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Together Together

John C. Lyden

University of Nebraska-Omaha, johnclyden@gmail.com

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Together Together

Abstract

This is a film review of *Together Together* (2021), directed by Nicole Beckwith.

Keywords

Surrogacy

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Author Notes

John Lyden is Professor of Religious Studies and the Blizek Professor of Religion and Film at University of Nebraska-Omaha. He was been the Editor of the *Journal of Religion & Film* since 2011. He is the author of *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals* (NYU Press), and the editor of the *Routledge Companion to Religion and Film* and co-editor (with Eric Michael Mazur) of the *Routledge Companion to Religion and Popular Culture*. He also co-edited, with Ken Derry, *The Myth Awakens: Canon Conservatism, and Fan Reception of Star Wars* (Wipf and Stock 2018).



Together Together (2021), dir. Nicole Beckwith

The genre formula of the Romantic Comedy is so pervasive that one begins to expect every film will end with a heterosexual romantic relationship forming from some quirky or unlikely connection. Other films are built around reconciliations of long-estranged family members, usually biological parents and children. This comedy is refreshing precisely because it takes as its subject an unusual couple, who do not end up romantically involved and who do not fit the normal categories, and yet who have a genuine bond of friendship and love.

App designer Matt (Ed Helms) is a 40-year-old single straight male who wants to have a child, but has no partner. He hires 26-year-old Anna (Patti Harrison) to be the surrogate to carry a child created from his sperm and an anonymous donor. This might have been simply a contractual relationship, but he clearly wants to have more of a connection with Anna. Part of this is simply that he is lonely; he doesn't seem to be very close to family or friends, and in fact is the designer

of an App called “Loner”—but Anna is also alone, estranged from a family that judged her for a teen pregnancy years ago, and without a boyfriend or close friends. Aside from the occasional hookup, she doesn’t seem to interact with anyone other than Matt and her coffee shop workmate Jules (Julio Torres).

Neither Matt nor Anna is interested in a sexual or romantic relationship with the other, but they connect due to their loneliness and their shared goal of bringing this child into the world. Anna makes it clear that she will not be part of this child’s life, and doesn’t even want to know the sex; they make a pact to call the fetus “Lamp” as a temporary and suitably gender-free name. And yet she consents to help pick out the paint color for the nursery and to shop for a crib with Matt, as he wants her to be part of this. He even convinces her to move in with him, and together they watch *Friends* from start to finish, which she has never seen. And she teaches him how to demonstrate the use of a tampon to his future hypothetical adolescent daughter.

When they have a baby shower, however, Anna is treated not as a person but more as a receptacle by Matt’s family, which hurts her. But Matt never views her that way, and all the other preparations for the baby’s arrival are done by them together, as any parents might. Aside from surrogacy, there are other cases in which impending parenthood is thrust on a couple that is not “together together” (i.e., romantically), but they can still share this joy. This is true even though in this case the relationship is impermanent—and as Jules points out, all relationships end, for even a lifelong marriage ends at death. One should value the connection that exists, whatever form it takes, and Anna and Matt are able to express love for each other even though it is not permanent or sexual in nature. This film reminds us of the value of all the types of relationships that exist in our lives, and that however the connection is formed and however long it lasts, it is worth experiencing and remembering their beauty and blessing.