

# SELECTED REFERENCES

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SECTION

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## WORKPLACE ROMANCE\*\*

Brown, Theresa J. and Elizabeth Rice Allgeier. "Managers' perceptions of workplace romances: an interview study." *Journal of Business and Psychology*, Winter, 1995, pp. 169-176.

When thirty managers were asked about their reactions to workplace romances, their responses indicated that managers recommend intervention when the relationship is between participants of unequal organizational status and when it negatively affects the work group. There was no gender differential in the responses of the managers toward workplace romances in general, though the data suggest that the observer's gender may affect the reaction when the participants in the relationship are of different ages.

Hoffman, Lynn, Sharon Clinebell, and John Kilpatrick. "Office romances: the new battleground over employees' rights to privacy and the employers' right to intervene." *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, December, 1997, pp. 263-275.

The authors outline the rights and responsibilities for employees and employers as follows: 1) In co-worker to co-worker relationships, employees have the greatest rights to privacy and employers the fewest rights to intervene unless the relationship affects performance or ends in a sexual harassment claim. 2) Noninvolved co-workers have rights similar to the company's—no intervention unless the affair affects their productivity. 3) In relationships between supervisors and subordinates, employers have more rights to intervene because both the company and the supervisor are exposed to sexual harassment claims. The authors emphasize the need for employers to establish and communicate policies and procedures regarding sexual harassment, office dating, and conflict of interest.

Kennedy, Marilyn Moats. "The politics of couples; couples working for the same company." *Across the Board*, January, 1995, pp.11-12.

The author discusses the relaxation of corporate rules regarding office romances, intracorporate marriages, and other serious relationships. Reasons offered include: 1) new corporate sensitivity to nontraditional couples, 2) recognition that the smaller cohort of workers coming up the ladder are more independent, and 3) fear of lawsuits surrounding rights of privacy. Among the benefits to the company of having couples in the organization include fewer problems with transfers by relocating both partners. Problems with same-company couples include: 1) performance appraisals and subsequent differentials in promotions and raises, 2) dealing with each member of a couple as half a pair, rather than as an individual, and 3) couples on competing work teams.

\* Prepared by Linda Oppenheim, Social Sciences Reference Librarian.

\*\* Items on this list should be ordered directly from the publisher or obtained through your library. Addresses and prices are given in connection only for monographs and documents in print.

Mainiero, Lisa A. "Dangerous liaisons? A review of current issues concerning male and female romantic relationships in the workplace." In *Women in management: trends, issues, and challenges in managerial diversity*, pp. 162-185, edited by Ellen A. Fagenson. (*Women and Work: A Research and Policy Series*, Volume 4) Thousand Oaks, CA 91320. Sage Publications (2455 Teller Rd.). 1993. 342pp. \$29.95, paper.

This chapter focuses on the complexities of romantic relationships between male and female managers. Mainiero presents a model of the power dynamics for couples who are romantically involved. The factors that affect the quality of their experience are: 1) social and organizational trends, 2) participant motives, 3) issues of risk and disclosure, 4) role conflict, and 5) effects on the couple's work motivation. The author concludes by outlining the implications of romantic relationships for management practice and for women.

Pierce, Charles A. and Herman Aguinis. "Bridging the gap between romantic relationships and sexual harassment in organizations." *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, May, 1997, pp. 197-200.

Workplace romances and sexual harassment have been treated as unrelated organizational issues, though they both share a social-sexual component. The link between the two, Pierce and Aguinis surmise, derives from soured hierarchical romances, in which the participants differ in their organizational status and have continued exposure to one another required by daily work interactions. If the supervisor terminates the romance, the subordinate former partner might accuse him or her of sexual harassment. If a subordinate-partner terminates the romance, the supervisor-partner might attempt to continue it with behavior that could be considered sexually harassing. Also, a supervisor-partner might try to manage the dissolution of the relationship by relocating or terminating the subordinate-partner. The authors recommend that organizations adopt realistic policies to manage hierarchical romances.

Powell, Gary N. and Sharon Foley. "Something to talk about: romantic relationships in organizational settings." *Journal of Management*, May 1, 1998, pp. 421-448.

The authors review the existing scholarly literature that addresses the following questions: 1) What factors contribute to or inhibit the formation of romantic relationships in organizational settings? 2) What types of romances occur and how do they evolve over time? 3) What factors influence the impact of these relationships? 4) What kinds of policies and what kinds of interventions should be implemented? For future research Powell and Foley recommend: an increased level of empirical research to test existing theories of workplace romance, greater use of theoretical frameworks, application of more rigorous research methods, greater use of laboratory and experimental methods, and more research into gay and lesbian workplace romances.

Powers, Dennis M. *The office romance: playing with fire without getting burned*. Buffalo, NY 14240. American Management Association (P.O. Box 4725). 1999. 316pp. \$22.95.

According to Powers, various surveys indicate that romantic interest between people at work is very high, from 25 to 33 percent. This is inevitable, the author claims. For the employee, his/her employment offers a safe place to meet people of similar economic, social, interest and educational levels; the opportunity and time to get to know one another; and continued closeness. The company receives the benefit of increased employee job satisfaction. Powers focuses on "pro-interactive" companies that support, or at least do not outlaw, socializing and romance. The company's expectation is that the people involved will be

professional and discrete. Supervisorial relationships are managed by eliminating evaluation and other functions that could lead to favoritism, transferring to other positions or changing functions. The companies still maintain strong sexual harassment policies. If corporations are inflexible regarding relationships between employees, couples will hide their association until they can find new jobs that allow them to preserve both their relationship and their careers. Powers presents cases from numerous interviews and includes sample office romance guidelines.

Schaner, Dean J. "Romance in the workplace: should employers act as chaperones?" *Employee Relations Law Journal*, Summer, 1994, pp. 47-71.

Schaner recommends that employers adopt clearly articulated, written policies to restrict "power-differentiated romantic relationships" between coworkers. He discusses justifications for coworker dating restrictions, including avoiding sexual harassment claims, allegations of favoritism and possible "reverse harassment" claims, job-site domestic disputes and the potential for workplace violence, diminished employee morale and productivity, and for some employers violation of morality. Schaner analyzes legal challenges to those restrictions, namely the constitutional rights of equal protection and privacy, sex discrimination theories, common-law tort actions including invasion of privacy, wrongful discharge, implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing, and intentional infliction of emotional distress. Finally, he enumerates several factors to cover in a model coworker dating policy, including restricting dating between supervisors and subordinates, communicating with the couple to determine options (transferring or resigning for one of the couple or demotion of supervisory employee), removing decision-making authority over the subordinate whom a supervisor dated, and applying the policy to various scenarios.

Segal, Jonathan A. "Love—what's work got to do with it?" *HR Magazine*, June, 1993, pp. 37-42.

Segal, an attorney, presents a general framework for employers to use when approaching the issue of consensual sex between co-workers: 1) Is there a legitimate employer interest in regulating the consensual relationship? 2) Do the affected employees have a legally enforceable right to engage in the consensual conduct, despite legitimate employer interest? 3) When there are legitimate interests on the part of both employer and affected employees, are there alternatives available to the employer that are less restrictive with regard to employee rights? Segal answers "yes" to the first two questions and proceeds to discuss how to accommodate the respective rights. He recommends that intimacy prohibitions be limited to relationships between supervisors and subordinates, but not confined to persons who are married. In the case of sweethearts who work for direct competitors, the author advises that employers require employees to execute confidentiality agreements with the consequence of personal liability as well as termination if broken. Since restrictions on relationships may conflict with rights of privacy stated in employee handbooks, Segal urges employers to add a "conspicuous disclaimer" to their handbooks, stating that the handbook is not a contract of employment.

Williams, Christine L., Patti A. Giuffre, and Kirsten Dellinger. "Sexuality in the workplace: organizational control, sexual harassment, and the pursuit of pleasure." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1999, pp. 73-93.

The authors argue that individuals can and do make the distinction between sexual harassment and consensual sexual behavior and feel that how the wide range of sexual interactions come to be labeled consensual or coercive deserves systematic sociological study. Their literature reviews include: 1) research on the

distinction between sexual harassment and sexual consent, 2) the popular and business literature on office romance, and 3) sociological research on consensual sexual relationships, including mate selection, organizational policy, and workplace culture. The authors found that organizations attempt to control and monitor sexual behavior among workers, but that workers resist and manipulate these controls. They also point out that organizational context is the determining factor in whether a set of behaviors is acceptable or unacceptable. Both individuals and organizations use double standards in deciding who can and cannot engage in sexual relationships in the workplace, and which relationships are valued and privileged. Marginalized groups may be over-represented among those who are excluded from workplace sexual behavior and therefore more likely to be charged with sexual harassment.

Wolkenbreit, Randi. "In order to form a more perfect union: applying no-spouse rules to employees who meet at work," *Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems*, Fall, 1997, pp. 119-165.

Wolkenbreit criticizes blanket no-spouse rules that are standard in the private sector and that require one spouse to leave a company when two employees marry. The author sees them as punitive, ineffective and unfair, being applied most often to women. Even narrower no-spouse rules that allow for married employees when there is no conflict of interest have an impact on employees. The first part of the article examines the social context of no-spouse rules in the workplace, describing the different types of rules and the justifications for them and explaining why they are ineffective and discriminatory. Part two examines the effectiveness of challenges to the rules in the private sector brought under state and federal anti-discrimination laws. Part three describes the failure of due process, equal protection, and First Amendment challenges to no-spouse rules in the public sector. The author suggests several changes to the legal system that would protect employees adversely affected by unwarranted no-spouse rules.

*Workplace romance survey*. Atlanta, GA 31193. Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM Distribution Center, P.O. Box 930132). 17pp. (Item #62.17014) \$40.00.

This report is based on the responses of 617 human resource professionals who responded to a January 1998 survey faxed to 2,750 randomly selected SHRM members. Among the findings are the following: 1) Thirteen percent of the respondents said that their organizations have a written policy about workplace romance, while an additional 14 percent said that their policy was unwritten, but widely understood. 2) For those whose organizations do have policies, 55 percent said that the policies permit, but discourage workplace romance. Thirty-two percent permit and 7 percent prohibit these situations. 3) Of the respondents whose organizations prohibit or discourage workplace romance, 88 percent did so because of potential claims of sexual harassment, 75 percent were concerned about the potential for retaliation if the romance ended, and 60 percent were concerned about the morale of co-workers. 4) Some organizations placed restrictions on romantic involvement. Seventy percent with some type of policy disallowed liaisons between supervisors and subordinates and 37 percent prohibited public displays of affection. 5) The consequences of violating these policies included transfer within the organization (42 percent), termination (27 percent), counseling (26 percent), formal reprimand (25 percent), demotion (7 percent), and no official consequence (25 percent). The outcomes reported by the respondents included marriage, complaints of favoritism from co-workers, claims of sexual harassment, and decreased productivity of the involved couple. Twelve percent of the respondents said that their organizations train supervisors on how to handle such relationships, 86 percent reported that there is no training, and the remainder was uncertain.