

# Relating

The Newsletter of the Institute for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Relationships

Volume 2, Issue 2

March/April 2002

## Building Bridges II Site Picked, Program Shaping Up

Registrations are coming in for the second annual *Building Bridges – Share Our Similarities, Celebrate Our Differences* national conference! A number of presentation proposals have also been received, well in advance of the June 3 deadline.

“Having presenters submit ideas early helps the people choosing which presentations are offered do a better job,” said ITCR President and CEO James Fleckenstein, CAE. “It gives them more time to review submissions, and that’s always welcome.”

The Conference will be held at the recently renovated Holiday Inn National Airport in Arlington, Virginia. The hotel is located very near not only to the Reagan National Airport, as the name implies, but to the extensive shopping, dining, and entertainment facilities of the Crystal City area of northern Virginia. It is also extremely close to the METRO subway system, making the entire Washington area easily accessible to attendees. Complimentary shuttle service will be available to and from the airport and METRO.

Several new features of the Conference include an on-site bookstore/exhibit to allow attendees to take home more information and materials for immediate use, and an included luncheon on Saturday.

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## Covenant Marriage: No Solution for a Diverse New World (second of two parts)

By Robert T. Francoeur, Ph.D.

As reported in Part 1, social/religious conservatives in Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Michigan, Iowa, and Mississippi are rushing to enact new laws to shore up what they believe is “the one true traditional American marriage and family.” Their main weapon is promoting so-called “covenant marriages.” But their effort to reestablish the primacy of what they see as traditional marriage ignores, distorts and contradicts some essential characteristics of the covenant tradition.

Walter Brueggemann, a leading Protestant authority on “covenants,” tells us that “covenanting is the primary human activity,” the source of social and personal vitality. All communities, he claims, are rooted in “covenant-making, covenant-keeping, covenant breaking and covenant-renewing.” The covenant tradition is most evident in Judaism, less so in Protestantism, and hardly visible in Catholicism, although Christian theologians have been more active than rabbis in applying the covenant tradition to new rituals that accommodate and structure the growing variety of today’s lifestyles and relationships.

The *brith* (covenant) is a basic value in all Jewish life and community, from the ongoing creation relationship of G-d and his people, to tribal, cross-generational, sibling, parent-child, husband-wife, and household relationships. The marriage *brith* is spelled out in a *ketubah* (contract), which stipulates the conditions of a marriage, even down to its possible dissolution. Nothing is too sacred or too profane to include in a *brith* and *ketubah*. Brueggemann and others argue that a well thought out, carefully prepared covenant could provide the basis for a far more steady marriage than the vague feeling, unreal romanticism and unarticulated hopes and expectations which start off too many marriages today.

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*Relating*

Volume 2, No. 2 - March/April, 2002

### ITCR Mission Statement

Attaining a satisfactory level of love and companionship through intimate relations is an unalterable, fundamental need of all human beings. The Institute for 21st Century Relationships exists to facilitate the fulfillment of the human potential for relating, and to support the freedom of consenting adults to discover and to practice the intimate relationship structure that best meets their emotional and human needs. We champion the basic human right to do so free of governmental, societal or institutional coercion or favoritism.

We seek, through education, research, and support, to create a climate in which all forms of ethical, consensual and fulfilling relationship styles are broadly understood and are equally respected and honored as legitimate choices.

Published bi-monthly by the  
Institute for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Relationships  
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Editor & Publisher: James R. Fleckenstein, CAE  
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## INVISIBLE 'CONDOMS' FOR WOMEN ON THE WAY

By Sophia Cariati, Society for Women's Health Research

For close to two decades, the world has focused on vaccine development as the answer to the AIDS epidemic. Meanwhile, scientists have been hard at work on another promising product that most people have never even heard of: microbicides.

Microbicides are substances that destroy or immobilize the organisms that cause sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including AIDS. Products in development include a variety of creams, gels and suppositories that women can apply to the vagina. Putting women in control of their own protection holds increasing appeal, since women represent one of the fastest growing segments of the AIDS population, and are also more than twice as likely to contract STDs as men given the same exposure. With twenty such products now in human testing, microbicides may hit drug store shelves within five years.

"In my opinion, microbicides are as revolutionary to women's health today as was the introduction of the [birth control] pill forty years ago," said Lori Heise, director of the Global Campaign for Microbicides (GCM), Washington, D.C.

Women now account for 23 percent of new AIDS cases in the U.S., up from seven percent in 1986. Other STDs such as genital herpes, gonorrhea and chlamydia are also increasing in incidence in the U.S. Women bear the greatest burden of these STDs, suffering more frequent and more serious complications than men.

Currently women can choose between what have proven to be unpopular female condoms and male condoms to protect themselves. Both options have their shortcomings. Women often describe awkward female condoms as noisy and uncomfortable and their ability to protect against STDs remains uncertain. And with male condoms, women must rely on men to wear them to protect their own health.

"Women are the only group at high risk of STDs and HIV that don't have a user-friendly tool within their control to protect themselves from disease," said Heise, "We need to empower women to manage their own risk."

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## Special *Relating* Theme Section on Jealousy

### Jealousy: Eyes of Jade By Jeffery P. Adams

Jealousy: people have fought wars, killed friends, relatives, lovers and themselves over it. A co-worker of mine was killed by the husband of his girlfriend. Rifle shot in the face. What bothers me most is how many seem to regard jealousy as a right because they are "in love." "I love you: I'll kill you." Excuse me?

King Arthur messed up a "time of peace and plenty" because his two best friends, Guinevere and Lancelot, had desired to feel physically that love they had shared so far only in spirit. Seeing them together, Arthur (in one of the Arthurian legend versions) plunged his sword into the ground where the two lovers lay, and left it there, thus weakening his kingship and plunging the entire Land into terrible famine and waste.

Seems like a strange decision. Neither bowing to the morality of the time which demanded their deaths nor forgiving them (until years later) he instead martyred himself *and the entire Land*. The multitudes who depended on him for their prosperity were struck with a desolation as hollow, grinding and deadly as the Arthur's own. Only with the finding of the Holy Grail, the symbol of Christ's own love and understanding, was he able to heal himself and his people. For he and the Land were One...

What if Arthur had simply been content that his two best friends enjoy the love they had discovered for each other? If he did love them both as he said, how could he have done otherwise? This part of the story has always bothered me, even before the word polyamory ever crossed my horizons, for it was in that selfish moment of terrible despair that Morganna seduced him and begat the son that was to be Arthur's downfall and the final end of "this brief time of peace." In Arthur's own jealousy lay the true failure, not in the "betrayal" of the lovers.

My family consists of four adults, wonderfully happy, living together and working together in a common business venture. We see a lot of each other, though somehow it's never enough. Over the time since we first "got together" a curious thing has happened. My co-husband stated it rather recently. He mentioned that many of the little things that used to bother him about his wife

(we were two couples originally; what's the term for your "original" wife as opposed to your "acquired" wife/wives?) – like the toothpaste being squeezed from the bottom or from the middle, for instance – just don't matter any more. He said that with four of us instead of just the regulation two, these things never crop up, for him. Instead of three times as many things to get irritated over, it's more like there are three times as many ways to absorb that irritation, so it never even comes up at all.

Me, I have always despised any trace of jealousy in myself, and have routed it out with all the power and wisdom I either possess or can borrow. Still, I feel jealousy, ugly, nasty thing that it is. In the early days of our family this banished and unwelcome beast nevertheless reared its ugly visage and spat all over me. Ah well... I dealt with it for what it was: insecurity within myself. I looked for where I was feeling frightened, challenged, unworthy, but mostly I just acknowledged the feelings and left them alone (as best as I could). I let the "eyes of jade," the magic green spotlights, point the way to those inner emotions (that desolation and famine upon my own Land). In time the unwanted feelings went away, and Peace returned.

The Holy Grail, in at least one of those versions, was indeed found inside Arthur's own mind... Do not all solutions lie within? I love now to listen to my co-husband and my "original" wife laughing up a storm with each other. Even if I can't join in (because I'm busy writing articles, say), I still share in their mirth. It makes me very happy.

I thank those Wonderfully Clear Sighted Eyes of Jade for their help. ☒

**Jeffery P. Adams** is a free-lance writer living in Idaho. He and his family are mutually owned by four very sophisticated cats who firmly believe in everyone's right to a free lifestyle.

### Open House Hosts Needed

Could you host an open house to help raise funds for the Institute's work? Do you belong to a group that might hold a fund raising event to benefit us? Please call/e-mail us - address and phone number on page 2.

I remember encountering Ayala in the Psychology Department at UC Berkeley in the early 70's where I was an undergraduate and she was an adjunct faculty member. Female professors were quite scarce and this fiery little Israeli woman definitely stood out. Who knew that twenty years later we would both be writing about jealousy!

While *Romantic Jealousy* does not assume the reader to be anything other than monogamous, Dr. Pines acknowledges the existence and legitimacy of alternatives to monogamy such as open marriage, swinging, and polyfidelity. In fact, she was quite fascinated with the San Francisco based Kerista Commune, an experiment in group marriage and communal living which thrived from the mid seventies until the mid nineties. While she only devotes part of one chapter to Kerista, it's clear from her respectful tone that she appreciated the way the Kerista Islanders (as they called themselves at one time), refused to be ruled by jealousy.

Nevertheless, much of this book is addressed to the average person with a jealousy problem. An appendix offers a research questionnaire entitled "Exploring Your Romantic Jealousy" and suggests that the reader compare their responses before and after reading the book. Clearly, Dr. Pines' intent is to provide some relief for the millions who suffer from jealousy even though they've elected monogamy.

Her approach is eclectic and describes five different ways of viewing and managing jealousy. The psychodynamic approach sees jealousy as the result of unresolved childhood traumas. One of the most common psychodynamic issues I see in people with jealousy problems (but not one that Pines discusses) is the person who had to compete with the same sex parent for the attention of the opposite sex parent. The cure is to change the parental introjects.

The systems approach views jealousy as the result of the dynamics within a particular relationship. Jealousy often shows up in a relationship in which one partner has more power than the other. The less empowered partner often feels dependent and jealous. The cure here is to equalize the power between the partners. The behavioral approach views it as a learned response that can be unlearned. Desensitization, either progressively or through intense exposure to the situation where jealousy arises, is the

treatment of choice from this perspective.

The social psychological approach views jealousy as the result of culture, which determines when jealousy is experienced and how it is expressed. The socio-biological approach sees jealousy as innate, the result of evolutionary processes that are different for men and women.

Pines' position is that while many consider these various approaches to be contradictory, anything that can help a person deal with jealousy can and should be used. Case examples show how each of these approaches is relevant in different situations and provide evidence, albeit anecdotal, of their efficacy.

I would agree although my personal inclination leans more toward systems and a form of psychodynamic approach, called Pelvic-Heart Integration or a sixth possibility that Dr. Pines doesn't directly address – which I would call the spiritual – and which does in a sense include all of the others.

One chapter does address the good that can come from experiences with jealousy, *a la* my own "let jealousy be your teacher" approach. While most people run from jealousy as fast as they can, either by attempting to stop their partners from doing whatever is triggering their jealousy, or by distracting themselves with their favorite addiction, turning around and facing this demon directly is the essence of the spiritual approach. Simply finding the courage to experience your jealousy directly and investigate its qualities, its source, and its sensations can be a powerfully transforming experience. Paradoxically, as soon as you stop resisting it, it tends to evaporate like the mirage of projection that it is.

Someone had highlighted certain passages and completed the questionnaire in my slightly used copy. This added a definite poignancy and sense of gratitude as well as voyeuristic spice for me, so I highly recommend tracking down a used copy and saving it for a rainy day. ☺

**Deborah Anapol, Ph.D.** is the author of *Polyamory: The New Love Without Limits* and leads seminars on conscious relating and sacred sexuality nationwide. She will be offering weekend seminars in Bangor, PA May 17-19, in Colorado July 26-28, and Pilion Peninsula, Greece Sept 20-26. You can contact her at 415/507-1739, info@lovewithoutlimits.com or www.lovewithoutlimits.com

## Climbing the Glass Mountain and Slaying the Green-eyed Dragon By WindForce

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Jealousy! The great bugbear of all non-exclusive relationships. The great slippery mountain of glass guarding the juicy golden apples of a life overflowing with love's warmth and light.

Jealousy! The excruciating combination of fear and anger that can rip your guts out and drive you insane, or just quietly, unconsciously twist and poison even wondrous partnerships/love affairs.

Jealousy! Where do you come from? Are you encoded in our genes or do we create you entirely ourselves? The jury is still out, but the evidence is accumulating that the roots of sexual jealousy are laid during infancy and are then watered generously by social practices and conventions. But now from several generations of polyamorous pioneers we know for certain that sexual jealousy can be overcome, that it can be reprogrammed and even replaced by its opposite.

I encountered by own personal glass mountain and green-eyed dragon for the second time a few years ago when my wife and I took a male friend of mine as a lover. It was our first such relationship. I loved it when the three of us made love together, but during this relationship I was away on a job during the week and home only from Friday evening to Monday morning. Though I had initiated this relationship, and was joyous that we were creating it, nonetheless I suffered horribly when I knew Pat and Jim were making love, which was usually a few nights a week. But I had set up this lesson and was determined to

master it. I drew on all of my years of conscious training, read and re-read whatever I could find, meditated, took walks, and busied my mind with my work.

It all helped, but the dragon was only finally laid to rest when I focused sharply on how much I loved Pat, and on all the pleasure she got from enjoying a second lover/playmate - with my blessing. Only then could I send my lovers waves of love over the speakerphone when they were in bed together and I was a hundred miles away! In polyland this total re-programming of sexual jealousy has a name: *compersion*.

There are many paths and practices that can move one along toward greater enlightenment. The path of love is one of the most convenient. It is right there in front of each of us every day, every hour in every interaction we have with other human beings. No special time or place is needed for its practice. But the upper reaches of this path go up the glass mountain and are guarded by the great green-eyed dragon of sexual jealousy. Currently, largely unarmed and untrained, and even though weighed down by social disapproval, a few brave seekers still charge the glass mountain and its fearsome dragon. Many slip, flounder, fall and give up. But some succeed and reach the love-lit plateau at the top - where, of course, their next life challenge awaits them. ☒

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## Another Breed of Dragon By Suzann Robins, M.A.

Jealousy is first defined as "resentment or envy against a rival;" second as "fearful of losing another's affection." It is "the mental anguish and uneasiness caused by suspicion and fear, or the act of vigilance in maintaining or guarding something" (Random House College Dictionary, revised ed. 1988).

It kills many relationships. Too often one person feels the "resentment" when their partner expresses a desire for a more open relationship. The "mental anguish" is then directed toward the person who asked for a different way of relating. The "act of vigilance to maintain or guard" the

status quo takes away from the flow of love that previously brought the partners together. In our society, whether you're gay or straight, pair bonding is the acceptable form of relating.

The straight story goes like this: boy meets girl and there is attraction. He asks her out, she accepts. They like each other and decide to spend more time together. This leads to sharing meals, free time, and eventually living under the same roof. Perhaps there are shared children, family responsibilities, and joint friendships forming as the "couple" presents itself to the individual worlds. This new entity, the "couple"

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## A Different Dragon

(Continued from page 5)

supercedes any prior individual identities. Old friendships are dropped, interests change, and new habits and expectations are formed. Unspoken assumptions eventually surface and the “honeymoon” is over. The rest of the story can, of course, take several paths.

The gay male story is not much different, except the two men often explicitly agree that sex with other men is OK under certain circumstances. Many lesbians, on the other hand, often struggle due to the lack of a widely accepted courtship model: who should approach whom, etc., but they manage to create relationships nonetheless.

There is only one problem. I am bisexual. So, how does the “bisexual model” work? I discover that the heterosexual model of serial monogamy (where one relationship begins when the other is over) seems to be the accepted norm. The only difference, to most bisexual authors, is that the partner’s gender may change.

This doesn’t work for me. I want more, I want both. I want it all!! I tell my husband, after 10 years of marriage and three children, that I am attracted to women. It takes 10 more years before I act on this desire. Then, after the marriage ends, I meet another man, and follow the “straight” formula, but with the understanding that I’m still seeking a female partner. He agrees, and five years later, I find her. By then he’s gone; she and I do the lesbian dance for five years.

I am still asking, “How do I have both? What does it take to create an open relationship? What is this thing called polyamory? How does it work?” There are no models, no rules, but I find internet lists where people are successfully making it up as they go along. I find networks of open-minded people who are exploring a variety of possibilities. And then the jealousy comes.

It begins inside my own head. I feel resentment and envy because it looks like someone else has something I want – a more open relationship. I become fearful of losing my partner’s affection if I tell her I want to relate to another. *The mental anguish and uneasiness begin, not because of suspicion or fear, but because I want to be vigilant in maintaining or guarding something I already have.*

A year of negotiation passes. She says, “Go ahead, have another lover, I am OK with that.” Meeting people has always been easy for me –

I am an open, cheerful, outgoing, friendly person. I attend a poly potluck; I know how this part works. I am a levelheaded psychology teacher, a wanna-be sex educator, and a woman who loves sex – on my terms, at my pace. I am able to communicate all that. Finding a man who wants to be/have a part-time lover is not difficult in poly circles. So far, so good.

I make certain both my partners are clear that the fact I want more than one has nothing to do with either of them being insufficient as friends or lovers. It has more to do with my high level of desire. We reach understanding; he is not jealous of her, and she is not jealous of him. We are all busy people, so they are each content with the amount of my time and affection they receive. This part goes ok.

Months pass and then the “green monster” rears its head again. I feel resentment and envy because nothing looks like the thing that I want – even though the relationship is open, the intimacy I long for is missing. *The mental anguish and uneasiness begin, not because of suspicion or fear, but because I want to be vigilant in maintaining or guarding something I already have.* What is that something? Are we less intimate than before? No, not really.

It has to do with having created a home, a comfort level of activity. A pace for living and loving that has become familiar. This familiarity is breeding contempt for the change I still seek.

It is hard to change. In our quest for new ways of relating, this is the aspect of jealousy we need to explore. It means changing a mind-set that has existed for millennia. It means changing conditioning handed down from generation to generation. It means accepting that we are different, queer, misfits. How do we do vacations? Who do we take home for family reunions? How do we explain to our children, parents, and peers that we have more than one partner? Or that the one we have is so often unavailable? This is a new face of jealousy: the resentment or envy about the affection we might lose. The careful guarding of what we already have. The suspicion and fear about change.

I’m still growing, and still looking for answers. 

**Suzann Robins, M.A.**, is a lively teacher and certificated Transpersonal Hypnotherapist who has been involved with integrative health topics for the past 30 years, and a part of the polyamory community for the past 10.

# The View from the Front Lines

By Jim Fleckenstein, ITCR President and CEO

## ***We need a Stonewall attitude shift – now!***

Virtually anybody who is a student of alternative relationships is aware of the 1969 Stonewall “riots” in New York, which marked the turning point in the gay rights movement. When NY police decided yet again to raid a prominent local gay bar, the patrons – many of them drag queens and other “fringe” elements of the gay community – decided that they’d had enough harassment. The resulting several days of civil disturbance had a number of effects: it ended most police harassment of gay establishments, and it became a rallying point for a dramatic change in gay consciousness about their right to peaceably pursue their own way of living and loving. The Gay Pride events in the US each June have their roots in the Stonewall riots.

As I go about my daily task of furthering the right of people to live their own relationship choices, I am often amazed at what we put up with. Stonewall type police/“zoning” harassment raids still happen regularly to swing clubs (FL, AZ, TX, AL, CA, PA, LA) and to BDSM events/clubs (MA, MD, CA, NJ, WI). Polyamorist families get broken up by intolerant relatives. People live in fear of being “outed” at their workplace, in their community, or among their families.

When are we going to have the kind of “we’re mad as hell and we aren’t going to take it anymore” reaction that moved gays and lesbians from being officially persecuted to being a tolerated, if not yet wholly integrated, minority?

Is it that we care so little about our right to live and love as we choose? Do we collectively believe we have so much to lose if we resist that it is easier to just move on – find another club, attend a different convention, keep leading a “secret life” – than to take even the “baby steps” that must be taken to ensure our rights?

I’m not advocating a “take it to the streets” course of action for all sexual/relationship minorities. But we nevertheless must collectively raise our consciousness and our willingness to resist, each in our own way, both active and passive discrimination and harassment.

One of the most debilitating attitudes of all is our

own (often repressed) moral ambivalence about our life choices. We, like everyone else, are products of a cultural environment that labels our choices as “deviant” at best, “sinful” at worst. When we come to public attention at all, we’re attacked for causing the disintegration of the family, the corruption of youth, and the death of commitment. At some level, we unwittingly internalize those harsh criticisms, and we are ashamed. Shame brings fear, and fear, paralysis.

We’re also hamstrung by our own belief in being dogmatically nonjudgmental and ethically relativistic; we are (often out of a notion of preemptive self defense) extremely inhibited in expressing judgments about anything but the starkest examples. Therefore, we shy away from owning our own rightful indignation at being oppressed, even to the extent of defending the very institutions that oppress us (i.e., deny us legal recognition and protection, sanction social discrimination against us, threaten our livelihoods, endanger our family cohesion, etc.). Many of us even feel smug in our own “large mindedness.” It’s a shame our opponents don’t reciprocate.

Many of those in nontraditional relationships bristle at any effort to point out the psychological damage that coerced monogamy (as currently practiced) and monogamist thinking does. *Real* people suffer in relationships that don’t meet their needs, endure the pain of jealousy and the heartbreak of shattered trust from infidelity; they cause *real* children hurt and suffering through marital conflict and bitter divorces, etc. This doesn’t take into account the chronic low-level unhappiness that pervades many of the 50% of marriages that *don’t* end in divorce.

So, by passively evading our responsibility to demand respect for our own right to choose how, whom, and how many we love, completely free of social coercion, we collaborate in denying that right to others. If *all* choices were legal and respected, many others, if fully informed and truly free, might well join us in *not* “choosing” today’s monogamy.

Stonewall illustrates why such change comes hard, however. It was not the comfortable, “respectable,” closeted part of the gay community that catalyzed change. It was the outliers; the more flagrant, more extreme (and thus easily targeted) elements that finally took the stand that helped liberate everyone.

We can choose whether we dare to be “extreme” – the creators of change, or to keep on passively allowing harassment and discrimination based on

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## Covenant Marriage No Solution

(Continued from page 1)

The Jewish betrothal covenant, *erusin*, echoed in Bavarian Catholic courtship customs of *festern* ("window-courting"), Scandinavian Lutheran "taking your night feet for a walk," and colonial American "bundling" all show that even covenants supporting religious marriage could and did adopt a permissive posture toward (supposedly forbidden) premarital sex. How far a stretch is it to imagine a religious covenant tradition that embraces comarital sexuality?

Opening up the marriage *brith* and *ketubah* to include intimate relationships not traditionally accepted by the Torah and Talmud is based on the urging of Mishnah Berachoth that the *halacha* laws should be **in tune with the needs of the people and their times**. When the Jewish community supported polygyny and concubinage, the *halacha* and *ketubah* supported polygyny and concubinage. When the Jewish community came to favor monogamy (because of threats and pressure from the dominant Christian community in medieval Europe), tradition supported monogamy. In this tradition, people should be free to write their own *brith* and *ketubah* in a way that structures and legitimizes alternatives to monogamy like sexually open marriages, swinging, multilateral threesomes and foursomes, group marriages and gay unions.


Brueggemann reminds us that all covenants need to be: 1) based on a commitment, 2) open to renegotiation, 3) concerned with mutual decisions and all parties involved, 4) addressing important issues, and 5) open to various internal and external sanctions.

Creating a covenant can be socially and personally supportive for those who decide to explore an open or polyamorous relationship. Whether the relationship is emotional or sexual, the intimacy of a comarital or satellite relationship does affect the lives of all involved, including any children of the involved adults. Incorporating this intimacy into the primary relationship covenant enhances integrity, honesty and communications – and the relationship. The late Robert Rimmer provided a model in the "synergamous" marriage ceremony in his 1972 novel *Thursday, My Love*.

In *The New Intimacy* (1973, 2001), Unitarian-Universalist minister Ron Mazur takes the most positive approach of any mainstream theologian to extending the covenant tradition to sexually open and polyamorous marriages:

*"Persons participating in an open-ended marriage covenant not only with each other, but with the whole Family of Man... Within such marriages the possibility of adultery is totally absent because exclusion, possessiveness, and jealousy have no place in the relationship. "Adultery" is a theological judgment, which can only apply to the restrictive type of covenant. When one partner breaks the vow of "to thee only do I promise to keep myself," a relationship of trust is broken and he or she is unfaithful. But it's also possible to create a model of marriage - a covenant - monogamous in the sense that it's based upon an intended lifetime commitment between two but which nevertheless is open-ended because it does not exclude the freedom to have any number of intimate relationships with others."*

Realistic covenants for the 21<sup>st</sup> century have to be flexible and renegotiable. Obviously, this is something the religious conservatives cannot tolerate. The express purpose of "covenant marriage" is to create an *inflexible* covenant that cannot easily be renegotiated. Yet, like it or not, no one can escape the fact that American marriages and families are changing radically. Increasingly, Americans are questioning and challenging old models that worked well in Victorian times but are often poorly suited to meet the emotional and erotic needs of women and men in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Today, a few pioneering ministers, priests and rabbis are using the covenant tradition as a way to socially structure and religiously recognize cohabitation and gay and lesbian unions. In our western religious traditions, true covenant relationships offer an excellent way to legalize a variety of marital and non-marital relationships. They offer a bridge from the past to the future for religious-minded persons. They can ease the social turmoil we cannot escape. Finally, they can provide psychological, emotional and social support for the majority of Americans today who are not in traditional legally recognized, monogamous, sexually exclusive, lifelong relationships. *True* "covenant marriages" deserve support. The kind being pushed by religious extremists, who misappropriate the name without a clear understanding of the concept, do not. 

**Robert T. Francoeur, Ph.D.** (rtfrancoeu@aol.com) is the editor of *Sex, Love and Marriage in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Next Sexual Revolution* (iUniverse Publishers), and Chair of the Institute's Advisory Council. He invites feedback on this article.

## Sexual Freedom Legal Defense Fund Created

Attorney and ITCR Advisory Council member Valerie White educated attendees at the first ITCR *Building Bridges* Conference about legal issues for people in polyamorous and other alternative relationships. Now she has announced the formation of a new nonprofit organization, the Sexual Freedom Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc.

The new group knows that people who practice alternative sexual expression can sometimes find themselves in trouble. Like the "Paddleboro" defendants in Massachusetts, they may be charged with crimes under archaic laws. They may face the loss of custody of their children. SFLDEF has been established to help people who find themselves in these kinds of trouble.

"We hope people who need financial assistance with legal fees and the expenses of litigation will contact us for help. We hope lawyers and child-development specialists who are willing to work with this population will permit us to put them in a referral database. And we hope people who share our dedication to sexual freedom will help us build our fund," said White.

"Just in the first week we got five requests for help. And we have already made our first grant, to a woman who has lost custody of her children because of BDSM." The organization has applied for charitable, tax-exempt status.

"We want to focus on alternative sexual expression among consenting adults, like polyamory, swinging, BDSM, fetishism and so forth," White says. "GLBT folks already have a great resource in the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund."

"The Institute is delighted that Valerie has created SFLDEF," said ITCR President and CEO James Fleckenstein, CAE. "This group fills an important role, and we look forward to providing SFLDEF and its attorneys with facts and research to support their efforts in the future." ❏

The new group can be contacted at:

**SFLDEF, Inc.**  
**156 Massapoag Ave.**  
**Sharon, MA 02067**  
**valerie@forevermail.com**  
**781-784-6114 www.sfldef.org**

## **Building Bridges 2002** (Continued from page 1)

In response to attendee feedback, this year's Conference will include an optional Saturday night "big event." Current plans call for a dinner/dance, with a "Pajama Party" theme. More details about this opportunity to decompress and have fun will be made available as plans firm up.

The aim of the Conference remains to bring together both leaders and participants from all forms of alternative relationships, for networking, learning, and building a common agenda for change. Several leading national organizations representing participants in alternative lifestyles have already pledged their interest and support for the 2002 event. Leaders of the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom and the International Lifestyles Association are actively supporting the 2002 *Building Bridges* Conference, and more such groups are expected to become involved.

Regional volunteer-run groups are also lending their support this year. The Hampton Roads (VA) Polyamory and the Richmond (VA) Polyamory groups have become Supporting Organizations for the *Building Bridges* Conference.

The Conference topics will build upon last year's successes, covering essentials such as communications skills, jealousy management, "introduction to..." sessions on various relationship choices, legal issues, etc.

The Conference registration fees include all Conference materials, the Friday Welcoming Reception, two breakfasts, Saturday lunch, and refreshment breaks. Complete registration information and forms can be found online at: [www.lovethatworks.org/conference.html](http://www lovethatworks.org/conference.html), and on page 12 of this issue of *Relating*.

Presenters are also still being recruited. Information on how to be considered as a presenter can also be found online at: [www.lovethatworks.org/call.html](http://www.lovethatworks.org/call.html). ❏

### **Next Issue Theme – Integrating Spirituality and Nontraditional Relationships**

Share *your* thoughts and experiences. For writer's guidelines, deadlines, etc.: [www.lovethatworks.org/relating.html](http://www.lovethatworks.org/relating.html)

# Calendar of Events

## May

- 1-5 – American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists – Miami, FL (Info: [www.aasect.org/annualcon.cfm](http://www.aasect.org/annualcon.cfm))
- 17-19 – 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Bisexual Empowerment Conference: A United Supportive Experience (BECAUSE) – Milwaukee, WI (Info: [www.bisexual.org](http://www.bisexual.org))
- 18-20 – GenderPAC's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Conference on Gender – Washington, DC (Info: [www.gpac.org/ngc/index.html](http://www.gpac.org/ngc/index.html))
- 15-19 – "Miami in May" lifestyle convention – Miami Beach, FL (Info: [www.miamininmay.com](http://www.miamininmay.com))
- 18-23 – American Psychiatric Association Conference – Philadelphia, PA (Info: [www.psych.org/sched\\_events/ann\\_mtg\\_02/2002annualmeeting.cfm](http://www.psych.org/sched_events/ann_mtg_02/2002annualmeeting.cfm))

## June

- 6-9 – 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the American Psychological Society – New Orleans, LA (Info: [www.psychologicalscience.org/convention/](http://www.psychologicalscience.org/convention/))
- 13-16 – Midcontinent Region Annual Conference of SSSS – Big Rapids, MI (Info: [www.ssc.wisc.edu/ssss/meetings.htm](http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/ssss/meetings.htm))
- 14-16 – Loving More West Conference – Harbin Hot Springs, CA (Info: [www.lovemore.com/westdetails.html](http://www.lovemore.com/westdetails.html))
- 17-19 – 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Guelph Conference and Training Institute on Sexuality – Guelph, ON, Canada (Info: [www.uoguelph.ca/sexconf/confnew.htm](http://www.uoguelph.ca/sexconf/confnew.htm))

## July

- 4-7 – "Living In Leather" Conference of the National Leather Association-International – Dallas, TX (Info: [www.livinginleather.org](http://www.livinginleather.org))
- 5-8 – 11<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Personal Relationships – Halifax, NS, Canada (Info: [www.medicine.dal.ca/ahprc/ISSPRconference.html](http://www.medicine.dal.ca/ahprc/ISSPRconference.html))
- 13-20 – Thornfield 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Workshop on Sexuality – Cazenovia, NY (Info: [www.sexualityworkshop.com](http://www.sexualityworkshop.com))
- 31- August 4 – The Lifestyles Convention – Reno, NV (Info: [lifestyles-convention.com/](http://lifestyles-convention.com/))

## August

- 2-4 – Loving More East Conference – Havre de Grace, MD (Info: [www.lovemore.com/eastdetails.html](http://www.lovemore.com/eastdetails.html))


- 22-25 – American Psychological Association Annual Meeting – Chicago, IL (Info: [www.apa.org/convention/](http://www.apa.org/convention/))

## October

- 4-6 – 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) – Los Angeles, CA (Info: [www.glsen.org/templates/events/article.html?section=50&record=617](http://www.glsen.org/templates/events/article.html?section=50&record=617))
- 5 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Poly Pride Day – New York, NY (Info: [www.poly-NYC.com](http://www.poly-NYC.com))
- 11-13 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual **Building Bridges** Conference of the ITCR – Washington, DC (Info: [www.lovetthatworks.org](http://www.lovetthatworks.org))
- 24-27 – 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy – Cincinnati, OH (Info: [www.aamft.org](http://www.aamft.org))

## November

- 6-10 – National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's 15<sup>th</sup> Annual *Creating Change* Conference – Portland, OR (Info: [www.nglftf.org/cc/index.cfm](http://www.nglftf.org/cc/index.cfm))
- 7-10 – 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality (SSSS) – Montreal, Quebec, Canada (Info: [www.ssc.wisc.edu/ssss/meetings.htm](http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/ssss/meetings.htm))
- 11-14 – 64<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the National Council on Family Relations – Houston, TX (Info: [www.ncfr.org/conference\\_info/index.asp](http://www.ncfr.org/conference_info/index.asp))
- 20-24 – 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Nawlins in November lifestyle convention – New Orleans, LA (Info: [www.neworleansinnovember.com](http://www.neworleansinnovember.com))

Send us information on major conferences/events that might be of interest to *Relating's* readers, and we'll consider them for inclusion. Send to *Relating* Calendar, ITCR, 2419 Little Current Drive, Suite 1933, Herndon, VA 20171, or email us at [calendar@lovetthatworks.org](mailto:calendar@lovetthatworks.org). 

Robert T. Francoeur  
Martha Cornog  
Timothy Perper

**Sex, Love,  
and Marriage  
in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The Next Sexual Revolution

**Before you read the next issue of *Relating*, you ought to read this book!**

Edited by Robert Francoeur, Timothy Perper and Martha Cornog, *SLM* is an anthology of 22 stories describing the search for the reunion of sex and spirit, from a range of faith traditions. Available from Amazon via the ITCR website.

## Microbicides Offer New Hope

(Continued from page 2)

Consistent condom use is easy when the man, of his own accord, puts one on. And with new sexual partners, this is often the case. But once relationships become "serious," most couples stop using them. Some men complain condoms reduce the physical pleasure of sex. In addition, condoms are often seen as a physical barrier to intimacy and raise emotional issues of trust and commitment.

"Even for educated, high income women it is often very difficult to ask a man to use a condom," said Heise. Asking men to use condoms can even be dangerous for some women, Heise notes. Women in abusive relationships and many women in developing nations are often too afraid to assert themselves and ask men to use protection. In Africa, where the HIV-infection rate among women is skyrocketing, condoms are often associated with promiscuity and a lack of trust.

Approximately 60 microbicides are currently in development, according to GCM. At least 20 of these have proven safe and effective in animals and are now being tested in people in small studies. A few of these products have made it to the large human studies, Phase III trials, which must be completed before manufacturers seek marketing approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

If one of the leading candidates proves effective, then a product should be on the market in four to five years, said Heise. But drug research and development is expensive. Without substantial funding increases from the government and public sector organizations, microbicides will take much longer to become widely available.

There are other hurdles to microbicide development. Because they are a new type of product, it has proved difficult to determine what level of effectiveness the FDA will require before giving approval. In addition, the research and development cost of first generation microbicides is high relative to their estimated market value. This has kept most pharmaceutical companies out of the field, leaving the government and public sector to lead the way.

As a result, advocates are counting on mobilizing the public to help make microbicides become a reality. They hope that more and more women will recognize that this is a health priority. "With increased awareness, women can make their voices heard and shape the research agenda of this country," said Heise.

For more information, visit the Society for Women's Health Research's Web site at [www.womens-health.org](http://www.womens-health.org).

## The Front Lines (Continued from page 7)

relationship choice. Soft-pedaling our differences with anti-choice extremists, just laying low, or proudly professing a completely nonjudgmental attitude on matters of relationship choice only prolongs *everyone's* oppression.

We must have faith, not that our individual choices are "the way" (the arrogance our opponents demonstrate) but that *free choice itself* is "the way." Whenever the right of competent adults to choose *whatever* form of ethical, consensual relationship they wish is challenged, whether by police raids, extremist rhetoric, political opportunists, or even by our own inner demons and fears, we need to take a stand and fight for a *meaningful* right to choose.

When are we going to adopt the Stonewall mentality? Soon, I hope. ☒

## Founders Club Members

This is an elite group of Institute supporters who gave \$500 before September 1, 2001. We thank them for their generosity and vision.

- Anakosha Corporation – Naples, FL
- Paul S. Christensen – Champaign, IL
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- Betsy E. Lehrfeld – Washington, DC
- James S. Turner – Washington, DC
- George W. Sherouse – Chapel Hill, NC
- Anita T. Wagner – Herndon, VA
- Jasmine Walston – Clarksville, IN

# Building Bridges 2002 Conference Registration Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Nickname: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_


City, State, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Community(ies) of Interest (check all that apply):

- Polyamory    Swinging    BDSM or D/s    Polygamy  
 GLBT    Cohabitation    Researcher    Social Change Activist

-   Please check here if you require special assistance to participate in this Conference. An Institute staff member will contact you.

## Registration Fees: (Includes all Conference materials, meals, etc.)

**Before August 1, 2002:**    ITCR Associate: \$115    Non-Associate: \$135

**After August 1, 2002:**    ITCR Associate: \$140    Non-Associate: \$150

## Optional Events:

**Pre-Conference Workshop Friday, October 11: \$65**

**Saturday, October 12 Social Dinner/Dance: \$35**

Please return this form, along with your check made payable to ITCR, to:

**Institute for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Relationships  
2002 Conference  
2419 Little Current Drive, Suite 1933  
Herndon, Virginia 20171-4612**

**Feel free to photocopy this form for multiple registrants.**