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Dan Savage, author and voice of the advice column and podcast, *Savage Love*, has gained worldwide attention for his controversial and comprehensive sex-positive advice. Highlighting sexual minorities, Savage advocates for safer, consensual, legal, and enjoyable sexual relations, while providing an alternative perspective to conservative and potentially oppressive frameworks of love, sex and family. While Savage has been reported to speak out against social inequality, he has been criticized for being cissexist, sexist, classist, racist, sizeist, and ableist. Regardless of this backlash, over the last twenty years Savage has proceeded to gain fame and reach a wide variety of audiences of diverse and seemingly contradictory identities.

During the summer of 2012, I hope to analyze how Dan Savage’s columns have affected larger queer liberation movements, specifically transliberation movements. Collaborating with Professor Jade Aguilar, I will analyze the *Savage Love* series including the advice column, the podcast, and his non-fiction book, *Savage Love: Straight Answers from America’s Most Popular Sex Columnist*. To expand my knowledge of the larger discourse surrounding trans issues and movements, I will also analyze feminist and queer blogs, journal articles, and new articles that are in direct conversation with Dan Savage himself or the topics and themes raised in *Savage Love*. Along with Jade Aguilar, I hope to interview Dan Savage regarding his philosophies, theories, intentions, and perceived impacts on the queer liberation movement with respect to trans issues.

From this analysis, I hope to gain insight into the following questions: Who are Dan Savage’s direct and indirect audiences? How does Savage’s presence as a cisgendered, homonormative, white male influence how followers and critiques interpret his advice? From various heteronormative and queer perspectives, what are the implications of having a singular spokesperson for all sexual and gender minorities? How does Savage’s advice affect notions of progress? How does Savage acknowledge and deny his own privilege and how does that directly and indirectly silence others?

From this research, I hope to not only critique Dan Savage’s theories based on who and what he is overlooking, but also to provide insight into what queer liberation movements need from their leaders if they are to create social and structural changes. Aided by a background in feminist and anthropological theory, I hope to approach this topic with particular emphasis on the intersecting identities of the individuals that make up political movements. My intellectual and theoretical framework will also draw from the *Expanding the Circle* conference I attended last spring and my experiences as a founder of Willamette’s Queer Student Union, both of which directly address structural and social change regarding queer issues.

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1 “Trans Liberation is the phrase that has come to refer to all those who blur or bridge the boundary of the sex or gender expression they were assigned at birth: cross-dressers, transsexuals, intersex people, Two Spirits, bearded females, masculine females and feminine males, drag kings and drag queens” Feinberg, Leslie. 2011 “TRANS LIBERATION: Beyond Pink or Blue.” transgenderwarrior.org. Web. 14 Nov 2011.
My goal is to create a widely approachable, critical, and motivating piece for audiences at various stages of familiarity and comfort with feminist and queer issues which will be appropriate for newspaper, journal, and blog readers. Beyond this project, I intend to continue organizing for social justice and hope to eventually join non-profit organizations in providing resources for socially marginalized populations.