

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS IN ORGANIZATIONS

A Test of a Model of Formation and Impact Factors

CHARLES A. PIERCE AND HERMAN AGUINIS

ABSTRACT: We obtained questionnaire data from 465 employees to test a model containing hypothesized formation and impact factors from Pierce, Byrne, and Aguinis's (1996) conceptual model of workplace romance. As predicted, results indicate that (a) employees' attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work and levels of perceived job autonomy are positively associated with their participation in a workplace romance; and (b) employees' participation in a workplace romance is positively associated with their levels of job satisfaction and, to a lesser degree, organizational commitment. Employees' participation in a workplace romance was not, however, predictive of their levels of job performance or intrinsic work motivation. We discuss implications for future workplace romance research.

RESUMEN: Con la información suministrada por los cuestionarios completados por 465 empleados se ha tratado de probar el modelo que incluye los factores de formación e impacto de las relaciones amorosas en las organizaciones propuesto por Pierce, Byrne, y Aguinis (1996). Consistente con las predicciones, los resultados indican que (a) las actitudes de los empleados con respecto a las relaciones amorosas e íntimas en el trabajo y los niveles de percepción de autonomía en el trabajo están asociados en forma positiva con la participación en una relación amorosa en el trabajo; y (b) la participación de empleados en una relación amorosa en el trabajo está asociada en forma positiva con los niveles de satisfacción con el trabajo y, en menor medida, con el compromiso con la organización. Por otro lado, la participación en una relación amorosa en el trabajo no predijo los niveles de desempeño o motivación intrínseca con el trabajo. Exponemos implicaciones de estos resultados para las investigaciones futuras sobre el tema de las relaciones amorosas en el trabajo.

Researchers have recently shown an increased interest in the topic of workplace romance (e.g., Pierce, Aguinis, & Adams, 2000; Powell, 2001; Powell & Foley, 1998). Workplace romances are mutually desired relationships between two employees of the same organization that entail physical attraction (Foley & Powell, 1999; Mainiero, 1986, 1989; Pierce,

Byrne, & Aguinis, 1996; Quinn, 1977). Perhaps the increased interest in workplace romances is because they have become prevalent. Dillard & Witteman (1985) reported that approximately 75 percent of the employees they interviewed had either observed or participated in a workplace romance. A Bureau of National Affairs (1988) survey indicated that nearly 33 percent of all romances develop in the workplace with a fellow employee. More recently, a Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 1998) survey indicated that the frequency of workplace romances has remained constant or increased in organizations throughout the United States.

Workplace romances have been hypothesized to affect critical organizational variables such as employees' job productivity and work motivation (Cleveland, Stockdale, & Murphy, 2000; Powell & Foley, 1998). This potential influence has been, in part, the impetus for scholars' interest in the topic of workplace romance. Recently, researchers have: (a) reviewed antecedents, dynamics, and consequences of participating in a workplace romance, as well as managerial actions taken in response to such liaisons (Pierce et al., 1996; Powell & Foley, 1998); (b) developed a model of coworkers' preferences for and responses to managerial interventions regarding workplace romances (Foley & Powell, 1999); (c) examined factors hypothesized to affect respondents' perceptions of a hierarchical workplace romance (Jones, 1999; Powell, 2001); and (d) developed a model of, and experimentally examined, the

Charles A. Pierce is an associate professor of industrial/organizational psychology at Montana State University. He received his Ph.D. in social psychology from the State University of New York at Albany. His research interests include workplace romance, sexual harassment, and research methods.

Herman Aguinis is an associate professor of management at the University of Colorado at Denver. He received his Ph.D. in industrial/organizational psychology from the State University of New York at Albany. His research interests include personnel selection, social power and influence, and research methods.

The research reported herein was supported by a grant awarded to Charles Pierce from the National Science Foundation's MONTS EPSCoR Program. The authors thank Brandee Broberg, Aysem Karahan, Jeff Mark, Ly-Minh Pham, and Jennifer Rausch for their assistance with data entry. Portions of this article were presented at the meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, San Diego, April 2001.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Charles A. Pierce, Department of Psychology, 304 Traphagen Hall, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59717-3440; e-mail: capierce@montana.edu.

link between dissolved workplace romances and sexually harassing behavior (Pierce & Aguinis, 1997, 2001; Pierce et al., 2000). Given that workplace romances may affect critical organizational variables and, moreover, that they can result in sexual harassment claims (e.g., see *Cooper v. Wyeth Ayerst Lederle*, 2000; *Cross v. Cleaver*, 1998; *Newton v. Cadwell Laboratories*, 1998; SHRM, 1998, 2002; *Succar v. Dade County School Board*, 1999), it is important to identify factors that help explain the formation and impact of such liaisons.

The goal of the present study is to provide a test of hypothesized direct relationships regarding some of the key formation and impact factors from the Pierce et al. (1996) model of workplace romance. As part of their comprehensive review of the workplace romance literature, Pierce et al. (1996) developed a conceptual model of numerous factors hypothesized to account for the formation and impact of romantic relationships at work. These factors are derived from social psychological theories of repeated exposure, interpersonal attraction, love, emotion, attitudes and behavior, social exchange, and impression management. For example, in terms of the formation of workplace romances, Pierce et al. proposed that factors such as propinquity, repeated exposure, attitude similarity, physiological arousal, and evaluation of overt body characteristics can determine the extent to which two employees are attracted to one another. This attraction, in turn, may foster the desire for a workplace romance. Whether a workplace romance will actually develop between two employees may depend on factors such as their attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work, their levels of perceived job autonomy, and the organization's culture. With regard to the impact of workplace romances, Pierce et al. proposed that, under certain conditions, factors such as the romance participants' levels of job productivity, work motivation, job satisfaction, and job involvement may be affected. In addition, participation in a workplace romance may influence managerial decisions regarding promotions, relocations, and, in some cases, terminations.

To date, despite the recommendation of Powell & Foley (1998: 438) for "an increased level of empirical research to support or disconfirm theories of workplace romance that are already available," researchers have not reported an empirical test of any model of formation and impact factors regarding workplace romance. Thus, the extent to which social psychological theories are helpful for explaining the formation and impact of romantic relationships in organizations is unclear. We therefore formulated several hypotheses and a corresponding model based on key portions of the Pierce et al. conceptual model of workplace romance. Moreover, the rationale for our hypotheses is derived from Pierce et al. Next, we develop hypotheses that entail factors predicted to account for the formation and impact of workplace romances.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Formation of Workplace Romances

At present, the factors that are responsible for fostering workplace romances are unknown. Employees' attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work and levels of perceived job autonomy have been proposed as predictors of their participation in a workplace romance (Pierce et al., 1996). We chose to assess these two formation factors because, according to the stages of development of a romance proposed by Pierce et al., employees' attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work and levels of perceived job autonomy immediately precede, and thus should be predictive of, their participation in a workplace romance.

Attitude toward romance and sexual intimacy at work.

In support of the theoretical link between attitudes and behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), individuals' attitudes toward an issue can predict their behavior relevant to that issue (Kim & Hunter, 1993). Stated differently, individuals' behavior is often a product of their belief system. However, empirical support for a link between employees' attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work and their participation in a current workplace romance has yet to be provided. We tested the following:

Hypothesis 1. Employees' attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work are positively associated with their participation in a workplace romance.

Job autonomy. An employee's level of job autonomy is defined as the extent to which he/she perceives the opportunity to make decisions about his/her own and other's work (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and, moreover, whether he/she has the freedom to move around physically at work and socialize with other employees (Haavio-Mannila, Kauppinen-Toropainen, & Kandolin, 1988). Employees who perceive that their jobs are characterized by autonomy may find it easier to develop a workplace romance because of the potential for repeated social interactions with fellow employees (Haavio-Mannila et al., 1988; Pierce et al., 1996). Perceiving one's job as autonomous may also lead an employee to believe that he/she has discretion in his/her job and that his/her behavior is therefore not closely monitored. We tested the following:

Hypothesis 2. Employees' levels of perceived job autonomy are positively associated with their participation in a workplace romance.

Impact of Workplace Romances

It is unknown whether, once they are involved in workplace romances, employees differ in terms of their job-related atti-

tudes and behaviors compared to employees not involved in workplace romances. Employees' levels of job performance, work motivation, and job satisfaction may be affected by their participation in a workplace romance (Pierce et al., 1996). We also discuss employees' levels of organizational commitment as a potential impact factor. We chose to examine these four impact factors because each is a key variable that determines an organization's overall effectiveness.

Job performance. Research on the association between employees' participation in a workplace romance and their job performance (e.g., quantity and quality of work) has reported mixed results and, thus, the nature of this association remains ambiguous (Pierce et al., 1996). However, consistent with impression management theory, researchers have proposed that because workplace romances are often perceived negatively by coworkers and management, romance participants may attempt to counteract by impressing their supervisors via enhancing their job performance (Dillard, 1987; Dillard & Broetzmann, 1989). If so, then participation in a workplace romance could result in improved performance at work. We tested the following:

Hypothesis 3. Employees' participation in a workplace romance is positively associated with their level of job performance.

Intrinsic work motivation. Intrinsic work motivation is conceptualized as an employee's motivation to work for its own sake, such that aspects of the work itself are interesting, engaging, or satisfying (Amabile, Hill, Hennessey, & Tighe, 1994). Workplace romances may enhance participants' work motivation because they feel better about themselves and are enthusiastic about the romantic aspect of their work (Dillard & Broetzmann, 1989; Mainiero, 1989). Thus, perhaps employees' jobs become more interesting or engaging as a function of participating in a workplace romance, which could enhance their intrinsic motivation to work. We tested the following:

Hypothesis 4. Employees' participation in a workplace romance is positively associated with their level of intrinsic work motivation.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is conceptualized as an employee's affective reaction to his or her job that results from comparing desired to actual work outcomes (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992). Employees' levels of life satisfaction have been shown to be positively associated with their levels of job satisfaction (Judge & Watanabe, 1993). Thus, consistent with an affective spillover hypothesis, participating in a workplace romance could enhance a participant's job satisfaction (Pierce et al., 1996). We tested the following:

Hypothesis 5. Employees' participation in a workplace romance is positively associated with their level of job satisfaction.

Organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is conceptualized as the extent to which an employee identifies with and is involved in his or her current organization. Organizational commitment is characterized by a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). Given this conceptualization, employees may become more attitudinally or behaviorally committed to their organization while participating in a workplace romance that is not prohibited or discouraged by the organization. Our proposition is based on impression management theory. Knowing that workplace romances are often perceived negatively by coworkers and management (Pierce et al., 1996), romance participants may attempt to counteract by managing a favorable impression via overtly increasing their level of organizational commitment. We tested the following:

Hypothesis 6. Employees' participation in a workplace romance is positively associated with their level of organizational commitment.

METHODS

Participants

Study participants consisted of 465 employees. Fifty-seven percent were men. Seventy-eight percent were white, 14 percent were Asian, 4 percent were Hispanic, and 2 percent were African American. Their ages ranged from twenty-one to fifty-six years ($M = 30.43$ years). Forty-nine percent were single, 46 percent were married, and 5 percent were divorced. Sixty-eight percent were enrolled part-time in an MBA program, and the remaining 32 percent were enrolled part-time in an MS program in finance, information systems, accounting, management, international business, marketing, or health administration.

In terms of their current employment, 72 percent of the study participants were employed full-time and 14 percent were employed part-time. Forty-seven percent were employed in an organization with fewer than 500 employees and 53 percent were employed in an organization with more than 500 employees. Examples of industries in which they were employed include telecommunications, oil, aerospace, defense, health care, education, retail, advertising, manufacturing, marketing, computer technology, banking, consulting, and construction. Examples of their job titles include human resources director, marketing director, bank president, senior engineer, test engineer, program analyst, financial analyst, certified public accountant, environmental scientist, chief financial officer, sales manager, production manager, sales as-

sociate, teacher, and paralegal. The participants' mean tenure in their current organization was 3.61 years and their mean number of years of work experience was 8.73. Finally, their mean number of years of supervisory experience was 3.25 and the mean number of employees they were responsible for supervising was 15.79.

Procedure

Questionnaires were administered to and collected from 465 individuals during one of their evening graduate business classes. The questionnaire included measures of study variables and respondents' demographics. All individuals were informed via the questionnaire's written instructions that (a) their participation in the study was voluntary; (b) their responses were anonymous and would not be furnished to anyone other than the researchers conducting the study; (c) their responses would be used solely for research (nonadministrative) purposes; and (d) their responses, where applicable, should be based on their current employment.

Measures

Attitude toward romance and sexual intimacy at work.

Respondents' attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work were assessed using seven items adapted from Powell's (1986) measure of beliefs regarding romance and sexual intimacy in the workplace. Sample items include: "Sexual relations foster better communication between the two workers involved in the relationship," "It is all right for someone to look for a dating partner at work," and "It is all right for someone to look for a marriage partner at work" (1 = strongly disagree, to 7 = strongly agree). As expected, results of a confirmatory factor analysis using Amos 4.0 (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999) supported the fit of a one-factor model for the attitudinal items (Comparative fit index [CFI], Incremental fit index [IFI], & Normed fit index [NFI] = .95; Relative fit index [RFI] = .90). (Results of all confirmatory factor analyses reported herein are based on using raw data as input and on maximum likelihood estimation.) Factor loadings (i.e., standardized regression coefficients) for the seven items ranged from .27 to .96 and each was significant at $p < .001$.

Job autonomy. Respondents' levels of perceived job autonomy were measured using three items from the Job Diagnostic Survey (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). The three items are as follows: "How much autonomy is there in your job? That is, to what extent does your job permit you to decide on your own how to go about doing the work?" (1 = very little autonomy, to 7 = very much autonomy); "The job denies me any chance to use my personal initiative or judgment in car-

rying out the work" (1 = very inaccurate, to 7 = very accurate); and "The job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do the work" (1 = very inaccurate, to 7 = very accurate). As expected, results of a confirmatory factor analysis supported the fit of a one-factor model for the autonomy items (CFI, IFI, NFI, & RFI = .99). Factor loadings for the three items ranged from .64 to .88 and each was significant at $p < .001$.

Participation in a workplace romance. Participation in a workplace romance was measured by asking respondents to indicate whether they were currently romantically involved with (e.g., dating, married to) a member of their present organization (1 = Yes, 0 = No).

Job performance. Job performance was measured using the following items adapted from Farh, Dobbins, & Cheng (1991): "What do you think of your quality of work with respect to your job? In other words, are your job outcomes perfect, free of error, and of high accuracy?" (1 = very low quality, to 5 = excellent quality); "What do you think of your work efficiency with respect to your job? In other words, what is your assessment of your work speed or quantity of work?" (1 = very low efficiency, to 5 = excellent efficiency); and "What do you think of your job performance? In other words, are you able to complete quality work on time for your job?" (1 = very poor performance, to 5 = excellent performance). As expected, results of a confirmatory factor analysis supported the fit of a one-factor model for these three performance items (CFI, IFI, NFI, & RFI = .99). Factor loadings for the three items ranged from .62 to .81 and each was significant at $p < .001$. With respect to this measure, we informed respondents that their data would be used only for research purposes, which reduces self-appraisal leniency (Farh & Werbel, 1986).

Intrinsic work motivation. Respondents' levels of intrinsic work motivation were measured using the six-item Intrinsic Job Motivation (IJM) scale (Cook, Hepworth, Wall, & Warr, 1981; Warr, Cook, & Wall, 1979). Sample IJM items include: "I feel a sense of personal satisfaction when I do this job well," "I take pride in doing my job as well as I can," and "I feel unhappy when my work is not up to my usual standard" (1 = strongly disagree, to 7 = strongly agree). As expected, results of a confirmatory factor analysis supported the fit of a one-factor model for the IJM items (CFI, IFI, & NFI = .99; RFI = .98). Factor loadings for the six items ranged from .27 to .82 and each was significant at $p < .001$.

Job satisfaction. Respondents' levels of overall satisfaction with their job were measured using Quinn & Staines' (1979) item "All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your job?" (1 = not at all satisfied, to 4 = very satisfied).

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliability Estimates^a

Variable	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Attitude toward romance and sexual intimacy at work	3.47	1.03	(.78)						
2. Job autonomy	5.25	1.29	-.12*	(.78)					
3. Participation in a current workplace romance	0.09	0.28	.17***	.07	—				
4. Job performance	4.11	0.62	-.06	.18***	-.05	(.75)			
5. Intrinsic work motivation	5.81	0.80	-.02	.16***	-.03	.12**	(.76)		
6. Job satisfaction	2.84	0.84	-.08	.44***	.11*	.14**	.25***	—	
7. Organizational commitment	4.32	1.27	-.04	.35***	.08†	.17***	.23***	.68***	(.92)

^a Range of *n*, 452 to 465. Cronbach's alphas are in parentheses on the main diagonal.

† *p* < .10

* *p* < .05

** *p* < .01

*** *p* < .001

Organizational commitment. Respondents' levels of attitudinal and behavioral commitment to their current organization were measured using the fifteen-item Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; Porter et al., 1974). Sample OCQ items include: "I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful," "I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar," and "I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization" (1 = strongly disagree, to 7 = strongly agree). As expected, results of a confirmatory factor analysis supported the fit of a one-factor model for the fifteen items (CFI and IFI = .98; NFI & RFI = .97). Factor loadings for the items ranged from .23 to .86 and each was significant at *p* < .001.

Finally, to avoid increasing respondents' awareness of our research topic, we included the workplace romance measures toward the end of our questionnaire near the demographic measures.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliability estimates for each of our study variables. Reliability estimates range from .75 to .92, indicating that each of the multi-item measures was internally consistent. These internal consistency estimates, together with results of the confirmatory factor analyses summarized in the Methods section, indicate that the measures we used are psychometrically sound. In terms of additional descriptive information, the duration of employees' current workplace romances ranged from less than one month to twenty-five years (*M* = four years, two months, *Mdn* = two years, eight months). Our re-

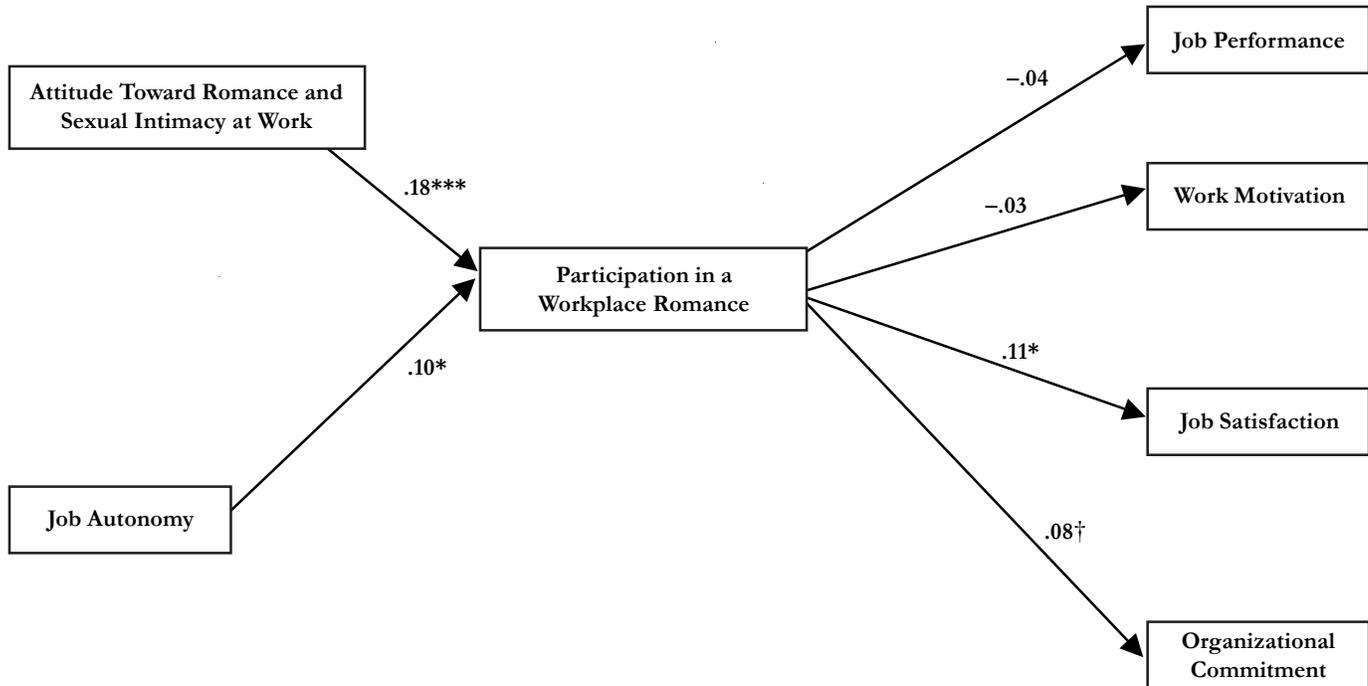
ported workplace romance participation rate was 9 percent of the respondents, which is similar to the analogous rate reported in prior studies (e.g., Pierce, 1998).

Test of a Hypothesized Model of Formation and Impact Factors

To test Hypotheses 1 through 6, we examined a single-indicator, path-analytic model that specified (a) employees' attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work and levels of perceived job autonomy as predictors of their participation in a current workplace romance; and (b) employees' participation in a current workplace romance as a predictor of their levels of job performance, intrinsic work motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. We conducted this path analysis using Amos 4.0 with raw data as input and maximum likelihood estimation. In the model shown in Figure 1, parameter estimates for each path are standardized regression coefficients (β s) and were used to test Hypotheses 1 through 6. It should be noted that Table 1 reports only bivariate correlations. Unlike the parameter estimates generated from our path analyses, each zero-order correlation reported in Table 1 does not take into account simultaneously the interrelationships among all the variables in our hypothesized model shown in Figure 1. Hence, because the goal of the present study is to test a theory-based model, and not only bivariate relationships, we tested our hypotheses via path analysis.

In support of Hypotheses 1 and 2, results for the path-analytic model shown in Figure 1 indicate that employees' attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work and levels of perceived job autonomy are positively associated with their participation in a current workplace romance.¹

FIGURE 1
Model of Workplace Romance Formation and Impact Factors



Note: Completely standardized path-analytic solution for factors associated with employees' participation in a workplace romance ($n = 465$). Each variable was modeled with an error term.

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Inconsistent with Hypotheses 3 and 4, results for the model shown in Figure 1 reveal that employees' participation in a current workplace romance is not significantly associated with their levels of job performance or intrinsic work motivation. In support of Hypothesis 5, results for the model shown in Figure 1 indicate that employees' participation in a current workplace romance is positively associated with their level of job satisfaction. With respect to Hypothesis 6, results for the model shown in Figure 1 indicate that employees' participation in a current workplace romance is marginally positively associated with their level of organizational commitment. Results of this path analysis also support the fit of the model shown in Figure 1 (CFI, IFI, & NFI = .95; RFI = .91).

Tests of Two Alternative Models

Considering the potential limitations of self-report measures and cross-sectional designs, we assessed two alternative path-analytic models to that shown in Figure 1. First, to address the potential concern that our model shown in Figure 1 suffers from mono-method bias, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis whereby we specified each of our seven observed variables shown in Figure 1 as an indicator of a com-

mon underlying factor. Results for this one-factor model indicate that each of the factor loadings was nonsignificant ($ps > .05$) and generally less than .50.

Second, to address the potential concern that our model shown in Figure 1 suffers from a directionality or reverse causality problem, we specified our hypothesized formation factors as impact factors (i.e., criteria) and our hypothesized impact factors as formation factors (i.e., predictors). More specifically, we assessed a single-indicator, path-analytic model that specified (a) employees' levels of job performance, intrinsic work motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment as predictors of their participation in a current workplace romance; and (b) employees' participation in a current workplace romance as a predictor of their attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work and level of perceived job autonomy. Results indicate that employees' levels of job performance, intrinsic work motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment were not significant predictors of their participation in a current workplace romance ($ps > .05$ for corresponding β s). In addition, employees' participation in a current workplace romance was not a significant predictor of their level of perceived job autonomy ($p > .05$ for corresponding β). Across these analyses, only the positive association between employees' participation in a

current workplace romance and their attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work was significant ($p < .05$ for corresponding β).

DISCUSSION

The goal of our study was to provide a test of hypothesized direct relationships regarding some of the key formation and impact factors from the conceptual model of workplace romance of Pierce et al. (1996). Results provide support for Hypotheses 1 and 2 in that employees' attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work and levels of perceived job autonomy were predictive of their participation in a current workplace romance. Results also provide support for Hypothesis 5 and tentative support for Hypothesis 6 in that employees' participation in a current workplace romance was predictive of their levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

These results provide support for the validity of several portions of the conceptual model of workplace romance of Pierce et al. Specifically, in terms of formation factors, the present study indicates that employees' attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work and levels of perceived job autonomy predict their participation in a current workplace romance. In terms of impact factors, the present study indicates that employees' participation in a current workplace romance predicts their level of job satisfaction. In addition to supporting portions of the model of Pierce et al., these results are also consistent with the discussion of Powell & Foley (1998) on potential antecedents and consequences of workplace romance. Although Hypotheses 3 and 4 were not supported, the corresponding results suggest that employees' participation in a workplace romance is not significantly negatively associated with their job performance or intrinsic work motivation. Stated differently, even though our results with respect to Hypotheses 3 and 4 do not support the Pierce et al. model, they also do not support the widespread belief that participating in a workplace romance leads to lower levels of job performance and work motivation among those involved in the liaison (see Mainiero, 1995).

As noted at the beginning of the article, our results were predicted based on several social psychological theories. First, the theory of reasoned action was used to predict the positive association between employees' attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work and their participation in a workplace romance. According to this theory, individuals' attitudes toward an issue can predict their behavior with respect to that issue. Second, consider the effect of being repeatedly exposed to an employee on becoming interpersonally attracted to that employee. Employees who have a great degree of job autonomy may be apt to experience repeated social contact with other employees and, moreover, not expect their social

interactions to be closely monitored. If this repeated social contact elicits positive emotions, it can enhance the likelihood of the formation of a romantic liaison. Third, impression management theory was used to predict the positive association between employees' participation in a workplace romance and their level of organizational commitment. Knowing that coworkers and management often perceive workplace romances negatively, romance participants may attempt to manage a favorable impression at work by overtly enhancing their level of attitudinal or behavioral commitment to the organization. Finally, the notion of affective spillover was used to predict the positive association between employees' participation in a workplace romance and their level of job satisfaction. Positive emotions experienced in an employee's personal life, such as the potential joy of a workplace romance, may spill over and influence his or her emotions experienced at work.

The present study provides a unique contribution to the existing workplace romance literature. We provide an initial empirical test of, and support for, a model that was derived from key portions of an untested conceptual model of workplace romance. To date, researchers have not reported an empirical test of any model of formation and impact factors regarding workplace romance. Results of testing our hypothesized model suggest that the aforementioned social psychological theories may indeed be helpful for explaining the formation and impact of romantic relationships in organizations.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The primary limitation of the present study is that we used self-report measures and a cross-sectional design. The nature of our study is, however, well within the bounds of Spector's (1994) stipulation that self-reports and cross-sectional designs are appropriate when studying a relatively unexamined organizational phenomenon or when measuring work-related attitudes, perceptions, and affective reactions. Given that our study represents an initial attempt to test empirically a model derived from portions of a conceptual model of workplace romance, we consider a cross-sectional design to be appropriate. The use of self-reports is also justifiable considering that many of the variables we measured are work-related attitudes, perceptions, and affective reactions. From an empirical standpoint, results of testing our two alternative models do not support an argument favoring the presence of mono-method bias or an argument favoring problems with the directionality of our hypothesized model shown in Figure 1. In terms of our model's directionality, while some may favor alternative explanations such as performing well on the job, being satisfied with one's job and being motivated to work are each predictors of an employee's participation in a workplace romance. Our results do not support this asser-

tion. In sum, we acknowledge that self-reports and cross-sectional designs have limitations, but we believe that their use was appropriate in the present study.

On a related note, another concern with using self-report measures of variables such as job performance is the potential for socially desirable responding. We believe that our results should not be interpreted as a function of socially desirable responding. Most of the measures used in the present study, including self-appraised job performance, have been shown to correlate near zero and nonsignificantly with a valid measure of socially desirable responding (Pierce, 1998).

It is also noteworthy that our results cannot be explained as a function of employees' levels of satisfaction with their current workplace or nonworkplace romance. That is, employees who were involved in a workplace romance were equally as satisfied with their current romance compared to employees who were involved in a nonworkplace romance. On a seven-point scale ranging from 1 = extremely dissatisfied, to 7 = extremely satisfied, the reported levels of satisfaction with their current romance for those who were involved in a workplace romance ($M [SD] = 5.47 [1.69]$) versus those involved in a nonworkplace romance ($M [SD] = 5.47 [1.69]$) were not significantly different ($t [377] = 0.01, p > .05$).

In the future, longitudinal designs could be used to gain an even more precise understanding of the formation and impact of workplace romances. For example, researchers could use experience sampling methodology (Alliger & Williams, 1993) to assess whether employees' daily, weekly, or monthly fluctuations in work-related reactions and experiences are related to their level of involvement in a workplace romance. Longitudinal designs would also allow researchers to examine some of the proposed moderator variables or boundary conditions in the conceptual model of Pierce et al. For instance, a longitudinal design could be used to assess the proposed moderating effect of stage of a workplace romance (early vs. late) on the association between employees' participation in a workplace romance and their level of job involvement. While the goal of the present study was to test a model that would reveal whether some of the hypothesized direct relationships of Pierce et al. are valid, we recommend that researchers test alternative models in the future. These models could incorporate some of the proposed moderator variables from the Pierce et al. conceptual model.

CONCLUSION

Our study represents an initial attempt to test empirically key portions of a conceptual model of formation and impact factors regarding workplace romance. In view of our results, we are not suggesting that workplace romances should be

encouraged. However, our results suggest that workplace romances may not always be detrimental to a participant's job-related experiences, thereby suggesting that managerial actions such as terminating or prohibiting workplace romances could potentially impede an organization's effectiveness. In closing, given the conceptual advancements regarding workplace romance (see Pierce et al., 1996; Powell & Foley, 1998), we hope that researchers will continue to examine empirically factors hypothesized to account for the formation and impact of romantic relationships in organizations.

NOTE

¹ Consistent with Powell (1986) and Pierce (1998), female respondents held less favorable attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work ($M [SD] = 3.23 [0.97]$) than did male respondents ($M [SD] = 3.64 [1.05]$). Indeed, the point-biserial correlation between respondents' gender and their attitudes toward romance and sexual intimacy at work was .20 ($p < .001$). Considering this gender difference, we computed a partial correlation (controlling for respondents' gender) between attitude toward romance and sexual intimacy at work and participation in a workplace romance ($r = .16, p < .001$). This partial correlation is virtually identical to the corresponding zero-order correlation reported in Table 1 and hence provides additional support for Hypothesis 1.

REFERENCES

- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. 1980. *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Alliger, G.M., & Williams, K.J. 1993. Using signal-contingent experience sampling methodology to study work in the field: A discussion and illustration examining task perceptions and mood. *Personnel Psychology*, 46: 525-549.
- Amabile, T.M., Hill, K.G., Hennessey, B.A., & Tighe, E.M. 1994. The work preference inventory: Assessing intrinsic and extrinsic motivational orientations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66: 950-967.
- Arbuckle, J.L., & Wothke, W. 1999. *Amos 4.0 user's guide*. Chicago: SmallWaters Co.
- Bureau of National Affairs. 1988. *Corporate affairs: Nepotism, office romance, & sexual harassment*. Washington, DC: Bureau of National Affairs.
- Cleveland, J.N., Stockdale, M., & Murphy, K.R. 2000. Physical attractiveness, interpersonal relationships, and romance at work. In J.N. Cleveland, M. Stockdale, & K.R. Murphy (eds.), *Women and men in organizations: Sex and gender issues at work*: 67-92. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Cook, J.D., Hepworth, S.J., Wall, T.D., & Warr, P.B. 1981. *The experience of work: A compendium and review of 249 measures and their use*. London: Academic.
- Cooper v. Wyeth Ayerst Lederle*, 106 F. Supp. 2d 479 (S.D.N.Y. 2000).
- Cranny, C.J., Smith, P.C., & Stone, E.F. (eds.). 1992. *Job satisfaction: How people feel about their jobs and how it affects performance*. New York: Lexington.

- Cross v. Cleaver*, 142 F.3d 1059 (8th Cir. 1998).
- Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. 1985. Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior. In R.M. Steers & L.W. Porter (eds.), *Motivation and work behavior* (5th ed.): 44–58. New York: Plenum.
- Dillard, J.P. 1987. Close relationships at work: Perceptions of the motives and performance of relational participants. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 4: 179–193.
- Dillard, J.P., & Broetzmann, S.M. 1989. Romantic relationships at work: Perceived changes in job-related behaviors as a function of participant's motive, partner's motive, and gender. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 19: 93–101.
- Dillard, J.P., & Witteman, H. 1985. Romantic relationships at work: Organizational and personal influences. *Human Communication Research*, 12: 99–116.
- Farh, J.L., & Werbel, J.D. 1986. Effects of purpose of the appraisal and expectation of validation on self-appraisal leniency. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71: 527–529.
- Farh, J.L., Dobbins, G.H., & Cheng, B.S. 1991. Cultural relativity in action: A comparison of self-ratings made by Chinese and U.S. workers. *Personnel Psychology*, 44: 129–147.
- Foley, S., & Powell, G.N. 1999. Not all is fair in love and work: Coworkers' preferences for and responses to managerial interventions regarding workplace romances. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20: 1043–1056.
- Haavio-Mannila, E., Kauppinen-Toropainen, K., & Kandolin, I. 1988. The effect of sex composition of the workplace on friendship, romance, and sex at work. In B.A. Gutek, A.H. Stromberg, & L. Harwood (eds.), *Women and work*, vol. 3: 123–137. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Hackman, J.R., & Oldham, G.R. 1975. Development of the job diagnostic survey. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 60: 159–170.
- Jones, G.E. 1999. Hierarchical workplace romance: An experimental examination of team member perceptions. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20: 1057–1072.
- Judge, T.A., & Watanabe, S. 1993. Another look at the job satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78: 939–948.
- Kim, M., & Hunter, J.E. 1993. Relationships among attitudes, behavioral intentions, and behavior: A meta-analysis of past research, Part 2. *Communication Research*, 20: 331–364.
- Mainiero, L.A. 1986. A review and analysis of power dynamics in organizational romances. *Academy of Management Review*, 11: 750–762.
- . 1989. *Office romance: Love, power, and sex in the workplace*. New York: Rawson Associates.
- . 1995. Sexual attraction in the workplace is often counterproductive. In J.S. Petrikin (ed.), *Male/female roles: Opposing viewpoints*: 284–288. San Diego: Greenhaven.
- Mowday, R.T., Steers, R.M., & Porter, L.W. 1979. The measurement of organizational commitment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 14: 224–247.
- Newton v. Cadwell Laboratories*, 156 F.3d 880 (8th Cir. 1998).
- Pierce, C.A. 1998. Factors associated with participating in a romantic relationship in a work environment. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 28: 1712–1730.
- Pierce, C.A., & Aguinis, H. 1997. Bridging the gap between romantic relationships and sexual harassment in organizations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 18: 197–200.
- . 2001. A framework for investigating the link between workplace romance and sexual harassment. *Group and Organization Management*, 26: 206–229.
- Pierce, C.A., Aguinis, H., & Adams, S.K.R. 2000. Effects of a dissolved workplace romance and rater characteristics on responses to a sexual harassment accusation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43: 869–880.
- Pierce, C.A., Byrne, D., & Aguinis, H. 1996. Attraction in organizations: A model of workplace romance. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 17: 5–32.
- Porter, L.W., Steers, R.M., Mowday, R.T., & Boulian, P.V. 1974. Organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover among psychiatric technicians. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 59: 603–609.
- Powell, G.N. 1986. What do tomorrow's managers think about sexual intimacy in the workplace? *Business Horizons*, 29(4): 30–35.
- . 2001. Workplace romances between senior-level executives and lower-level employees: An issue of work disruption and gender. *Human Relations*, 54: 1519–1544.
- Powell, G.N., & Foley, S. 1998. Something to talk about: Romantic relationships in organizational settings. *Journal of Management*, 24: 421–448.
- Quinn, R.E. 1977. Coping with cupid: The formation, impact, and management of romantic relationships in organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 22: 30–45.
- Quinn, R.P., & Staines, G.L. 1979. *The 1977 quality of employment survey: Descriptive statistics, with comparison data from the 1969–70 and 1972–73 surveys*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Survey Research Center.
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). 1998, January. *Workplace romance survey* (item no. 62.17014). Alexandria, VA: SHRM Public Affairs Department.
- . 2002. *Workplace romance*. Alexandria, VA: SHRM Survey Program.
- Spector, P.E. 1994. Using self-report questionnaires in OB research: A comment on the use of a controversial method. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 15: 385–392.
- Succar v. Dade County School Board*, 60 F. Supp. 2d 1309 (S.D. Fl. 1999).
- Warr, P.B., Cook, J., & Wall, T.D. 1979. Scales for the measurement of some work attitudes and aspects of psychological well-being. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 52: 129–148.