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May 26, 2015

Polyamory, Candor, and the Press: Engendering Acceptance Through Personal Revelation

Often derided as attention seeking or self-centered behavior, public oversharing - sharing personal details with a broad audience - may have benefits for the sharer beyond self-fulfillment. In the right circumstance oversharing, or candor about personal information, can work to build empathy and understanding in the listener. In this paper I'll explore instances where self-identified polyamorists (individuals who openly engage in relationships involving multiple consensual "romantic, sexual and/or affective partners,"(Sheff 2006, 621) share details about their lives in accounts published by large press outlets for a wide audience. I'll argue that by being so candid they are not seeking short-lived fame or attention, but instead wish to encourage understanding and acceptance of their romantic relationships and family styles. When a marginalized or relatively hidden community begins to speak out there are often political goals in mind. However, I do not believe that this is the primary motivating factor for polyamorists. Instead, I'll assert that their goal for greater understanding is for social gains instead of legal ones. Specifically I use the term social gains to refer to acceptance and support from family, community members, and colleagues and the impact it has on the quality of life experienced by polyamorous individuals. While legal gains are quantifiable, the social improvements sought are more difficult to track.

This paper looks at two of the most common ways those practicing polyamory speak publicly about their lives in the press: the reported story and the personal essay.

The reported story, where a journalist has interviewed one or more individuals, appears to be the most prevalent type of print journalism on this subject. These pieces vary but can have an inquisitive and even voyeuristic tone, with the journalist not only seeking a definition of polyamory but also probing for a more intimate look inside the relationships of the interview subject. In contrast, the personal essay focuses on a particular moment or detail in the authors life, for example a specific relationship or the act of coming-out as poly to friends or family. Both the reported stories and the personal essays often appear in the fashion and style sections of popular newspapers and magazines. This placement, while chosen by the editorial staff at the publication, speaks to the content of the articles which focus on lifestyle descriptions and not on forms of politically motivated organizing efforts. These pieces do not seek to advise the reader on how to conduct a similar relationship nor do they appear to advocate for this relationship style beyond statements of personal happiness.

There are some memoirs that cover open marriages, or similar relationships, but the primary purpose of these books has generally been to entertain their reader with the taboo nature of the relationship. The majority of the widely available trade books on polyamory are designed as relationship guides for those wishing to explore the relationship style, or for those who are already in polyamorous relationships and are seeking guidance. These advice books cover similar territory, attempting to offer a definition of polyamory; an overview of the different relationship structures; strategies on how to navigate jealousy; information on safer-sex practices; and thoughts on when and how to come-out about the relationship to those around you. Many of the advice book authors share personal narratives where they recount their journey to becoming

polyamorous and share details of their own relationships. Even Elizabeth Sheff, whose recent book *The Polyamorist Next Door: Inside Multiple-Partner Relationships and Families* (2014) covers a “fifteen-year ethnographic study of polyamorous families with children,” shares a personal story by telling us that she initially came to the subject “as a civilian” who wanted to understand more about the relationship style when she fell in love with a polyamorous man (x).

What is Polyamory?

While there is disagreement about who coined the word polyamory in the 1980s, the definition is relatively consistent among its practitioners. Created by taking the Greek word for many, poly, and the Latin word for love, amor, polyamory is literally defined as “many loves.” Sheff offers a more nuanced definition, stating that “Polyamory is consensual, openly conducted, multiple-partner relationships in which both men and women have negotiated access to additional partners outside of the traditional committed couple” (Sheff 2014, i). There are multiple relationship structures that can be considered poly - a common abbreviation for polyamory. Some place the focus on a couple or primary relationship where each partner sees other people, often called secondary partners. Other individuals find the primary/secondary structure a poor fit and chose to maintain multiple relationships of equal importance. Relationships are also not limited to two individuals. Triads (groups of three) are not uncommon, and larger group relationships are also possible. In fact there are so many possible iterations of what polyamory can look like that entire chapters of polyamory advice books are dedicated to describing and defining the multiple relationship styles. It is also important to note what

polyamory is not. Here it is worth quoting Sheff (2014) at length as she succinctly dismantles many common misconceptions.

It is not polygamy (marriage of many) because polyamorists are not always married. Even more importantly, polygamy is almost always practiced as polygyny, or one man married to multiple women. Usually in those relationships, the women are not allowed to have additional male partners and are prohibited from having sex with each other. Polyamory is also not cheating because (ideally) everyone is aware of the other partners - the relationships have been negotiated with rules to structure scheduling and safer-sex agreements. It is also not swinging, which tends to be more focused on sexual variety and less accepting of emotionally intimacy. (Sheff 2014, 1)

Finally, while those engaging in polyamory may hold religious beliefs or subscribe to a particular faith, a religious obligation is not traditionally the underlying motivation for the practice of polyamory.

Public Perception and Stigma

In contemporary western society, monogamy is the assumed norm. One only need to scan the many relationship advice books available, examine the relationships displayed as ideal in television and movies, or listen to the vehement arguments from the conservative right about traditional family values, to see that our culture celebrates committed monogamous relationships. Advice books for those considering or engaging in polyamory often talk about the fear of stigma, discrimination, and general lack of acceptance. In Deborah Anapol's book *Polyamory in the 21st Century* (2010), an individual identified as Kelly explains his mind set about coming-out as polamorous: "I don't mind doing something out of the ordinary, but I prepare the context for people before telling them because you have to equip people to be able to hear you, or it's not worth sharing. If we know they're just going to be hurt or shocked and we're not

prepared to invest the time and energy to give them a tool kit to understand, it's better not to tell" (Anapol 2010, 161). While Kelly is not embarrassed about his relationships he is aware that they are viewed as outside the norm. It is clear that his introduction of the concept of polyamory to other people has taken more work on his part than might be necessary should he have chosen to only date one individual at a time. This extra effort to explain his relationships confirms Anapol's assertion that "polyamory challenges the whole notion of normative sexual and relational identities..." (166).

It is not uncommon to read in both advice books and the published media pieces covered in this paper that poly individuals fear loss of jobs, child custody problems, or forms of ostracization by family or community. I think it is important to note that these fears are not unfounded. In a survey of close to 4000 polyamorous individuals, a not-insignificant number "(28.5%) report having experienced some form of discrimination in the past 10 years compared to the general US population (5.5%)" (Cox, Fleckenstein, and Bergstrand, 2013). What is not clear about the survey respondents is how many of the individuals are publically out about their relationship style and to whom. In a recent study published in *Psychology & Sexuality*, "Three's a crowd: public awareness and (mis)perceptions of polyamory" (Hutzler et al 2015), the researchers "conducted two studies to examine American public awareness of polyamory and to identify traits that predict an individual's attitudes towards polyamory" (3). They found that "individuals in polyamorous relationships (compared to those in monogamous relationships) were perceived as being (a) higher in promiscuity, unsafe sexual practices and sex drive; (b) lower in trustworthiness and morality and (c) higher in communication skills and extroversion" (10). Additionally "the pattern of results across both studies indicate

pervasive, negative views of polyamorous individuals, not only in general attitudes but also with respect to their personal characteristics (e.g., that they are immoral and untrustworthy) and sexual behavior” (12). It is clear that both discrimination and stigma towards polyamory exist though I have found the majority of incidents are shared as anecdotal stories and not, given a lack of legal protections, as documented cases of discrimination. However, there is one well-publicized child custody case that has become an often-referenced cautionary tale for polyamorists. In 1999 *Time* ran the story of April Divilbiss and the custody battle she faced with her daughter’s paternal grandparents. The case began after her appearance on the *MTV* show “Sex in the ‘90s: It’s a Group Thing” where she shared that she was part of a poly triad and cohabitated with both male partners (Cloud 1999). The resulting legal battle continues to loom over the poly community over a decade later.

The Slippery Slope

There is another manifestation of stigma around polyamory and other non-monogamous relationship styles that is worth examining. It can also help illuminate a potential cause for a lack of political action among the poly individuals speaking with the mainstream press. In arguing against gay marriage conservative politicians, religious leaders, and pundits have held up multi-partner relationships as one of the inevitable, and undesirable, next steps should gay marriage become legal:

Two weeks after the New York State Senate voted to legalize same-sex marriage, Timothy Dolan, the state’s Roman Catholic archbishop, warned that the ongoing redefinition of marriage will eventually lead to the acceptance of concurrent marriages (which he considers to be synonymous with infidelity), and fears that nonmonogamy may eventually become a societal norm. (Conley et al 2012, 2)

While never directly stated by the individuals in the articles I reviewed, I suspect that one reason polyamorists speaking with the press are not actively advocating for legal rights and protections may be connected to a desire not to detract from, or inadvertently derail, the gains being made by the LGBTQ community. This slippery slope argument also brings into sharp focus the stigma surrounding polyamory. Conley points out that “[t]he fact that [consensual non-monogamy] is used to frighten individuals into voting against civil rights measures for a group already known to be stigmatized (viz., lesbian, gay, and bisexual people) suggests an extremely high level of antipathy toward [consensual non-monogamy]” (Conley et al 2012, 7).

Who Is Speaking To The Press

Many of the reported stories show similar patterns both in who the journalist has chosen to interview and how they present the subject. Often, the main interview subject has some kind of wider public role within the poly community. Terisa, interviewed by *Newsweek*, was the director and producer of a web series loosely based on her dating life (Bennett 2009). Tiffany, the center of the *Philadelphia Magazine* piece, runs a 200 person online poly group in Philadelphia (Edgar 2015). Diana Adams, interviewed by the *New York Times* and *The Atlantic*, co-hosts Poly Cocktails, a monthly mixer for the NYC poly community (Morin 2014; Williams 2008). Their public-facing activities make them easier for journalists to locate and potentially make them more likely to agree to public interviews. It is worth noting that the public activities these individuals are involved in are not focused on activism or political lobbying, but instead on what could be called community building. Their willingness to share their personal stories with the public may

stem from the fact that community building around polyamory is an important part of their lives.

The Common Questions Addressed

Sex, logistics, jealousy and coming-out (or not) are the key topics that are consistently addressed in each reported article. Sharing details about your sex life with the national media is certainly beyond the norm for most of us, though in our current culture simply sharing information about your intimate relationships is not necessarily shocking as long as those details cleave to the typical. When that information strays from the norm, in this case monogamy, the information can appear deviant and thus more salacious.

Sex

A 2008 *New York Times* article titled “Hopelessly Devoted to You, You and You” profiled Brooklyn attorney Diana Adams and her long-term partner, neuroscientist Ed Vessel. It opens with an anecdote about the number of toothbrushes lined up in Vessel’s bathroom. After the journalist establishes what polyamory is, and offers a little more information about Adams and Vessel, he tells us that “Ms. Adams and Mr. Vessel consider themselves bisexuals. He has a boyfriend in Texas he sees a few times a year, and she sees two women regularly.” We are also given details about their other concurrent heterosexual relationships, “Mr. Vessel typically sees each girlfriend two or three nights a week, which means he keeps an overnight bag packed because he is often away for four or five nights consecutively.” Safer sex issues are also touched on, “with all that running around, this lifestyle is not always about boundless sex. The two said that

rules become more important because of the emotional and health hazards involved in having multiple partners. All parties are expected to give full disclosure about whom they are seeing and what they are doing (Williams 2008). Sexual health is a common topic within the poly community, and one that does appear frequently in the reported stories. An interview in *Minneapolis City Pages* (2012) with a woman named Carrie, her husband Mark, and boyfriend Rick also address this concern with more directness than Adams and Vessel. "Most of my monogamous friends just assume I'm a slut, and to a degree I guess they're right," Carrie offers. Rick chimes in: "Here's the thing though: In a group like ours, you're a lot more cognizant of who you sleep with." He adds, "We all hang around each other in the same circles, so I know that if I sleep with someone, then I'm affecting the other people she may be in a relationship with." This blunt and unashamed admission to enjoying a sex life that includes multiple partners is not uncommon, but it is often coupled with an immediate explanation of the safer-sex practices and concerns needed to make these relationships work, combating the idea that their behavior is reckless. There are also gentle reminders in these articles that multiple partners do not necessarily mean lots of partners. Carrie continues, "I know more about STDs than my monogamous friends... It's funny, because they assume my number of partners is higher than theirs. Then we compare numbers and I think it scares them a bit how many more people they've been with than I have" (Strait 2012).

Logistics

Stating you have multiple lovers can certainly bring up a host of unanswered questions for those who have never been in the same position. After addressing who is

sleeping with whom, the next piece of the puzzle tends to be addressing logistical questions. A year after the *New York Times* article focusing on Adams and Vessel, *Newsweek* published “Polyamory: The Next Sexual Revolution” (2009) in the Culture section of the magazine. It takes an entire paragraph to explain all of the connections involved:

Terisa, 41, is at the center of this particular polyamorous cluster. A filmmaker and actress, she is well-spoken, slender and attractive, with dark, shoulder-length hair, porcelain skin—and a powerful need for attention. Twelve years ago, she started dating Scott, a writer and classical-album merchant. A couple years later, Scott introduced her to Larry, a software developer at Microsoft, and the two quickly fell in love, with Scott's assent. The three have been living together for a decade now, but continue to date others casually on the side. Recently, Terisa decided to add Matt, a London transplant to Seattle, to the mix. Matt's wife, Vera, was OK with that; soon, she was dating Terisa's husband, Larry. If Scott starts feeling neglected, he can call the woman he's been dating casually on the side. Everyone in this group is heterosexual, and they insist they never sleep with more than one person at a time. (Bennett 2009)

Then another paragraph to fill in the reader on the who and when portion of the relationships:

Larry and Terisa married last year—with Scott's permission—in part for tax purposes. Larry owns the house they all live in, and Scott pays rent. Household expenses require a complicated spreadsheet. Terisa, Larry, and Scott all have their own bedrooms, but sleeping arrangements must be discussed. Larry snores, so Terisa spends most nights with Scott—which means she must be mindful of making up for lost time with Larry. Terisa and Larry only recently began dating Matt and Vera, after meeting on Facebook, and now every Friday, the couple bring their son over to the house and the three of them stay all weekend. Matt will usually sleep with Terisa, and Vera with Larry, or they'll switch it up, depending on how everyone feels. (Bennet 2009)

Clearly explaining to the reader all of the individual connections involved in these relationships is not easy, and the above paragraphs are representative of the style normally used to describe them in the press. The reporter usually provides these

descriptions without judgment, though occasional winks towards the reader may turn up, for example the note about Terisa making up lost time with Larry. Rarely are the individuals being interviewed allowed to explain these arrangement in their own words.

Jealousy

Diana Adams, the same woman interviewed by *The New York Times* (2008), spoke to an *Atlantic* reporter in 2014 about her personal journey to polyamory and her work as an attorney for LGBTQ families. One of the topics they tackled was the struggle with jealousy. Adams begins by stating, “Jealousy is an emotion that we treat in a really blunt way... We treat jealousy almost with this reverence, but we don’t unpack what’s behind it.” This self-evaluating approach is a common one, with the general sense being that jealousy is not something that should rule a relationship, but instead a problem to be examined and moved beyond. Adams continues, “We talk a lot. We check in with each other, ‘Is this okay with you?’ and the answer can be, ‘I don’t know.’ For instance, maybe Ed and I are going to a party together and this guy that I’ve been dating is at the party too. ‘Will it feel okay with you if I go over and kiss him?’” (Morin 2014)

Another group interviewed for a different *Atlantic* article speak about jealousy as something for the individual experiencing it to confront and deal with:

“It can be about feeling like you’re not special, or feeling like this thing belonged to me and now someone’s taken it.” She said it was rough for her when Jonica first moved in. Sarah had been accustomed to seeing Michael whenever she wanted, but she started to feel a pang when he spent time with Jonica. ‘At first I thought, ‘Is something bad happening, something I don’t want to support?’ she said. ‘No, I want to support Michael and Jonica in being together. From there, I look at my own reaction. I can be an anxious person, so maybe I was feeling anxious. I find other ways of getting grounded. I might go for a walk or play guitar... It’s part of learning a healthy self-awareness and the ability to self-soothe,” she added. ‘I notice what I’m feeling, and do a dive inward.” (Khazan

2014)

This measured approach to a very chaotic emotion appears frequently, and those speaking about their relationships to reporters tend to tackle it with similar descriptions to what is cited above. They stress that jealousy can be a positive emotion if it compels you to look inward, examine yourself, and strengthen your relationship. Adams sums it up with her assessment that “Polyamory will find your buttons and it will push them. If you don't want to have that kind of challenge, it's not the right lifestyle for you. But, if you're up for it, polyamory can be the catalyst for powerful personal growth.” (Morin 2014)

Coming Out

Many of the individuals interviewed for the pieces I reviewed chose not to give their last names. While they were willing to speak to the press there was still a level of apprehension about fully exposing their lives to the public. These precautions connect back to the documented stigma surrounding polyamorous relationships, and participants' fears of discrimination or being ostracized from their community. When they do speak about coming-out, the examples shared are personal and sometimes sad. Mark, who was interviewed in the *Minneapolis City Pages*, speaks about his ex-wife's experience with her church: “[W]hen she decided to become poly she came out to her pastor about it... It became a big conflict. He told her he couldn't support it as a pastor and as leader of the church, and that she couldn't be in a leadership role any longer as a result. That hurt her a lot...” The specter of child custody also surfaces in this article with Carrie telling the journalist, “I doubt you'll find anyone with kids who will talk with you. They keep that on the down-low because courts today will still take children away from polyamorous

people. They award custody to the grandparents. It's happened in multiple states" (Strait 2012).

The Personal Essay - Same But Different

While the reported stories focus on who is dating whom, how often they see each other, and how those relationships work, the personal essays take a different approach. Offering a more nuanced look at an individual and their relationships the writer relies partly on building understanding, but also on creating empathy. Writing under a pseudonym, Michael Carey published an essay on *Slate* titled "Why I'm Still In The Polyamory Closet" (2013). Here his sharing of relationship details focus much less on sexual orientation and number of partners, but more on the fears and difficulties holding non-traditional relationships can bring. "If you're in a vanilla relationship, you probably take it for granted that when you're talking with a co-worker, and they say, 'Hey, you're looking sharp, are you going someplace special tonight?' you can just talk." Carey goes on to detail the little lies that build up when answering questions like these. He and his wife Rose have been married for three years, and he also has a serious girlfriend, Diana. "At first you don't know how people might react, so you conceal things, or tell a few little white lies. Before you know it, it's been months, or years, and maybe you might like to come out, but that would force you to admit past deceptions." He compares this build up of lies with a recent dinner he had with his girlfriend Diana's family, who know that she is polyamorous. "But it was nice to sit around a table with my family, of birth and of choice, and just behave naturally. I didn't have to worry, if I casually stroked Diana's shoulder or used some term of endearment like *sweetheart*, that someone might freak out.

I didn't have to continuously monitor my behavior and words. I didn't need to dissemble." While many of his readers may not have been in polyamorous relationships they can potentially relate to that heavy feeling that comes with keeping part of your life from people you either care about or see very frequently. He closes with the statement that "I'd like to live in a world where nobody who conducts their sexual and romantic life with respect for consent, love, and generosity toward their partners—one at a time or otherwise—has to maintain a charade, pretending that they live and love in a more "acceptable" way than they actually do" (Carey 2013).

Sophie Lucido Johnson gets right to the point with the title of "Mom, I Have Two Boyfriends: How I Discovered I Was Polyamorous At 27" (2015) but her personal essay has more nuance than the title implies. She begins by describing a teenage love of the romantic movie "Bed of Roses" and how it influenced her pursuit of a relationship as an adult. These relationships ultimately ended in disappointment and heartbreak, and it was not until she began to date non-exclusively that she felt happy with her romantic life. She describes falling in love with her boyfriend Ned with touching detail, and describes the conversation they had about committing to each other while still remaining non-monogamous: "We promised to be honest with each other. We promised to support each other in times of crisis, and to prioritize and commit to this relationship. And mostly, we promised to be open to whatever inevitable changes would come as we moved forward." The essay continues as Johnson tells the reader about falling in love with another man, Luke, while still having Ned's full support. She is honest that when Ned begins to love another woman, she struggles with jealousy: "I had assumed I wouldn't get jealous; I had assumed I would be happy for Ned immediately; I had assumed that I would be cool and

calm and collected, because science was on my side, and the rational part of my brain knew that this would all be OK.” The piece ends with a note about coming-out to her mother, who she says is open to the concept though perhaps thinks it may only be a phase. Johnson closes the essay with “my love life has never made me happier; I have never felt so grounded or completely myself. I wish this kind of happiness on everyone: the feeling that comes from giving yourself the permission to be exactly who you are in the world, let go of the idea that anything about you needs to be fixed, and then to love in whatever way you choose” (Johnson 2015).

Johnson touches on commitment and trust in her early conversation with Ned about their relationship and she also talks about the transparency needed, stating: “Polyamory requires time, communication, space, communication, communication, and patience.” While Johnson may not know that researchers have shown respondents viewed those in poly relationships to be less trustworthy, she might be aware that people may assume dishonesty without a full explanation of the transparency involved in her relationships. Earlier in the essay she goes to great lengths to describe herself as having “the lifestyle of a healthy elderly recluse with a vegetable garden and waterproof clogs,” noting that “I’m not the type of person who would typically pass as ‘sexually adventurous’ in a lineup” (Johnson 2015). These statements, coupled with her comments about the amount of communication needed for the relationships to function, work to disabuse the reader of the negative notion that poly people are sexually promiscuous and reckless. Like the individuals interviewed in the reported pieces Johnson also addresses jealousy, though here her tone is potentially more accessible to the reader as she admits that it was a very difficult struggle and that it initially caused problems for her. Though

she does make it clear that it was a part of a larger journey and something she moved past in order to continue a relationship style that makes her very happy.

Both essays end with a wish for happiness for others in their relationships. The authors have used their personal stories to connect with their readers and engage with them in a meaningful way about love, emotion, and how we live in this world. In sharing stories about relationships that feel universal, even when the relationship style is not, the writer can engage a “me too” emotional response from the reader. By connecting in this way the authors are building understanding with their audience and creating empathy. In closing with this wish for others to be happy it becomes even more difficult for the already engaged reader to discount the writer as strange and other, because to accept that everyone should get to be happy also means accepting that the writer should be allowed to be happy in their nontraditional relationships.

Is All This Sharing Effective?

Our curiosity and desire to know how these nontraditional relationships work may temper our recognition that these interview subjects are actually sharing very intimate details. The articles appearance in the Fashion and Style section of the publication further normalizes the voyeuristic consumption of the details of someone else’s sex life. However, information regarding who we sleep with, how often, and where, is normally considered relatively private information. It might be acceptable to share with close friends in the right context, but it is not often shared with reporters. Why then are these individuals sharing this information? If a key ingredient in our acceptance of something we are unfamiliar with is understanding and familiarization, then is this level of sharing

needed to achieve that acceptance? The individuals speaking with the press would seem to believe that can be the case. Jeremy Mullins, a 34 year old Atlanta resident, told a *CNN* print reporter: "We want to promote the idea that any relationship is valid as long as it is a choice made by consenting adults." He went on to say, "In this regard, and as in most things, promoting public acceptance is the first step" (Grinberg 2103). He was marching as part of the Atlanta Pride Parade with his romantic partners and a group of other poly individuals. He says he and his partners have faced rejection from their families and fear disapproval from neighbors and colleagues. Mullins and the two additional individuals involved in their triad say they agreed to speak with *CNN* over an eighteen-month period because they wished to challenge the status quo, but their fears about the possible repercussions caused them to withhold their place of employment.

There was no lack of material to pull from when considering both reported stories and personal essays on polyamory, and many of the pieces were published within the last three years. The themes each covered were similar, tackling questions about sex, logistics, jealousy, and coming-out. The reported stories relied on vocal members of the polyamorous community in various cities to give voice to this relationship style, and those individuals strove to keep the tone of their explanations measured, self-reflective and open and positive. While the information shared was personal, it was not brash or attention seeking. Instead personal choice, an overall sense of happiness, and basic attempts to demystify the relationships were apparent throughout these stories. The personal essay authors allowed their readers to see more of the struggle involved in their relationship, but again they kept a measured tone, with both stressing that polyamory has made them feel happy and fulfilled in a way that monogamy did not.

These articles, and the candor involved in them, all point to a growing awareness of polyamory, but does all of this candid sharing lead to change? Here we can look directly at the results and assessment of Hutzler and his colleagues:

Perhaps most importantly, the results from Study 1 also indicated that exposure to the term and/or knowing someone polyamorous is positively related to attitudes towards the relationship orientation. This finding is consistent with the body of literature on Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, which argues that contact with outgroup members facilitates learning about them, which in turn can decrease prejudice. (Hutzler et al 2015, 8)

Hutzler and team also found that "it seems plausible that a strategy that increases factual knowledge about polyamory (including how polyamorous relationships differ from other [Consensual Non-Monogamy] relationships) might lead to more positive [Attitude Toward Polyamory]" (Hutzler et al 2015, 9). While those individuals speaking with the press and publishing personal essays may not know this information directly, I think they are aware that one of the keys to building acceptance is to increase awareness, understanding, and at times empathy. It is possible then that all of this sharing may indeed positively impact people's perceptions of polyamory. The article titles may be pithy, the relationships complex, and the logistics difficult to explain, but ultimately these stories could indeed have a positive and lasting impact on the polyamorous community.

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