

# What is shaping culture? Polyamory: Multiple + Love

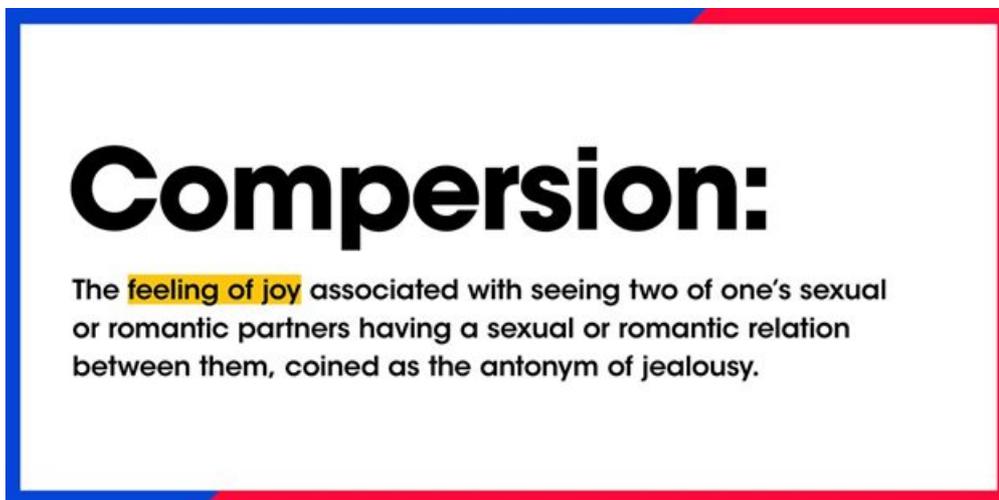
By  Brett Rogers

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Today I explore the world of Polyamory, ask questions about their lifestyle and find out why it works for them.



The kinds of relationships that people have had for the longest time are being challenged by changing social structures, identity politics and rejection of previously ingrained life paths. Polyamory, for example, is the practice of engaging in multiple sexual relationships with the consent of all the people involved.



To start understanding Polyamory, you first need to learn a new word. Although it was created around the '80s, it cannot be found in many dictionaries. Importantly, it is the antonym of jealousy. Consider that for a second: Compersion is the antonym of Jealousy. Jealousy can be a dominant emotion in many relationships, so to consider the possibility of feeling compersion feels both alien and inspiring.



What are some of the challenges faced by poly people, both internally and externally?

# Nita

Love may be infinite, but time definitely isn't. The **only limit on love is time**, having enough time to ensure that you can give each partner, each relationship and yourself the time for the complexities and the communication required. Externally the world is not set up for poly families, poly people cannot marry more than one partner, there is no protection for additional partners. Whilst blended families as a result of divorce are making unusual family structures more normalised, poly families face being ostracised.

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Yes, the world is becoming more accepting and society is demanding acceptance for how they wish to love, but traditions and norms are extremely difficult to break through. There are multiple challenges for people who practice alternative relationships – time being one example.

Dan and Zoe, a married couple with a powerful and lasting foundation for their relationship, explored polyamory after nine years. They spoke of the preconceived ideas of polyamory that tend to derail many people from understanding what polyamory is.

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Some of the ideas that they debunked were:

- Polyamory is not about sex: It's about love
- It's not a sexual 'free for all': Not all relationships include sex, but all include love.
- It's not the same for everyone: Each polycule has their own structure that dictates the rules of engagement for the relationship.

Another new word for us; polycule is a portmanteau of 'polyamory' and 'molecule' and refers to a connected network of non-monogamous relationships.

The Triad family is a Christian polycule from Baltimore, USA on Instagram as @thetriadfam. They are very outspoken but weren't always as open about their relationship. What brought them out was their isolation from the poly community: "We

share our journey to bring awareness to the different kinds of families in society today, to show everyone that we do everyday things and that you don't have to stop believing in a Higher Power just because you're different or because religious folks may deem you 'sinful'."

Interestingly, The Triad Family include a passage from the Bible in their communications: *Ecclesiastes 4:12 – Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*



## What can the mainstream learn from polyamory?

- Communication: Polycules are committed to regular, honest and frank discussions about how they feel and the state of their relationships.
- Rules: These are vital to establish the parameters of the relationship, what are we ok with, and what are we not ok with? This is not about ruling a relationship with an iron fist, but is about complete freedom within those parameters.
- Honesty: This one is hard but brings clarity.
- Consent: Permission is always sought out between the people involved. There is no middle ground, it's either yes or no. Something that we as South Africans have a major problem with.

It's not that long ago that people were absolutely petrified of exposing their 'abnormal relationships' to the real world. People could be, and were, ostracised from family, friends and places of work. Under no circumstances are we saying that that is no longer the case, but there is a sea change happening where people with alternative relationships are emerging from the shadows of social judgment and criticism.

## ABOUT BRETT ROGERS

Brett Rogers, culture lead at Cape Town advertising agency HaveYouHeard and content curator for In\_, a channel of content, which showcases cultural forces that are changing the world. It aims to inform, inspire and entertain the viewer and does so with multimedia posts, including podcasts, videos, google trends, mini Q+A's and more. In\_ talks to those interested in in-depth cultural exploration and those curious about the world we live in.

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