In summer 2012, I will be conducting an analysis on the advice column, *Savage Love*. Dan Savage, the Seattle-based author, has been writing his advice column for twenty years and it is syndicated in more than seventy newspapers, primarily in alternative weeklies in the United States, with well over one million in total circulation. As Gudelunas points out, "In a culture that is determined to restrict talk about sex, and particularly those sexual practices that are labeled 'taboo,'" advice columns provide a "widely available and culturally mainstream venue for talking, learning, and debating issues of sexuality."1

Dan Savage also uses his column as a political platform advocating for gay rights by attacking and bullying politicians that he sees as working against rights for sexual minorities. Savage, who is openly gay, has said in interviews that he started the column as a response to advice given to gays by straight advice columnists that he felt were "clueless about gay issues or gay people or gay sex or gay rights." However, despite being one of the few nationally syndicated newspaper columnists advocating for gay and lesbian rights, he is receiving increasing criticism from the queer community regarding some of his views on women, race, body size, bisexuality, asexuality, and transgendered individuals. Recently, Savage was "glitterbombed" at a lecture at the University of Oregon, and a spokesperson for the group responsible claimed it was because "Dan Savage is a transphobic and generally oppressive rich white cis gay man."2

This research is thus an attempt to analyze one of the few spaces (a sex advice column) where sexual behavior and sexual identity is publicly presented and discussed. In particular, I will examine how sexual behaviors engaged in by the letter writers shape their understanding of their sexual identity, how Savage's response to readers' letters normalize deviant sexual behaviors and (re)construct socially “appropriate” sexual acts, bodies, and behaviors, and how sexual social movement actors are responding to Savage's claims and ideas in creative ways.

I plan to collaborate with Dawn Hinrichs (junior, WGS major) who will be undertaking her own study of *Savage Love* columns and podcasts. With both of us coding the same material but looking for different themes, we will be able to code more than we could have alone, as well increase our inter-coder reliability. We will also collaborate on data analysis and interpretation, framing our findings in queer theory, intersectionality, identity construction, and social movement theory. Finally, we will serve as peer-reviewers of each others' written work, providing feedback on all drafts of our papers.

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This LARC project is the start of a new scholarly endeavor. While my research on sexuality has in the past focused exclusively on members of Intentional Communities, this shift to a media analysis is an attempt to find research projects that allow for easier student involvement. The outcome of this project is anticipated to be a publication in a scholarly journal, submitted in the fall semester of 2012. Dawn Hinrichs is aiming to publish her work in a more public venue (such as a popular blog or newspaper) in order to engage a broader audience than a scholarly journal provides.