

# Learning From Polyamory's Experiences With The Media

by Pepper Mint

# Outline

Polyamory in the Media

Engaging with Media

Cultivating Spokespeople

Diverse Representation

Human Interest Focus

Alternatives to Mainstream Media

Open Discussion

# Polyamory in the Media

Surprisingly positive treatment

Mostly human interest stories

Articles on polyamory typically interview poly people

Minimal coverage of criminal cases

Rarely sensationalized or sexualized

Not yet a right-wing target

Significantly outsized mindshare

Small community with a lot of press

Go-to community for comments on non-monogamy

# Polyamory in the Media

But, some negative aspects...

- Poor representation of non-mainstream poly folks

- Coverage often misrepresents due to cluelessness

- Sound bites are often inadequate

- Pieces often end with therapist/expert “zinger”

Frequently combative relationship with media

- Media has trouble finding poly people to interview

- Poly people often hate poly media coverage

# It Could Be So Much Worse

Heavy focus on criminal cases or legal issues

Or local community backlash

For example: BDSM, swinging, sex work

Scandalous exposés or over-sexualization

Or accused of causing moral decay

For example: BDSM, sex work, porn

Invisibility

For example: male bisexuality, sacred sexuality, nudists

# Engaging With Media

Engage as much as possible

- Take opportunities when they appear

- Have a clearinghouse that requests go through

- Search out and pitch opportunities

- Leverage members and allies in media organizations

Not engaging is generally detrimental

- Contributes to invisibility

- Criminal and legal cases define the community

- Clueless journalists or conservatives frame the issues

# Hostile Media

Try to anticipate which media outlets will be hostile

Check for warning signs when engaging

Be willing to walk away from problematic engagements

Handling hostile interviews

Stick to positive sound bites, sidestep leading questions

Get hostile interview training

Expect a certain level of misrepresentation

Audiences can always look up stuff later

# Cultivating Media Personalities

Need good media figures

Out of the closet

Diverse

Well-trained or experienced

Channel media opportunities to promising activists

Almost no one is paid for appearing in media

They speak because they believe they are doing good

Or they are selling something

# Diverse Representation

## Mainstream media diversity issues

Media almost always prefers less-diverse representation

Game the system by providing diverse spokespeople

Refuse to engage if outlet will not accept diversity

## Lack of privilege makes it harder to be out

People who show up by default will be highly mainstream

Focus on and cultivate non-mainstream folks who are out

Find anonymous media opportunities

# Human Interest Focus

Primary focus on community members' lives

Pursue and generate human interest media opportunities

Have a hook – what makes this community interesting?

Present as “this is just what we do”

Media personalities should be very open to questions

Match sexuality discussions to audience

In the US, keep it appropriate

Sidestep over-sexualizing questions or portrayals

# Alternatives to Media

## Alternative press

Indie papers, people of color channels, etc

Media websites: Huffington Post, Salon, etc

College radio shows

## Online media

Blogs

Podcasts/Videocasts

Online forums

Social media

# Open Discussion

How do these lessons apply to a particular sexual community/minority? Or not?

What lessons can we see from other sexual communities/minorities?

What are the media/publicity challenges faced by a particular sexual community/minority?



# Thank you!

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