

Attraction in organizations: a model of workplace romance

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Summary

Antecedents and consequences of participating in a romantic relationship in the workplace are critically examined. These factors are derived from social-psychological theories of interpersonal attraction, romantic attraction, love, emotion, and social exchange, as well as from previous research addressing romance in the workplace. The antecedent factors explain the processes by which romantic relationships develop between two members of the same organization, and the consequent factors highlight both the beneficial and detrimental effects that such relationships have on the participants, coworkers, and the host organization. Based on these formation and impact factors, a conceptual model of workplace romance is developed along with a series of testable propositions in order to facilitate and direct future research on romantic organizational behavior.

*Corporate romance is as inevitable as earthquakes in California.
(Westhoff, 1985, p. 21)*

Introduction

The sexual integration of the workforce in the past few decades has increased the frequency of intimate contact between male and female employees (Dillard, 1987), thereby enhancing the likelihood of romantic relationships in the workplace (Quinn, 1977; Rubin, 1973). Indeed, approximately 80 per cent of employees in the U.S. report different types of social-sexual experiences on the job (Gutek, 1985), including mutually desired, fun-loving, passionate romantic affiliations with their nearby coworkers. Similarly, Dillard and Witteman (1985)

A previous version of this article was presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Society, Washington, DC, July 1994.

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CCC 0894-3796/96/010005-28

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Accepted 28 February 1995

reported that nearly 75 per cent of the individuals they interviewed had either observed or participated in a romantic relationship at work. However, in addition to being a major source of legal disputes regarding incriminations such as sexual harassment (Mainiero, 1989; Slovak, 1991), romance at work is quickly becoming a widespread organizational issue (Dillard and Witteman, 1985; Westhoff, 1985) that influences work-related factors such as job productivity (Anderson and Hunsaker, 1985; Dillard, 1987; Dillard and Broetzmann, 1989), worker motivation (Mainiero, 1989), and managerial decisions (Driscoll and Bova, 1980). And despite Cupid's flourishing archery practice in the workplace, the existing literature on workplace romance demonstrates insufficient methodological rigor in addition to an equivocal theoretical and empirical bearing (Dillard and Broetzmann, 1989; Mainiero, 1986).

In light of the scanty empirical research on this commonly observed romantic phenomenon, a more precise understanding of how such relationships develop, and the resulting implications they have with respect to organizational behavior and functioning, is greatly needed. Accordingly, the objectives of the present article are to (a) examine the factors that lead to the formation of a workplace romance, and (b) discuss the impact that a workplace romance has on the participants, coworkers, and the host organization. Consistent with these two objectives, a unified model of antecedents and consequences of participating in a workplace romance is developed along with a series of testable propositions. Both the model and propositions, which serve to encourage future research on attraction in the workplace and provide policymakers with a detailed depiction of romance in organizations, are derived from social-psychological theories of interpersonal attraction, romantic attraction, love, emotion, and social exchange, as well as from previous research addressing romantic organizational behavior.

In the sections of the article that follow, we (a) define the workplace romance construct, (b) examine the processes by which a workplace romance is formed, and (c) assess the effects of participating in a workplace romance on the employees involved in the liaison, their coworkers, and the host organization.

Workplace romance: a definition

Whereas many forms of romantic relationships in organizations (e.g. homosexual, heterosexual) may be the focus of the broad study of workplace romance, the present article borrows from previous literature in an attempt to integrate theories of heterosexual romance. Thus, a workplace romance is currently defined as any heterosexual relationship between two members of the same organization that entails mutual sexual attraction (Dillard and Witteman, 1985; Mainiero, 1986; Powell, 1993; Powell and Mainiero, 1990; Quinn, 1977). A close relationship at work can be considered a workplace romance when two employees have acknowledged their mutual attraction to one another and have physically acted upon their romantic feelings in the form of a dating or otherwise intimate association. That is, romantic relationships, including those that occur in the workplace, typically involve (a) an intense passionate desire to be in the presence of one's romantic partner, (b) a shared, intimate exchange of personal disclosures, (c) affection and respect, (d) pleasant emotional states such as need satisfaction, happiness, and sexual gratification, and (e) physiological arousal and the desire for sexual acts such as kissing, petting, and intercourse with one's partner (Hatfield, 1988; Rubin, 1973, 1974; Sternberg, 1986, 1988; Walster, 1971). Therefore, in general, romantic relationships at work are characterized by jointly desired, as opposed to unwanted or harassing, sexual activities.

The nature of workplace romances can be conceptualized even more precisely in terms of Sternberg's (1986, 1988) triangular theory of love which specifies that all loving relationships are based on three components that together constitute the vertices of a triangle. The first component, *intimacy*, refers to close, connected, bonded feelings in a relationship. The second component, *passion*, refers to the drives that foster romance, physical attraction, and sexual consummation. And the third component, *decision/commitment*, refers to the initial decision that one is in love with someone else and, ultimately, a commitment to continue loving that person (cf. Byrne and Murnen, 1988). Sternberg's theory is especially useful for depicting the nature of workplace romances because it distinguishes between liking and loving feelings. More specifically, from combinations of the three components there exist five kinds of love that are particularly relevant for defining workplace romances. These five are liking, infatuated love, romantic love, fatuous love, and consummate love.

According to Sternberg, liking involves only the intimacy component without the more intense feelings of passion or commitment (cf. Rubin, 1973, 1974). Liking can occur in the early stages of a close relationship when two employees are merely becoming acquainted with one another (see Lobel, Quinn, St. Clair and Warfield (1994) for a discussion of intimacy in the workplace). In contrast, infatuated love occurs when a couple falls in 'love at first sight' (Sternberg, 1986, p. 124). An infatuation with another employee involves immediate and passionate physiological arousal without feelings of intimacy or commitment. Romantic love, on the other hand, encompasses both the intimacy and passion components of close relationships, and is essentially liking coupled with arousal instigated by physical attraction (cf. Rubin, 1970). Two employees who express romantic love are physically attracted to one another and maintain strong emotional bonds. Alternatively, fatuous love involves only the passion and decision/commitment components in the absence of intimacy. Such love between two members of a work group can result in a long-term commitment based entirely on feelings of arousal or passion, excluding feelings of bondedness. And finally, consummate love entails the combination of all three components. It is this type of 'complete' love that single and married couples in organizations may try to achieve in a romantic relationship.

Overall, the triangular theory describes both the liking and loving aspects that are characteristic of close relationships at work. In other words, workplace romances involve variations of intimacy, passion, and commitment. Sternberg's theory of love, along with other social-psychological theories of interpersonal attraction, romantic attraction, and emotion, also helps to provide a better understanding of the formation of workplace romances.

The formation of a workplace romance: antecedents

In order to illuminate the processes by which workplace love affairs evolve, several antecedent factors that potentially foster the development of liking and loving between two organizational members must be considered. For summary purposes, Table 1 lists previous workplace romance studies to date, including information regarding their sample sizes, methods of data collection, and purported antecedents as well as consequences of such liaisons. These antecedents and consequences of workplace romance, in addition to others, are incorporated into a conceptual model shown in Figure 1. The reader should refer to Table 1 and Figure 1 throughout the article.

Table 1. Author(s), year of publication, sample size, method of data collection, and antecedents and consequences of romantic relationships in the workplace purported in the workplace romance literature

Author(s) and year of publication	<i>N</i>	Data collection	Antecedents/consequences*
Anderson and Fisher (1991)	219	Mail survey	AS, PR/PD, TD
Anderson and Hunsaker (1985)	100	Survey	AS, PR, RE/JP, PD
Bradford, Sargent and Sprague (1980)	—	Anecdotal	RE/JP
Bureau of National Affairs (1988)	—	Expert panel	AS, RE/JP, WMO, WMT, PD, TD
Chesanow (1992)	8	Case study	OC/JP, G, PD
Clawson and Kram (1984)	15†	Case study	RE/JP, PD, TD
Colby (1991)	—	Case scenario	AS/RD, TD
Collins (1983)	4	Case study	AS, RE/RD, TD
Colwill and Lips (1988)	—	Anecdotal	AS, PR/JP, WMO, WMT
Crary (1987)	—	Multiple case studies	AS, AR/JP
Devine and Markiewicz (1990)	126	Vignette/questionnaire	/JP, PD, TD
Dillard (1987)	292	Telephone survey	/JP, JI, G
Dillard and Broetzmann (1989)	207	Telephone survey	/JP, WMT
Dillard and Witteman (1985)	292	Telephone survey	AS, PR, RE/
Driscoll and Bova (1980)	3†	Case study	/JP, WMO, PD, RD, TD
Eyler and Baridon (1991)	—	Anecdotal	AS/JP
Eyler and Baridon (1992a)	4	Case study	AS, PR/JP, WMT
Eyler and Baridon (1992b)	—	Anecdotal	AS/JP, WMO, WMT, TD
Farley (1980)	—	Anecdotal	PR/RD, TD
Flax (1989)	1	Case study	/TD
Ford and McLaughlin (1987)	245	Mail survey	/JP, RD, TD
Goodman (1983)	—	Anecdotal	/TD
Gutek (1985)	1257	Telephone survey	/JP, RD, TD
Haavio-Mannila <i>et al.</i> (1988)	234	Interview	JA, AR/
Horn and Horn (1982)	—	Case/anecdotal	PR, RE, OC, AR/JP, WMO, PD, TD
Jacobs (1981)	4	Case study	/WMO
Jamison (1983)	3	Case study	/JP, WMO, PD
Josefowitz (1982)	—	Anecdotal	AS/JP, PD, RD, TD
Kennedy (1992)	2	Case study	AS/JP, TD
Kram (1985)	—	Multiple case studies	/PD
Leighton (1984)	6	Case study	PR, AR/RD, TD
Mainiero (1986)	—	Literature review	PR/JP
Mainiero (1989)	100	Survey	AS, PR, OC/JP, WMO, WMT, PD, TD
Mead (1980)	—	Anecdotal	—
Mishra and Harell (1989)	—	Survey	/JP, WMO, TD
Mondy and Premeaux (1986)	—	Case scenario	AS/JP, G
Morrall (1988)	2	Case study	/RD, TD
Pietropinto (1986)	400	Survey	PR/JP, WMO, PD, RD, TD
Powell (1986)	351	Survey	AR/JP, TD
Powell and Mainiero (1990)	—	Case scenario	PR/JP, WMO, WMT, TD
Quinn (1977)	130	Questionnaire	AS, PR, RE/JP, WMO, PD, RD, TD
Quinn and Judge (1978)	—	Multiple case studies	PR, RE/JP, WMO, PD, RD, TD
Quinn and Lees (1984)	—	Case scenario	PR/JP, WMO, PD, TD
Rapp (1992)	6	Case study	/JP, PD, RD, TD
Schultz (1982)	7†	Case study	AS, PR/PD, RD
Slovak (1991)	—	Legal issues	—

Table continued on next page

Table 1. (cont.)

Author(s) and year of publication	N	Data collection	Antecedents/consequences*
Smith (1988)	—	Anecdotal	/JP, WMO, PD, RD, TD
Spelman and Crary (1984)	—	Case scenario	RE/PD
Spelman <i>et al.</i> (1986)	2	Case study	RE, OC, AR/JP, PD
Spruell (1985)	2	Case/anecdotal	PR/JP, PD, RD, TD
Staff (1984)	12	Case study	/WMO, RD, TD
Staff (1988a)	8	Case study	/PD
Staff (1988b)	11	Case study	AS/JP, WMO, PD, RD, TD
	756	Telephone survey	
Warfield (1987)	48	Mail survey	RE/JP, RD, TD
Westhoff (1985)	70	Survey	OC/JP, WMO, G, PD, RD, TD
Westhoff (1986)	11	Case studies	/JP, PD, RD

* AS = Attitude Similarity, PR = Propinquity, RE = Repeated Exposure, JA = Job Autonomy, OC = Organizational Culture, AR = Attitude Toward Romance at Work, JP = Job Productivity, WMO = Worker Morale, WMT = Worker Motivation, JI = Job Involvement, G = Gossip, PD = Promotion Decisions, RD = Relocation Decisions, and TD = Termination Decisions. † Based on Table 1 from Mainiero (1986).

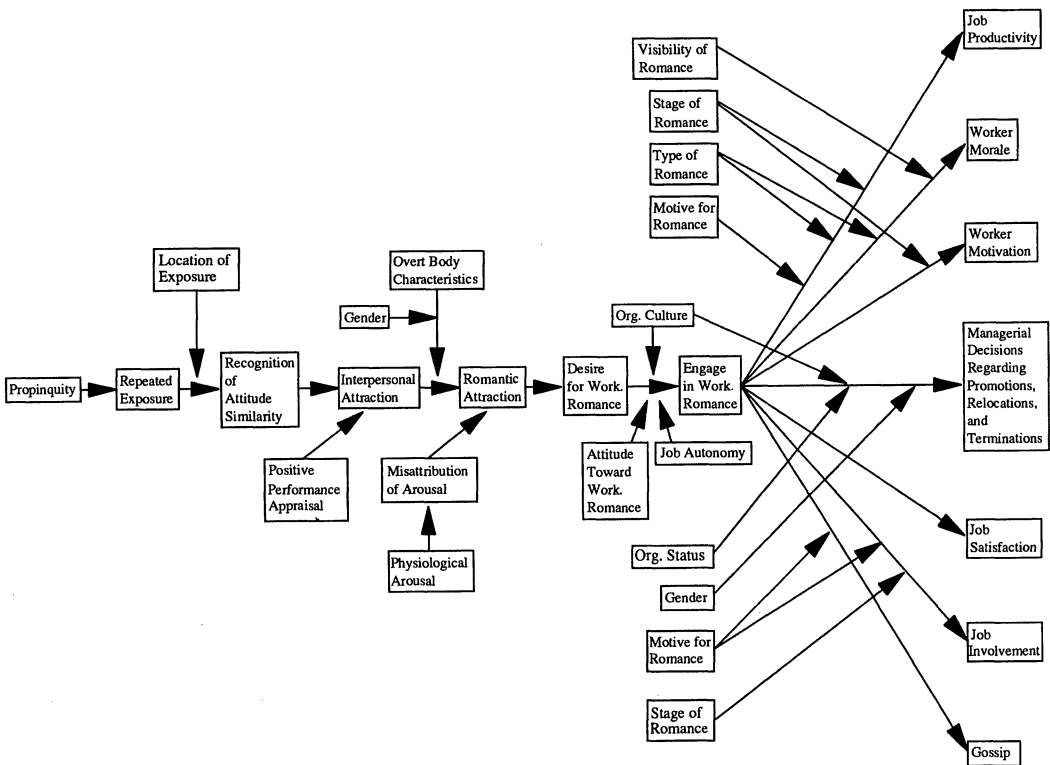


Figure 1. Conceptual model of antecedents and consequences of workplace romance

Factors that influence interpersonal attraction

According to Berscheid and Walster (1969, 1974), Hendrick and Hendrick (1983), Rubin (1973, 1974), and Sternberg (1986, 1988), factors that predict liking (Byrne, 1971; Huston, 1974) can be distinguished from factors that predict loving (Cook and Wilson, 1979; Sternberg and Barnes, 1988). However, this liking versus loving distinction has not been acknowledged by workplace romance researchers. Therefore, in sharp contrast to previous investigations on this topic, the present conceptualization of workplace romance makes a clear distinction between conditions that lead to interpersonal attraction (liking) and conditions that lead to romantic attraction (loving). It is important to note, however, that liking can ultimately lead to more intense, romantic, loving feelings (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1983; Rubin, 1974). Accordingly, factors that promote interpersonal attraction are discussed next, followed by factors that promote romantic attraction.

Proximity

With respect to propinquity, or spatial proximity, Byrne and Neuman (1992) stated that without the 'opportunity for interaction there can be no opportunity for attraction' (p. 32). Stated differently, propinquity induces exposure to a stimulus which can elicit an affective response such as liking. In organizations, employees working near one another on related work tasks are more apt to interact and, therefore, potentially become attracted to one another (Quinn and Judge, 1978). Propinquity research does, however, distinguish between physical proximity, or the actual physical distance between two individuals, and functional proximity, which refers to how easy it is for a dyadic interaction to occur. Both types of proximity have been found to influence the initiation of romantic relationships. The essential finding is that the 'smaller the physical and functional distance between two people, the more likely they are to be attracted to each other' (Segal, 1974, p. 654) (see also Byrne, 1961b; Byrne and Buehler, 1955; Ebbesen, Kjos and Konecni, 1976; Festinger, Schachter and Back, 1950; Nahemow and Lawton, 1975). More importantly, propinquity has been identified as a factor that influences attraction in task-oriented and work-related settings (Dixit, 1985) and, therefore, researchers often allude to proximity within the context of romantic organizational behavior (e.g. Rubin, 1973).

Quinn (1977), for example, reported three types of proximity that are relevant to romances between workers, including (a) on-going geographical proximity, (b) proximity as the result of on-going work requirements, and (c) occasional proximity. Quinn's data indicate that on-going geographical proximity, which is based on the physical positioning of employees' work stations, fostered the initiation of 63 per cent of the reported workplace romances in his study. Likewise, various work requirements such as training, consulting, supervising, and business trips were a factor in the development of 77 per cent of the reported romances. Occasional or temporary proximity, such as meeting in an elevator, was also identified as a factor leading to workplace romance. Mainiero (1986, 1989) affirmed that propinquity is especially operative when coworkers are required to spend long hours together on the job. Such close physical proximity and longer working hours can lead to an increase in the frequency of social interactions between coworkers who are engaged in similar work tasks, thereby increasing the likelihood of interpersonal attraction (Byrne and Neuman, 1992).

Additional evidence for physical proximity as an antecedent of attraction in the workplace is provided by the results of Anderson and Hunsaker's (1985) survey. These authors found that 68 per cent of the reported workplace romances involved two employees working in the same immediate vicinity, 94 per cent of the romances entailed employees working in the same building,

and 34 per cent of the romance participants shared the same or adjoining offices. Consistent with the notion of functional proximity, the results of Dillard and Witteman's (1985) survey suggest that employees close in rank or status are more likely to engage in a romantic affair as compared to those with widely different rank or status. It may, therefore, be easier to establish romantic interactions with other coworkers as opposed to superiors. Thus, there is evidence for the impact of physical and functional proximity on workplace romances.

Other studies employing surveys (Anderson and Fisher, 1991; Pietropinto, 1986), case study reports (Quinn and Judge, 1978), and case scenarios (Quinn and Lees, 1984) have also included propinquity as an initiating factor with respect to workplace liaisons, suggesting that it helps to diminish social barriers (Pietropinto, 1986) and stimulate sexual feelings (Quinn and Lees, 1984). Although many of these surveys and case study reports do not provide empirical evidence for the effects of propinquity (see Table 1), other research has indicated that propinquity influences the formation of workplace romances because it promotes frequent intimate contact, or repeated exposure, between two employees.

Repeated exposure

Generally speaking, the greater the proximity to another employee, the greater the likelihood of interacting with that employee on multiple occasions. Moreover, previous research has shown that repeated exposure to a stimulus can lead to a more positive, or less negative, evaluation of the stimulus (Zajonc, 1968). Thus, employees who interact during their daily work routines can become attracted to one another because of their repeated social contact. Indeed, a vast amount of the literature on repeated exposure supports the claim that 'mere repeated exposure of the individual to a stimulus is a sufficient condition for the enhancement of his attitude toward it' (Zajonc, 1968, p. 1) (see also Brockner and Swap, 1976; Moreland and Zajonc, 1976, 1982; Pheterson and Horai, 1976; Saegert, Swap and Zajonc, 1973; Swap, 1977). Stated differently, individuals who are 'encountered more frequently seem to elicit greater feelings of attraction from us, even though little or no social interaction has actually taken place' (Moreland and Zajonc, 1982, p. 396). The reason for an exposure effect in the workplace, according to Collins (1983), is that it builds mutual trust and respect between employees which, in turn, enhances the probability of interpersonal attraction.

Although a meta-analysis of this exposure-affect relationship (Bornstein, 1989) indicated that nonliving stimuli such as polygons, nonsense words, and meaningful words show greater exposure effects than living stimuli, the effect was greatest for ratings of liking the stimuli and among adult subjects. Thus, the mere exposure effect has the most influence on promoting liking among those who constitute the U.S. workforce. Accordingly, previous workplace romance investigations have contended that frequent dyadic interaction can result in an increased perception of liking (Clawson and Kram, 1984) and, thus, the likelihood of instigating a romantic relationship is increased (Collins, 1983; Dillard and Witteman, 1985; Quinn and Judge, 1978; Spelman and Crary, 1984; Spelman, Crary, Kram and Clawson, 1986).

Anderson and Hunsaker (1985), for example, ascertained that employees can become romantically involved without a substantial amount of initial exposure to one another. More specifically, 44 per cent of the cases involved employees spending less than five hours per week together at work before they were involved romantically. Moreover, 38 per cent of the male boss-female subordinate cases involved workers who interacted with one another less than five hours per week before the relationship was initiated. Warfield (1987) also measured the effect of repeated exposure on attraction, based on the item 'Do you feel sexual attraction occurs as a result of first impression or after a period of exposure?' Of the 48 survey respondents, four

answered 'first impression' 24 answered 'after a period of exposure' 12 answered 'both' and eight did not respond. Altogether, the data indicate that even small amounts of exposure to an opposite-sex employee can ultimately lead to attraction.

Interestingly, researchers have also noted that social contact and repeated exposure outside of the workplace can enhance the likelihood of a romantic relationship. Eyer and Baridon (1992b), Mainiero (1989), and Spelman *et al.* (1986) argued that traveling with opposite-sex coworkers can be especially romantic and intimate. Similarly, corporate cocktail parties, business soirees, conventions, and chartered excursions can create an intimate atmosphere because inhibitions and social barriers tend to be relaxed (Mainiero, 1989; Spruell, 1985). Thus, the *location* (i.e. whether on or off the job site) of employees' interactions can also influence how personal relationships develop.

The majority of the workplace romance studies that discuss repeated exposure are, however, typically not accompanied by empirical evidence (see Table 1). Several of the case studies (Clawson and Kram, 1984; Collins, 1983; Spelman *et al.*, 1986), for example, failed to demonstrate the impact of repeated exposure on the romantic affairs under investigation. In spite of such a limitation, the inclusion of repeated exposure as an antecedent of workplace romance is tenable because it can force a working dyad to identify whether they share similar attitudes and, as discussed next, attitude similarity is a well known predictor of liking (Byrne, 1971, 1992).

Attitude similarity

Byrne (1961a) posited that interpersonal attraction between individuals is based on the presence of reciprocal rewards while engaging in dyadic interactions, and perceived similarity of attitudes is one example of a reinforcing agent that often results in liking. Despite a few inconsistencies in the literature (Rosenbaum, 1986a,b; Sunnafrank, 1992), a substantial amount of empirical evidence suggests that the greater the proportion of similar attitudes shared between two individuals, the greater the likelihood that the dyad will like one another (Byrne, 1992; Byrne, Clore and Smeaton, 1986; Byrne and Nelson, 1965; Smeaton, Byrne and Murnen, 1989). Byrne and his colleagues (e.g. Byrne and Clore, 1970; Clore and Byrne, 1974), while advancing this reinforcement-affect model of attraction, suggested that affect is the primary determinant of evaluative responses. More specifically, any stimulus that elicits or is associated with another stimulus that elicits positive affect will be liked, whereas any stimulus that elicits negative affect will be disliked. This affect-based relation between attitude similarity and attraction is generalizable across stimulus modes (Byrne, 1971), attitudinal topics (Byrne, London and Griffitt, 1968), age ranges and marital status (Byrne and Griffitt, 1966; Byrne, Griffitt, Hudgins and Reeves, 1969), and prestige levels (Bond, Byrne and Diamond, 1968; Byrne, Griffitt and Golightly, 1966). Therefore, boss-subordinate as well as coworker attraction can result from shared similar attitudes (Alliger, Janak, Streeter, Byrne and Turban, 1993; Feren, Carroll and Olian, 1988). Consequently, attitude similarity has been discussed in the workplace romance literature.

Mainiero (1989), for example, described personnel selection as a process whereby employees are recruited based on their fit within the corporate culture (*cf.* Schneider, 1987). Such a selection process results in employees who express similar attitudes and values. Mainiero suggested that an organization can be akin to a large group of qualified romantic candidates, based on their similarity of work-related attitudes. In addition to selection by organizations, individuals select organizations on the basis of similarity factors (Good and Good, 1974; Good, Good and Golden, 1974). Thus, attraction to, and selection by, an organization is dependent upon one's attitudinal fit within the social structure. Organizations therefore function as filters resulting in

attitudinally similar employees which may, in turn, increase the potential for romantic initiations.

Although attitude similarity has been repeatedly established as a factor in interpersonal attraction, most of the studies reported in Table 1 failed to test empirically the presupposed similarity effect. The case studies listed assert that individuals (a) fall in love with and marry people like themselves (e.g. Collins, 1983), (b) are attracted to others with compatible and shared values, beliefs, and interests (Crary, 1987; Kennedy, 1992; Mondy and Premeaux, 1986; Schultz, 1982), and (c) usually work with attitudinally similar others because of an organization's ability to pre-screen potential employees for attitudinal fit within the existing corporate culture (Colby, 1991; Eyer and Baridon, 1992a). The magnitude of the effect of similarity on attraction is, however, typically not reported. Similarly, researchers who conducted mail (Anderson and Fisher, 1991), telephone (Dillard and Witteman, 1985), and in-person (Anderson and Hunsaker, 1985) surveys regarding workplace romances also posited that organizations employ those who are attitudinally similar to one another, and that individuals pursue others who have attitudes and interests similar to one's own. Nevertheless, the similarity effect is usually not tested directly, but rather assumed to be operative because of its predetermined empirical robustness. Even though attitude similarity is a predictor of interpersonal attraction, it needs to be examined more carefully within a workplace romance context.

Performance appraisals

In addition to attitude similarity, other affect-based variables such as receiving a positive performance evaluation can predict interpersonal attraction (Berscheid and Walster, 1969; Byrne and Rhamey, 1965; Jones, 1964; Mettee and Aronson, 1974; Rubin, 1973, 1974) and, in fact, there is a 'powerful effect of interpersonal evaluations on attraction' (Byrne, 1971, p. 108). In the domain of organizational behavior, the reinforcement-affect model of attraction (Clore and Byrne, 1974) would predict that if an employee receives a positive performance appraisal, he or she will experience a positive affective response that results in liking. That is, a subordinate may like his or her supervisor because of the positive affect evoked by a favorable rating. It deserves noting, however, that relatively little research has examined the effects of performance appraisals in the context of attraction in the workplace. Furthermore, this research typically only assesses the effects of manager-subordinate attitude similarity on performance evaluations (e.g. Pulakos and Wexley, 1983; Turban and Jones, 1988) as opposed to examining whether receiving positive ratings leads to attraction. Thus, future workplace romance research should assess the influence of positive performance appraisals on the formation of boss-subordinate liaisons.

In sum, the factors that influence interpersonal attraction lead to the following four propositions.

Proposition 1 Employees who work in close proximity to one another and share related work tasks interact repeatedly during daily work routines and this exposure tends to elicit positive affect and interpersonal attraction. Employees who are frequently in intimate contact with one another outside of the workplace, such as during business trips, corporate parties, and lunches, are especially prone to becoming attracted to one another.

Proposition 2 Employees who perceive that they are attitudinally similar based on frequent work interactions are more likely to be attracted to one another as compared to those who perceive that they are attitudinally dissimilar.

Proposition 3 Employees who receive positive performance appraisals from their supervisor are more likely to be attracted to them as compared to employees who receive negative performance appraisals from their supervisor.

Proposition 4 Interpersonal attraction between two employees positively predicts whether they will become romantically attracted.

Factors that influence romantic attraction

Interpersonal attraction involves primarily feelings of intimacy, whereas romantic or sexual attraction entails feelings of intimacy, passion, arousal, care, and, in some cases, commitment and exclusiveness (Berscheid and Walster, 1974; Hendrick and Hendrick, 1983; Rubin, 1973; Sternberg, 1986, 1988; Walster, 1971). When two individuals share intimate and passionate feelings, they are likely to become romantically attached because of their strong emotional bonds and physical attraction to one another (Sternberg, 1986). Thus, under what conditions are opposite-sex workers likely to become romantically attracted?

Arousal

Many social-psychological researchers have reported that passionate, romantic, sexual feelings can develop from misattributing physiological arousal (Berscheid and Walster, 1974; Dutton and Aron, 1974; Hatfield, 1988; Rubin, 1973; Walster, 1971; White, Fishbein and Rutstein, 1981). More specifically, based on Schachter and Singer's (1962) two-factor theory of emotion, investigators argue that passionate, romantic love can result from (a) experiencing intense physiological arousal, and then (b) mislabeling the arousal as attributable to loving, passionate feelings for a nearby attractive member of the opposite sex. As a test of this two-factor theory, Dutton and Aron (1974) demonstrated that provoking a male's anxiety can intensify his sexual attraction toward an attractive female. Similarly, White *et al.* (1981) reported that exertion-induced arousal heightens a male's sexual attraction toward an attractive female. These findings are also consistent with excitation transfer theory (Zillmann, 1984) which contends that arousal from one situation can strengthen emotional reactions, such as passion, that occur in subsequent situations. Although they have not been examined in previous workplace romance research, Schachter and Singer's two-factor theory of emotion and Zillmann's excitation transfer theory have interesting organizational implications that lead to the following proposition.

Proposition 5 Physiological arousal induced from a myriad of work factors such as time deadlines, competitive demands, physical exertion, extreme temperatures, dangerous working conditions, and other anxiety-provoking situations can be mislabeled as sexual or romantic feelings for an opposite-sex coworker. Arousal stemming from these work factors can also intensify an employee's passionate desire for an opposite-sex coworker during their subsequent dyadic interactions.

Evaluation of overt body characteristics

In addition to attributes such as earning potential, socio-economic status, and marital status, the formation of romantic relationships is known to be influenced by the evaluation of a prospective partner's overt characteristics (Berscheid and Walster, 1974) such as his or her physical

attractiveness (Brislin and Lewis, 1968; Byrne, Ervin and Lamberth, 1970; Walster, Aronson, Abrahams and Rottman, 1966; Woll, 1986), body height (Gillis and Avis, 1980; Graziano, Brothen and Berscheid, 1978; Koestner and Wheeler, 1988; Lynn and Shurgot, 1984; Sheppard and Strathman, 1989), and body weight (Koestner and Wheeler, 1988; Smith, Waldorf and Trembath, 1990). With respect to romantic attraction, meta-analytic evidence suggests that the emphasis placed on physical attractiveness (Feingold, 1990) and body height (Pierce, 1994) is moderated by one's *gender* such that males tend to place more emphasis on physical attractiveness than do females, and females tend to place more emphasis on stature than do males. Interestingly, female employees may perceive male employees who are taller than themselves as more socially powerful than shorter male employees and, therefore, prefer to be romantically attached to them because of their dominating appearance in the workplace (*cf.* Lynn and Shurgot, 1984). Overall, the foregoing overt body characteristics have been ignored in the workplace romance literature and, because of their strong influence on determining physical or sexual attraction, should be assessed with respect to the formation of workplace romances.

Proposition 6 Employees who like one another are apt to become romantically attracted if they evaluate each other's overt body characteristics positively. Male and female employees will, however, place differential emphasis on these overt physical attributes.

Participating in a workplace romance

Employees who become romantically attracted to one another have to decide whether they will actually initiate a close relationship in the workplace. Thus, what factors lead two employees who desire to be romantically involved to engage (initiate) or participate in a workplace romance (i.e. a dating relationship)?

Attitudes toward workplace romance

Managerial and subordinate values and beliefs regarding employee participation in romantic relationships at work are often advanced as having an impact on workplace romances (Horn and Horn, 1982; Spelman *et al.*, 1986). An employee's attitude toward attraction in the workplace, for example, can influence how skilled he or she is at discussing and managing feelings of attraction at work (Crary, 1987). In addition, subordinates' attitudes toward romantic affairs can even be influenced by top management attitudes regarding such liaisons (Horn and Horn, 1982). Furthermore, Horn and Horn suggested that the manner in which management handles daily activities at work can set the tone for romantic affairs in the workplace. Overall, an employee's attitude toward the appropriateness of being involved in a romantic relationship at work has been purported to be an initiating factor with respect to workplace romances.

Haavio-Mannila, Kauppinen-Toropainen and Kandolin (1988), for example, empirically examined the effect of attitudes toward workplace romance on the development of close relationships. More precisely, these authors assessed attitudes toward flirting at work and their impact on romantic organizational behavior. The results of Haavio-Mannila *et al.*'s (1988) study support the contention that a positive attitude toward flirting in the workplace is directly related to engaging in a workplace romance for both male and female employees. Additional research is needed, however, in order to examine specifically the influence of attitudes toward romance in the workplace, rather than only examining attitudes toward flirting behaviors.

Because workers' attitudes regarding romantic affairs in the workplace may be predictive of the initiation of such relationships, Powell (1986) examined employee beliefs concerning sexual intimacy in the workplace. Based on survey data collected from 198 male and 153 female business and part-time MBA students who were employed, Powell concluded that (a) romance in the workplace is not perceived as fostering better communication between the employees involved nor creating a more positive work environment, (b) boss-subordinate romances are perceived as more problematic compared to peer romances (*cf.* Mainiero, 1986, 1989; Quinn, 1977; Westhoff, 1985), (c) romance in the workplace is perceived more positively if it does not disrupt job productivity, and (d) females are more opposed to workplace romances as compared to males. Powell's findings suggest that participating in a relationship in the workplace can be perceived positively or negatively.

Finally, assuming employees' attitudes toward workplace romance determine whether they will participate in such an affair, one might hypothesize that holding negative attitudes would prevent an individual from engaging in a desired workplace romance. Such negative attitudes may stem from numerous factors such as one's (a) concern over potential sexual harassment charges and legal actions, (b) fear of having to compromise financial security, and (c) religious upbringing and fidelity considerations. Each of these factors, along with others such as the dyad's marital status and degree of satisfaction with their present romantic relationship, could be considered 'deterrents' to participating in a workplace romance and need to be examined in future research.

Proposition 7 Employees who hold unfavorable attitudes toward workplace romance are less likely to participate in such an affair than employees who hold favorable attitudes toward workplace romance.

Organizational culture

Organizational researchers have defined organizational culture as the 'personality' of an organization (Hatch, 1993; Landy, 1989; Schein, 1990, 1991). In the workplace romance literature, corporate culture is depicted as the invisible force that guides employee behavior (Westhoff, 1985). Similarly, other researchers have contended that an organization's culture entails the attitudes, values, beliefs, ideologies, philosophies, norms, and standards that develop regarding those who work in the organization (Mainiero, 1989; Spelman *et al.*, 1986; Westhoff, 1985). Because it can dictate which employee behaviors are deemed appropriate, organizational culture has been discussed as having an influence on the formation of romantic relationships in the workplace (Mainiero, 1989; Westhoff, 1985).

According to Mainiero (1989), slow-paced, conventional, traditional, conservative cultures typically discourage workplace romances, whereas fast-paced, action-oriented, dynamic, liberal cultures, which often contain an atmosphere of intense pressure and activity that stimulates sexual excitement (Pietropinto, 1986; Quinn and Judge, 1978), tend to be less stringent with respect to such relationships (see also Chesanow, 1992; Horn and Horn, 1982; Spelman *et al.*, 1986; Westhoff, 1985). Indeed, of the 100 female executives surveyed by Mainiero (1989), 86 per cent of those who worked for conservative organizations reported that workplace romances were discouraged informally or by formal written policy, whereas 50 per cent of those who worked for liberal organizations claimed such romances were neither encouraged nor discouraged. Therefore, an organization's standards regarding a worker's participation in a workplace romance may have an influence on whether an individual will engage in such an affair. That is,

employees working in conservative cultures may be concerned about the negative repercussions of participating in a workplace romance.

Proposition 8 Employees working in a conservative culture, as opposed to a liberal culture, are less likely to engage in or disclose a workplace romance for fear of retribution from management.

Job autonomy

In the context of workplace romance, Haavio-Mannila *et al.* (1988) defined job autonomy as including the ability to make 'decisions about one's own work' and the 'freedom to move in the work environment and to make contacts with coworkers' (p. 126). These authors suggested that employees with relatively autonomous jobs should find it easier to 'cross the traditional gender barrier' and initiate romantic behaviors with other coworkers (Haavio-Mannila *et al.*, 1988, p. 126). An 'autonomous job' may, therefore, allow for frequent dyadic interactions with opposite-sex members of the work group. Haavio-Mannila *et al.* reported the results of a previously conducted interview of 281 male and 296 female employees in Finland. The data indicated that 40 per cent of the females with autonomous jobs had been involved in a workplace romance, whereas only 25 per cent of the females with less autonomous jobs had been involved in the same type of romantic affair. The authors also conducted an interview of 102 male and 132 female employees in Helsinki and ascertained that high job autonomy was positively related to participating in a workplace romance, especially for males. It should be noted, however, that there may be a confound between hierarchical position (organizational status) and job autonomy such that supervisors typically maintain greater degrees of autonomy as compared to subordinates. Yet, organizations may be more apt to discourage supervisors from participating in romantic affairs with other employees. The relationship between job autonomy and workplace romance is therefore in need of further examination.

Proposition 9 Employees who perceive their job as autonomous are more likely to engage in a workplace romance than employees who do not perceive their job as autonomous.

In summary, many factors can determine the formation of a workplace romance. The recognition of attitude similarity via repeated exposures to a nearby coworker, as well as receiving a positive performance appraisal from a supervisor, are predictors of liking. In addition to liking, the misattribution of physiological arousal on the job is hypothesized to predict romantic attraction. Even when two employees become romantically attracted to one another and desire a formal relationship, factors such as their attitude toward the appropriateness of a workplace romance, an organization's culture, and their degree of perceived job autonomy can determine whether they will initiate such an affair. Once employees partake in a workplace romance, several aspects of organizational behavior and functioning can be influenced.

The impact of a workplace romance: consequences

The beneficial and detrimental influence that romantic relationships at work have on the participants, members of the work group, and the host organization is a crucial and yet unresolved issue

for organizational researchers and management. Previous workplace romance research has focused primarily on the effects of such affairs on (a) employee responses such as job productivity, worker morale, and worker motivation, and (b) managerial decisions regarding promotions, job relocations or transfers, and the termination of employees involved in a liaison (see Table 1). These consequent variables, in addition to other employee response factors such as job satisfaction, job involvement, and gossip, are integrated into the proposed model shown in Figure 1. Next, the effects of a workplace romance on employee responses are discussed, followed by an examination of managerial decisions rendered in response to a workplace romance.

Employee responses

Job productivity

Researchers have argued that workplace romances should *not* be of managerial concern unless they disrupt an employee's job performance (Mainiero, 1989; Mondy and Premeaux, 1986; Powell, 1986; Westhoff, 1986). Stated differently, a workplace romance should be permissible as long as the couple's and coworkers' productivity does not decline. Previous research addressing workplace romance indicates, however, that such affairs can sometimes have an enhancing, and sometimes an impeding, effect on job productivity (Mainiero, 1995); i.e. on an employee's quantity and quality of work output.

Several studies listed in Table 1 indicate that employees involved in a romantic relationship can be more productive on the job. More specifically, male–female work teams often show an increase in productivity more so than same-sex teams by channeling their attraction into work goals (Bureau of National Affairs (BNA), 1988; Eyer and Baridon, 1991, 1992a,b; Westhoff, 1985) which can enhance teamwork, cooperation, work flow, and communication processes (Mainiero, 1989). In addition, feeling attracted to one another, yet maintaining an appropriate balance between intimacy and distance (*cf.* Eyer and Baridon's (1992a,b) 'more-than-friends-less-than-lovers' model), can help increase productivity because of its stimulating effects (Clawson and Kram, 1984; Crary, 1987; Jamison, 1983). Consistent with these assertions, Anderson and Hunsaker (1985) reported, based on third party observations, that 21 per cent of the women and 9 per cent of the men involved in a workplace romance showed an increase in productivity. Similarly, Quinn reported that 15 per cent of the females and 17 per cent of the males involved in a relationship at work were more productive.

Westhoff (1985, 1986) also discussed job performance and suggested that newly formed couples are initially less productive because of the large amounts of time and energy invested in the relationship. After the initial excitement of having a new romantic partner diminishes, however, productivity tends to rise steadily. Consistent with Westhoff's theorizing, Mainiero (1989) suggested that in the early stages (duration of romance approximately 0 to 12 months, *cf.* Rubin, 1973) of a workplace romance when couples admit their mutual sexual attraction and proceed toward one another, productivity may decline. In the later stages (duration of romance greater than approximately 12 months, *cf.* Rubin, 1973), the relationship stabilizes and the couple exhibits a renewed interest in work and increasing productivity. Thus, the *stage* of a workplace romance appears to moderate the relationship between romance and productivity.

Additional evidence suggesting that workplace romances can enhance worker performance is reported in Dillard (1987) and Dillard and Broetzmann (1989) who posited that, depending on an employee's *motive* for engaging in a workplace romance (see also Anderson and Hunsaker,

(1985), Mainiero (1986) and Quinn (1977) for a discussion of motives), job performance can be positively affected. More precisely, those participating in a workplace romance with a *love* motive, or the sincere desire for companionship and/or a spouse, tend to show an increase in productivity. In contrast, those participating with an *ego* motive, or the desire for excitement, adventure, and sexual experiences, as well as those with a *job-related* motive, or the desire for advancement, security, power, financial rewards, and lighter workloads, tend to show no change in performance (Dillard, 1987). Dillard argued that love-motivated couples, such as those seeking what Sternberg (1986) labels a consummate love or what Quinn (1977) labels a true love, fear the negative consequences of inadequate performance and, therefore, demonstrate increases in effort so as to impress their supervisor(s). Such a fear would, however, seem especially apparent in organizations where workplace romances are discouraged. Finally, even though Quinn and Judge (1978) acknowledged that some couples do become more productive, these authors maintained that it is more common to observe a decline in productivity because of missed meetings, late arrivals and early departures, and costly errors. Accordingly, a substantial portion of the foregoing literature indicates that job productivity can be negatively affected by workplace liaisons.

As an example, 70 per cent of Anderson and Hunsaker's survey respondents reported that workplace romances result in decreased productivity because of excessive employee chatting, long lunches, and lengthy discussions behind closed doors (Chesanow, 1992; Mondy and Premeaux, 1986). Approximately 31 per cent of Ford and McLaughlin's (1987) survey respondents agreed that a couple's job performance suffers as the result of a workplace affair, and nearly 39 per cent agreed that other employees' performance is also negatively affected. Similarly, Rapp (1992) discussed the results of a survey in which 42 per cent of the romance cases negatively affected the couple's job productivity, and 39 per cent of the cases negatively influenced coworker productivity. In addition, 33 per cent of Quinn's romance cases reported decreased productivity. Colwill and Lips (1988), Driscoll and Bova (1980), Mishra and Harell (1989), and Pietropinto (1986) also reported that romantic organizational behavior can have an adverse effect on productivity, yet a potential limitation of many of these surveys is that observations were based primarily on less accurate third party knowledge of romantic pairs in organizations.

Lastly, the link between romance and productivity may also be contingent upon the *type* of romantic relationship; i.e. a boss-subordinate (hierarchical) versus a peer (lateral) relationship. Devine and Markiewicz (1990), for instance, found that couples involved in a lateral romance are more productive than couples involved in a hierarchical romance. Furthermore, the BNA (1988), Mainiero (1989), Powell and Mainiero (1990), and Rapp (1992) suggested that hierarchical relationships typically impede upon the productivity of peers as well as the participants. In terms of social exchange, coworkers might perceive inequity due to unjust managerial decisions and procedures and, therefore, feel resentful and spend a substantial amount of time discussing the boss-subordinate romance instead of working (*cf.* Chesanow, 1992; Mainiero, 1989). In sum, productivity may suffer depending upon the type of workplace romance in question.

Proposition 10a Romantically involved employees exhibit a decrease in job productivity during the early stages of their workplace romance and an increase in job productivity during the later stages of their workplace romance.

Proposition 10b Employees entering a workplace romance with a love motive increase their job productivity in order to impress management, whereas employees entering with an ego or job-related motive show little or no change in their productivity levels.

Proposition 10c Hierarchical romances negatively affect participant and coworker job productivity more than do lateral romances.

Worker morale

Workplace romances can also have an impact on employee morale; i.e. the mood or spirit of the work group can be influenced by romantic organizational behavior (Mainiero, 1989). The workplace romance literature suggests that the mood of a work group can be raised as well as lowered because of such affairs. For example, 34 per cent of the executive women surveyed by Mainiero (1989) reported that a workplace romance can energize employee morale. Mainiero suggested that such affairs can be uplifting, thereby creating a happier work environment. Stresses, anxieties, and tensions are also reduced as the result of romance at work (Anderson and Hunsaker, 1985; Smith, 1988). Horn and Horn (1982) argued further that romance can create 'sexual electricity' that excites coworkers' imaginations. Thus, workplace liaisons can elevate employees' moods. The majority of these and other positive assertions are, however, solely anecdotal in nature (e.g. Colwill and Lips, 1988; Eyer and Baridon, 1992b; Horn and Horn, 1982). Similarly, many of the studies that suggest worker morale is negatively affected by romantic relationships suffer from the same lack of methodological rigor. That is, several researchers have maintained that employee morale is lowered as the result of romantic organizational behavior, yet primary data are typically not provided to support such a claim (e.g. Driscoll and Bova, 1980; Jacobs, 1981; Jamison, 1983; Mishra and Harell, 1989; Quinn and Lees, 1984) with the exception of one survey of 756 respondents in which 8 per cent claimed workplace romances anger others and 47 per cent reported that such affairs create an awkward or uncomfortable work environment (Staff, 1988b).

Nevertheless, the BNA (1988) report suggested that the *type* of workplace romance can also have an impact on worker morale. In particular, boss-subordinate romances tend to disrupt employee morale more than do peer romances (Colwill and Lips, 1988; Mainiero, 1989; Powell and Mainiero, 1990; Quinn, 1977). The BNA report discussed the results of a survey administered to 112 executives, 45 of whom claimed employee morale had been undermined because of a boss-subordinate romance. Mainiero (1989) conceded that hierarchical romances can be devastating and destructive because of employee jealousy and suspicion regarding favoritism. Based on her survey, Mainiero reported that 78 per cent of the female executives resented boss-subordinate relationships, whereas only 21 per cent resented romantic peer relationships. Similarly, 33 per cent of Quinn's romance cases reported lower mood states as the result of a hierarchical romance. In reference to hierarchical romances and unequal social power, Powell (1993) suggested that work group morale can be negatively affected as the result of a romantic dependency that exists in a boss-subordinate liaison. Powell argued that this romantic dependency disrupts the balance between task and career dependencies that already exist in a boss-subordinate romance and, consequently, creates negative reactions from peers. For example, in terms of perceived inequity, members of the work group may fear that the subordinate involved in the hierarchical romance will receive task and career rewards (e.g. pay increases, promotions, increased number of personal days, lighter workloads) in exchange for providing sexual favors which, in turn, results in an unfair work environment and lowers work group morale (Powell, 1993). Basically, members of the work group perceive organizational injustice as the result of boss-subordinate romances, thereby lowering their morale at work.

Finally, it is also expected that the *visibility*, or a work group's awareness, of hierarchical romances will have an impact on worker morale. That is, relationships that are intentionally not

disclosed, perhaps because of an organizational policy, are less likely to negatively affect employee moods as compared to apparent, visible relationships.

Proposition 11 Hierarchical romances negatively affect coworker morale, whereas lateral romances positively affect coworker morale. In addition, the more visible a hierarchical romance, the more negative its impact on coworker morale.

Worker motivation

Work motivation has been conceptualized as involving variations in intensity, quality, and direction of ongoing work-related behavior (Kanfer, 1990; Landy, 1989; Landy and Becker, 1987). Employee motivation has been identified in the workplace romance literature, yet an inadequate amount of empirical evidence exists with respect to this construct. The critical issue is whether a workplace romance influences an individual's motivation to work.

Mainiero (1989) argued that workplace liaisons can increase worker motivation because the participants feel better about themselves and are willing to work longer hours together (see also BNA, 1988; Eyley and Baridon, 1992a). Thirty-three per cent of Mainiero's cases reported an increased motivation to work as the result of a workplace romance. Similarly, Dillard and Broetzmann reported the outcome of their survey that assessed, among other job-related behaviors, romantically involved employees' enthusiasm for work. These authors found that 40 per cent of the men and 57 per cent of the women engaged in a workplace romance displayed a marked increase in their work-related enthusiasm. Thus, employees involved in a workplace romance seem to demonstrate an increased motivation to work. Analogous to the effects on job productivity, however, one might expect the *stage* of a romantic relationship to have an impact on a participant's work motivation. More specifically, newly formed couples may be more interested in spending time getting acquainted with one another and will, therefore, be less motivated to work. After the relationship progresses to a mutually stable point, however, the couple will show a renewed motivation to work.

Proposition 12 Romantically involved employees exhibit a decrease in work motivation during the early stages of their workplace romance and an increase in work motivation during the later stages of their workplace romance.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been defined as 'an affective . . . reaction to a job that results from the incumbent's comparison of actual outcomes with those that are desired' (Cranny, Smith and Stone, 1992, p. 1). Interestingly, as Cranny *et al.* (1992) noted, this delineation of job satisfaction is consistent with Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) social exchange definition of one's satisfaction with a mutually dependent dyadic relationship. In line with Thibaut and Kelley's theorizing, research has shown that individuals are romantically satisfied to the extent that actual outcomes from a relationship exceed their level of personally expected outcomes (i.e. the individual's comparison level; Rusbult, 1980). Thus, one might hypothesize that an employee who perceives the outcomes of a workplace romance as exceeding his or her comparison level will be more satisfied with their partner and, possibly, more satisfied with certain aspects of their job. For example, a subordinate who is happily romantically involved with a superordinate may be particularly satisfied with the supervisory component of his or her job, whereas a subordinate who is happily romantically involved with another subordinate may be particularly satisfied with

the coworker component of his or her job. Such an argument is consistent with previous research that has identified a positive relationship between overall life satisfaction and facets of job satisfaction (e.g. Judge and Watanabe, 1993).

Additional social exchange theories, and in particular equity theory, have also been used to explain satisfaction with romantic relationships (Hatfield, Utne and Traupmann, 1979; Hendrick and Hendrick, 1983). An equitable relationship exists when a person assessing the romance perceives that both participants are receiving equivalent relative gains from the liaison. Thus, an employee who perceives his or her workplace romance to be equitable will be satisfied with his or her relationship and, potentially, more satisfied at work. Note that if the outcomes of a workplace romance are perceived as below one's comparison level, or if a romance is perceived as inequitable, unhappiness will result potentially leading to a dissolved affair and perhaps job dissatisfaction or even voluntary organizational exit.

Similarly, because job satisfaction is known to be partially affectively-based (Cranny *et al.*, 1992), Clore and Byrne's (1974) reinforcement-affect model of attraction supports the contention that positive affect experienced from a workplace romance may 'spill over' and enhance employee job satisfaction. Indeed, researchers have argued anecdotally that dyadic attraction in the workplace can positively influence a couple's satisfaction with their jobs (Kiesler, 1978). In sum, because employee job satisfaction predicts factors such as voluntary turnover (Carsten and Spector, 1987), it is important to determine whether participating in a gratifying workplace romance can result in an increased satisfaction with various facets of one's job such as pay, supervision, and coworkers.

Proposition 13 Employees who are satisfied with their workplace romance are more likely to be satisfied with certain aspects of their jobs than employees who are dissatisfied with their workplace romance.

Job involvement

As with job satisfaction, job involvement is another relatively unexamined variable with respect to workplace romances. Lodahl and Kejner (1965) defined job involvement as 'the degree to which a person is identified psychologically with his work, or the importance of work in his total self-image' (p. 24). Similarly, Paullay, Alliger and Stone-Romero (1994) defined job involvement as 'the degree to which one is cognitively preoccupied with, engaged in, and concerned with one's present job' (p. 225). Job involvement basically entails the amount of personal value an employee invests in his or her present work (Alliger and Williams, 1993; Saleh and Hosek, 1976).

Using three items from Lodahl and Kejner's Job Involvement Scale, Dillard (1987) examined whether an employee's *motive* for entering a workplace romance influences his or her involvement with work. He found that participants who entered with ego or job-related motives showed no change in job involvement, whereas love-motivated participants showed an increase in job involvement. Similar to the reason for enhancing one's job productivity, Dillard suggested that love-motivated employees fear retribution from management and, thus, increase their job involvement in order to impress their supervisor. In other words, once a love-seeking employee finds a congenial romantic partner, his or her involvement with work may increase in order to maintain the desired relationship. However, such an increase would most likely occur when romances are discouraged in the workplace. Additional research is therefore needed that examines job involvement in the context of workplace romance. One might predict, for example, that in the early stages of a romance, employees will become more involved with, or place more personal value on, their romantic partners as opposed to their jobs. Once a couple reaches a

mutually stable point in their relationship, however, they may show renewed involvement with their current occupations. Thus, the *stage* of a liaison may have an impact on a romance participant's job involvement.

Proposition 14a Employees entering a workplace romance with a love motive increase their job involvement in order to impress management, whereas employees entering with an ego or job-related motive show no change in their job involvement.

Proposition 14b Romantically involved employees exhibit a decrease in job involvement during the early stages of their workplace romance and an increase in job involvement during the later stages of their workplace romance.

Gossip

Romances at work, and particularly those that are highly visible, promote interesting topics of discussion among organizational members (Chesnow, 1992; Dillard, 1987; Mondy and Premeaux, 1986; Westhoff, 1985). In perhaps the most extensive analysis of gossip and workplace romance to date, Dillard (1987) determined that the tone of employee gossip depends upon the perceived *motive* for why participants engage in a romantic relationship. For example, female employees who entered a relationship with a job-related motive stimulated negative gossip in the workplace, whereas male employees who initiated a relationship with a sincere love motive fostered positive gossip. Thus, employees who are perceived as participating in a workplace romance for the purpose of advancing their careers, gaining power, or reducing workloads are more apt to create negative gossip. In contrast, employees who are perceived as sincerely seeking a consummate (Sternberg, 1986) or true (Quinn, 1977) love can stimulate favorable discussions among the work group. The differential effects of workplace romances versus other types of less influential, non-workplace romances become quite evident when considering such factors as employee gossip or even work group morale discussed previously, thereby suggesting that gossip is worthy of further examination.

Proposition 15 Employees who are perceived as being romantically involved with other organizational members because of job-related motives are more likely to create negative gossip than employees who are perceived as being romantically involved with other organizational members because of a love motive. In addition, the gossip is most likely to be negative if a subordinate is perceived as maintaining a job-related motive for entering a romantic relationship with his or her supervisor.

Managerial decisions

Promotions

Several studies listed in Table 1 discuss the influence of workplace liaisons on employee promotions. Essentially, the findings show that (a) a female participant can be promoted (Quinn and Judge, 1978), (b) women perceive such affairs as threatening to their potential job advancement (Mainiero, 1989), (c) couples may or may not expect promotions depending upon their organizational status (Devine and Markiewicz, 1990), and (d) such liaisons are hampered by promotion denials (BNA, 1988). Despite the limited evidence accumulated thus far with

respect to workplace romance and promotion decisions, important claims exist in the literature that are worth addressing here and in future empirical research efforts.

Boss–subordinate relationships, for example, often result in perceived favoritism and inequity with respect to promotion decisions, especially when a male supervisor is romantically involved with a female subordinate. It may be the case that male managers, who maintain power within an organization, demonstrate favoritism and inequitable managerial procedures by ignoring performance complaints, promoting, and providing pay raises for female subordinates with whom they are romantically involved (Josefowitz, 1982; Quinn, 1977; Quinn and Judge, 1978; Quinn and Lees, 1984; Rapp, 1992; Spruell, 1985). When coworkers perceive such favoritism or inequity, they can become both alienated from the work group (Chesanow, 1992) and envious (Schultz, 1982), resulting in a disrupted balance of power within the organization (Mainiero, 1989; Quinn, 1977; Quinn and Lees, 1984). Mainiero (1989) and Jamison (1983) suggested that when the power structure of an organization breaks down, channels for advancement become closed off and executive decision making regarding promotions and raises is distorted (Rapp, 1992). Thus, future promotion decisions may be in jeopardy.

Some organizations are aware of such injustice, however, and are often reluctant to promote employees who are romantically involved with one another (Spelman and Crary, 1984). Consequently, several researchers have suggested that employees involved in a workplace romance are often passed over for promotions (BNA, 1988; Chesanow, 1992; Clawson and Kram, 1984; Pietropinto, 1986). In particular, the BNA report indicated that the lower ranked partner, who is usually female, is sometimes not considered for promotions nor favorable job assignments in order to avoid perceived favoritism. Fortunately, the lower status partner may not always expect to be promoted (Devine and Markiewicz, 1990). In sum, an organization's *culture* should be examined as a potential moderator of the relationship between a workplace romance and promotion decisions.

Relocations

Several studies listed in Table 1 discuss relocation or transfer decisions in the context of workplace romance, yet only a few include a method of primary data collection that examines romance and relocations. Ford and McLaughlin's (1987) data, for example, indicate that nearly 16 per cent of the surveyed personnel managers agreed that an organization should transfer one of the romantically involved employees. In addition, Quinn and Judge (1978) reported a case study in which a relocation decision was made, and Staff (1984) discussed a case study in which a restaurant employee was informed he could be transferred if he married his coworker. Finally, Westhoff (1985) asked business school students about engaging in a romantic affair with an employee in an organization, even if it was against formal policy. Based on this hypothetical scenario, 41 per cent of the respondents would expect to be transferred and 46 per cent of the respondents would not expect to be transferred if they participated in such an affair. Thus, managers may perceive job relocations as a feasible intervention to workplace romance and, at the same time, employees might anticipate such transfers as a consequence of participating in a workplace liaison.

Despite such limited evidence accrued with respect to romances and relocation decisions, several researchers have provided important anecdotal insights that are worth addressing here and in future empirical investigations. First, because transfers can help resolve problematic romances (Driscoll and Bova, 1980; Leighton, 1984), some researchers have suggested that management should willingly offer relocations as an option for couples to consider (Colby, 1991; Collins, 1983; Spruell, 1985). Stated differently, organizations should utilize relocations as a

positive intervention technique. However, the impact that such transfers may have on the employee(s), and the host organization, is in need of further assessment. Second, Josefowitz (1982) and Rapp (1992) reported that the female participant in a workplace romance is typically the individual who is relocated. Perhaps some organizations perceive females as more easily dispensable compared to males, but such a perception will have to change as more females occupy top-level management, or high status, positions (Spruell, 1985). Thus, relocation decisions may exhibit discrimination based on an employee's *organizational status* and/or *gender*. In sum, it appears that those involved in a workplace romance are more at risk for a transfer as compared to those not involved in a workplace romance.

Terminations

A supervisor's decision to terminate or dismiss an employee because of his or her involvement in a workplace romance is conceivably the most detrimental of the managerial actions discussed thus far with respect to one's career. As with job relocations, terminations represent a punitive form of organizational intervention that should be made judiciously. Nonetheless, employees are often dismissed for participating in a workplace romance (BNA, 1988; Powell, 1986; Powell and Mainiero, 1990; Quinn, 1977; Rapp, 1992).

Many studies listed in Table 1 consider job loss to be a potential outcome of participating in a workplace liaison, yet very few include primary data that focus on termination decisions and romantic affairs. Overall, the survey data, case study reports, and anecdotal propositions indicate that (a) a female participant is more likely to be terminated than a male participant (Anderson and Fisher, 1991; Devine and Markiewicz, 1990; Driscoll and Bova, 1980; Farley, 1980; Horn and Horn, 1982; Josefowitz, 1982; Powell, 1986; Quinn, 1977; Quinn and Judge, 1978; Quinn and Lees, 1984; Westhoff, 1985), (b) the participant who is the least essential or less valuable (i.e. lower in status and typically female) to the organization is often terminated (Collins, 1983; Goodman, 1983; Leighton, 1984; Spruell, 1985; Westhoff, 1985), and (c) extramarital affairs are more likely to result in employee terminations as compared to other types of affairs (Mainiero, 1989; Westhoff, 1985). Thus, the consequences of a workplace romance may be more serious for the female participant than for the male participant (Devine and Markiewicz, 1990).

Anderson and Fisher (1991) posited that a female employee involved in a workplace romance is more likely to become the victim of such an affair as compared to her male partner. In order to exhibit more fair decision making, Collins suggested that the less effective employee of the dyad should be terminated, regardless of his or her gender. Moreover, if the romance is hierarchical, the lower status individual should be terminated (Spruell, 1985). Several researchers have noted, however, that the female participant is typically lower in status than the male (Anderson and Fisher, 1991; Driscoll and Bova, 1980). Therefore, female participants may be perceived as less valuable and more dispensable and, thus, are terminated more frequently than their male partners (Anderson and Fisher, 1991; Quinn, 1977; Westhoff, 1985). Researchers therefore need to assess empirically the potential moderating effects of *organizational status* and *gender* on the relationship between workplace romance and participant termination (Quinn and Judge, 1978). More specifically, managerial prejudices and inequitable decisions based on gender should be identified and, hopefully, surmounted. Not all organizations use termination decisions as a means of managerial intervention, however. Mishra and Harell (1989), for example, surveyed several managers who claimed that employee termination is not a solution to the problems instilled by a workplace romance. Nevertheless, such decisions occur, so additional research is needed with respect to romantic organizational behavior and job loss.

Proposition 16 Both high and low status employees involved in a workplace romance, regardless of their gender, are less likely to be promoted in a conservative culture than in a liberal culture.

Proposition 17 Low status employees involved in a workplace romance are more likely to be relocated or terminated than high status employees involved in a workplace romance, especially if they are female.

In summary, under certain conditions workplace romances can potentially influence a host of work-related factors such as productivity, morale, motivation, job satisfaction, job involvement, employee gossiping behaviors, and career-dependent managerial decisions. However, future research needs to more carefully examine these factors in order to achieve a more precise understanding of the rampant occurrence of romantic relationships in the workplace.

Concluding remarks

Because of the sensitive nature of the phenomenon, obtaining survey and case study data on workplace romances has not been an easy task for researchers in fields such as applied social psychology, organizational psychology, human communication, administrative science, and management. Furthermore, some of the data gathered are known to be problematic (Dillard and Broetzmann, 1989). For instance, several investigators (e.g. Anderson and Hunsaker, 1985; Quinn, 1977) have used third party observations of romantic organizational behavior that, as Dillard (1987) noted, can lead to actor–observer effects (Jones and Nisbett, 1971). An employee’s motive for initiating a workplace romance, for example, can be differentially attributed depending upon whether one is a participant in or an observer of a workplace liaison (Dillard, 1987). Future investigations need to be aware of actor–observer divergences and should, therefore, use methods that obtain information *directly* from romance participants when appropriate. Nonetheless, third party data is still useful for assessing factors such as job productivity and work group morale.

For the most part, researchers have suggested that the increase of women in the labor force has fostered a natural environment for romantic affairs (Anderson and Hunsaker, 1985; BNA, 1988; Jacobs, 1981; Quinn, 1977) that has resulted in an increased prevalence of such liaisons in the workplace. However, additional changes in the nature of work, such as increased working hours that inhibit romantic social activities outside of the workplace, may also compel more employees to seek intra-workplace as opposed to extra-workplace romances. Despite the escalating occurrence of workplace romances, and their potential beneficial and detrimental impact on employee behavior and organizational dynamics, the existing research addressing romance in the workplace is lacking in methodological rigor as well as in a theoretical and empirical orientation. The purpose of the present article was to embed this under-researched construct known as workplace romance into a theoretically and empirically sound nomological network in order for future research efforts to more critically investigate such affairs. The antecedent and consequent factors discussed in this article are based on theories of attraction, love, emotion, and social exchange that have yet to be evaluated within the domain of workplace romance. In addition to previously examined variables, factors are included in the conceptual model that, to our knowledge, have never been tested empirically within the context of romance in the workplace (e.g. performance appraisals, physiological arousal, job satisfaction). Thus, the model serves to

unify previous research as well as facilitate and direct future research on romantic organizational behavior.

In closing, although outside the direct scope of this article, three final issues are worth raising with respect to workplace romances. First, relatively little is known about the effects of a dissolved workplace romance on factors such as job productivity, work motivation, job satisfaction, job involvement, voluntary turnover, and the likelihood of future sexual harassment incriminations. For example, one might expect that a broken relationship would initially obstruct an employee's ability to concentrate and perform adequately on the job. Once the disappointment of a breakup has subsided, however, employees may channel their energy back into work tasks and become more productive and motivated. That is, refocusing one's energy on work may help to overcome the loss of a romantic partner. In terms of sexual harassment accusations, a dissolved hierarchical romance may be more problematic than a dissolved lateral romance because of the dyad's unequal balance of power and organizational status. Second, there is a lack of information reported regarding the duration and outcome of workplace romances. For the most part, it is unknown whether the prototypical workplace romance is short-lived, or whether a substantial number of long-term relationships occur that eventually result in wedlock. And finally, the legal ramifications surrounding workplace romance is another issue in need of further inquiry. In contrast to an organization's own legal actions, the types of lawsuits that romantically involved employees render in response to denied promotions, transfers, and terminations have not been examined in detail. Addressing these additional concerns, in conjunction with testing the current propositions set forth, will help advance our scientific knowledge of workplace romance.

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