The first time I saw my father hit my mother I was five years old. Upon getting ready to leave the house he struck my mother across the face for not ironing his pants. My father's rage increased, leaving my mother standing over a bucket bleeding. Gender based violence is an experience that many women are familiar with. Similar to my mother’s experience; one out of three women throughout the world will fall victim to violence, usually at the hands of a man (Katz, 2011). Violence toward our women in society does not only greatly impact the victims, but it threatens the social welfare of our communities. While in the past there has been a limit on awareness and prevention on the issue that is no longer the case. There has been great progress in the attempts to eradicate gender based violence through prevention programs and governmental approaches. However, these approaches have not been sufficient. Social change and advocacy has always been rooted in collaborative and community ties. Taking the steps toward eradicating violence toward women, starts by holding our communities accountable for those changes to occur through a combination of educational, governmental and individual means. Creating change will begin by identifying and educating male allies that speak out against gender violence, interrupt structural sexism, and work collaboratively with women to achieve these efforts. I propose that looking at violence through the lens of how men have and could contribute to the end of violence toward women resulting in more effective and long lasting results.

In order to identify and educate male allies we must look to youth, sports and military organizations, and create mentoring programs that educate on structural sexism, and gender based violence. Educating young male mentors will begin by placing incentive to their participation in gender violence efforts to reduce it. Incentives for participation would include focusing on how these efforts would affect the woman in their lives, such as their mothers, sisters, and friends. Lastly, a mentoring program would allow to build leadership roles among
young men toward other men. In order to construct such mentoring programs we should turn to research that has focused on male on male mentoring programs in the past. Ph.D. Jackson Katz is a leading educator in gender equality and the founder of the Mentors in Violence Prevention program, which began by focusing its attention toward young men. The original proposal of the program was to be a pilot program in hopes of increasing the participation of college men on sexual harassment, rape and domestic violence by collaborating with high status male and later on female athletes in the effort (Katz, 2011) Mentoring programs like MVP would allow for young men to recognize their male privilege and become leaders by mentoring other students in creating a culture that stigmatizes certain aggressive behavior. Research into the MVP program showed that high school’s that implemented the program had more students willing to intervene to stop aggressive behavior and were more likely to perceive aggressive behavior as wrong the schools that did not implement the program. (Katz, 2011) Reaching out to educational organizations would allow changing the perception and the use of aggressive behavior in the future.

In the past the approach toward violence against woman has focused primarily on perpetrator violence. Television and other media outlets have focused the role of the man as the perpetrator and the role of the woman as the victim in discussions of gender violence (Katz, 2003) it is this focus that might discourage men to pay attention and engage in conversations on aggression and violence. Leading men to automatically exclude themselves since they do not identify with the perpetrator role. However, in the more recent years there has been more focus on how others, that are not victims nor perpetrators, can participate in the solution of the problem. Modeling efforts after the bystandered approach (Katz, 2003) would encourage change within structural sexism, resulting in the use of less violence toward woman. The bystandard
approach focuses on how others that are not victims nor perpetrators can contribute by interrupting male on male sexist behaviors such as jokes, and intervention of aggressive behavior.

It is both through education and the challenging the social structure that can produce positive effects for woman and reducing violence. In combination with those efforts reaching toward those how have a voice like celebrities could inspire many more people to pay attention and take an active role. In recent years many male celebrities like Will Smith, John Legend, Joseph Gordon Levitt and many others have been outspoken about gender based violence and their own incentives in decreasing and stigmatizing violence. Men with power voicing their opinions and challenging the behavior and beliefs of other men cuts to the core of what it means to be a man in our society. By penetrating through how the media portrays violence toward woman begins to show the growth of a movement that is focused on ending violence toward woman that can gain male support and make it a collaborative effort. Media and movies place focus on how we socialize boys. If we begin to construct a more fluid view of gender and generate a less narrow definition of masculinity it could begin to stigmatize the use of violence toward women as uncool generate new norms and attitudes among men.

Eradicating gender based violence begins by recognizing that it is a shared responsibility, and movement that should always remain community centered. While my proposal has focused on how men can and have contributed to the work it is also vital to recognize that woman’s experiences and voices are central to the movement. My mother drew strength from her own experiences of domestic violence and rape to teach my brothers why they needed to be different and be compassionate men in order to create change for their future daughters. This proposal focuses on how we can come to shift from this I as primarily a “woman’s issue” in the past, to
creating a space for men that is welcoming and encouraging to their participation. Focusing on men’s place in the movement challenges the social structure, reduces narrow masculinity and might be able to generate a solution to violence that speaks to the core of the issue. Ultimately, eradicating violence requires critical analysis of social standards, creative approaches and the courage to formulate new paradigms to the problem.
References


My biggest commitment to my own growth has been the pursuit of my education. When I was younger I purely saw my education as a means to an end without realizing how much more I would gain along my journey. I’m in my junior year here at Portland State University and never imagined that I would get this far seven years ago, as I graduated high school. Sometimes financial barriers momentarily get in the way of achieving our goals. However, it is through motivation and persistence that we overcome the barriers when we are committed to our goal. This scholarship prize would allow me to the opportunity to focus on my academic and career goals while alleviating some of the financial worries that students who do not qualify for FAFSA like myself have. While the scholarship would be of great benefit to my education it has also been great pleasure sharing with my thoughts about a topic I am passionate about.