A Framework for Investigating the Link Between Workplace Romance and Sexual Harassment

CHARLES A. PIERCE
Montana State University

HERMAN AGUINIS
University of Colorado at Denver

Workplace romance and sexual harassment are pervasive social-sexual phenomena in organizations. However, the processes through which dissolved workplace romances are most likely to foster sexually harassing behavior between former romantic partners are not known. The authors propose that the following factors play a critical role in influencing the likelihood that terminated workplace romances lead to sexually harassing behavior: (a) type of workplace romance as defined by pairing of each partner's primary romance motive, (b) partners' social power, (c) initiation of romantic relationship dissolution, (d) male partner's sexual harassment proclivity, (e) nature of each partner's residual affective state, and (f) organization's tolerance for sexual harassment. Based on the role of these factors, the authors provide a framework and propositions that serve to guide future research addressing the link between dissolved workplace romances and sexually harassing behavior. Methodological considerations and implications for management are also discussed.

Increases in the number of women in the labor force, required hours on the job, and coed work teams exemplify the changing nature of work in the United States during the past two decades. Such changes in working conditions provide an explanation for the following two social-sexual phenomena in organizations: workplace romance and sexual harassment (Gutek, 1985; Powell & Foley, 1998). Workplace romances are mutually desired relationships involving sexual attraction between two employees of the same

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organization (Mainiero, 1986, 1989; Pierce, Byrne, & Aguinis, 1996; Quinn, 1977). In contrast, sexually harassing behavior involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature that is unwanted (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1993).

Workplace romances and sexually harassing behavior are pervasive in organizational life. With respect to workplace romances, 71% of employees have either observed or participated in such a relationship (Dillard & Witteman, 1985), 24% of managers have been involved in such a relationship at least once during their career (Peak, 1995), and 33% of all romantic relationships begin at work with a fellow employee (Bureau of National Affairs, 1988). With respect to sexual harassment, less blatant forms of harassing behavior (i.e., hostile environment harassment) such as unwanted sexual attention and gender-based harassment are much more common than blatant forms of harassing behavior (i.e., quid pro quo harassment) such as sexual coercion and assault (Gutek, Cohen, & Konrad, 1990; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1994). In fact, between 25% and 50% of women in the U.S. labor force have experienced unwanted sexual attention and gender-based harassment (Baker, Terpstra, & Larntz, 1990; Fitzgerald & Shullman, 1993; Gelfand, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1995).

In addition to being pervasive, workplace romances and sexually harassing behavior have a substantial effect on organizational life. Workplace romances can have both a positive and negative influence on the relational participants, coworkers, and organization. For example, such liaisons can increase job involvement and work motivation among romance participants yet decrease work group morale (Pierce, 1998; Pierce et al., 1996; Powell & Foley, 1998; Powers, 1999). In contrast, sexually harassing behavior at work fosters only negative consequences for the harasser, harassee, coworkers, and organization. For example, such behavior can decrease job productivity and increase psychological stress, tardiness, absenteeism, and turnover (Gutek, 1985; Schneider, Swan, & Fitzgerald, 1997; Terpstra & Baker, 1992).

Given that workplace romance and sexual harassment represent pervasive and consequential phenomena in organizations and, moreover, that both are social-sexual in nature, it is surprising that they are typically examined independently (for exceptions, see Pierce & Aguinis, 1997a; Pierce, Aguinis, & Adams, 2000; Summers & Myklebust, 1992). Indeed, results from a nationwide survey of human resource professionals suggest that workplace romances and sexually harassing behavior are connected. Specifically, 24% of the 617 respondents indicated that sexual harassment claims had occurred

in their organization as a direct result of a workplace romance (Society for Human Resource Management, 1998). Knowing that nearly 48% of workplace romances dissolve (Henry, 1995), there is a need to understand better the conditions under which such terminated relationships result in sexually harassing behavior at work.

To date, researchers have developed separate frameworks for investigating workplace romance and sexual harassment. Considering the increase in number of workplace romances that lead to sexual harassment incriminations in organizations, we believe that researchers and management would benefit from having a theory-based workplace romance/sexual harassment framework. The goal of our article is to develop a framework and testable propositions that, when applied to relational participants, explain the processes through which dissolved workplace romances are most likely to foster sexually harassing behavior between former partners. First, we discuss how different pairings of motives for participating in a workplace romance define various types of romantic relationships that, once dissolved, can lead to different types of sexually harassing behavior. Second, we discuss factors predicted to moderate the association between dissolved workplace romances and sexually harassing behavior. Third, we discuss methodological issues with respect to empirically examining the link between workplace romance and sexual harassment. Finally, we discuss managerial implications of our framework. The reader should refer to Figure 1 throughout the remainder of this article as an aid for understanding our proposed framework.

LINK BETWEEN TYPE OF WORKPLACE ROMANCE AND SEXUALLY HARASSING BEHAVIOR

Understanding the reasons for why a workplace romance develops can help explain the conditions under which such a romance, once dissolved, is likely to foster sexually harassing behavior. Numerous factors have been identified as antecedents to workplace romance, including propinquity, repeated exposure, evaluation of overt body characteristics, interpersonal attraction, misattribution of physiological arousal, job autonomy, attitude toward workplace romance, and an organization's culture (Pierce et al., 1996; Powell & Foley, 1998). Notwithstanding, we posit that employees' primary motives for engaging in a workplace romance are of utmost importance when considering the dissolution of their liaison and any resulting sexually harassing behavior. Thus, the first portion of our framework summarized in Figure 1 consists of how different pairings of workplace romance

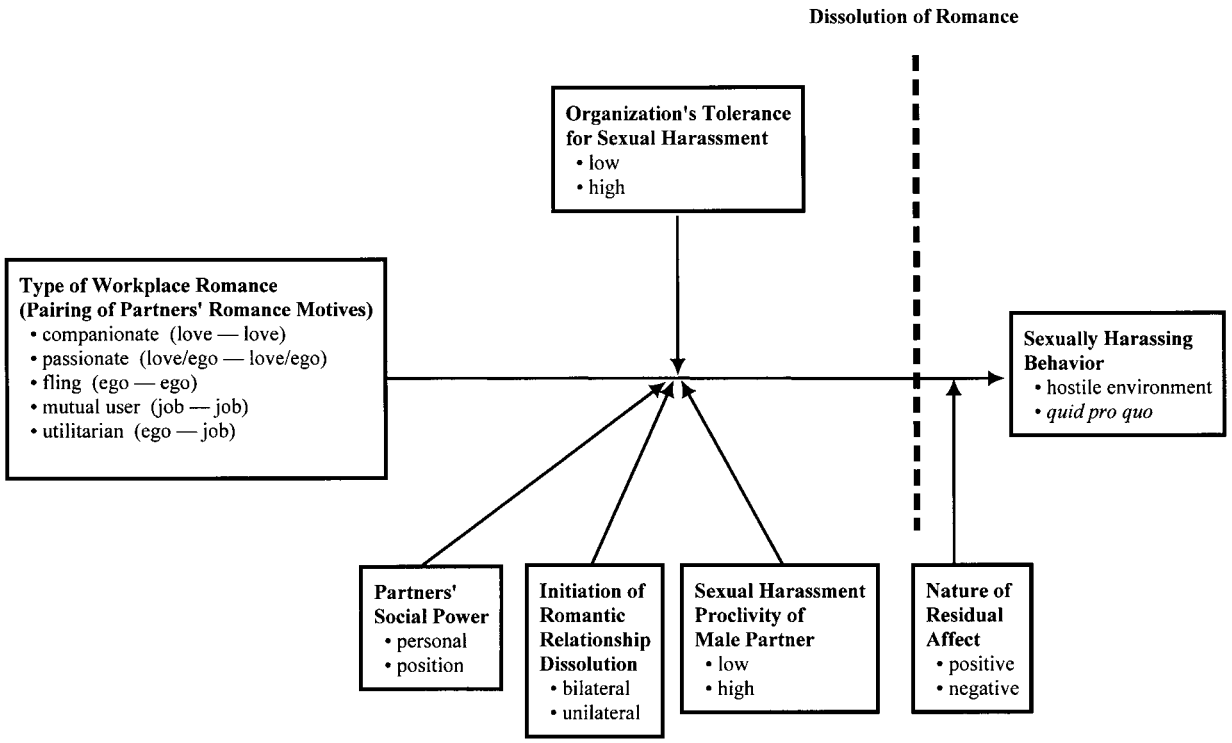

Figure 1: A Framework for Investigating the Link Between Workplace Romance and Sexual Harassment

motives define different types of romantic relationships. The pairing of each partner's primary romance motive determines the type of workplace romance that develops, which in turn is proposed to predict different types of sexually harassing behavior that can occur between former workplace romance participants. Next, we discuss how different pairings of primary romance motives define different types of workplace romances.

ROMANCE MOTIVES AND TYPE OF WORKPLACE ROMANCE

Previous research has identified the following taxonomy of motives for an employee's participation in a workplace romance: (a) sincere desire to seek a long-term companion or spouse (love motive); (b) desire to seek adventure, excitement, sexual experience, or ego satisfaction (ego motive); and (c) desire to seek advancement, security, power, financial rewards, lighter workloads, or increased vacation time (job-related motive) (Anderson & Fisher, 1991; Brown & Allgeier, 1996; Dillard & Broetzmann, 1989; Quinn, 1977). Different types of workplace romances develop depending on the pairing of the dyad's primary motives for participating in the romantic liaison. Although several possible pairwise combinations of romance motives exist, the following pairings of motives, or stated differently, types of workplace romances, are the most likely to occur according to prior research: (a) both employees have a sincere love motive, which is labeled *companionate love*; (b) each employee has both a love and ego motive, which is labeled *passionate love*; (c) both employees have an ego motive, which is labeled *fling*; (d) both employees have a job-related motive, which is labeled *mutual user*; and (e) one employee (e.g., subordinate) has a job-related motive, and the other employee (e.g., supervisor) has an ego motive, which is labeled *utilitarian* (Dillard, 1987; Dillard, Hale, & Segrin, 1994; Powell & Foley, 1998; Quinn, 1977).

With regard to the occurrence of these relational types, Dillard et al. (1994) interviewed 128 individuals and asked them to describe a workplace romance that they observed at their place of employment. These 128 study participants described a total of 256 employees involved in a workplace romance. Results revealed that in terms of type of workplace romance, 36% were classified as passionate, 23% were classified as companionate, 22% were classified as utilitarian, and 19% were classified as a fling. Mutual user romances were not examined. With respect to the hierarchical versus lateral nature of these romantic relationships, 63% were between employees with unequal organizational rank, and 37% were between employees with equal organizational rank. Although it is possible that employees can have multiple motives for engaging in a workplace romance, researchers use the primary

motive of each participant to classify the type of relationship. In short, Dillard et al.'s findings indicate that passionate workplace romances are the most common, followed by companionate and utilitarian liaisons. Unfortunately, it is not known whether different types of workplace romances are more likely to dissolve. However, most flings are short in duration (Powell & Foley, 1998; Quinn, 1977), thereby suggesting that they may be the most likely to dissolve.

TYPE OF WORKPLACE ROMANCE AND SEXUALLY HARASSING BEHAVIOR

The aforementioned five types of workplace romances are the most common and differ in terms of their degree of genuineness of each employee's primary romance motive. Companionate and passionate workplace romances involve, at least in part, genuine or culturally endorsed love motives, whereas flings, mutual user, and utilitarian workplace romances involve less genuine or self-centered ego and/or job-related motives (Dillard et al., 1994). We believe that different degrees of genuineness influence the potential for exploitation. For instance, suppose that a workplace romance involves a male supervisor and his female subordinate (i.e., a direct-reporting hierarchical workplace romance) and hence entails a social power differential. Consistent with social exchange theory (Homans, 1958), the supervisor could exchange rewards such as a lighter workload, pay increase, promotion, heightened job security, or more vacation time with his subordinate in return for sexual favors. Whether such exploitation occurs is most likely contingent on the level of genuineness of each partner's primary motive for participating in the workplace romance. A direct-reporting hierarchical workplace romance that involves genuine love motives (e.g., a companionate relationship) should be less apt to result in exploitation compared to a direct-reporting hierarchical workplace romance that involves less genuine ego and/or job-related motives (e.g., a mutual user relationship) (cf. Dillard et al., 1994; Mainiero, 1986).

When considering this potential for exploitation that exists in some types of workplace romances, an unexamined research question emerges: What effect, if any, does the pairing of primary romance motives, or stated differently, type of workplace romance, have on fostering various types of sexually harassing behavior between former workplace romance participants? This research question deserves attention for several reasons including (a) approximately half of workplace romances dissolve (Henry, 1995), particularly those with partners who have misaligned romance motives (Mainiero, 1993);

(b) some research has indicated that hierarchical workplace romances are more pervasive than lateral (peer-peer) workplace romances (e.g., Dillard et al., 1994); and (c) quid pro quo sexually harassing behavior typically involves a social power differential between the harasser and target (Cleveland & Kerst, 1993; Gutek, 1985; Thacker & Ferris, 1991).

As summarized in Figure 1, we posit that type of dissolved workplace romance, which entails a specific pairing of primary romance motives, can predict different types of sexually harassing behavior between former relational participants. For example, because of the genuine love motives involved, we predict that an employee who was previously participating in a companionate or passionate workplace romance has a low likelihood of directing blatant quid pro quo forms of sexually harassing behavior (sexual coercion or assault) toward his or her former romantic partner. The rationale for this prediction is that in contrast to dissolved mutual user and utilitarian romances, dissolved companionate and passionate romances may foster greater empathy for one's former partner, thereby resulting in less desire to engage in quid pro quo harassing behavior. It is also possible that in contrast to dissolved mutual user and utilitarian romances, dissolved companionate and passionate romances foster a richer understanding of each partner's character, thereby resulting in partners perceiving one another as multidimensional and complex rather than as sexual objects. Given the potential lack of empathy along with possibly perceiving one's partner as a sexual object, mutual user and utilitarian romances could foster hostile environment or quid pro quo sexually harassing behavior.

In the genuinely motivated example just provided, we predict that there is a greater likelihood of the employee directing less blatant hostile environment forms of sexually harassing behavior (unwanted sexual attention and gender-based sexual joking and innuendoes) toward his or her former romantic partner. That is, an employee who was previously participating in a companionate or passionate romance might attempt to rekindle the loving relationship by engaging in romantic, affectionate, "natural breakup behaviors" that, once considered appropriate, could be perceived by the former romantic partner as unwanted and thus sexually harassing. Alternatively, an employee might communicate sexual jokes to or discuss sexual issues with his or her former romantic partner that, once deemed appropriate, could be perceived by the former partner as offensive and thus sexually harassing. Indeed, the harasser might not even consider these forms of hostile environment behavior to be sexually harassing (see Tata, 1993). The rationale for this prediction is that former partners who had genuine romance motives may find it difficult to alter their pattern of intimate behavior toward one another

immediately after the relationship dissolves, which is not surprising given that romantic terminations often entail a gradual disengagement process (Levinger, 1979).

As another example of this link between type of dissolved workplace romance and sexually harassing behavior, consider a dissolved workplace romance that was a fling. Given that each employee was motivated solely by his or her ego and thus merely seeking adventure, excitement, or sexual experience from the romance, we predict that the likelihood of either quid pro quo or hostile environment sexually harassing behavior after a terminated fling is relatively low. Although each partner has the identical primary romance motive, most flings are short in duration (Powell & Foley, 1998; Quinn, 1977). Thus, rather than investing the time and energy necessary to rekindle the dissolved romance or impose sexually coercive job-related threats, it seems more likely that each egocentric employee would move on to a novel romantic relationship. The rationale for this prediction is that employees who are motivated solely by their ego may partake in successive romances to satisfy their ongoing, self-centered need for adventure, excitement, and sexual experience. Given that such romances are short-lived, it is also possible that employees in a fling develop a lack of emotional, physical, and/or intellectual investment in their partner. This lack of investment may result in a low desire to sexually harass because of the selfish belief that nothing could be personally gained by engaging in such behavior.

To summarize this section of our article, we offer the following proposition:

> *Proposition 1:* Type of dissolved workplace romance predicts different types of sexually harassing behavior between former romantic partners after their workplace romance dissolves. Specifically, (a) dissolved companionate and passionate romances are more likely to lead to hostile environment sexually harassing behavior compared to dissolved mutual user and utilitarian romances, (b) dissolved mutual user and utilitarian romances are more likely to lead to quid pro quo sexually harassing behavior compared to dissolved companionate and passionate romances, and (c) dissolved flings have a relatively low likelihood of leading to either type of sexually harassing behavior.

Whether any of the aforementioned five types of dissolved workplace romances actually result in hostile environment or quid pro quo sexually harassing behavior between former relational participants is contingent on numerous other variables. Thus, in the next section, we discuss factors predicted to moderate our proposed direct effect of type of dissolved workplace romance on type of sexually harassing behavior.

MODERATORS OF THE WORKPLACE ROMANCE/SEXUAL HARASSMENT LINK

The goal of this section is to discuss the most likely conditions rather than all possible conditions under which different types of dissolved workplace romances may result in different types of sexually harassing behavior between former relational participants. To achieve our goal, we propose that the relationship between type of dissolved workplace romance and type of sexually harassing behavior is moderated by (i.e., contingent on) the following variables: (a) partners' social power, (b) initiation of romantic relationship dissolution, (c) sexual harassment proclivity of male partner, (d) nature of each partner's residual affective state, and (e) organization's tolerance for sexually harassing behavior. Indeed, to advance theory by gaining an understanding of the precise nature of the association between two variables, it is often necessary to examine the effects of moderator variables (Aguinis & Pierce, 1998a, 1998b; Aguinis & Stone-Romero, 1997). Thus, we discuss next the role that each of the proposed moderator variables plays in our framework summarized in Figure 1.

PARTNERS' SOCIAL POWER

Social power is defined as an agent's perceived ability to influence a target's attitudes, beliefs, values, intentions, emotions, or behavior (Aguinis, Nesler, Quigley, Lee, & Tedeschi, 1996; French & Raven, 1959). Prior research has identified the following two types of social power: *position* (organization-based) power and *personal* (individual-based) power (e.g., Aguinis & Adams, 1998; Bass, 1960). Whether a workplace romance participant perceives that his or her romantic partner has position power is a function of the partner's formal status within the organizational hierarchy. If, for instance, the romance participant's partner also happens to be his or her direct supervisor and consequently has the legitimate authority to provide rewarding or punishing job sanctions, then the partner will be perceived as having position power. Indirect-reporting hierarchical romances may involve less position power. Whether a workplace romance participant perceives that his or her romantic partner has personal power is a function of the partner's personality, expertise, knowledge, opportunity to access important information, and ability to manage impressions successfully (cf. Bass, 1960; Brass & Burkhardt, 1993).

Prior research has determined that the type of sexually harassing behavior enacted by a harasser is contingent on whether the harasser is perceived by

the harassee as having position power versus personal power. Compared with personal power, position power is a better predictor of quid pro quo harassing behavior (Cleveland & Kerst, 1993; Thacker & Ferris, 1991). One plausible explanation for this finding stems from social exchange theory (Homans, 1958), such that perceptions of social power can affect the nature of rewards available to be exchanged within a dyad. Based on this prior research, we predict that the likelihood of different types of sexually harassing behavior subsequent to dissolved workplace romances is influenced by the nature of the harassee's perception of the harasser's social power. For example, supervisors who were previously participating in a less-than-genuine mutual user or utilitarian hierarchical romance with an immediate subordinate and who are perceived by the subordinate as having position power may have a high likelihood of directing blatant quid pro quo forms of sexually harassing behavior toward their former romantic partner. In the case of a mutual user or utilitarian hierarchical romance, the subordinate's primary romance motive is job related. Thus, if the supervisor is perceived by the subordinate as having position power (e.g., ability to provide job sanctions), then the supervisor has the potential to engage in quid pro quo forms of sexually harassing behavior such as sexual coercion involving a job-related threat. If on the other hand, the supervisor is perceived by the subordinate as having personal power (e.g., ability to provide unique job-related knowledge), then the likelihood of quid pro quo forms of sexually harassing behavior should be lower.

Personal power is perhaps most applicable to companionate and passionate romances between employees who have the same organizational rank (i.e., a lateral relationship). It is unclear, however, whether personal power is a better predictor than position power of hostile environment sexually harassing behavior. Thus, we are uncertain regarding the extent to which personal power affects the likelihood of harassing behavior after a dissolved companionate or passionate workplace romance. In sum, we offer the following proposition:

Proposition 2: An employee's perception of his or her romantic partner's social power moderates the link between type of dissolved workplace romance and type of sexually harassing behavior between former relational participants. Specifically, dissolved mutual user and utilitarian romances are more likely to lead to quid pro quo sexually harassing behavior when the perceived power differential between partners is based on position power rather than personal power.

INITIATION OF ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION

Inherent in any dissolved romantic relationship is the process through which one partner makes the unilateral decision to terminate his or her romance with the other partner. Both partners could, of course, concede to bilaterally terminate the relationship. However, mutual dissolutions are less common than unilateral dissolutions (Sprecher, Felmlee, Metts, Fehr, & Vanni, 1998). We posit that whether one partner directs sexually harassing behavior toward the other partner after a terminated romance is contingent on whether the romantic dissolution was unilateral or bilateral.

In general, should a workplace romance dissolve unilaterally, the noninitiator of the dissolution is perhaps more likely than the initiator to direct sexually harassing behavior toward his or her former romantic partner. Bilaterally dissolved workplace romances, on the other hand, should be less apt to result in sexually harassing behavior than unilaterally dissolved workplace romances. The rationale for this prediction is based on the extent to which there is a mutual agreement between partners regarding the dissolution. The lack of a mutual agreement could create negative emotional states that result in an unstable, problematic breakup. Consider hostile environment sexually harassing behavior such as unwanted sexual attention (e.g., physical touching and repeated requests for dates). The partner who did not initiate the dissolution may be more likely than the initiator to attempt to rekindle the romance, particularly if the relationship was companionate or passionate and thus involved genuine love motives. Indeed, former partners may find it difficult to alter their pattern of intimate behavior toward one another immediately after the romance dissolves because romantic terminations often entail a gradual process (Levinger, 1979). Such intimate romantic behavior, although once deemed appropriate, could be construed by the initiator of the dissolution as unwanted and thus sexually harassing. In this one of many possible scenarios, the initiator of the romantic dissolution would most likely avoid any form of sexual innuendo with his or her former romantic partner. However, the noninitiator may attempt to rekindle the romance, humiliate his or her former partner with gender-based jokes, or even engage in quid pro quo retaliation behavior. In sum, we offer the following proposition:

Proposition 3: Initiation of the romantic dissolution moderates the link between type of dissolved workplace romance and type of sexually harassing behavior between former relational participants. Specifically, (a) dissolved companionate and passionate romances are more likely to lead to hostile environ-

ment sexually harassing behavior when the romance dissolved unilaterally rather than bilaterally, and (b) dissolved mutual user and utilitarian romances are more likely to lead to hostile environment or quid pro quo sexually harassing behavior when the romance dissolved unilaterally rather than bilaterally.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT PROCLIVITY OF MALE PARTNER

Male employees are more likely than female employees to direct sexually harassing behavior toward a member of the opposite sex (e.g., Gutek, 1985; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1994). However, not all men are equally prone to being sexual harassers. Research using Pryor's (1987) Likelihood to Sexually Harass scale suggests that men vary in terms of their likelihood to sexually harass women. A man's proclivity to sexually harass a woman has been shown to be in part a function of whether the situation imposes attributional ambiguity. Specifically, from a social-cognitive perspective, a man may be more likely to direct sexually harassing behavior toward a woman if he perceives that the immediate situational context will disguise and thus legitimize his motives for the behavior (Pryor, 1987; Pryor, LaVite, & Stoller, 1993; Pryor & Stoller, 1994).

Consistent with research suggesting that a prior history of workplace romance can wrongfully legitimize hostile environment sexually harassing behavior (Pierce et al., 2000; Summers & Myklebust, 1992), male employees who have a high proclivity to sexually harass might engage in hostile environment harassing behavior because the situational context entails a dissolved workplace romance. That is, because of the potential ambiguity of the situation, male employees high on the likelihood to sexually harass continuum should be more likely than male employees low on the likelihood to sexually harass continuum to direct unwanted sexual attention (e.g., physical touching and repeated requests for dates) and gender-based harassment (e.g., sexual jokes) toward their former workplace romance partner. As an example, the mere history of a love-motivated companionate workplace romance could, from the male partner's perspective, create an ambiguous situation in the eyes of other employees and the former romantic partner and consequently serve to disguise or legitimize his social-sexual behavior. The rationale for this prediction is as follows: Compared to relational participants, observers of a workplace romance are probably less aware of partners' romance motives. Thus, sexually harassing behavior after any type of dissolved workplace romance may be misinterpreted by observers as appropriate behavior. Men with a high proclivity to sexually harass could take advantage of this ambiguity by exploiting their former partner. In sum, we offer the following proposition:

Proposition 4: Sexual harassment proclivity of the male partner moderates the link between type of dissolved workplace romance and type of sexually harassing behavior between former relational participants. Specifically, (a) dissolved companionate and passionate romances are more likely to lead to hostile environment sexually harassing behavior when the male partner has a high rather than low proclivity to sexually harass, and (b) dissolved mutual user and utilitarian romances are more likely to lead to hostile environment or quid pro quo sexually harassing behavior when the male partner has a high rather than low proclivity to sexually harass.

NATURE OF RESIDUAL AFFECTIVE STATES

Dissolved romantic relationships can result in one or both of the former partners experiencing a negative affective state such as anger, resentment, or jealousy (Duck, 1982; Sprecher et al., 1998). Interestingly, task and career dependencies typically require frequent social interactions between workplace romance participants after the romantic aspect of their professional relationship terminates. Subsequent to a dissolved romance, repeated exposure to a former romantic partner who may evoke unfavorable feelings could greatly intensify one's negative affect. Considering that emotions influence cognition and behavior (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Zajonc, 1984), these intensified negative emotional states can perhaps explain in part subsequent sexually harassing behavior between former romance participants.

In the context of dissolved workplace romances, the influence of negative residual affective states on enhancing the likelihood of different types of sexually harassing behavior is in need of examination (Pierce & Aguinis, 1997a). For example, consider a dissolved mutual user hierarchical romance where both a supervisor and subordinate had a job-related motive for participating in the liaison. Should this type of less-than-genuine romance terminate with intense feelings of anger or resentment on the part of the supervisor, the supervisor may be more likely to direct blatant quid pro quo forms of sexually harassing behavior toward his or her former romantic partner than if such feelings were positive in nature (e.g., joy). Alternatively, consider a dissolved companionate hierarchical romance where both a supervisor and subordinate had a genuine love motive for participating in the liaison. Should this type of loving romance terminate with intense feelings of jealousy on the part of the supervisor, the supervisor may be more likely to direct less blatant hostile environment sexually harassing behavior (e.g., unwanted attempts to rekindle the romance) toward his or her former romantic partner than if such feelings were positive in nature. The rationale for this prediction is that employees might express inappropriately their negative emotions by engaging in behaviors that could be perceived by the target as sexually harassing. In sum, we offer the following proposition:

Proposition 5: The nature of each partner's residual affective state moderates the link between type of dissolved workplace romance and type of sexually harassing behavior between former relational participants. Specifically, (a) dissolved companionate and passionate romances are more likely to lead to hostile environment sexually harassing behavior when former partners experience negative rather than positive residual affective states, and (b) dissolved mutual user and utilitarian romances are more likely to lead to hostile environment or quid pro quo sexually harassing behavior when former partners experience negative rather than positive residual affective states.

ORGANIZATION'S TOLERANCE FOR SEXUALLY HARASSING BEHAVIOR

An organization's culture influences the occurrence of sexually harassing behavior at work. Stated differently, an organization's tolerance for sexually harassing behavior among employees affects whether its employees will engage in such behavior. The degree of an organization's tolerance for sexual harassment is based on employees' perceptions of organizational sanctions for sexually harassing behavior engaged in by supervisors, coworkers, and other employees (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Fitzgerald, Hulin, & Drasgow, 1994; Hulin, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1996).

Unfortunately, some organizations might tolerate certain types of sexually harassing behavior, most likely those that are less blatant, such as unwanted sexual attention and gender-based joking. Moreover, with the belief that it is natural breakup behavior, some organizations might tolerate these less blatant hostile environment forms of sexual harassment if they occur between former workplace romance participants (Pierce et al., 2000; Summers & Myklebust, 1992). We also acknowledge that some organizations might tolerate all types of sexually harassing behavior. Before engaging in sexually harassing behavior directed toward one's former workplace romance partner, we predict that an employee will evaluate whether his or her organization condones such behavior. If an organization enforces a strict, widely publicized sexual harassment policy and employees are punished accordingly should they engage in sexually harassing behavior at work, then an individual would probably think very carefully before sexually harassing his or her former workplace romance partner. We offer the following proposition:

Proposition 6: An organization's tolerance for sexual harassment moderates the link between type of dissolved workplace romance and type of sexually harassing behavior between former relational participants. Specifically, (a) dissolved companionate and passionate romances are more likely to lead to hostile environment sexually harassing behavior in organizations with a high rather than

low tolerance for such behavior, and (b) dissolved mutual user and utilitarian romances are more likely to lead to hostile environment or quid pro quo sexually harassing behavior in organizations with a high rather than low tolerance for such behavior.

Taken together, Propositions 2 through 6 purport that the association between different types of dissolved workplace romances and different types of sexually harassing behavior is contingent on several moderator variables. One methodological challenge that lies ahead for researchers is the fact that some of the variables summarized in Figure 1 are individual level (e.g., sexual harassment proclivity of male partner), some are dyad level (e.g., type of dissolved workplace romance), some are organizational level (e.g., organization's tolerance for sexual harassment), and some might change over time (e.g., romance motives and hence type of dissolved workplace romance). Although the extant management literature on levels-of-analysis issues in organizational research should prove helpful in terms of data collection and analysis strategies (Klein, Dansereau, & Hall, 1994), we believe that alternative research methodologies could also benefit those who are interested in empirically assessing the link between workplace romance and sexual harassment.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

For several reasons, including that they are sensitive topics, workplace romance and sexual harassment impose constraints in terms of the types of research methods that can be used to investigate such phenomena. For example, workplace romance research has primarily been limited to telephone and in-person surveys, case studies, and questionnaire mailings, each of which is a nonexperimental method (for a review, see Pierce et al., 1996, Table 1). Similarly, a substantial amount of sexual harassment research has been limited to the use of cross-sectional designs and "paper people" with convenience samples (Glomb, Munson, Hulin, Bergman, & Drasgow, 1999; Lengnick-Hall, 1995). One drawback to most of these methods is that they are static, whereas the social-sexual phenomena under investigation are dynamic. Our intent is not to criticize these methods of research that have been used to examine workplace romance and sexual harassment. Instead, we discuss next some potential methodological alternatives that researchers may want to consider, particularly if they are interested in empirically examining the link between workplace romance and sexual harassment.

Given the infancy of research and stage of theory development with respect to the link between workplace romance and sexual harassment, investigators should first consider using qualitative methods such as interviewing former relational participants and their coworkers. Interviews could provide in-depth information about factors such as the employees' romance motives and what type of sexually harassing behavior, if any, resulted from the dissolution. Additional exploratory methods such as a telephone survey would also be appropriate for gaining further insight into our proposed framework. One advantage of telephone surveys is the investigator's ability to sample randomly numerous employees from different types and sizes of organizations. Finally, lab experiments using written or videotape vignettes, albeit limited to examining effects of type of dissolved workplace romance on perceptions of sexual harassment, could also be conducted. In addition to these traditional research methods, two methodological alternatives could foster an even more precise understanding of the link between workplace romance and sexual harassment.

One methodological alternative is the use of signal-contingent experience sampling methodology (ESM), which has been implemented successfully in field research in areas such as the study of work-family conflict. With signal-contingent ESM, study participants wear an electronic beeper (e.g., a wristwatch) while at work that signals randomly when they are to write in diaries containing measures of focal study variables. Among the several advantages of ESM over cross-sectional designs are the following: (a) increased accuracy of self-report measures because responses are immediate rather than retrospective and (b) more precise understanding of work-related reactions and experiences that fluctuate on a day-to-day or even within-day basis (Alliger & Williams, 1993). Given that some of the variables summarized in Figure 1 are dynamic, ESM could enable researchers to examine more precisely portions of or issues relevant to our proposed framework. For example, employees' daily changes in affective states could be measured to determine if such fluctuations in emotions moderate the link between previously participating in a workplace romance and subsequently engaging in sexually harassing behavior directed toward one's former romantic partner. If ESM were to be used to examine the link between dissolved workplace romances and sexual harassment, researchers would have to take steps to assure anonymity and confidentiality of responses. To obtain anonymous responses, researchers could have each study participant choose a numerical code or pseudonym rather than providing his or her actual name. Study participants should also be informed that their anonymous responses will remain confidential, such that they will not be made available to anyone other than the researcher and, moreover, will only be used for research purposes. Finally, some deception

may be necessary in terms of informing research participants about the precise nature of the study.

A second methodological alternative is the use of highly immersive virtual reality (VR) computer technology, which has been implemented successfully by military, aerospace, and medical training programs; automobile manufacturers; and psychological researchers examining topics such as human perception. With this particular type of VR technology, which entails using an exoskeleton, data gloves, head-mounted color video display, treadmill, motion platform, and position tracker, study participants are immersed in a computer-generated, three-dimensional, multisensory environment to experience telepresence. *Telepresence* occurs when a VR user loses awareness of being present at the site of the VR equipment and alternatively feels present in the VR environment (Durlach & Mavor, 1995). In the context of organizational behavior research, the advantages of using such technology over less realistic written vignettes and videotape include the following: (a) ability to manipulate naturally occurring field variables in a controlled laboratory setting and (b) ability to examine more soundly sensitive topics such as workplace romance and sexual harassment that are difficult to study experimentally in field settings (Pierce & Aguinis, 1997b). The use of VR technology would, however, be limited to examining effects of type of dissolved workplace romance on perceptions of sexual harassment. For example, during several immersions into a virtual organization, a VR user could be instructed to take on the role of a manager and observe passively a computer-generated workplace romance that dissolves and ultimately results in sexually harassing behavior between former romance participants. Researchers could manipulate individual- and dyad-level characteristics of the workplace romance (e.g., type of romance and initiation of relationship dissolution), as well as organizational-level characteristics of the work environment (e.g., tolerance for sexual harassment), to determine if such factors influence the VR user's judgments of and responses to the sexually harassing behavior.

Considering (a) the constraints involved in investigating sensitive topics such as workplace romance and sexual harassment, (b) the dynamic nature of romantic relationships, and (c) the multiple-level nature of the variables in our framework, we believe that methodological alternatives such as ESM and VR could enable organizational researchers to gain a more precise understanding of these complex social-sexual phenomena. Investigating complex organizational issues may necessitate sophisticated, albeit costly and perhaps slightly inconvenient, research methods. The potential for improving the quality of data collection should, however, be given serious attention.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

Most organizations enforce a sexual harassment policy, but few maintain a workplace romance policy. Indeed, results from the Society for Human Resource Management's 1998 survey of 617 human resource professionals indicate that only 13% of these respondents' organizations had a workplace romance policy. In response to some of the work-related problems associated with workplace romance (see Mainiero, 1989, 1993; Pierce et al., 1996; Powell & Foley, 1998), researchers and practitioners have argued that more organizations need to develop and enforce policies specifically aimed at effectively managing romantic relationships at work, particularly those liaisons that are hierarchical and thus involve a social power differential (e.g., Paul & Townsend, 1998; Pierce & Aguinis, 1997a, 1998; Schaner, 1994).

Given the link between terminated workplace romances and sexually harassing behavior, we believe that management should consider developing and enforcing integrated policies that address both workplace romance and sexual harassment in the same document and/or training materials. Such integrated policies would highlight specific conditions under which different types of dissolved workplace romances may be most likely to result in different types of sexually harassing behavior. Employees would be informed of the policy in a training seminar on social-sexual behavior in the workplace. Much like sexual harassment, this training module could be a standard part of an employee's orientation program. It deserves noting that some stipulations in an integrated policy may best be determined on an organization-by-organization basis. Indeed, current workplace romance policies vary substantially in terms of the types of restrictions imposed and consequences of a policy violation (Society for Human Resource Management, 1998).

In light of our framework and the corresponding research propositions set forth, there are certain conditions that seem most likely to lead to sexually harassing behavior. Organizational policies and training programs addressing the link between dissolved workplace romances and sexual harassment should consider the following potentially highly volatile conditions:

- companionate and passionate workplace romances involving a unilateral romantic dissolution, a male partner who has a high sexual harassment proclivity, negative residual affective states such as jealousy, and an organization with a high tolerance for hostile environment sexually harassing behavior; and
- mutual user and utilitarian workplace romances involving a position-based social power differential, a unilateral romantic dissolution, a male partner who has a high sexual harassment proclivity, negative residual affective states such as anger or resentment, and an organization with a high tolerance for hostile environment or quid pro quo sexually harassing behavior.

To more effectively manage terminated workplace romances and prevent costly sexual harassment litigations, some organizations require that workplace romance participants sign a consensual relationship agreement (Eidelhoch & Russell, 1998; Hansen, 1998). By signing such an agreement, the two employees involved acknowledge that (a) the romantic relationship is voluntary, consensual, desired, and unrelated to their professional relationship at work; and (b) each partner is free to terminate the romance at any time without coercion (e.g., attempts to rekindle the romance), prejudice (e.g., harm to one's job or career), or other work-related consequences. Given the connection between dissolved workplace romances and sexually harassing behavior, we recommend that managers or supervisors at least consider discussing the possibility of signing a consensual relationship agreement with employees who are involved in a workplace romance. With the goal of preventing sexually harassing behavior, the agreement should stipulate congenial terms and conditions that each party must abide by after a romantic dissolution. Examples of congenial terms and conditions might include no arguments at work; managing negative emotional states such as anger, resentment, or jealousy; relocating workspaces; and a willingness to be repeatedly informed of the organization's integrated workplace romance/sexual harassment policy. These signed agreements may be particularly useful for the two bulleted scenarios provided earlier.

Researchers, managers, and practitioners should note that to date, the advantages and disadvantages of having workplace romance participants sign a consensual relationship agreement remain unknown. Future research should therefore assess the effect of implementing such an agreement on relational participants, coworkers, and management. Among other potential obstacles (e.g., interference with job tasks), two legal issues that organizations and practitioners would have to surmount are privacy invasion and discrimination. A discussion of these legal issues is beyond the scope of this article and is provided by others (e.g., Eidelhoch & Russell, 1998; Hansen, 1998). On a more positive note, the potential benefit of using a consensual relationship agreement is its ability to help prevent sexually harassing behavior and perhaps a costly sexual harassment lawsuit. Researchers need to determine whether the advantages of using such an agreement outweigh the disadvantages.

Three closing comments are warranted. First, considering that flings are typically short in duration (Powell & Foley, 1998; Quinn, 1977), one could argue logically that they are the most likely type of workplace romance to dissolve. However, Dillard et al.'s (1994) results indicate that flings are less common compared with other types of workplace romances. If the more common types of workplace romances are indeed less likely than flings to

dissolve, then this would be positive news assuming our proposed framework is valid. That is, we predict that dissolved flings have a relatively low likelihood of leading to either hostile environment or quid pro quo sexually harassing behavior (see Proposition 1). Thus, although it depends on several potential moderating factors, many dissolved workplace romances will not result in sexually harassing behavior. Second, our proposed framework is derived from theories and research involving opposite-sex dyads. Although the degree to which they occur is unknown (Powell & Foley, 1998), future research should examine whether our framework is also valid for same-sex workplace romances. Third, although its occurrence is less common (Gutek, 1985; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1994), future research should examine situations in which men are sexually harassed by women. For example, in potentially ambiguous situations (e.g., dissolved companionate or passionate romances), women may be equally likely as men to engage in romantic, affectionate behavior that, once considered appropriate, could be perceived by a former romantic partner as unwanted and thus sexually harassing.

CONCLUSION

Results from the Society for Human Resource Management's 1998 survey indicate that sexually harassing behavior occurs in organizations as a direct result of workplace romances. Results from this survey also reveal that the number of workplace romances has remained stable or increased in many organizations during the past 5 years. Accordingly, in an effort to bridge the gap between two conceptually distinct yet pervasive social-sexual phenomena in organizations, the objective of our article was to explain the processes through which different types of dissolved workplace romances are most likely to foster different types of sexually harassing behavior. Because the number of workplace romances that lead to sexually harassing behavior has increased in the past few years, organizational researchers and management need to understand better how these social-sexual phenomena are connected. We hope that our framework and propositions serve to encourage future research addressing the link between workplace romance and sexual harassment.

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Charles A. Pierce (www.montana.edu/wwwpy) is an assistant professor of social and industrial/organizational psychology at Montana State University. He received a Ph.D. in social psychology from the University at Albany, State University of New York. His current research interests include workplace romance, sexual harassment, and research methods and analysis.

Herman Aguinis (www.cudenver.edu/~haguinis) is an associate professor of management at the University of Colorado at Denver. He received a Ph.D. in industrial/organizational psychology from the University at Albany, State University of New York. His current research interests include personnel selection, social power and influence, and research methods and analysis.