrete action when faced with a DV situation with the hopes of preventing any further oversights like in the case of Tracey Thurman.

The most significant political action taken to reduce incidence of DV and increase accountability in the law enforcement sector is the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA was passed by Congress in 1994 and brought about greater legal protection for abused women and stiffer penalties for batterers (Brewster, 2002). VAWA provided \$3.3 billion in grant programs over five years to assist state and local communities in fighting violence against women such as physical abuse, sexual assault, and stalking (Roberts, Kurst-Swanger, 2002). Specifically, VAWA had four main goals: (1) To improve the criminal justice response to violent crimes against women; (2) to expand services and community support for DV victims; (3) To improve safety for women in public transit and public parks and assistance to victims of sexual assault; and (4) To provide support for a variety of educational, health, and database services (Roberts, 2002). One such program within VAWA was Services and Training for Officers and Prosecutors (STOP) grants, which provided funding for the training of law enforcement personnel, nationally enforcing the specialized DV training requirements and creating

multidisciplinary training for law enforcement prosecutors, judges, and victim services (Roberts, & Kurst-Swanger, 2002). Finally, with the passing of VAWA, DV was being recognized federally as a serious crime and a major social problem that was necessary to address. Furthermore, media coverage of VAWA actually served to increase public awareness of the issue of DV as a whole (Brewster, 2002).

Not only did legal action for DV improve and expand between 1975 and 2002, but social and healthcare systems for the protection victims grew as well. In 1972, Erin Pizzey opened the first women's shelter even in London called the Chiswick Women's Aid (Roberts, 2002). The opening of this shelter spurred a movement throughout Great Britain and America and by 1977 a total of 89 shelters for battered women had been opened through the United States. That year (1977), the shelters' 24-hour hotlines received over 110,000 calls from battered women (Roberts, 2002). By 1990 there were more than 1,250 battered women's shelters in the US and by the year 2000, there were more than 2,000 (Roberts, 2002). Every state and major metropolitan area in the country now has crisis-intervention services for battered women and their children, all of which provide the following services: "a 24-hour hotline, a safe and secure emergency shelter, an underground network or volunteer homes and shelters, and welfare and court advocacy by student interns and other volunteers" (Roberts, 2002).

Between 1975 when *Chicago* was first written and 2002 when the musical was adapted into a film, much had shifted in terms of both the understanding of DV as a public health issue and the way in which DV was handled by authorities. Starting in the 1980s, DV was beginning to be treated as a serious public health issue and has only increased in prominence and importance since then. The updates to the film both reflect those changes in public perception of

DV and highlight where progress still needs to be made in terms of understanding the impact and scope of DV today.

Changes to the Initial Act of Violence in the Film

In the film version of *Chicago*, adapted and released in 2002, while jazz club singer Velma Kelly - who has just murdered her own sister and husband - performs “All the Jazz,” the flashy opening number of the show, the audience is introduced to Roxie Hart, who watches Velma perform at the club (Marshall, 2002). It is clear that Roxie admires Velma and wants to be on stage herself. This plot point is driven home when Fred Casely comes over to Roxie in the club and she asks if he is going to introduce her to the club manager. Fred Casely tells her that he will help her make that connection soon and the couple proceeds to Roxie’s apartment where they engage in a sexual affair while Roxie’s husband is not at home. In the film, the song ends as Velma is taken away to prison for the murder of her husband and sister and the scene with Roxie and Fred continues - but one month later (Marshall, 2002).

As Fred gets out of bed, Roxie inquires after the club manager Fred had promised to introduce her to. Fred then admits that he never knew the club manager but just wanted to impress her and get her to go home with him. He then tells Roxie that it is all over between them and begins to leave. Roxie is furious that Fred lied to her and is about to leave her and she verbally berates him for having led her on. Fred gets upset and grabs Roxie harshly, roughly shoving her against the wall and throwing her to the ground. He then threatens her saying he will “knock her lights out” if she gets up or says another word (Marshall, 2002). Just before Fred leaves, Roxie stands up, grabs the gun from the drawer and shoots Fred three times in the

stomach. The scene abruptly changes to when police have arrived on the scene of the crime where Roxie's husband, Amos, has taken the blame for her, saying that he saw the dead man coming in the window as a burglar and shot him (Marshall, 2002).

In the film, Roxie's actions follow direct and acute violence that was started by and came from Fred. He roughly shoves her to the ground and then proceeds to threaten her with further violence should she get up or continue to speak her mind. The film was clearly attempting to portray a type of violence called "Resistive/Reactive Violence" in which a victim resists domination and battery by using force themselves (Dasgupta and Pence, 2006). Thus, when Roxie responds with violence in kind, it is certainly extreme and unjustified but it is clearly motivated by the anger from Fred's lying to her about the manager and his act of physical violence against her. Fred had promised her a potential boost in her career when in reality he had been stringing her along in order to get sex for a month. Then when he is done manipulating her he leaves her with nothing and reacts violently when she gets angry. Thus, the movie is clearly characterizing Fred as a sort of abuser in that he is emotionally manipulative and physically violent (Marshall, 2002).

Theoretically, by showing a case of resistive/reactive violence in which Roxie murdered Fred, the movie is updating the story of *Chicago* to reflect new statistics and research that have emerged about DV, namely that when a woman murders her significant other, 75-85% of the time it is due to some kind of resistive/reactive response to violence started by the male partner (Campbell, Baty, Laughon, & Woods, 2009). However, while this would seem to be more progressive, the level of violence that Fred displays as well as the fact that this is situational violence rather than any systematic pattern of abuse, still does not make Roxie's reaction

realistic to what most cases of DV that result in murder look like. When a murder of an intimate partner occurs, in most situation, it arises after an extended pattern of abuse rather than from one isolated event (Campbell, Baty, Laughon, & Woods, 2009). Additionally, murder most often occurs after extreme violence or extreme threats of violence (Straus, 2009). In the *Chicago* movie, there is certainly violence and threats of further violence before Roxie shoots Fred, but Roxie is not severely injured and if Roxie had let Fred walk out the door, it is presumable that his abusive behavior towards her would cease as he was the one who wanted to end the relationship. What is more, as Roxie scrambles to find the gun, she repeats “you lied to me Fred, you lied to me, you son-of-a-bitch, you’re a liar Fred” (Marshall, 2002) suggesting that it is not the physically abusive behavior that drives her to murder him but rather her anger that Fred was not able to make the career advancing connection that he promised her. When Fred begins to leave her, she is not concerned about him, rather she continuously asks him about the connections that he claimed he had and was got very upset when she discovers he has none.

This would suggest that in fact Roxie murdering Fred is not actually as a direct result of the abuse and thus cannot actually be labeled as “resistive/reactive.” Rather, the murder is motivated by Roxie’s own self interest in advancing her career and actually suggests that she was the one using Fred for *her* own gain. Her disappointment that Fred could not deliver what he promised led her to murder him, an extreme reaction to disappointment which would suggest that, like in the stage version, Roxie can similarly be characterized as an Anti-Social abuser (Dasgupta and Pence, 2006). This would suggest that the movie version is not as progressive as it would initially seem. In fact, it may be more harmful in its portrayal of this murder than the stage version. While the stage version is explicitly and comedically cold, the movie version seems to

be attempting to go for a more realistic and disturbing portrayal of violence that attempts to paint Roxie as a victim rather than the sole abuser. However, while Roxie certainly does become a victim to Fred's violent outburst, she is one who take fatal physically violent action against her intimate partner. Thus the movie seems to be trying to portray her as much more sympathetic than the stage version when her murder of Fred in the movie is just as disturbingly callous as in the stage version (Marshall, 2002).

That is not to say that in the film versions Fred actions are to be diminished as harmful. He is clearly abusive physically and intended to hurt Roxie when he threw her across the room in frustration. However, taking his actions into account should not justify Roxie's extremely violent reaction either. There is a danger in the film that by attempting to make Roxie more sympathetic from the beginning by showing her as a victim, Roxie's violent actions may be interpreted by viewers as excusable and within her right. Roxie is a victim of violent abuse but so is Fred Casely and as the film continues, Roxie continues to manipulate and abuse her husband, Amos, who does not abuse her in any way first.

Additionally, Fred is made out to a less sympathetic character in the way in which he fails to beg for mercy as in the stage version. In the stage version, Fred begs for his life twice between the first and third fatal shots saying, "Sweetheart... Roxie please..." (Kander, Ebb, Fosse, 1975) and Roxie dismisses him coldly saying "Don't sweetheart me you son-of-a-bitch" before she shoots him a second and third time. The stage version, in this way, makes Fred a sympathetic character as he did nothing to Roxie except decide to leave their adulterous affair and then innocently begs for his life while she kills him mercilessly. In the film version, however, Roxie still shoots Fred three times but he dies silently, making his death more

palatable. In the film, Fred is certainly less innocent in his behavior and that is perhaps reflected in the way in which he does not beg for mercy as he is shot.

Another big factor in attempting to make the scene more “realistic” is by taking the violent action out of the context of the first musical number “All That Jazz” (Kander and Ebb, 1975). Whereas in the stage version, the violent murder is embedded within the musical number, the movie places the murder in a scene directly following “All That Jazz.” In fact, there is no musical underscoring to the scene in the film version at all and within a musical that has very little dialogue compared to the amount of music, failing to place this important moment within a musical context is very striking. In the stage version, the horror of the violent action is undercut by surrounding act with enticing music and the comedic line “I gotta pee.” Additionally, it is much more stylized on stage as there is no fake blood of any kind to actually evoke realistic suffering. In the movie, however, without the excitement of “All That Jazz” to surround the murder, the whole scene feels much more realistic and disturbing. The film also cuts Roxie’s comedic line to end the scene, which served to further lighten the mood in the stage version and thus allows the film to retain a more serious tone. The film version also cuts to Fred as he is being shot and blood can be seen coming out of his wounds, which further enhances the horror and the realism of the situation.

By taking the initial act of violence out of the musical context, the filmmakers are clearly trying to take the horrors of *Intimate Partner Violence* more seriously (Marshall, 2002). Whereas in the stage version, Fosse, Kander, and Ebb seemed to gloss over the violent behavior, using it as a device for the satirization of the manipulation of the media within the society, the film focuses deeply on this act of violence, seemingly trying to send the message that this kind of

violence is more than just a device. They are purposefully removing the elements of the scene that would lighten the tone of the moment such as the comedic lines and the music, most likely to be more sensitive to DV as an issue that has gained great attention in the social and legal spheres (Marshall, 2002). This film scene takes the viewers out of the Vaudeville world to address the serious issue of DV. This desire to make the incidence of DV within the show more serious and disturbing reflects the way in which DV has become a more widely recognized issue between 1975 and 2002 (Straus, 2009). Whereas in 1975, DV was not considered a felony, thanks to improved federal legislation, DV has become fully illegal and legislation such as VAWA now funds programs to improve police response to DV and victim services (Roberts, & Kurst-Swanger, 2002).

Sexualization of “Cell Block Tango”

While the music and lyrics of “Cell Block Tango” remain the same from the 1975 stage version and the 2002 film, in the film adaptation of this number, the women are played as very “dangerous” but in a highly sexualized way. The dance is choreographed with the women dancing with unnamed male dancers whose faces are never clearly shown. At the end of every monologue, the woman speaking seems to “overthrow” her male dance partner, stylistically placing herself in a clear position of power and then tossing aside her male victim. Through this dancing and characterization, the number takes on a less “absurd” lens and seems to sexually fetishize the idea of a dangerous powerful woman.

Making the 2002 adaptation of “Cell Block Tango” much more sexual and portraying the women as powerful and sexy for that power, further complicates the issue of gender dynamics in

this song. To start, the film seems to be progressive in placing these women in a position of power, but by sexualizing the number, the women are in some ways objectified and fetishized as femmes fatales. Additionally, these women are being placed in a traditionally “masculine” role of the abuser and yet when women are put in the position of dangerous and psychotic abusers that blame their victims for their horrible deeds, due to the fetishized nature of these female abusers - film viewers are still not meant to be disturbed by this portrayal. This is even more problematic considering the fact that between 1975 and 2002, statistics emerged that showed that 35.62% of DV victim ("Home", 2017) annually are men and 41% of intimate partner murders between 1985-1996 were committed by women (Brewster, 2002). These statistics have been made available to the general population and yet this song’s lyrics continues to paint female abusers as absurd and unbelievable. Thus not only does the number fetishize female abusers, it continues to suggest that female abusers are not actually something to be concerned about in society through their humorous monologues.

Additionally, by attempting to portray these women as powerful and sexual within “Cell Block Tango”, the filmmakers seem to justify the victim blaming that is occurring within the song. In this version of the number, the ending lines of the monologues that are meant by Kander and Ebb to be humorous and absurd are choreographed to be very sexual. Thus, the filmmakers seem to be attempting to subvert the humor of the song by sexualizing the characters instead. Perhaps the intention of this kind of sexualization was to increase the perceived power of the women, especially because many of the sexual poses choreographed into this number seem to be of a dominatrix nature with the women sexually domineering the men. However, the purpose of the humor within this number was to make the women’s justification for the murder seem

absurd. By subverting that absurdity with sexual power, the silly reasons for the women murdering the men seem less silly. This is potentially problematic as viewers of the film may actually perceive these women to be powerful and justified in their actions.

Another way to interpret the number, which is just as problematic, is often times, when a woman abuses or murders her male intimate partner, there was prior abuse by the male before, meaning that “Cell Block Tango” is painting as absurd women who potentially retaliated against former abuse from a male partner. In a study done by Goldenson, et. al., on the pathology of convicted female perpetrators of DV within heterosexual relationships, researchers found that of women accused of abusive behavior, 24% were dominant aggressors (primarily initiated violence for reasons other than self defense), 55% experienced bidirectional aggression (both offender and partner were equally responsible for violence in the relationship), and 21% reported being largely victims of aggression (Goldenson, Geffner, Foster, & Clipson, 2007). This points to the fact that, statistically speaking, women who are convicted of perpetrator behavior were likely to have experienced some form of abuse from her male intimate partner regularly in their relationship (76%). Additionally, when male partners are murdered by a female spouse, girlfriend, or former partner, 75-85% are preceded by some form of prior DV with 25% of murder cases of this sort in immediate self defense (Campbell, Baty, Laughon, & Woods, 2009). These statistics likewise point to the fact that in the vast majority of cases in which a woman murders her male partner, the male partner was abusive as well.

However, within the number “Cell Block Tango,” when these women are portrayed as sexy, angry, and dangerous, any pain that they may have experienced due to their prior abuse is essentially erased. Especially in the film’s interpretation, the portrayal shows no hurt but rather

hardness and anger. That is not to say that every woman shows hurt from abuse she experienced or that women are wrong for showing a hardness following an abusive situation. But the film in no way paints these “Cell Block Tango” women as survivors or victims when in some of the situations within in the song definitely point to some prior abuse, particularly June who describes her husband’s dangerous outburst before she murdered him, “He was crazy. And he kept on screaming ‘you’ve been screwing the milkman’” (Kander, & Ebb, 1975). Also, because the line to end this monologue is particularly humorous (“And then he ran into my knife. He ran into my knife ten times”), the comedy undermines the seriousness of the monologue that proceeds and erases the potential discomfort the audience might feel knowing that these women were abused throughout their relationships.

Additionally, the repetition of the phrase “He had it coming” likewise suggests that these women experienced more harmful abuse than perhaps what is explored in the song. Particularly in one iteration of the chorus, the women sing “and then they used us / and they abused us / it was a murder but not a crime,” very blatantly alluding to past abusive behavior (Kander, & Ebb, 1975). Again, however, within the context of the angry and seductive tango, any actual pain or lasting pathology from past abusive behavior is disregarded even though, as I explored in the introduction, 66% of post abused women report experiencing symptoms of PTSD for up to 9 years after leaving an abusive situation and 45% report pain-fatigue-depression symptoms, a cluster of symptoms highly associated with abused women (Campbell, Baty, Laughon, & Woods, 2009). Ultimately, this song serves to disregard the true experience of a majority of female perpetrators of violence who were also victims of abuse themselves.

Anti-Essentialism and Roxie in the Legal System in 2002

As I explored earlier in this section, DV legislation developed in leaps and bounds between the 1970s when *Chicago* was initially written and in 2002 when the film version was released. Dominance Feminists gained support and were able to create a more standardized and accountable legal system for handling cases of DV. However, as I explored in Part I of this chapter, in order to achieve their goals, Dominance Feminists created the idea of the “essential victim” to gain the support of the largely white, middle class, male judicial system. The essential victim was white, middle-class, weak, frightened, and passive and in order to be believable as a victim in court, it was best if a woman fit that description.

While pushing the idea of the essential victim was essential in getting legislation criminalizing DV recognized, this desire to categorize victims in this way proved problematic for victims of DV that did not fit the essential description. For example, in the legal system, it became a requirement for victims of DV bringing their perpetrator to court to testify that they were afraid of their abuser (Goodman, 2012). Fear became an important marker of a DV victim and women who testified that they were not afraid of their abuser were dismissed from court. Additionally, if a woman did not appear to be “passive,” rather they appeared to be angry about their abuse, they were dismissed as victims and for portraying such strong emotions (Goodman, 2012).

For those reasons, lawyers began advising female victims to adapt the story of their abuse to fit the “essential victim” description. If victims reported not being scared of their abuser, their lawyer would advise them to lie and say they were if they wanted help from the courts (Goodman, 2012). Doing this, however, erases the true experience of many victims. Victims are

essentially being told that their individual experiences are not valid as stories of abuse and they will not receive any aid if they present the truth the courts. This denying women the right to get help for their true experience with abuse became very problematic for many people. Thus, the Anti-Essentialist feminist movement was born, in which members of this movement began advocating for victims that did not fit the essentialized lens.

Anti-Essentialist feminism has become particularly relevant within the last twenty years, and continued to be very important when the *Chicago* film was first released. In terms of Roxie's portrayal within the legal system in *Chicago*, not much has changed between 1975 and the 2002 film version. Within the number "We Both Reached for the Gun," Roxie is still Billy's puppet and Billy still speaks for her, turning her into the essential victim that would gain sympathy from the press and the court. The film is able to be even more stylized than the stage version, showing very literally how Billy is controlling both Roxie and the members of the media (Marshall, 2002). In this scene in the film, as the song progresses, the media gradually also turn into marionettes with strings controlled by a very enlarged Billy (Marshall, 2002). Therefore, the portrayal of Roxie as the essential victim and a puppet of her lawyer with her story manipulated to gain sympathy has not changed at all from the 1975 film version to the 2002 stage version. It is clear that the piece is still meant to mock the ease with which the media can be manipulated using Roxie's case as a device for that satire.

While mocking the idea of the essential victim in 1975 was potentially very harmful and subversive to what Dominance Feminists were actually trying to do at the time, today, the idea of the essentialized victim is something that is proving harmful in the courts. Thus the film actually shifts to being very progressive in its portrayal of the essentialized victim in "We Both Reached

for the Gun.” Within the context of its release in 2002, the film, by mocking the idea of the essential victim, is supporting the Anti-Essentialist platform that it is ridiculous to portray victims in this homogenized way. It is important to raise awareness that this idea of the essential victim does still exist in the legal system and needs to be reformed today to incorporate and respect the stories of each individual victim of DV.

Unfortunately, however, while the film ostensibly does mock the essential victim, which today can be considered a positive shift, the film is still portraying a character that does still fit the bill of the essential victim. The filmmakers cast Renee Zellweger in the role of Roxie, a white, blond actress who fits the characteristics of the white, blond, thin and therefore potentially frail looking essential victim. In a time today when it is important to move on from portraying essential victims, and represent the voices and experiences of all women, the film perpetuates the idea of the essential victim by failing to represent women outside of the characteristic essential victim. Additionally, in the world of film acting, actors in big budget films are generally known for other work and the same is true in the case of Renee Zellweger. In other films, such as “Bridget Jones’ Diary,” Zellweger plays a very likable and empathetic character and she is known as a likable actress. Thus, this was another way in which the filmmakers seemed to be attempting to make Roxie into a more sympathetic character. What is more, though Renee Zellweger can carry a tune, she is by no means a trained singer and so she does not have a lot of vocal “power.” This is another way in which the filmmakers chose an actress who would appear “frail” not only in appearance but in the sound of her voice.

Amos and Male Victimhood in the 2000s

In the movie version of *Chicago*, several changes are made to the character of Amos to attempt to portray him as less of a victim of abuse while still portraying him as somewhat comedically sad. The first interaction that occurs between Amos and Roxie in the film is very telling of that attempted change. Roxie performs “Funny Honey” just as in the stage version, watching as Amos betrays her to the police officer. She grows angry and after the song finishes she crosses the room and pushes Amos roughly off the side of the bed saying “You double-crosser, you big blabbermouth!” Then she continues to hit him on the chest as she berates him for revealing her to be the murderer. However, unlike in the stage version where Amos gets no more lines after Roxie verbally berates him calling him a “double-crosser” and a “goddamn disloyal husband” (Kander, Ebb, & Fosse, 1975), Amos in the movie continues to yell at Roxie and stand his ground while she hits him. However, eventually he backs away from her as she confesses to the police.

It seems in this portrayal, the filmmakers made this change in the way Amos reacts to Roxie’s verbal and physical beratement to paint him as less of a victim to her abusive behavior. Rather than backing down right away, he yells at Roxie but does not take physical action against her physical action. Even when he seems to stand up for himself, however, the police officer still refers to Amos as “Goofy,” suggesting that within the world of the film, Amos is still meant to be perceived as sad and silly but it is largely because he did not realize that Roxie had been having an affair for several months.

Another instance in which parts of Roxie and Amos’s abusive relationship is removed for the film is the tap dance in which Roxie coerces Amos into giving her the money she needs to afford Billy Flynn. In this way, the film chooses to leave out an important scene that further

characterizes Roxie as a systematic abuser to Amos is which she can maintain power and control over their relationship. Furthermore, at the end of the film, half of the scene in which Roxie dismisses Amos for the last time is cut. While in the stage version, the scene goes as follows:

AMOS: Roxie?

ROXIE: What do you want?

AMOS: I'd like you to come home. You said you still wanted me. I still love you. And the baby. Our baby...

ROXIE: Baby? Jesus what do you take me for? There ain't no baby

AMOS: There ain't no baby?

ROXIE: That's right

AMOS: Roxie, I still love you

ROXIE: They didn't even want my picture. I don't understand that. They didn't even want my picture.

AMOS: My exit music please...

[MUSIC the ORCHESTRA doesn't play]

AMOS: ... Okay.

In the movie, the scene stops after Roxie says "That's right." Amos fails to confess his love for her again and he does not ask for any exit music that is not given. Rather, after she tells him there is no baby, he quietly leaves and she continues the scene as if he was never there. I believe that cutting the second half of this exchange was similarly a way to make Amos seem like less of a victim of DV. The film does not go so far to try to shame him whereas in the stage version he is repeatedly scorned of love and then denied the decency of exit music. In the film he quietly

leaves and melts away. While this may seem like a nicer treatment of Amos as a character, by glossing over and removing the victimization of Amos, the film in some ways denies a voice to male victims of DV. Especially in a time when statistics have shown male victimhood of DV to be higher than what was previously believed, truly showing a male victim of DV could have been very enlightening.

Now that I have analyzed both the lingering issues with the portrayal of DV both in the original 1975 stage version of *Chicago* and the updated film version, I will explore how I addressed these problems in my own DV intervention program. Thoroughly exploring the issues within the musical will allow me to target my intervention towards correcting the misguided attitudes the irresponsible representation of violence within this show potentially promotes. Thus, in Chapter 3, I will outline my complete process for my intervention as well as the results from the implementation taking special care to address the issues I analyzed in this chapter.

Chapter 3:

Domestic Violence Prevention and the Musical *Chicago*

One of the greatest risk factors for Domestic Violence (DV) perpetration is lack of knowledge and understanding of what DV is and resources available to escape violent situations. Additionally, harmful beliefs about gender roles and the perceived acceptability of violence in our society can raise the likelihood of engaging in and/or becoming a victim of DV. Many musicals, including *Chicago* - as I explored in the previous chapter - portray DV onstage in a way that has the potential to normalize abusive behavior. By letting the DV in these musicals go undiscussed in a productive manner, we normalize the problematic notions of DV they portray. As Campbell et. Al. declare in their article “Health Effects of Partner Violence: Aiming Towards Prevention,” “Primary prevention of Intimate Partner Violence and Intimate Partner Abuse must focus on creating a safe environment and establishing behaviors that do not condone IPV or IPA through inaction on community and societal levels” (Campbell, Baty, Laughon, & Woods, 2009). In this chapter, I will lay out my plan for using the musical *Chicago* as a means of violence prevention. I will use the musical *Chicago* as a platform for the discussion of DV with the hope that this intervention will change attitudes towards and enhance knowledge of DV for the community through guided discussion of the way in which violence is portrayed in the musical.

This chapter will begin with an exploration of the directorial choices that were made within Torn Ticket’s production of *Chicago* to update the portrayal of violence or stick with a classic interpretation such as those explored in the last chapter. I will discuss the implications of

these choices for the way in which our audience would interpret the show today. Though I was not the director of the show, I did choreograph several numbers and as a cast member I did have some way in the way in which scenes were interpreted. Next, I will lay out my intervention program that I established to address the portrayal of DV within our production of *Chicago*. I will go through the methods for the program implementation, the process for which the program will be presented, the results of the survey to measure the effectiveness of the intervention in achieving my goals for the project, a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and finally, a projection for how this project can continue in the future.

Torn Ticket's Production of *Chicago* in 2017: Directorial Decisions and Their Implications Today

As a part of this project, early in the rehearsal process for *Chicago*, I presented to the cast definitions and historical background of DV as a public health issue before applying them to an analysis of key scenes in the show that demonstrate abuse (addressing those scenes that I analyzed fully in Chapter 2). My goal with this presentation was to educate the cast on the DV seen within the show so that we as a cast could be very purposeful in addressing the issues within our performance. My hope was that creating a cast that is critically aware of the problems within the show can aid in performing the piece in an updated and less problematic way (Baker, 2008). Within this presentation to the cast, I wanted to create a safe environment in which these difficult subjects could be discussed productively. To do so, I was sure to put in a trigger warning for DV at the start of my presentation and I encouraged cast members to disengage if ever they found themselves feeling too uncomfortable with the material.

While I spent most of the hour-long presentation presenting educational material about DV and applying it to my own interpretations of scenes within this show, at the end I asked cast members what they found most striking that they want to be aware of within our production. One thing that stood out to cast members and especially our director and the actress playing Roxie was the idea of Roxie as an anti-social abuser or an abuser with some form of pathology like Narcissistic Personality Disorder. They very much agreed with my interpretation of Roxie as an abuser and the actress playing Roxie, who had come to the conclusion that Roxie suffered from Narcissistic Personality Disorder in character work before the presentation, very much wanted to portray Roxie as that kind of abuser throughout the show. I believe that this interpretation actually makes Roxie much more realistic as an abuser. Additionally, the actress's choice to portray her in this way is not only a stronger and more realistic character choice, if the actress portrays Roxie as an abuser, the actress is not attempted to make Roxie more sympathetic to the audience.

This decision points to the potential impact that an actor's performance can have on how the audience interprets the character or a situation within the musical. Another example in which I was involved as an actress in making that performance decision was during Torn Ticket's 2015 production of *Little Shop of Horrors*. In that production, I played Audrey, a poor young woman trapped in a physically and emotionally abusive relationship with her boyfriend Orin. In one pivotal scene of the show, Audrey introduces Orin to her coworker (and the protagonist of the musical who is in love with Audrey), Seymour. Orin takes charge of the scene and begins verbally abusing Audrey in front of her coworker, causing her emotional distress and embarrassment. The script, however, is clearly written to be comedic. The abusive dialogue

between Orin and Audrey is full of jokes, specifically a recurring gag in which Orin demeans Audrey for failing to call him “Doctor” (he’s a dentist) snapping at her and making her apologize profusely for the oversight.

The first time I watched the show, as I alluded to in the introduction, the actors played the scene comedically and the audience responded by laughing at the abuse as it unfolded on stage. To make the scene comedic, the actor playing Audrey, while apologizing, played up the her distress in an “over-the-top” way, turning the the abuse into more of a parody of what a victim might actually feel rather than a realistic reaction. In this way, the abuse was made comedic, played up for laughs rather than attempting to show the actual pain that a victim of abuse would feel in this situation. Watching this made me feel very uncomfortable, however, and when I played Audrey the next year, I vowed to portray the abusive scenes in such a way that would not make light of the horribly scarring experience of being abused. Thus, in my interpretation of Audrey, I decided to make Audrey’s reaction to the violence less “over-the-top” and more serious, trying to portray actual pain in the eyes of the character to make the audience feel very uncomfortable with the abuse. As a result, during the Torn Ticket production of *Little Shop of Horrors* in which I played Audrey, audience members did not laugh at the scene in which my character was verbally abused. In this situation, the script did not need to be changed to shift the way in which the audience interprets the scene, rather changing the way in which a character is acted radically shifted the reaction of the audience.

Within the 2017 production of *Chicago*, another instance in which the way a character was acted shifted the meaning of the show and the audience reaction was our actor’s portrayal of the character of Amos. In our production of *Chicago*, the first interaction that Roxie and Amos

actually have together is Roxie coming over and hitting Amos repeatedly as she says “You double-crosser! You said you’d stick! You goddamn disloyal husband!” Immediately the abusive relationship is established and very clearly through not only the verbal abuse written in the script but physically as she smacks him repeatedly as well. Additionally, as she hit him, he cowered back, covering his face with his hands, suggesting that this was not the first time she has hit him in this way and he feels helpless to do anything to stop her violent outburst. Whereas in the film, the actor playing Amos yells back at Roxie and attempts to stand his ground while she hits him, our Amos chose to make the abusive relationship much more acute, portraying Amos as very clearly a victim of Roxie’s abuse. Additionally, where in the movie, Amos is portrayed in clown shoes and makeup for the number “Cellophane” to clearly paint Amos as a sad character meant for laughs, in our production, Amos was dressed normally and delivered the number very honestly, causing him to be viewed as a much more sympathetic character rather than one to laugh at.

Where the film shies away from Amos as a victim of DV, our production chose to emphasize the abusive relationship further. The film glossed over the issue of Roxie as an abuser and tried to minimize her negative impact on Amos by taking out any situations from the original script in which Roxie abusing Amos is featured too heavily. The movie glosses over and chooses to remove Roxie’s abuse of Amos, which serves to deny the existence of male victims. In our production, however, we chose to enhance the parts of the script in which Roxie abuses Amos and draw out the moments of violence in order to really make the audience feel uncomfortable about the relationship and rethink their perceptions of male DV victims. I believe that by

emphasizing the violence and really making Amos a sympathetic character, our production raised awareness about male victims of DV, who are rarely portrayed honestly on stage.

Some parts of the show did we did not radically shift from what was intended in the original script or the 2002 film version. Overall, the director wanted the aesthetic of the show to be highly sexualized - a traditional approach to *Chicago*, - which manifested in the costumes, the choreography, and the characterization. Specifically, the initial act of violence and “Cell Block Tango” were staged to be particularly seductive. The initial act of violence in our production was the original 1975 stage version (rather than the updated 2002 film version), as that is the version of the script that is licensable. Like in the original version, the initial act of violence is found within “All That Jazz,” which was choreographed to be very alluring, following the traditional approach of seducing the audience into accepting the violence within the context of the musical number. “Cell Block Tango,” however, followed an interpretation more similar to the 2002 film version: it was very sexualized and choreographed in such a way that the female murderers always domineered the men with whom they were dancing. The number portrayed the women as very powerful and very angry through their movements onstage. As I will explore later in this chapter, this way of portraying the number has the potential to be interpreted as empowering for these women rather than a situation to be wary of. Thus, while we did update some characterizations in our production to make our production more critically aware of the problematic way in which the show displays violence, there were some scenes - the initial act of violence and “Cell Block Tango” being two major ones - that were performed in a more traditional and less updated way, continuing to perpetuate the issues within those scenes.

Domestic Violence Prevention and *Chicago* - Intervention Methods

It is not enough, however, to just have the cast be informed about the issues within the show as there is still problematic material that cannot be changed that needs to be addressed for the audience as well (Baker, 2008). Thus, I have designed an intervention program to target the audience of Torn Ticket II's production of *Chicago* with the goal establishing a universal DV prevention approach to reach the larger community of people engaging with this show.

My *Chicago*-based community health prevention program took place after Tufts University's Torn Ticket II's production of the musical *Chicago*. Once having seen the show, audience members were invited to participate in a talkback led by myself in the lobby after the performance. The goal of the talkback is to educate the community about the complexities of DV and then to engage in a discussion of how the violence was portrayed in the musical. As I discussed in the last chapter, *Chicago* presents many problematic portrayals of DV at work that can be easily glossed over within the spectacle of the show. *Chicago* also perpetuates a rather callous attitude towards abuse, an attitude in which victims are blamed for their abuse ("he had it coming"), male victims are seen as sad and foolish, and abusers are portrayed as sexy and powerful. If we, as they audience, accept this disturbing portrayal and remain silent about what we have seen, we remain passive about the issue, failing as a community validate DV as a topic in need of discussion. Thus, the talkback provided a safe and supportive environment in which the DV in the show was picked apart and revealed as problematic in order to gain deeper understanding of the issue.

This talkback was an awareness and education program targeting members of the audience who attended Torn Ticket's production of *Chicago* March 30th and 31st, 2017.

Participants were recruited from the audience of Torn Ticket II's production of Chicago. A page in the program described the study that I conducted and encouraged those who wish to participate to attend a talkback after the show (SEE APPENDIX III for program notes).

Additionally, before the show began, I (as my character Mary Sunshine) came onstage and gave a live fire speech. Within the fire speech, I invited audience members to join me for the talkback in the Balch lobby after the show (SEE APPENDIX IV for Fire Speech Script). I informed the audience that if they stayed for the talkback, they would receive snacks as an incentive to remain. That way, recruitment reached all members of the audience (my population) and convenience sampling (solely advertising to those who know me and want to attend the talkback to support me) was avoided. Participation in the talkback was completely voluntary.

In addition to the talkback, audience members who chose to attend were given a survey before and after the discussion (SEE APPENDIX II). The survey measured understanding of DV and attitudes towards violence, with questions relating specifically to what was seen in the show. The same survey was presented before and after the talkback. My hope, was that the surveys would show an increase of knowledge and understanding of DV and a change in attitudes and beliefs after the discussion.

Consent took place before the talkback that occurred just after the performance of Torn Ticket II's Chicago. Participants were asked to fill out a pre-discussion survey. The top of the survey explained the intent of the survey (to assess knowledge of and attitudes towards DV). Because I wished the survey to remain anonymous, I stated at the top of the survey after the information about the study is given that by filling out this survey and handing it in, participants were consenting to having their answers recorded in my study. Again, the survey was

anonymous so no personal information will be able to be traced back to the participant should they choose to fill out the survey. However, because I wanted to see if there is a change between the pre-post survey, I include instructions on how to write an identifier at the top of both surveys. I asked participants to write the first two letters of the name of their first pet and the last letter of their favorite color plus their favorite number (eg. MOE-13). That way, there was no identifying information included in the survey so it remained anonymous but I was able to keep a person's pre-post survey together to better analyze the results.

Before the talkback took place, when I handed out the pre-discussion surveys, I, as the Principal Investigator, verbally explained the consent process and then gave participants five minutes to consider consenting to the study and then fill out the survey. Participants who chose not to fill out the survey were still welcome to stay for the talkback, thus participants who wanted to hear the talkback but did not feel comfortable consenting to the survey would not have felt pressure to complete the survey to participate in the talkback. Minors under the age of 18 were not be permitted to partake in the survey.

My techniques for the talkback itself came from what I have discussed in the last two sections of this chapter modified for my specific situation with the time and resources restraints I have. I began the talkback, after the pre-program survey has been collected, by giving a comprehensive definition of DV, focusing specifically on forms of violence that are not physical, as those are the forms of abuse most often overlooked as DV and can be seen throughout *Chicago*, just as Straus suggested in his article on "Gender Symmetry" (Straus, 2009). I also defined who can be considered a victim of DV as I concluded based on the work of Davis (2008) in chapter one of this project - it is not only intimate partners that can be victims of DV by

siblings, the elderly, and the disabled as well. I also presented some statistics and further information about male and female perpetrators, dispelling any misconceptions that only men can be abusers. In this portion of the talkback, I provided information about the complexities of DV that the audience may be unaware of. By educating the audience in this way, I hoped that they would gain a deeper understanding of the issue and be more able to recognize abuse in their own lives and in the lives of others. In sum, I hoped to increase “community accountability,” “enhancing the community’s capacity to recognize and intervene in abusive situations, support women, confront men, and articulate non-abusive norms” (Davis, 2008).

I planned to take no more than 7-10 minutes on the education portion of the talkback as I wanted to spend the majority of the time on discussion that engages the participants and allows them to analyze the show for themselves with my guidance. I wanted this portion of the talkback to be highly interactive, allowing audience members to express their own reactions and feelings that were evoked by watching the show (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009). When asking questions, I wanted to take into account the questions that Ieva et al. articulated as good questions to ask when discussing participant’s experiences and reflecting on an empathetic response to gain a greater understanding of the issue. Additionally, after having spoken with a member of a professional theater who often holds talkbacks after his company’s shows, he suggested asking simple questions (rather than multi-part questions) one at a time to allow the audience to reflect on one issue at a time. Additionally, I planned for having time to ask many questions but question order or number of questions asked changed depending on how the discussion went on the night of the talkback.

To start off the discussion, I asked for reactions to the violence within the show as a whole:

- Having just watched *Chicago*, what is your initial reaction to the violence within the show?
- What feelings came up for you?
- What images stand out for you and why?
- Did you identify with any of the characters?

I wanted to get the audience thinking about the show as a whole before diving into a discussion of specific moments of DV within the show, moments that I analyzed in great detail in the last chapter. This allowed the audience to contextualize the violence in their discussion of the show as a whole.

The next point of discussion I moved to is the initial act of violence within the show. This moment begins the performance and sets the tone for the rest of the show and definitely has the potential to elicit a very strong reaction. I guided the discussion with the following questions:

- What was your initial reaction after watching Roxie shoot Fred within the opening number?
- What feelings come up for you?
- What was your physical reaction?
- How did this shape your understanding of and feelings towards Roxie? (In this scene and throughout the rest of the show)
- Based on our earlier discussion of DV, can you identify the type of DV within this scene?
- What do you think is the purpose of showing this abuse in the opening number?

- Do you think the musical achieves that purpose?
- Do you feel that showing this kind of violence for that purpose is justified?

In the last chapter, I explore the three levels of *Chicago*: what is being shown in the show, the aim of the authors with that portrayal, and what is actually conveyed to the audience. Thus, the purpose of these discussion questions is to explore how the audience feels emotionally towards this scene then compare that to what the purpose of the scene was (the author's aim). I hoped to compare their emotional response to the perceived purpose to see if the author's goals are achieved and what it means if they are not.

Next, I wanted discuss the character of Amos and his portrayal as a victim of DV. I foresaw that this character would be thought of as comedic and foolish in his victimization and thus, through this discussion, I wanted to raise awareness of Amos as a victim and explore why it is that we find his character comedic and sad.

- What were your feelings towards the character of Amos?
- What words would you use to describe him?
- How do the interactions between Roxie and Amos make you feel?
- Throughout the show, do you think Amos is a victim of DV?
- What kind of abuse does Amos have to endure?
- How does thinking of Amos as a victim make you feel?
- Does it change the way you think of the violence within the show?

I hoped with these discussion questions, we would be able to work through the portrayal of Amos and how the show may shift in the way it is interpreted thanks to seeing Amos as a real

victim of abuse. I hoped that this discussion would help to shift attitudes towards more hidden forms of violence and male victims.

Though I would have loved to discuss the victim blaming in “Cell Block Tango” and the essentializing of the victim in “We Both Reached for the Gun,” I wanted to try to keep the talkback to under a half an hour. As the talkback occurred after a two and a half hour long show on a Thursday and Friday night, I believed that it would become unproductive if discussion continued for more than a half an hour as the participants may have lost interest. Additionally, since participants could leave the talkback at any time, I did not want to lose participants before they completed the second questionnaire, making them effectively lost to follow-up without knowing whether my intervention was effective for them. As I predicted that discussion of the show as whole and the two specific moments (initial act of violence and Amos as a victim) would last for about 15-20 minutes, I would end discussion there with the following closing questions:

- Does anyone have any other feelings on what we have discussed that you want to share?
- Does anyone have any thoughts on other parts of the show that we did not get to discuss that they would like to share?

I wanted to open up the floor at the end for the audience to share any further thoughts that they might have as a conclusion to the discussion. This gave participants control to bring up what they found important to discuss outside of how I guided the discussion. Additionally, it would have been a good indication of whether the participants wanted to continue the discussion or be done. If people brought up other thoughts, we could have continued our discussion, but if people were too tired, they would have remained silent and the discussion could come to a close.

Following the concluding thoughts, I passed out the post survey, instructing participants to label it with their identifier from the first survey (first two letters of their first pet, last letter of their favorite color, plus their favorite number). I then asked them to take five minutes to fill out the same survey that they received at the beginning and turn it into me. I then provided a sheet with more information about my thesis if participants would have liked to learn more about what I am doing. The information sheet also contained numbers and website URLs for sites that assist victims of DV in case any audience members encounter abuse in their futures. It was important after the discussion to also inform the audience about resources available to them if ever they should find themselves in an abusive situation. I remained in the lobby for if people who wanted to engage in further discussion outside of the talkback format.

Results

After conducting the talkback on Thursday and Friday after the show, I received 17 total participants in the talkback all of whom completed both the pre- and post- surveys and remained for the whole talkback. There were seven participants on Thursday night and ten participants Friday night. All participants labeled their pre- and post- surveys with an identifying code and I was thus able to compare all participants across time. As the survey is to remain anonymous, there is are no further demographic features of the participants to discuss at this time.

The first set of real questions I asked aimed to see if participants could apply knowledge of DV to situations inspired by the show. The second question (2.a) that was asked on the survey was meant to further test knowledge of different forms of DV by asking participants to identify whether certain scenarios taken from or influenced by *Chicago* could be identified as DV. The

first situation I asked participants to consider went as follows: “Fred Casely has entered Roxie’s apartment and does not leave when she asks him to. After she tells him that she is pregnant with her husband’s child, Fred threatens her saying ‘I’ll kill you before I see you have another man’s child!’ Does this isolated scenario demonstrate DV?” Within this question, I wanted to describe a scenario that contained threats of severe abuse (“I’ll kill you before I see you have another man’s child!”), which firmly falls under the definition of DV. One hundred percent of the participants answered “YES” that this scenario does demonstrate an instance of DV both on the pre- and post- survey. This demonstrates that all of the participants in the talkback could identify threats of extreme violence as DV both before and after my talkback.

The next question (2.b) was similarly asking participants to apply their knowledge of DV to a situation in order to identify whether or not the situation was an example of DV. The next question proved trickier for participants to answer and there was much more variation in the responses on the survey. The second question asked participants to consider the following situation: “Roxie does not love her husband, Amos, but she needs him to give her money to pay for her defense attorney. In order to convince him she tells him ‘I never stopped loving you, not my Amos - so manly and so attractive... so... I’m embarrassed... so sexy.’ Does this isolated scenario demonstrate DV?” In this question, I wanted to measure whether participants understood what psychological abuse and coercion looked like as well as economic abuse. In this situation, Roxie emotionally manipulates Amos in order to get him to give up all of his money for her gain.

	2. B Pre	2. B Post
Yes	12	16
No	5	1

Table 1: Results of question 2. B on the pre- post- survey.

As can be seen in Table 1 above, the majority of participants (70.59%) correctly identified this scenario as DV before the talkback in the pre-survey. However, of the five participants who answered “NO” on the pre-survey, 80% changed their answer to “YES” on the post-survey indicating that my talkback aided in providing new knowledge to correctly identify this scenario as DV by the end of the discussion. This is further supported by the fact that while 70.59% of participants correctly answered “YES” on the pre-survey, 94.12% correctly answered “YES” on the post-survey. For both nights of the talkback, significant time was devoted to discussing Amos as a victim of abuse, which allowed for identifying the abuse that could be seen in this specific situation in the show.

The next question demonstrating shifts in the way participants answered before and after the talkback was question 3.a. In this set of questions, I wanted to collect data on participants’ attitudes and beliefs towards situations of DV. In question 3.a, I wanted specifically to examine attitudes towards female abusers and whether or not participants viewed these females in a positive light. I asked in questions 3.a: “True or false: I find the violence portrayed in *Chicago* to be empowering for the women.” I used the word “empowering” in the question as it usually has a positive connotation, in which an empowered person gains strength and control for the better. As the women in this show take a role as the abuser, a role typically believed to be powerful and

“masculine,” I wanted to determine if participants viewed this kind of power for women as something to be viewed as positive.

	3.a Pre	3.a Post
True	6	2
False	11	13
Unsure	0	2

Table 2: Results for question 3.a on the pre- post-survey

This table shows a reduction in the number of people who believed this kind of violence to be empowering for the women in the show before and after the talkback. In the pre-survey, before the talkback, 35.29% of participants believed the violence in the show to be empowering for the women and 64.71% did not find the violence in the show to be empowering towards women. In the post-survey, however, there were significantly less participants who found the violence in the show to be empowering towards women with only two participants (11.76%) answering “TRUE” in the post survey compared with the 88.24% of participants who answered “FALSE” or “UNSURE.” Of the participants who answered “TRUE” in the pre-survey, three changed their answers to “FALSE,” two changed their answers to “UNSURE” and only one remained “TRUE” for the post-survey. Interestingly, that also means that one person who answered “FALSE” in the pre-survey changed their answer to “TRUE” for the post-survey, going against the general trend for this question. These results largely demonstrate that the talkback and discussion shifted many participants’ attitudes (83.33%) from viewing female

abusers in a positive and powerful light to questioning whether that kind of power and control is ever positive.

The results also demonstrate that the musical portrayed the female violence in such a way that 35.29% of participants initially found it to be empowering. This speaks to the danger that I discussed in Chapter II that audience could interpret the sexualized almost dominatrix version of “Cell Block Tango” as a positive power that the women in the number possess. The results also speak to the fact that it was only after discussing the ways in which this kind of powerful portrayal can actually be problematic that participants changed their minds about whether or not the violence in the show was empowering for women.

The next question to show striking results was question 3.b which was meant to assess participants’ attitudes and beliefs towards DV and the abuse they just witnessed on stage. Question 3.b targets specifically how participants reacted emotionally to the violence they had just seen on stage as I asked: “True or false: Watching the violence portrayed in *Chicago* made me feel uncomfortable or unsettled.” This question was also meant to gain an understanding of how audience members reacted specifically to the way the violence was portrayed within the show as Fosse, Kander, and Ebb portrayed the violence largely within the context of large, flashy musical numbers with the goal of making the violence feel like part of the larger entertainment. This question was meant to measure if Fosse, Kander, and Ebb’s goal was achieved as audience members would most likely not feel unsettled if the violence was successfully integrated into the entertainment world.

	3.b Pre	3.b Post
True	6	10
False	11	7

Table 3: Results of question 3.b of the pre- post-survey

The results demonstrate a fairly large shift between the feelings of the participants before and after the talkback. Before the talkback, the majority (64.71%) determined that the violence portrayed in the show did not make them feel unsettled or uncomfortable in any way compared with 35.29% who determined that the violence in the show did make them feel uncomfortable or unsettled. After the talkback, however, 36.36% of participants who answered “FALSE” in the pre-survey changed their answer to “TRUE” in the post-survey. 100% of participants who answered “TRUE” in the pre-survey maintained their answer in the post-survey. There was thus a shift that occurred during the talkback so that after the discussion, the majority (58.83%) determined that the violence within the show did make them feel uncomfortable or unsettled.

This is important as it shows that the talkback had a fairly significant effect on beliefs towards the DV portrayed within the show. After the talkback, people retroactively switched how they felt about the violence in the show after reflecting on it as part of the discussion. After reflection, 36.36% of participants who had not felt unsettled by the violence in the show determined that the violence was in some way unsettling or uncomfortable for them. Thus, this shows that the post-show discussion can have an effect on participants attitudes towards how the violence made them feel in the show.

The next question on the survey that showed a shift between the pre- and post-survey responses was question 3.d, meant to measure participant’s beliefs and knowledge about the

gender distribution for victims of DV. Because there has been the belief throughout history that women are basically the sole victims of DV (as evidenced largely by the gendered pronouns used in many theories of DV that are constantly gendering the victim as female and the perpetrator as male), I wanted to spend some time in the talkback discussing the statistics for male victims of DV. Specifically, within the talkback on both nights I presented the statistic from the National Coalition Against for DV (“Home,” 2017) that one in three women and one in four men will be victims of DV at some point in their lifetimes and on Friday night, I also included the statistic that 64.37% of reported DV victims annually are women and 35.62% of reported victims annually are men. Thus, while statistically more women are victims of DV, there are still a large amount of male victims of DV, which is significant especially within the context of *Chicago*. Thus, I asked the following question on the survey to measure participants’ knowledge and beliefs about the gender of victims with the following question: “True or False: Women are significantly more at risk for becoming victims of DV than men.” My goal with this question was that by using the phrase “*significantly* more at risk” participants would be able to identify that women are more at risk than men for becoming victims of DV but not *significantly* more likely. Of course, this question was purposefully vague (as I did not attempt to define “significantly” in the question) to make participants think deeply about their answer to this question.

	3.d Pre	3.d Post
True	17	5
False	0	11
Unsure	0	1

Table 4: Results of question 3.d in the pre- post- survey

This question demonstrated a very large shift from before and after the talkback. At the start, before the post-show discussion, 100% of participants answered “TRUE” that they believed that women were significantly more likely to be victims of abuse than men. However, after the talkback, 70.59% of participants changed their answer from “TRUE” to “FALSE” demonstrating their change in knowledge about the gender distribution of DV victims from the talkback.

Another interesting pattern to note is that of the 12 participants who changed their answer from the pre-survey, 9 of those participants were from the Friday-night talkback, meaning that 90% of the Friday participants (or all but one participant) changed their answer from “TRUE” to either “FALSE” or “UNSURE.” Many participants who answered “FALSE” wrote on their survey that they understood that women were still more likely to be victims of abuse but specified that it was not necessarily “significantly” more likely. For example one participant wrote “more but not significantly” next to their response.

These results demonstrate that the talkback had a large effect on beliefs about the gender distribution of DV victims. Especially on Friday night, in which I presented additionally statistical information about DV victims by gender (presenting not only the NCADV statistics on lifetime incidence of DV but the CDC statistics on annual incidence of DV by gender) and spending more time discussing male victims on Friday. This shows that this kind of education-based discussion in conjunction to what is seen within this show can really change participant’s knowledge and beliefs about DV.

For the rest of the questions on the survey there was no change of note in answers from the pre-survey to the post-survey very likely due to the fact that other questions addressed topics

related to the DV within the show that were not discussed during the talkback. One such question was question 2.c in which I wanted to determine whether or not participants included other relationships than intimate partners as victims within their definition of DV. To determine this belief I asked: “Velma’s sister, Veronica, is sleeping with Velma’s husband. When Velma finds out, she murders Veronica. Does this isolated scenario demonstrate Domestic Violence?” At the start of my talkback, I provided definitions of DV including a disclaimer that I believe the definition of DV victims should expand to include, siblings, children, the elderly, and the disabled. However, even before I presented this information, 88.24% of participants determined in the pre-survey that they considered this scenario to be DV and in the post survey, 88.24% of participants likewise considered this scenario to be DV. Thus, there was no shift in as a result of my talkback for this question.

Another question that did not show any difference between the pre- and post-survey was question 3.c, in which I wanted to determine if participants believed the portrayal of Roxie’s experience in the court system to be an accurate representation of how DV are treated in court. To determine this belief, I inquired: “True or False: The legal process that Roxie went through is indicative of the experience of most victims of Domestic Violence.” 100% of participants answered “FALSE” in both the pre- and post-survey. Thus, there was no change in belief as a result of the talkback. While it is accurate that the legal process that Roxie went through largely is *not* indicative of the experience of most victims of DV, there are some parallels between Roxie’s treatment in *Chicago* and real DV victims in court. Of course Roxie is not actually a victim of DV which further complicates the matter but when Billy Flynn decides to portray Roxie as a victim of DV, he employs classic essentializing techniques that were used in real life

to gain sympathy for DV victims in court. However, we did not get the chance to address these issues in our post-discussion and thus it makes sense why this answer would stay the same.

The last question that did not shift from the pre to the post survey was question 3.e in which I wanted to determine participant's beliefs about victim blaming for cases of DV. Do do so, I asked the following question: "True or False: In situations of Domestic Violence, sometimes violent behavior is justified when the victim does something to provoke the perpetrator (i.e. "They had it coming")." The results stayed the same between the pre- and post-survey with 88.24% of participants answering "FALSE" (that they did not believe violent behavior is ever justified when a victim does something to provoke the perpetrator) at both the pre- and post-survey and 11.76% answering "TRUE" (they do believe that in some situations violence is justified if the victim does something to provoke the perpetrator). Thus, the vast majority of the participants did not believe that violent behavior is ever justified even if the victim does something to provoke the perpetrator. There was no shift in answers from the pre- to the post-survey most likely due to the fact that this question was not addressed during the talkback due to time restraints.

However, the results of this question are interesting to study for the sake of the way in which the movie version of *Chicago* in 2002 seemed to attempt to make Roxie's character more justified in murdering Fred by having him attack her first. Thus, in shooting him he "had it coming" as he was initially abusive towards her and by lying about his connections to advance her career he provoked her into further violent action. However, the majority of the participants in the survey (fifteen out of seventeen participants or 88.24%) responded that violence is never justified even when the victim does something to provoke the perpetrator. This would therefore

suggest that the movie's characterization of Roxie would not make her more sympathetic to this group of participants who largely felt that violent behavior is never justified. An interesting follow up to this particular question would be to play the movie clip in future talkback situations and discuss the implications of Roxie's "reactive" violence towards Fred and then see if participants side with Roxie in the situation (that she is justified in murdering Fred or at least more sympathetic because of his prior actions) or oppose her decision to kill him for his abuse.

Discussion

The results of the survey show that the talkback was largely successful in enhancing knowledge and changing potentially negative beliefs about DV norms within participants of the intervention. The survey showed that survey-question topics that were explicitly addressed within discussion (male victims of DV, female abusers, etc.) showed the biggest shifts whereas survey-question topics that were not addressed in the talkback discussion (victim blaming, DV in the legal system, etc.) did not show any significant shifts between the pre- and post-survey. The discussion-based system also seemed to be very successful in engaging participants and letting them come to shifts in beliefs through their own exploration of the topic rather than me as the leader of the talkback telling them what to think of the various situations.

To begin the discussion, I asked the same question both nights: "Having just watched *Chicago*, what is your initial reaction to the violence within the show," and significantly, both the Thursday and Friday talkback groups answered in almost precisely the same way. Both groups immediately brought up the idea that by embedding the violence within the musical numbers, it seemed palatable and almost did not feel like violence. Group members both nights

agreed that interestingly, they did not feel as though they had any reaction to the violence and many participants found this fact to be striking. Both groups cited only one instance of the show in which a violent act seemed disturbing and emotional, which was when the Hungarian prisoner, Katalyn Hunyak, was hanged even though she claimed to be innocent. In this scene, there was no music as she was killed by the state, only a drum roll as she is about to drop. The acting became much more somber and realistic and even though a recapitulation of the “All That Jazz” theme was played as other members of the chorus carried Hunyak’s body off-stage, it is the first time in the show when the violence feels truly “off.”

Both groups determined through discussion that it was the music and the shift to a more serious tone in the acting that accounted for this suddenly disturbing instance of violence in the middle of a show full of violence that did not elicit any sort of negative reaction from participants. Each group also discussed further why the other acts of violence in the show did not seem as disturbing. Participants then began to feel more uncomfortable with the fact that they did not feel disturbed by the other violence in the show as the discussion progressed. Both nights talked specifically about how it was perhaps the fact that women were the perpetrators rather than the victims of the violent behavior and thus the violence did not feel so disturbing. The participants then found it unsettling that they did not find female abusers to be disturbing. This line of discussion is most likely where the shift for questions 3.a and 3.b occurred as participants were able to process their feelings towards the female character’s violent behavior and reassess their feelings towards the violence in the show and the way in which they view the violent women.

Another key similarity between the discussions both on Thursday and Friday was how both groups talked explicitly about how Amos's number "Cellophane" made Amos seem very honest, good, and true - one of the only songs in which a character appears to have truly good intentions - which made participants feel overwhelming sympathy for Amos. Both groups discussed that it was the performance of the song that evoked the empathetic reaction in them. I find this to be very striking in relation to arts-based violence intervention programs that I discussed in Chapter I, specifically the discussion of the use of music videos to enhance empathy. Through the viewing and discussion of music videos, counselors-in-training reported feeling a deeper empathetic response that allowed them to better understand the situation in the music video better than if they had read about the situation or were simply told the story. This same phenomenon seemed to occur with participants in the talkback when they discussed watching Amos perform "Cellophane." The number evoked sympathetic feelings in them that they were able to process in discussion, which also allowed for a deeper discussion of Amos as a victim of DV within the show as a whole. Discussing the feelings of sympathy towards Amos that the song evoked as well as providing further information about male victims of DV in relation to Amos as a character is most likely what accounts for the shift in questions 2.b and 3.d on the survey. Through this discussion, participants were able to gain a greater understanding of male victims of DV.

Weaknesses of the Intervention and Improvements for the Future

Due to the fact that participants had just sat through a two and a half hour long musical, I did not want to keep them long for further discussion of other issues seen within the show and

thus both nights, discussion covered definitions of DV to start and then largely the overall state of the violence within the show, the initial act of violence, female perpetrators, male victims, and the abuse that the character of Amos endures. The first night, discussion lasted for about 35 minutes and the second night, discussion lasted for about 20 minutes. While this is definitely not enough time to discuss every issue in the show - as evidenced by the fact that many answers on the survey did not change between pre- and post- as we did not address those topics during discussion - it was definitely a good way to start. Responses to survey questions pertaining to issues that were addressed in discussion shifted between pre- and post- demonstrating that the talkback was an effective way of enhancing knowledge and changing beliefs.

While for those that participated in the talkback, the intervention was very successful in enhancing knowledge and changing harmful beliefs, the issue of the time restraint for the talkback in terms of addressing all of the complicated topics within the show was only one issue with this intervention as a whole. Another drawback that I encountered with this intervention was the ability to recruit participants from the audience. The talkback was advertised to the audience as a whole within my live fire speech that I performed at the start of the show, which informed audiences what was going to be discussed, where the discussion would take place, and the food incentive that would be provided for those who participated (pizza was provided on Friday night courtesy of the Tufts Drama Department). The talkback was also advertised in the program along with a description of the other work I have been doing on this thesis. Though the talkback was advertised to the whole audience of both the Thursday and Friday performances, a very small percentage of the audience actually attended the talkback. Out of the approximately

400-500 total people who attended the shows Thursday and Friday, only 17 people stayed for the talkback.

There could be several reasons why recruitment was so difficult for this talkback. For one thing, unfortunately, both nights the talkback was in a location somewhat separate from the theater in which audience members watched the show and thus patrons who wanted to participate in the talkback had to follow me after the show to a separate location. Rather than simply allowing audience members to stay in the same location, they had to actively follow me to a new location. Additionally, it was difficult to get everyone's attention to get people to follow me to the new location and audience members had scattered between the lobby and the theater by the time the talkback was ready to begin. What is more, because I was in the show as well as leading the talkback, I had to change out of my costume and remove my makeup before I could lead the talkback. It took between ten and fifteen minutes from when the show ended to when I was able to get out of costume and back to the lobby. Many people could have left within that timeframe if they did not want to wait any longer after the show. Additionally, for those who did not know that usually at Torn Ticket shows audience members wait around to greet actors after they change, patrons who were interested in staying for the talkback may have been confused as to why I did not appear immediately and would have left.

To address these issues specifically, it would be a lot more ideal if the talkback could be held in the theater in which the show took place directly after the end of the show. That way, those who may be interested in participating could remain in their seats rather than having to take active steps to find me after the show and continue to the new location. People could still leave if they so chose but keeping the talkback in the theater right after the show would be more of an

opt-out situation rather than the opt-in situation that I had for this specific talkback. This would also mean that people who did not know me would not have to feel awkward about following me to a different location, they could remain anonymous in their seats. Additionally, if the talkback were to take place directly after the show, people would not have to wait around for me to change for ten to fifteen minutes - certainly a deterrent after having sat through the two hour long show.

While I wanted as many participants as possible in order to positively affect as many members of the audience as I could, because the discussion groups were small and mostly composed of people that already knew each other, participants were largely unafraid to speak their mind about the issues. Additionally, everyone in the discussion groups had the opportunity to contribute to the discussion because there were so few people. It would be interesting to see if the dynamic were to change with a larger group of people who may not know each other to begin with and if this change in dynamic would affect the changes that were seen in the survey. Additionally, the small group meant that we could all sit around one table, everyone could see each other, and I was not on any sort of unequal plane as the facilitator of the discussion because I was sitting at the table with the rest of the participants.

Another potential shortcoming of this intervention program in itself is that it was designed to be implemented once after the shows for a new group of participants each time rather than a long term program with a follow up, which would most likely be more effective in promoting lasting change. Additionally, due to the lack of follow-up ability of this particular intervention, there is also no way of measuring if the intervention actually lowers incidence of DV for participants. As I hoped to increase knowledge about DV as an issue, my hope with the

study is that participants will be able to utilize this information throughout their lifetime not just in the immediate future. Thus, it would be difficult to measure with any immediate follow up if this intervention remained relevant. Unfortunately this is a shortcoming of the program that will have to remain if there is to be any sort of intervention connected to problematic shows that aim to address the audience. However, one thing that could be done in future implementations of this intervention would be to attain contact information of participants and have the researcher call participants six months after the study and ask them the same questions that were on the survey and see if their knowledge of this issue has remained.

Further Developments for the Future

In addition to changes that could be made to address shortcomings of the intervention that I implemented for this project, there is more to this intervention that I would love to be able to implement in the future. To start, there could be a lot more work done with the cast of shows that deal with DV that prepares them to properly handle the DV in the shows and in their own lives. Since the cast would be working on the show for an extended period of time (typical rehearsal periods for musical theater last between 3 and 12 weeks), this would provide a great opportunity for multiple stages of the intervention in which material can be reinforced throughout the several week long rehearsal process. This kind of program, could be conceived for many of the shows that deal in any way with DV and the intervention could be tailored specifically to addressing the kinds of violence seen in each different show. Specifically, I would like to establish an intervention program that would allow for education about DV, discussion of specific instances of DV in the shows to enhance understanding and change problematic beliefs about DV as an

issue, and finally, a Theater of the Oppressed-style workshop in which participants can apply what they learned to the situations of DV within the show in a concrete way to rehearse for the future.

The first step for this implementing this larger intervention that would address cast members would be to perform an in depth analysis of all of the musicals that I will target for this intervention, similar to the scope of the analysis I performed for *Chicago* within this project. For a comprehensive list of the all of the musicals I wish to address in the future with the category of DV they portray see APPENDIX I. This kind of comprehensive analysis would help me to determine the most pressing issues to address in discussion for each of the musicals, allowing me to tailor the intervention to each musical specifically. I would then be able to compile discussion questions that will address issues with the portrayal of DV in each individual piece of musical theater. These discussion questions would be similar to the kinds of questions I used in discussion with the audience of Torn Ticket's *Chicago* for my talkback, which served to get participants engaging more deeply with the material.

To guide the intervention program, I will develop a Domestic Violence Prevention Packet that will be sent along with scripts of musicals that deal with DV so that directors of the shows or other trusted community members can implement the intervention program on their own within their community. The Prevention Packet will include instructions tailored for each specific show that outlines the three-part intervention program. Part one of the intervention program will be an educational workshop and the packet will provide in depth information about DV to be presented to the cast by the intervention leader. The education workshop will be one half an hour long session worth of materials. Part two of the intervention will be discussion of the DV in the

musical. Based on my analysis of the show, I will develop background for the discussion facilitator and discussion questions that relate to the specific show being rehearsed. Part two of the intervention will include two to three half-hour long sessions. Part three of the intervention is a Theater of the Oppressed-based activity that involves acting out and then rethinking abusive scenes in the show. Within the Domestic Violence Prevention Packet, I will include specific scenes from the show that should be used for this part as well as details for the intervention leader about what kind of violence is being addressed in the scenes. I will also include specific instructions for how this kind of workshop should be run (with a background on Theater of the Oppressed techniques) and discussion questions for after the activity.

The first day of the program workshop would be an education workshop in which the director of the show or another trusted member of the community would present information about the issue of DV. Within the Domestic Violence Prevention Packet I will have sent out with scripts for the show, I will provide a half hours worth of education material about DV within society. This material would include definitions of DV as a whole, definitions and explanations of specific types of DV (eg. situational violence, battering, pathological violence, etc.), an exploration why perpetrators employ violent tactics (presentation of different theories), and then an overview of resources to prevent and escape situations of DV. This session of the intervention will have the least amount of participation from the cast members but will lay the groundwork for future sessions.

The next two to three sessions in the intervention program would occur in the next two weeks of rehearsal and would involve a discussion of specific moments of DV seen within the musical. The goal of this session is to have participants applying what they learned in the first

education-based session to the musical on which they are working and gain a deeper understanding of DV in practice. Just as in my talkback, I hope that this kind of discussion will allow a shift in the way participants think about DV but through their own self-discovery in discussion rather than being told by an authority figure what to believe and thus changing potentially negative beliefs and attitudes towards DV. In my analysis of *Chicago* for this project, I focused specifically on four specific and separate issues of DV seen within the show for my analysis. Unfortunately for my talkback, with the time restraint that I had (only about a half an hour for discussion), I was only able to discuss with my participants two of the four issues I wanted to address. Thus, I will split up discussion of the issues of DV in the specific musicals into two separate sessions. This way, participants will get to go into greater depth with each issue rather than having to rush through.

The next step of the intervention will occur in three to four sessions occurring in the next couple weeks of the rehearsal process and will involve employing Theater of the Oppressed techniques to physically apply what participants have learned in the education-based and discussion workshops. The goal of this part of the intervention is to use the existing musical material to get participants rehearsing for real life situations of DV that could occur in their lifetimes. Participants can use this rehearsal to prepare themselves to avoid violent situations in the future. This part of the intervention will involve selecting scenes from the musical that portray DV on stage. Within the Domestic Violence Prevention Packet that is sent with the script, I will have selected important scenes within the show that deal with DV, including in the packet where in the scene the pivotal decision to engage in violence can be found, indicating where the director should stop the scene. Then, similarly to the YVP program by Kisiel et al.,

(2006), some actors will begin performing the scene dealing with DV while other cast members watch. Then, at the pivotal part of the scene before the abuse occurs, the director will stop the scene and ask other cast members to jump in and replace either the perpetrator or the victim to attempt to discover how the situation could be solved in a non-violent manner. Participants will then discuss what occurred in the scene after the intervention took place and whether that was the best course of action, what more could be done, and/or what other courses of action could be taken. I will include potential questions for discussion in the packet but directors should be encouraged to tailor the discussion more specifically to what occurred in their workshop. Participants will then be asked to perform the scene again incorporating these changes.

For part three of the intervention, one scene will be worked through per session and thus the number of sessions for part three will be determined by how many problematic moments are found in each specific show. Each session for part three of the intervention should take no more than twenty to thirty minutes for the Theater of the Oppressed-style engagement with and participation in the selected scenes along with the discussion of what occurred in the changed performance of the scene. This part of the prevention program follows Boal's ideas for rehearsing for real life through engagement with already existing musical material. These sessions also demonstrate to cast members that there are other options than the violence shown in the musical.

The final session would come the week after part three of the intervention is over and would involve a final discussion of what occurred in the workshops. I will include final discussion questions in the Domestic Violence Prevention Packet that directors should present to their cast during the final workshop. These questions will address overall what participants

learned from the process and further what they discovered about themselves and the show. Hopefully, some of what was discovered will find its way into the performance of the musical as well, allowing for a more sensitive performance of the material. Ultimately, the larger goal of this kind of intervention program is to enhance and reinforce knowledge of the issue of DV as a whole and to shift the way participants engage with musicals that deal (potentially problematically) with DV. Through this enlightened engagement with the material, I hope that participants will change potentially negative beliefs and attitudes towards DV. Additionally, with the rehearsal for real-life violent situation, I hope that participants will develop concrete methods for dealing with any sort of abuse they encounter in their own lives. Largely, I hope that this new knowledge about the issue, enlightened beliefs, and concrete skills for dealing with violence will decrease the incidence of DV and protect participants from abusive behaviors in their lives.

This intervention would be advantageous as it includes multiple sessions to reinforce knowledge and beliefs about DV and includes many different methods for violence prevention. It hits most of the key components of a DV prevention program that I outlined in Chapter I: (2) Prevention programs should incorporate interactive, skill-based components (Fashee, McNaughton Reyes) that enhance peaceful conflict resolution and respectful communication skills (Kisiel et al., 2006). It is important for programs to be interactive rather than just lecture- or reading-based to engage participants for the best results. This specific program involves group discussion and the interactive performance of the DV scenes, two interactive, skill-based methods of prevention; (3) Programs for DV prevention should provide participants with opportunities to develop strong positive relationships with others, including parents and peers (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009). Building a community that understands DV and is

actively taking steps to prevent DV within the community is important to resist normalization of the issue. This prevention program provides opportunities to strengthen relationships within the cast and between participants through group engagement with these complex issues; and lastly (4) prevention programs should be socioculturally relevant (Foshee, & McNaughton Reyes, 2009) to best engage the community and ensure lasting interest in prevention. This prevention program engages a cast that is clearly interested in musical theater, as participants are already involved with the show. Thus, by asking participants to engage with musical theater as a platform for violence prevention, this program is clearly socioculturally relevant for participants.

Though implementing this proposed program was beyond the scope of what I could accomplish within this specific project, I hope to continue my work and implement this more comprehensive prevention program in the future. After working to analyze more musicals, I hope to contact the leader of companies such as Musical Theater International that disseminate musical theater materials in order to encourage them to send my Domestic Violence Prevention Packets along with the musical script and other materials they send. I hope that through this continued engagement with this research, I can create a greater impact on decreasing the incidence of DV with these musical theater-based violence prevention programs.

Conclusion

Through my comprehensive analysis of the Domestic Violence portrayed within Fosse, Kander, and Ebb's *Chicago*, I was able to develop an educational and discussion-based intervention to enhance knowledge and alter misguided beliefs about DV via discussion of the musical. Though the portrayal of DV in the musical *Chicago* is largely (and purposefully) overshadowed by the spectacle of the performance, discussion of the violent scenes within the show proved effective at developing a more critical awareness of the issues portrayed on stage. The intervention showed positive results in increasing awareness of less visible forms of DV such as emotional abuse, coercion, and economic abuse and a shift towards decreased acceptability of female DV perpetrators. The success of the program points to further developments for this project such as expanding it to further involve the cast and implementing audience discussions on a larger scale.

Especially today, in a country led by a man accused of multiple accounts of sexual abuse, we must resist the normalization of DV. Engaging in musicals that gloss over or feature abuse in a problematic way, contributes to this normalization. By failing to recognize and discuss the violence found within these musicals, the audience and actors are essentially choosing to remain inactive in the fight to end DV. I chose to engage in this project because I felt it to be wrong that an audience would laugh at abuse portrayed on stage. I wanted to take concrete action to raise awareness about the complexities DV via an artform that I love. Thus, I will continue to use musicals as a platform for increasing understanding of DV with the hope that my work will help cease the perpetuation of harmful beliefs and attitudes towards DV.

APPENDIX

Appendix I

A comprehensive table of musicals that deal with or portray domestic violence

Title of Show	Composer	Year	Type of Abuse Present
35MM	Ryan Scott Oliver	2010	Physical Abuse, Sexual Assault
Assassins	Stephen Sondheim	1990	Sexual Harassment, Talk of Domestic Violence
Bat Boy	Laurence O'Keefe	1997	Sexual Assault
Beauty and the Beast	Alan Menken	1993	Stalking Behavior, Sexual Harassment
Bye, Bye Birdie	Charles Strouse	1960	Attempted Sexual Assault
Caroline, Or Change	Jeanine Tesori	2003	Physical Abuse
Carousel	Rogers and Hammerstein	1945	Physical Abuse
Chicago	Kander and Ebb	1975	Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Economic Abuse
Cinderella	Rogers and Hammerstein	1957	Emotional Abuse
Closer Than Ever	Maltby and Shire	198	Stalking Behavior
Crazy for You	George Gershwin	1930	Sexual Harassment
Dog Fight	Pasek and Paul	2012	Sexual Harassment
Fierello	Bach and Harnick	1959	Physical Abuse
Grease	Michael Gibson	1978	Sexual Assault
Into the Woods	Stephen Sondheim	1987	Sexual Assault, Child Abuse, Emotional Abuse
Kiss Me Kate	Cole Porter	1948	Physical Abuse
Les Miserables	Schoenberg	1980	Sexual Assault

Little Shop of Horrors	Alan Menken	1982	Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse
Love Me or Leave Me	Chilton Price	1955	Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Stalking
Man of La Mancha	Mitch Leigh	1965	Sexual Assault
Oklahoma	Rogers and Hammerstein	1943	Stalking Behavior, Sexual Harassment
Oliver	Leonard Bart	1960	Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse
Phantom of the Opera	Andrew Lloyd Weber	1986	Emotional Abuse
Porgy and Bess	George Gershwin	1935	Sexual Assault
Seven Brides for Seven Brothers	De Paul, Mercer, Deutsch	1954	Stalking Behavior, Sexual Assault
Spitfire Grill	James Valcq, Fred Alley	2001	Physical Abuse, Sexual Assault
Spring Awakening	Sheik and Sater	2006	Physical Abuse
Street Scene	Kurt Weil	1946	Physical Abuse, Sexual Harassment
Sweeney Todd	Stephen Sondheim	1979	Physical Abuse
Sweet Charity	Cy Coleman	1966	Physical Abuse, Stalking
The Apple Tree	Bach and Harnick	1966	Discussion of Physical Abuse
The Color Purple	Bray, Russell, and Willis	2005	Physical Abuse
Urinetown	Greg Kotis	2001	Kidnapping
Waitress	Sara Barellis	2015	Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse
West Side Story	Leonard Bernstein	1957	Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment

Appendix II

Chicago Survey

This survey is meant to assess your knowledge about, understanding of, and attitudes towards Domestic Violence. This survey is meant to be anonymous. Please do not put your name, email, phone number, or any other personal information on this survey. The information given in this survey will remain confidential and will only be shared with the Principle Investigator, Megan McCormick, for the purposes of her thesis. By filling out this survey and turning it into McCormick at the end of the talkback, you are consenting to having the information contained within this survey analyzed in McCormick's thesis. Filling out survey is not necessary to participate in the talkback. You may choose to leave the survey unfinished or leave the talkback at any time.

1. Please name five activities that would be considered Domestic Violence

-
-
-
-
-

2. Please characterize the following scenarios as portraying Domestic Violence or not:

- a. Fred Casely has entered Roxie's apartment and does not leave when she asks him to. After she tells him that she is pregnant with her husband's child, Fred threatens her, saying "I'll kill you before I see you have another man's child!"

Does this isolated scenario demonstrate Domestic Violence?

- b. Roxie does not love her husband, Amos, but she needs him to give her money to pay for her defense attorney. In order to convince him she tells him "I never stopped loving you, not my Amos - so manly and so attractive... so... I'm embarrassed... so sexy."

Does this isolated scenario demonstrate Domestic Violence?

- c. Velma's sister, Veronica, is sleeping with Velma's husband. When Velma finds out, she murders Veronica.

Does this isolated scenario demonstrate Domestic Violence?

- d. Billy Flynn finds Mary Sunshine to be very attractive. One day he tells her and tries to kiss her. Mary Sunshine pulls away and asks not to be kissed again. But Billy is in love with her and so continues to pursue her, asking her every day to reconsider and to be with him. Eventually, Mary Sunshine relents and they enter into a relationship together.

Does this isolated scenario demonstrate Domestic Violence?

3. Please circle true or false based off of your beliefs in relation to the following statements:

- a. I find the violence portrayed in *Chicago* to be empowering for the women.

True False

- b. Watching the violence portrayed in *Chicago* made me feel uncomfortable or unsettled.

True False

- c. The legal process that Roxie went through is indicative of the experience of most victims of Domestic Violence.

True False

- d. Women are significantly more at risk for becoming victims of Domestic Violence than men.

True False

- e. In situations of Domestic Violence, sometimes violent behavior is justified when the victim does something to provoke the perpetrator (i.e. "They had it coming").

True False

If you ever find yourself or a loved one in a violent relationship, please call the following numbers to obtain help.

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Hotline - 1-800-799-7233 or 1-800-787-3224

<http://ncadv.org/learn-more/get-help>

Safe Link (Boston) - 1-877-785-2020

http://www.casamyrna.org/?option=com_content&view=article&id=29&Itemid=45

Appendix III

Script for the live Fire Speech I performed at the start of the Thursday 3/30 and Friday 3/31

shows

Helloooooooooo [audience interaction] and welcome to Torn Ticket II's production of *Chicago*!!! The fire marshal would like to remind you that in case of an emergency walk DO NOT RUN to the nearest exit at the front and rear of the theater. Keep in mind that the nearest exit may be behind you. There will be beautiful, radiant, sexy people coming down the aisles so PLEASE keep the aisles clear. Now we will be headed back to the 1920s, where cell phones did not exist and apples were fruit. Please silence all electronic devices.

Finally, I would like to invite you to join my alter ego Megan McCormick for a talkback and discussion after the performance about the issues of Domestic Violence portrayed within the show. If you find yourself intrigued, disturbed, or curious to learn more about the issues of abuse within the show, please remain in the lobby after the performance and we'll move to Aidekman 12 about 10 minutes after the end of the show for PIZZA and discussion.

And now, sit back and enjoy *Chicago*.

Appendix IV

Program Notes for Torn Ticket II's production of *Chicago* on my thesis project

Now more than ever, we cannot afford to normalize abuse.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men will experience some sort of partner violence in their lives. 30-40% of women murdered in the United States were killed by an intimate partner or former partner with 67-72% of those cases preceded by Domestic Violence against the female partner. Murder of male partners by a female spouse, girlfriend, or former partner, is preceded by prior domestic violence against the female partner 75-85% of the time with at least 25% of cases being in immediate self defense (Campbell et al., 2009).

In her TED Talk, "Why Domestic Violence Victims Don't Leave," Leslie M. Steiner discusses how one becomes a victim of Domestic Violence and why one would not leave an abusive relationship. She deems the biggest factor for both to be silence on the issue - the fact that most victims are uninformed as to what domestic violence actually looks like and are therefore unaware of the warning signs for patterns of abusive behavior and the resources to escape abuse once it starts. She ends her talk by imploring the audience to speak out about the issue of Domestic Violence in any way they can.

Perhaps surprisingly, Musical Theater *is* a prominent platform for speaking, or singing, about Domestic Violence. Of the top ten most popular musicals to perform in high schools, 50% deal with Domestic Violence in some way (Nadworny, 2016). What is more, I have compiled a list of over 50 prominent musicals that show some form of Domestic Violence onstage. By letting the Domestic Violence in these musicals go undiscussed in a productive manner, we normalize the problematic notions of Domestic Violence they portray.

One important step for the prevention of Domestic Violence is to increase knowledge and awareness of the complexities of the issue. These musicals that deal with Domestic Violence could provide a platform to begin important discussions about Domestic Violence in communities all over the country. I am currently working on a thesis exploring how existing Musical Theater shows can be used as a form of Violence Prevention and the implementation of this project starts here and now. Tonight, I invite you to join me for a discussion after the performance of the portrayal of violence in the show. The discussion will take place in the Cohen Theater ten minutes after the show. I hope this project will change attitudes towards and enhance knowledge of Domestic Violence through guided discussion of the way in which violence is portrayed in *Chicago*.

We cannot afford to remain silent on the issue of Domestic Violence.

Thank You,
Megan McCormick

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