

**'Til 5pm Do Us Part: Intimate Relationships in the Workplace**

by

**Meghan Donohoe**

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**E. Kevin Kelloway, Ph.D.  
Supervisor**

**Lori Francis, Ph.D.  
Committee Member**

**David Bourgeois, Ph.D.  
Committee Member**

**Kathryne Dupré, Ph.D.  
External Examiner**

**Date: August 6, 2010**



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**'Til 5pm Do Us Part: Intimate Relationships in the Workplace**

by Meghan Donohoe

**Abstract**

In the current study, I sought to characterize the new concept of a work spouse relationship and compare it to three known types of intimate relationships in the workplace: close friendships, romantic relationships, and mentor relationships. A sample of 232 employees participated in the survey. First, a MANOVA compared the four relationships on constructs drawn from the workplace romance and work-family conflict, including the love quality of the relationship, motivation for entering into the relationship, role conflict and facilitation caused by the relationship, perceived alienation from others, and effects on individual health and affectivity. The work spouse relationship was found to be significantly different than the romantic relationship, close friendship, and mentor relationship. It is characterized by high levels of intimacy and passion, and is motivated by love. Second, exploratory factor analysis was used to understand the characteristics unique to the work spouse relationship through the development of a Work Spouse Characteristic Scale. Three factors were identified (work spouse, closeness, and love), however additional research is required to further validate this scale. Finally, implications and future research are discussed.

August 6, 2010

### 'Til 5pm Do Us Part: Intimate Relationships in the Workplace

The lines between career and personal life are increasingly blurred in today's workplace due to longer hours spent on the job as a result of travel, overtime, flextime and shift work (Carson & Barling, 2008). Having someone at work to share the daily pressures, frustrations, and joys of the job has led to more people pursuing close, intimate relationships in the workplace.

Factors such as proximity, repeated exposure, liking, and intensity help foster close relationships in the workplace (Anderson & Hunsaker, 1985; Carson & Barling, 2008; Maneiero, 1986, Pierce, Byrne, & Aguinis, 1996; Quinn, 1977). Working closely with others, either within the same work team or location contributes to increased social interaction among co-workers. Furthermore, repeated exposure to peers in the workplace, many of whom share similar attitudes and values (Carson & Barling, 2008), and the intensity of the working relationship, through the pursuance of similar work goals and the performance of similar tasks (Maneiero, 1986), contributes to the development of intimate relationships in the workplace. In short, the sheer nature of the workplace provides opportunities for intimate, long-lasting friendships and relationships to cultivate and thrive in the workplace (Anderson & Hunsaker, 1985).

Three types of intimate relationships in the workplace are well documented in the literature; close friends, mentor/mentees, and romantic partners. A fourth type of relationship, work spouses (a platonic workplace relationship that resembles a marriage; Wikipedia, 2010), has recently been gaining attention in the popular media and, until now, has not been examined empirically. In the current study, I seek to define the work

spouse relationship through the use of constructs that lend a well-rounded understanding of the characteristics of a relationship, including the love quality of the relationship, motivation for entering into the relationship, role conflict and facilitation caused by the relationship, perceived social support and alienation from others, and effects on individual health and affectivity. Given that the current study is exploratory in nature, only higher level hypotheses are posited.

### **Types of Intimate Relationships in the Workplace**

Four types of intimate relationships in the workplace are considered, the romantic relationship, close friendship, mentor relationships, and the work spouse relationship.

#### *The Romantic Relationship*

A workplace romance is defined as a relationship between two members of the same organization where some element of mutual sexuality or physical intimacy exists (Powell & Foley, 1998). Romantic relationships are ever present in today's workplaces. According to a 2009 survey from the job website Careerbuilder.com, 4 out of 10 workers report having dated a colleague. In addition, 65% to 86% of employees have either observed or participated in at least one workplace romance (Anderson & Hunsaker, 1985; Dillard & Witteman, 1985; Quinn, 1977). Romantic relationships in the workplace have prominently been considered heterosexual in nature, largely as a result of the exclusion of homosexual pairings in previous research (Powell & Foley, 1998).

There are mixed findings on the consequences of romantic relationships in the workplace. Both positive and negative changes in job performance and work productivity are associated with engaging in a romantic relationship in the workplace (Anderson &

Hunsaker, 1985; Dillard & Broetzman, 1989). On the one hand, having a romantic partner at work may stimulate an individual cognitively, leading to increased work involvement and willingness to put in extra time (Pierce, et al., 1996; Pierce, 1998; Quinn, 1977). On the other hand, increased cognitive distraction may lead to lower quality of work, causing tension and resentment within the organization (Anderson & Hunsaker, 1985; Pierce, 1998; Quinn 1977).

### *The Close Friendship*

A close friendship in the workplace (also known as a best friendship) refers to a psychologically and emotionally intimate bond between two individuals. Although this type of friendship is occurring within the workplace, it also extends outside of the workplace within the daily social lives of the individuals involved. Close friendships are more than just liking a person or acting in a friendly manner. Berman, West, and Richter (2002) define workplace friendships as:

Workplace friendships involve mutual commitment, trust, and shared values or interests between people at work, in ways that go beyond mere acquaintanceship but that exclude romance. These relations involve heightened norms of openness, informality, and inclusiveness... (pg. 217)

Close friendships in the workplace commonly occur between employees, their supervisors, and support staff, with friendships occurring most frequently between employees in different departments and across varying levels of age, gender, or status (Berman, West & Richter, 2002). Workplace friendships serve to increase the exchange of information and support that helps individuals perform their jobs successfully, in turn

reducing stress and improving quality of work (Berman, West & Richter, 2002). The greatest concerns held by employees regarding office friendships are the potential for increased gossip, and the possibility of the friendship transforming into a romantic relationship (Berman, West & Richter, 2002).

### *The Mentor Relationship*

Occurring between two members from different levels of the same organization, mentor relationships provide guidance and support to enhance the career development and psychosocial development of both individuals involved. This relationship can come about naturally within the organization, whereby a senior level employee takes personal interest in guiding, supporting and providing counsel to a more junior level employee (Kram, 1983), or between a direct supervisor/subordinate relationship where support is offered beyond the usual supervisory role (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). A mentor relationship can also be formed intentionally, through organizational mentoring programs that foster a “master/protégé” relationship (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). For the protégé, who is usually considered “junior” based on their longevity with the organization, the mentor relationship can provide career coaching, sponsorship, protection, and challenging work assignments that prepare the junior employee for organizational life and advancement opportunities (Kram, 1983). Positive psychosocial development is also provided to the protégé, through role-modeling, counseling, and friendship that fosters a sense of competence, confidence, and effectiveness in future company roles (Kram, 1983). Mentored individuals report higher levels of satisfaction and recognition, advantageous career opportunities and outcomes, and higher promotion rates than non-mentored

individuals (Fagenson, 1989). For the mentor, entering into a developmental relationship with a junior level employee serves to challenge, stimulate, and redirect one's energy into creative and productive action, functioning as an outlet to share wisdom and address concerns (Kram, 1983).

### *The Work Spouse Relationship*

The concept of the work spouse has been gaining attention in the popular media and can be considered a fourth type of intimate relationship present in the workplace. A work spouse, also known as a work husband/wife, office spouse, and office husband/wife, is a close platonic relationship between co-workers who share a special relationship, having bonds similar to those of a marriage (Work Spouse, 2009). Unlike romantic relationships and close friendships, the work spouse relationship only occurs within the boundaries of the workplace, rarely extending outside of work into the personal and social lives of the individuals involved.

Having never before been examined in published research literature, this intimate workplace relationship has become a much-discussed topic in the popular media. In 2009, one in ten workers surveyed by CareerBuilder.com (Erwin, 2009) reported having a workplace spouse. A similar poll in 2006 by Harris Interactive (Weiss, 2007) on attitudes in the American Workplace revealed that 17% of those surveyed had a work spouse, while according to Vault Inc., an American research and consulting firm (CNNmoney, 2006), 32% of workers have a work spouse. Furthermore, both single and married people reported having a work spouse at the same rate (Weiss, 2007) and many reported having had more than one (CNNMoney, 2006).

Although no research to date has been done to develop the work spouse construct, popular media and anecdotal evidence offers insight on the potential characteristics of this type of relationship. Some characteristics of the work spouse relationship are said to include co-dependence (e.g. depending on the other for supplies), shared jokes and experiences, acting as one another's special confidantes (e.g. sharing gripes about co-workers or office gossip), sharing of personal lives (e.g. favorite foods, personal issues), physical and emotional chemistry (e.g. finishing one another's sentences) and an unusual degree of honesty or openness (Erwin, 2009; Intini, 2006; Sandberg, 2003; Weiss, 2007; Work Spouse, 2009). In many cases, work spouses complement one another's skills and abilities, offering support to tackle large projects and ensuring one another's success (Erwin, 2009; Weiss, 2007). Furthermore, the sharing of workplace experiences makes this type of relationship unique from an actual marriage in that a work spouse is both invested and interested in the happenings of the workplace, whereas a home spouse may have little vested interest (Intini, 2006). Authors who have explored the work spouse concept have posited that the work spouse relationship may help attenuate the consumption of home life by work life (Jackson, 2005; Price, 2005). Although individuals in a work spouse relationship are not romantically involved, they seem to share many of the same characteristics as a romantic relationship.

Both managers and employees alike tend to value and encourage the development of close friendships and mentor relationships in the workplace. On the same note, many view romantic relationships within the workplace to be disruptive and unfavorable (Maneiro, 1986). Although the differences between the close friendship, mentor

relationships, and romantic relationship are relatively clear, where does the work spouse relationship differ? Is the work spouse really any different than a close friend?

### **Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love**

Sternberg's (1986) Triangular Theory of Love contributes a perspective on the quality of intimate relationships in the workplace. Sternberg (1986) posits that love is best described in terms of three components: intimacy, passion and decision/commitment. Intimate relationships in the workplace involve varying degrees of intimacy, passion and decision/commitment. The importance of each component to a relationship differs between and within individuals. The intimacy component refers to feelings of closeness, bondedness and connectedness and tends to be found at the core of all close relationships, including romantic relationships and close friendships, and is derived from emotional investment in the relationship (Sternberg, 1986). That said romantic relationships and close friendships generally have higher levels of emotional investment given that they are occurring both within and outside of the workplace, while work spouse and mentor relationships are occurring solely within the workplace. Therefore the following hypothesis is posited:

*Hypothesis 1:* Romantic partners will have significantly higher levels of intimacy in their relationship than will close friends, who will have significantly higher levels of intimacy than will work spouses and mentor/mentees.

The passion component refers not only to the romance side of a relationship (physical attraction and sex) but also other needs such as self-esteem, nurturance,

affiliation, dominance, submission and self-actualization. The passion component tends to be limited to romantic, loving relationships, therefore:

*Hypothesis 2:* Romantic partners will have significantly higher levels of passion in their relationship than will close friends, work spouses, and mentor/mentees.

Finally, the decision/commitment component refers to the decision to be in the relationship and the commitment to maintain the relationship. The decision/commitment component is highly variable across different kinds of relationships and environments. In the workplace, individuals have already formed both a commitment to the organization and to their co-workers solely as a result of being employed. By continuing to show up to work every day and choosing to be productive, the individual is demonstrating a commitment to both the organization and their relationships with fellow employees. It is however, the amount of commitment towards each relationship that may differ depending on the type of the relationship. Given that a pre-existing commitment exists in the workplace, levels of commitment should increase as the relationship extends beyond the place of work. Therefore:

*Hypothesis 3:* Romantic partners will have significantly higher levels of commitment in their relationship than will close friends, who will have higher levels of commitment than will work spouses and mentor/mentees.

### **Relationship Motive**

Understanding the motivation behind engaging in a certain type of intimate relationship at work can offer insight on the characteristics of the intimate work relationship. Individuals have varying motives for engaging in intimate workplace

relationships. The literature puts forth three motives to account for participation in workplace romances (Quinn, 1977). The *job* motive is driven by a desire for power, promotion and the assignment of favorable tasks. Previously, romantic relationships in the workplace have been perceived as being job motivated (Maineiero, 1986), for example, a female employee pursues a relationship with her male supervisor for the purpose of gaining a promotion. This perception has had negative effects on both the social climate of the work group and the effectiveness of the organization as a whole (Brown & Allgeier, 1995; 1996; Dillard, Hale & Segrin, 1994; Mainiero, 1986). This has ultimately led to unfavorable opinions about romantic relationships in the workplace. However, when the element of sex is removed from a workplace relationship, relationships motivated by the job are observed frequently at work. Coaching and mentorship programs foster relationships between employees for the purpose of succeeding on the job. Therefore I posit the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 4: Mentor relationships will be significantly more job motivated than will other intimate relationships in the workplace, while romantic relationships and best friendships will be less job motivated than mentor relationships and work spouses.*

Furthermore, the work environment has changed and romantic relationships appear to be occurring in the workplace for reasons other than job advancement. The *love* motive attempts to establish a serious, committed relationship, with the intention to foster a long-lasting partnership. Relationships perceived by observers in the workplace to be emanating from love motives resulted in increased job enthusiasm (Dillard & Broetzman,

1989) and positive reactions by co-workers to the intimate relationship (Anderson & Hunsaker, 1985; Brown & Allgeier, 1995, 1996; Quinn, 1977). Therefore:

*Hypothesis 5:* Romantic relationships will be significantly more love motivated than will other intimate relationships in the workplace, while mentor relationships will be less love motivated than all other intimate relationships.

The third motive, the *ego* motive, is driven by a desire for excitement or ego satisfaction. Given individual differences and a lack of previous research on the topic of ego motivation, the researcher is unable to make a reasonable hypothesis for group differences pertaining to this motivation.

### **Role Conflict and Facilitation**

Participants in intimate workplace relationships will often have to manage their personal relationship in the workplace while trying to fill their organizational role (Collins, 1983) as well as their roles outside of work. As a result of maintaining several roles at one time, especially in the same situation, role conflict can occur (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Role conflict results when participation in one role is made more difficult or causes friction by virtue of participating in the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). A great deal of research has examined the source of role conflict particularly in the area of work and family interference (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kelloway, Gottlieb, & Barnham, 1999; Tompson & Werner, 1997). For the purpose of the current study, the sources of conflict I will consider include inter-role conflict and intra-role conflict. Inter-role conflict can occur both at home and at work. Conflict may arise at home as a result of the workplace relationship; for example popular media sources discuss the conflict that

may arise at home when an individual confides more in their work spouse than their actual spouse or significant other (Erwin, 2009; Intini, 2006; Sandberg, 2003; Weiss, 2007). In addition, conflict may arise at work if the workplace relationship interferes with work roles; for example, having a best friend in the workplace who expects you to accompany them on long lunches or leave early for happy hour may make it difficult to take on additional job responsibilities or put in longer work days. In addition to conflict, participants in intimate relationship at work may also experience disruption in their work roles due to preoccupation with the relationship; for example, observers noted that participants in romantic relationships in the workplace were so preoccupied with the relationship that they missed important meetings and made high cost mistakes (Quinn, 1977). Furthermore, strain and time based aspects of inter-role conflict will be considered, as they are frequently distinguished in previous measures of inter-role conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kelloway, Gottlieb, & Barnham, 1999). Strain-based conflict occurs when strain and fatigue in one role affects performance in the other role. Time-based conflict occurs when time pressures and requirements in one role makes it difficult to fulfill the expectations of the other role.

*Hypothesis 6a:* Romantic partners will experience significantly higher levels of inter-role conflict in the workplace than will close friends and work spouses, while mentor/mentees will experience significantly lower levels of inter-role conflict at work than will close friends and work spouses.

*Hypothesis 6b:* Work spouses will experience significantly higher levels of inter-role conflict at home than will romantic partners, who will experience higher levels of

inter-role conflict at home than will close friends, while mentor/mentees will experience significantly lower levels of inter-role conflict at home than those in the other types of intimate relationships.

In addition to role conflict occurring between differing roles, the intra-role conflict that occurs within the work relationship will also be considered. Balancing the personal roles in a romantic relationship that is occurring in a work setting is challenging and may often require deciding between loyalty to the relationship or loyalty to the organization (Collins, 1983; Mainiero, 1986). Collins (1983) shares the case of a female study participant who wanted her romantic partner at work to include her in all his social and business functions. This created conflict for the man, who was continually put in a position either to invent a reason for bringing his significant other (and coworker) to these functions or causing tension in their relationship by telling her she could not attend.

*Hypothesis 6c:* Romantic partners will experience significantly higher levels of intra-role conflict in the workplace than will close friends and work spouses, while mentor/mentees will experience significantly lower levels of intra-role conflict than those in the other types of intimate workplace relationships.

On the other hand, intimate relationships in the workplace may serve to attenuate role conflict. This is known in the literature as role facilitation. Role facilitation occurs when “participation in one role is made better or easier as a result of participation in the other role” (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004, pg. 109). Mentor relationships, for example, promote sponsorship and coaching on work related activities, and expose junior employees to challenging work assignments that enhances and highlights their skills, all

the while ensuring protection against failure (Kram, 1983). Not only can role facilitation occur between roles (i.e. inter-role facilitation), participation within a role (i.e. intra-role facilitation) can enhance the behaviours and increase resources for those involved. For example, friendships in the workplace help to build and mobilize social resources that can be relied on to make decisions, act as a buffer for negative emotions, conceal or transform information and reinforce creativity and communication (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2003; Lincoln & Miller, 1979). Popular media posits that often work spouses compliment one another's skills and abilities, offering support to tackle large projects and ensuring one another's success (Erwin, 2009; Weiss, 2007). Researchers have not reached a consensus on the positive behaviours changes as a result of having romantic relationships at work, however Anderson and Hunsaker (1985) have gathered reports of individuals becoming easier to get along with and happier as a result of their workplace romance.

*Hypothesis 7a:* Mentor/mentees will experience significantly higher levels of inter-role facilitation than will close friends and work spouses, who will experience significantly higher levels of inter-role facilitation in the workplace than will romantic partners.

*Hypothesis 7b:* Mentor/mentees will experience significantly higher levels of intra-role facilitation than will close friends and work spouses, who will experience significantly higher levels of intra-role facilitation in the workplace than will romantic partners.

### **Perceived Social Support and Alienation**

Social support in the workplace involves a variety of positive behaviours, such as providing help to accomplish a task (Beehr et. al, 2000), offering assistance in the form of advice or knowledge (Dolan, Ameringen, Arsenault, 1992), facilitating the working life of others (Fenlason & Beehr, 1994), and offering emotional support during times of difficulty through listening or acting in a caring manner (Dolan, Ameringen, Arsenault, 1992; Fenlason & Beehr, 1994). The perception of social support is the cognitive appraisal of the extent to which one is genuinely connected with others (Barrera, 1986). The perception of available and adequate social support from supervisors, subordinates, and coworkers is related to decreases in perceived occupational stress, and greater physical and mental health (Wells, 1982). On the flip side, social alienation in the workplace, such as jealousy and gossip, can be extremely harmful (Barrera, 1986). The popular media reflects on the negative impact a work spouse relationship can have on peer relationships, stating that co-workers may feel excluded as a result of misinterpreting this type of intimate relationship as a “clique”, potentially leading to personal or professional disagreements (Erwin, 2009). Furthermore, co-workers historically do not support romantic relationships in the workplace particularly when the relationship is illicit, which fosters perceptions of favoritism (Schaefer & Tudor, 2001) or feelings of jealousy (Carson & Barling, 2008). This often leads to coworkers demonstrating their feelings through overt behaviours (e.g. expressing disapproval of the relationship to managers) or covert sentiments (e.g. gossiping about the relationship; Mainiero, 1986; Quinn, 1977). For example, workplace romances that occur between

individuals who are already married are perceived more negatively by co-workers than romances that occur between individuals who are single (Brown & Allgeier, 1996). Alternatively, managers and co-workers perceive close friendships in the workplace very favorably (Berman, West, & Richter, 2002), in many cases encouraging their occurrences through staff parties and team building activities. The development of mentor relationships are also encouraged, as the psychosocial enhancements provided by these pairings (e.g. friendship, role-modeling, confidence, competence, effectiveness) are beneficial to both the individuals involved and the organization as a whole (Kram, 1983). Therefore, observers of intimate relationships in the workplace will have varying feelings and reactions towards different types of workplace relationships, influencing the availability and adequacy of social support (or alienation) perceived by individuals in these relationships.

*Hypothesis 8a:* Mentor/mentees will have significantly higher levels of social support from co-workers than will close friends, who will have significantly higher levels of social support than will work spouses. Romantic partners will have the lowest level of social support at work compared to the other three types of intimate relationships.

*Hypothesis 8b:* Mentor/mentees will have significantly lower levels of alienation from co-workers than will close friends, who will have significantly lower levels of alienation than will work spouses. Romantic partners will have the highest level of alienation at work compared to the other three types of intimate relationships.

### Health and Affectivity

Engaging in intimate relationships in the workplace plays a role in the level of positive and negative affectivity experienced by the individuals involved. Negative affect is defined by Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988, pg. 1063) as “a general dimension of subjective distress and unpleasurable engagement that subsumes a variety of aversive mood states, including anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, fear, and nervousness, with low negative affectivity being a state of calmness and serenity.” Moods such as anger, guilt and fear can frequently occur if and when a romantic relationship dissolves (Mainiero, 1989). Popular media sources posit that the dissolution of work spouse relationships can also mimic that of romantic relationships break-up, resulting in negative emotions (Erwin, 2009).

*Hypothesis 9:* Romantic partners will have higher levels of negative affect than will work spouses, who will have higher levels of negative affect than close friends. Mentor/mentees will have the lowest level of negative affect.

In contrast, positive affect reflects “the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic, active, and alert. High positive affectivity is a state of high energy, full concentration, and pleasurable engagement, whereas low positive affectivity is characterized by sadness and lethargy” (Watson et. al, 1988, pg. 1063). Dillard and Broetzmann (1989) found that nearly half of workers involved in a workplace romance displayed increases in work-related enthusiasm. In the friendship literature, employees reported greater job satisfaction and job involvement when they were engaged in more intimate friendships at work (Neilsen, Jex & Adams, 2000; Riordan & Griffeth, 1995; Winstead, Derlega,

Montgomery and Likington, 1995). The Gallup Organizations developed a measure of employee engagement that assumes broader affective and performance outcomes (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2003). The Gallup Workplace Audit uses twelve items to assess individual well-being and productivity of work groups. One of the items included in the scale is “I have a best friend at work”, demonstrating the importance of friendship for individual well-being in the workplace. In addition, positive job behaviours as a result of romantic relationships include higher productivity, improved interactions (Quinn, 1977) and observations of reduced stress and anxieties in the workplace (Anderson & Hunsacker, 1985).

*Hypothesis 10:* Close friends will have higher levels of positive affectivity than will mentor/mentees, who will have higher levels than will work spouses, who will have higher levels of positive affect than will romantic partners.

To explore further the impact that workplace relationships have on participant health, a measure of emotional well-being was also included. No hypotheses are put forth for emotional well-being as this measure was included for exploratory purposes.

### **The Current Study**

The objective of the present study is to explore and define the concept of the work spouse relationship in comparison to three well-defined relationships that currently exist in the workplace, namely close friendships, romantic relationships, and mentor relationships. Descriptive features of these relationships will be identified/confirmed through measures of gender dynamics (popular media sources typically characterize the work spouse relationship as primarily occurring between opposite sex individuals; Erwin,

2009; Intini, 2006; Sandberg, 2003; Weiss, 2007; Work Spouse, 2009), power distance, and marital status. Power distance characterizes the difference between the organizational position held by one individual in a relationship and the position held by the other individual involved in the relationships. A hierarchical relationship occurs when one individual in the relationship holds a greater amount of organizational power than the other individual, such as the boss-subordinate relationship. The lateral relationship, on the other hand occurs between individuals at equal organizational status or power, such as co-workers or team members.

The constructs chosen to characterize and compare these relationships are drawn from the workplace relationship literature, particularly romantic relationships at work, since work spouse relationships are thought to be similar in nature. Sternberg's theory of love seeks to characterize the quality of the different intimate relationships on the level of intimacy, passion, and commitment. The underlying motivation for engaging in the relationship (love, job, ego) provides insight into the reasons for the existence of the relationship. Role conflict and facilitation measures drawn from the work-family conflict literature identify how these relationships function within the workplace, while perceived social support and alienation measures peer acceptance and rejection of these bonds. Finally, the impact on relationship involvement and general health and affectivity are considered.

### **Method**

A total of 232 individuals (153 women, 57 men, and 22 unreported) participated in the present study. A local marketing company was hired to recruit a sample of 400

participants by telephone. A telephone script developed by the researcher was provided to the company (Appendix B) to ensure that all participants were informed of the nature of the survey (i.e. intimate relationships in the workplace) and that participants were over the age of 18 and worked more than 20 hours per week with other people in the workplace. 1821 people were reached by telephone and 22% agreed to participate in the survey. The 400 participants who agreed to participate in the survey provided their email address and the link to the survey was emailed to them directly from the researcher. Out of the 400 individuals who were sent a link to the study survey, 206 completed the online survey for a response rate of 52%. In addition, the researcher engaged in targeted recruitment through social networking media and snowballing the study link through personal contacts to increase group size in the romantic relationship and work spouse groups. Twenty-six participants completed the online survey as a result of targeted recruitment and snowballing by the researcher<sup>1</sup>. As incentive for completing the survey, participants were given the opportunity to enter into a draw for a chance to win one of five \$100 visa gift cards. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 61 years ( $M = 37$ ,  $SD = 10$ ) and had been involved in their respective workplace relationship for an average of five and a half years ( $SD = 6.6$ ). On average, participants had been employed in their organization for 8.5 years ( $SD = 7.9$ ).

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<sup>1</sup> To ensure that the two groups were equivalent, independent samples t-tests were conducted on demographic and study variables. There were no differences between groups on study variables and demographics, with the exception of age and measures related to romantic relationships. Given that participants recruited through the social networking media were targeted specifically for their involvement in a work spouse or romantic relationship, their scores on intimacy, passion, and love motives were significantly higher than those in the telephone sample, which reported more close friendships. Furthermore, these participants were also younger ( $M=25$ ) compared to those from the telephone sample ( $M=39$ ). However, given that all participants were required to work more than 20 hours in a place of work and were equivalent on all other study variables, combining these two groups was justifiable.

### *Measures*

Single items assessed respondents' age, gender, marital status, occupation and salary. Respondents were then asked to think about the closest relationship they currently have at their place of work and consider this person while completing the survey. Single items also assessed relationship status (lateral vs. hierarchical), type of relationship, gender dynamics, length of time in the relationship, and previous involvement in a similar type of relationship.

*Quality of the workplace relationship* was assessed using Sternberg's (1997) Love Triangle Scale. The Love Scale uses 45 items to assess level of commitment (e.g., "I am committed to maintaining my relationship with this person"), passion (e.g., "I find this person to be very personally attractive"), and intimacy (e.g., "I feel emotionally close to this person") that the individual feels for the other person in their relationship. All items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). High scores indicate more of the construct (e.g. more passion).

*Work Spouse Characteristic Questionnaire.* To define the work spouse relationship empirically, a 45-item measure of work spouse characteristics was developed using the characteristics identified in a review of popular online media sources as items (e.g., "I refer to this person as my work spouse or my work husband/wife"). In addition, items that reflect the characteristics of a romantic relationship (e.g. "I am romantically attracted to this person") were incorporated in the questionnaire. All items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

*Inter-role conflict* at work and at home was assessed using time and strain measures adapted from Kelloway, Gottlieb, and Barham (1999). Items correspond to the Family Interference with Work Scale and all items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*all the time*), with high scores indicating higher levels of conflict. The inter-role work conflict measure of time included five items (e.g., “I spend time at work making arrangements for this person”) and demonstrated satisfactory internal reliability ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ). The inter-role work conflict measure of strain included six items (e.g., “My workplace relationship/friendship puts me in a bad mood at work”) and demonstrated good internal reliability ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ). The inter-role home conflict measure of time included four items (e.g., “I would spend more time at home if I had fewer demands from this person”), and demonstrated good internal reliability ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ). Finally, the inter-role home measure of strain included six items (e.g., “My workplace friendship/relationships puts me in a bad mood at home”) and demonstrated good internal reliability ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

*Inter-role preoccupation* was assessed using six-items developed by the researcher based on the issues that exist when individuals are involved in intimate relationships at work, identified in previous research and popular media sources (e.g., “I find myself constantly thinking about this person when I’m at work”). All items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), with higher scores representing greater levels of preoccupation. The scale demonstrated good internal reliability ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ).

*Intra-role conflict* was assessed using ten-items developed by the researcher based on the issues identified in previous research and popular media sources that exist when individuals are involved in intimate relationships in the workplace (e.g., “I feel pressured to give a salary increase to this person”). All items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), with high scores indicating higher levels of conflict. The scale demonstrated good internal reliability ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ).

*Inter-role facilitation* was assessed using a six-item scale adapted from Wayne, Musisca, and Fleeson (2004). Items correspond to the Work Family Facilitation Scale (e.g., “Having a good day with this person at work makes me a better companion when I get home”) and the Family Work Facilitation Scale (e.g., “The love and respect I get from this person makes me feel confident about myself at work”). All items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*all the time*), with high scores indicating higher levels of facilitation. The scale demonstrated satisfactory internal reliability ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ).

*Intra-role facilitation* was assessed using nine-items developed by the researcher based on the benefits that exist when individuals are involved in intimate relationships at work, identified in previous research and popular media (e.g., “I get along better with my co-workers as a result of my relationship or friendship in my workplace”). All items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), with higher scores representing higher levels of facilitation. The scale demonstrated good internal reliability ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

*Social support and alienation* were assessed using fourteen items developed by the researcher based on a review of popular media sources and previous romance

literature that represented perceptions of social support and alienation from significant others at home and coworkers in the workplace. Factor analysis identified one factor with a total of six items. Eight items reflecting social support were removed from the scale due to double loading items or single item factors. Therefore the current study was not able to measure social support. The six remaining items represent the perceived alienation from co-workers who are privy to the close relationship in the workplace (e.g., “My coworkers are jealous of my work friendship / relationship”). Items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*all of the time*), with higher scores representing higher levels of alienation. The scale demonstrated good internal reliability ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ).

*Motivation for being in the relationship* was measured by Dillard and Broetzmann’s (1989) 14-item measure. The scale assesses how important three types of motives (love, job, ego) were as reasons for entering into the relationship (e.g., “companionship”, “increased prestige”, “thrill”). Items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*very important*). Higher scores indicated underlying motivations for entering into the relationship (e.g. a high score on the love motive means the relationship was pursued because the participant wanted a loving relationship or companionship with the other person). The scales demonstrated good internal reliability (job,  $\alpha = 0.85$ ; love,  $\alpha = 0.80$ ; ego,  $\alpha = 0.83$ ).

*Emotional well-being* was measured by the 12-item version of the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ; Banks et. al., 1980). The GHQ is used to detect subclinical levels of psychiatric disturbance (e.g. depression) in the general population. The response scale

ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*all of the time*), with high scores indicating good emotional health over the past year.

*Positive and negative affectivity* was measured by the 20-item PANAS (Watson et. al, 1988). The PANAS is used to assess the moods, feelings and attitudes (e.g., upset, excited, ashamed) felt by participants in their intimate relationship in the workplace. The response scale ranged from 1 (*very slightly or not at all*) to 5 (*Extremely*), with high scores indicating greater levels of affectivity (e.g. more positive affectivity on the positive affect measure; more negative affectivity on the negative affect measure).

### **Results**

Table 1 presents general demographic information including gender dyads, power distance, and marital status by relationship type. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for all study variables are presented in Table 2. A between-subjects multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted on the following dependent variables: triangular theory of love (commitment, intimacy and passion), relationship motives (love, ego, job), inter-role work conflict (time and strain), inter-role home conflict (time and strain), inter-role facilitation, intra-role facilitation and conflict, intra-role preoccupation, alienation, emotional well-being (GHQ), and positive and negative affectivity. The independent variable was relationship type (close friendship, romantic relationship, work spouse, mentor relationship).

Table 1.

*The Comparison of Demographic Variables by Relationship type.*

Demographic Variables	Relationship Type								N
	Close Friendship (n = 136)		Romantic Relationship (n = 40)		Work Spouse (n = 25)		Mentor Relationship (n = 31)		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Age	38	10	31	9	35	10	39	11	212
Time in Relationship (yrs)	5.9	6.6	4.8	7.3	6.1	6.9	4.3	5.3	230
Time knowing each other	7.5	8.0	6.7	8.8	7.3	7.7	5.5	6.6	232
Length of Employment (yrs)	9.0	7.7	6.4	7.3	7.5	7.6	9.9	9.5	210
Gender Dyad									
Female-female	64%		-		4%		37%		92
Female-male	21%		100%		96%		33%		91
Male-male	15%		-		-		30%		27
Power Distance									
Lateral (co-workers)	87%		97%		76%		52%		191
Hierarchical (supervisor-subordinate)	13%		3%		24%		48%		40
Work Group									
Same work group	76%		64%		80%		97%		178
Different work group	24%		36%		20%		3%		52
Marital Status(respondent)									
Single	11%		18%		13%		15%		27
Committed	10%		41%		17%		8%		33
Relationship									
Married/Common-Law	74%		36%		67%		69%		139
Divorced/Separated	3%		3%		-		8%		8

Table 2.  
Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations for Study Variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
1. Intimacy	6.09	0.83	(0.96)																					
2. Passion	3.05	1.88	0.56*	(0.98)																				
3. Commitment	5.15	1.28	0.69*	0.74*	(0.96)																			
4. Inter-role Facilitation	3.35	0.74	0.46*	0.41*	0.53*	(0.83)																		
5. Intra-role Conflict	1.45	0.56	-0.08	-0.07	-0.01	0.02	(0.84)																	
6. Intra-role Facilitation	3.21	0.84	0.33*	0.31*	0.40*	0.66*	0.11	(0.91)																
7. Inter-role Preoccupation	1.67	0.72	0.18*	0.60*	0.33*	0.14*	0.24*	0.23*	(0.84)															
8. Inter-role Work Conflict (time)	1.45	0.59	-0.01	0.05	-0.02	-0.02	0.36*	0.02	0.29*	(0.84)														
9. Inter-role Work Conflict (strain)	1.44	0.60	-0.01	0.14*	0.02	-0.06	0.35*	0.02	0.42*	0.75*	(0.88)													
10. Inter-role Home Conflict (time)	1.31	0.58	0.02	0.20*	0.10	0.06	0.35*	0.11	0.46*	0.67*	0.64*	(0.82)												
11. Inter-role Home Conflict (strain)	1.33	0.61	0.01	0.21*	0.13	0.04	0.38*	0.11	0.51*	0.66*	0.76*	0.85*	(0.91)											
12. Work Alienation	1.79	0.77	0.07	0.26*	0.11	0.06	0.37*	0.19*	0.54*	0.31*	0.42*	0.44*	0.46*	(0.83)										
13. Love motive	2.80	1.09	0.45*	0.74*	0.55*	0.42*	-0.03	0.30*	0.49*	0.10	0.14*	0.18*	0.18*	0.32*	(0.80)									
14. Job Motive	1.73	1.00	-0.20*	-0.13	-0.18*	-0.11	0.41*	0.10	0.16*	0.21*	0.20*	0.19*	0.23*	0.27*	0.07	(0.85)								
15. Ego Motive	2.03	0.98	0.28*	0.63*	0.41*	0.26*	0.12	0.29*	0.54*	0.13	0.18*	0.26*	0.24*	0.37*	0.66*	0.36*	(0.83)							
16. GHQ12	5.53	0.94	0.04	-0.10	-0.01	-0.01	-0.15*	-0.01	-0.32*	-0.19*	-0.33*	-0.27*	-0.27*	-0.43*	-0.18*	-0.15*	-0.18*	(0.91)						
17. Positive Affectivity	3.49	0.79	0.08	0.14*	0.10	0.10	-0.03	0.15*	0.04	0.07	-0.10	0.04	0.00	-0.12	0.04	0.04	0.15*	0.50*	(0.90)					
18. Negative Affectivity	1.86	0.78	0.02	0.14	0.03	0.08	0.07	0.04	0.25*	0.22*	0.34*	0.32*	0.33*	0.36*	0.16*	0.12	0.22*	-0.74*	-0.21*	(0.91)				
19. Closeness (factor)	4.28	0.60	0.70*	0.54*	0.69*	0.62*	-0.10	0.48*	0.20*	-0.01	-0.01	0.07	0.04	0.04	0.49*	-0.19*	0.31*	-0.09	0.11	0.19*	(0.91)			
20. Work Spouse (factor)	2.71	1.06	0.48*	0.64*	0.56*	0.39*	0.13	0.32*	0.39*	0.13	0.16*	0.17*	0.13	0.26*	0.53*	-0.01	0.46*	-0.10	0.10	0.15*	0.55*	(0.84)		
21. Love (factor)	2.03	1.54	0.40*	0.91*	0.56*	0.31*	-0.08	0.26*	0.57*	0.04	0.14*	0.24*	0.26*	0.25*	0.69*	-0.11	0.60*	-0.06	0.12	0.08	0.41*	0.52*	(0.97)	

Note: Reliability coefficients for each variable are shown in parentheses along the diagonal

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

°Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Six univariate outliers were adjusted by windsorizing and no multivariate outliers were observed in the present data<sup>2</sup>. A statistically significant Box's  $M$  ( $p < .000$ ) indicated unequal variance-covariance matrices of the dependent variables across levels of relationship type and thus necessitated the use of Pillai's trace in assessing the multivariate effect.

Using Pillai's trace (see Table 3), the dependent variate was significantly affected by relationship type, Pillai's trace = .958,  $F(54,531) = 4.857$ ,  $p < .000$ . Univariate ANOVAs were conducted on each dependent measure separately to determine the locus of the statistically significant multivariate effect. Relationship type significantly affected all three variables on the triangular theory of love (commitment, passion, intimacy), inter-role facilitation, intra-role conflict, intra-role facilitation, intra-role preoccupation, relationship motives (love, job, ego), and positive affectivity.

*Hypothesis 1* posited that romantic partners will have significantly higher levels of intimacy than will close friends, who will have significantly higher levels of intimacy than will work spouses and mentor/mentees. Intimacy significantly differed between relationship types ( $F(3,192) = 11.546$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and eta-squared was 0.15, meaning that relationship type accounted for only 15% of the overall variance in intimacy. Tamhane post hoc tests, appropriate when heterogeneity of variance is present, partially confirmed *Hypothesis 1*, suggesting that those in romantic relationships ( $M = 6.71$ ,  $SD = 0.34$ ) have significantly higher levels of relationship intimacy than those in work spouse relationships ( $M = 6.19$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ), close friendships ( $M = 5.98$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ), and mentor

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<sup>2</sup> Analyses were run with and without windsorizing the analyses. Windsorizing did not change the results, however given that the presence of outliers can inflate error rates, results are reported with the outliers windsorized.

Table 3.

*Multivariate and Univariate Analyses of Variance*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Means</i>				<i>Univariate F<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Multivariate Effect</i>
	<i>Romantic</i>	<i>Close Friend</i>	<i>Work Spouse</i>	<i>Mentor</i>		
Commitment	6.40	4.87	5.41	4.55	19.57*	0.15
Intimacy	6.71	5.98	6.19	5.59	11.55*	0.64
Passion	6.16	2.23	3.46	1.93	115.40*	0.23
Love	4.20	2.45	3.04	2.22	40.55*	0.39
Job	1.34	1.66	1.64	2.41	6.62*	0.09
Ego	3.06	1.77	1.90	2.07	19.11*	0.23
Inter-role Work Conflict (time)	1.42	1.42	1.43	1.58	0.58	0.01
Inter-role Work Conflict (strain)	1.55	1.41	1.44	1.35	0.72	0.01
Inter-role Home Conflict (time)	1.54	1.24	1.25	1.33	2.60	0.04
Inter-role Home Conflict (strain)	1.56	1.28	1.20	1.30	2.37	0.04
Inter-Role Preoccupation	2.36	1.53	1.61	1.54	13.86*	0.18
Inter-Role Facilitation	3.75	3.18	3.58	3.30	6.63*	0.09
Intra-Role Conflict	1.22	1.46	1.41	1.68	3.22**	0.05
Intra-Role Facilitation	3.55	3.05	3.46	3.20	4.01*	0.06
Work Alienation	2.07	1.72	1.91	1.61	2.48	0.04
Positive Affect	3.63	3.37	3.41	3.84	2.99**	0.05
Negative Affect	2.01	1.83	1.76	1.77	0.68	0.01
Health	5.47	5.56	5.33	5.68	0.63	0.01

Note: Multivariate *F* ratios were generated from Pillai's trace.

b. Univariate *df* = 3, 192.

\**p* < .01, \*\**p* < .05.

relationships ( $M = 5.59$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ). Although there was no significant difference for close friendships, work spouse relationships had significantly higher levels of intimacy than mentor relationships.

*Hypothesis 2*, which posited that romantic partners will have significantly higher levels of passion than will close friends, work spouses, and mentor/mentees, was supported. Passion significantly differed between relationship types,  $F(3,192) = 115.400$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .643$ . Tamhane post hoc tests suggested that romantic relationships ( $M = 6.16$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ) had significantly higher levels of passion than work spouse relationships ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ). In addition, both romantic partners and work spouses had significantly higher levels of passion than did close friends ( $M = 2.23$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ) and mentor/mentees ( $M = 1.93$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). Levels of passion did not significantly differ between mentor relationships and close friendships.

*Hypothesis 3* proposed that romantic partners will have significantly higher levels of commitment than will close friends, who will have higher levels of commitment than will work spouses and mentor/mentees. Although the commitment component was statistically significant,  $F(3,192) = 19.567$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .234$ , Scheffe post hoc tests, appropriate when homogeneity of variance is assumed, suggested that only romantic relationships ( $M = 6.40$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) had significantly higher levels of relationship commitment than did those in work spouse relationships ( $M = 5.41$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ), close friendships ( $M = 4.87$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) and mentor relationships ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ).

*Hypothesis 4*, which posited that mentor relationships will be significantly more job motivated than will other intimate relationships in the workplace, while romantic

relationship and best friendships will be less job motivated than work spouse and mentor relationships, was partially confirmed. On levels of job motivation,  $F(3,192) = 6.624, p < .05, \eta^2 = .094$ , Tamhane post hoc tests suggested that mentor relationships ( $M = 2.41, SD = 1.07$ ) were significantly more job motivated than close friendships ( $M = 1.66, SD = 0.95$ ), romantic relationships ( $M = 1.34, SD = 0.80$ ), and work spouse relationships ( $M = 1.64, SD = 0.79$ ). Although not significant, romantic relationships had the lowest level of job motivation, followed by the work spouse relationship and then close friendships.

*Hypothesis 5* posited that romantic relationships will be significantly more love motivated than will other intimate relationships in the workplace, while mentor relationships will be less love motivated than all other intimate relationships. On levels of love motivation  $F(3,192) = 40.550, p < .05, \eta^2 = .388$ , Scheffe post hoc tests suggested that romantic relationships ( $M = 4.20, SD = 0.96$ ) were significantly more love motivated than work spouse relationships ( $M = 3.04, SD = 1.07$ ), mentor relationships ( $M = 2.22, SD = 0.73$ ) and close friendships ( $M = 2.45, SD = 0.79$ ). Contrary to expectations however, work spouse relationships were also significantly more motivated by love than both mentor relationships and close friendships.

Previous research did not provide enough information to make reasonable hypotheses about the relationship differences for ego motivation. However, ego motivation did significantly differ between relationship types,  $F(3,192) = 19.106, p < .05, \eta^2 = .230$ . Scheffe post hoc tests suggested that romantic relationships ( $M = 3.06, SD = 1.11$ ) were significantly more egoistically motivated than work spouse relationships ( $M =$

1.90,  $SD = 0.90$ ), mentor relationships ( $M = 2.07$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ) and close friendships ( $M = 1.77$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ).

*Hypothesis 6a* proposed that romantic partners will experience significantly higher levels of inter-role conflict in the workplace than will close friends and work spouses, while mentor/mentees will experience significantly lower levels of inter-role conflict at work than all other types of intimate relationships. No statistically significant relationship type effects were observed for inter-role work conflict (time),  $F(3,192) = .557$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .009$ ; or inter-role work conflict (strain),  $F(3,192) = .011$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .178$ . However, measures of inter-role preoccupation partially confirmed this hypothesis,  $F(3,192) = 13.863$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .178$ . Scheffe post hoc tests suggested that romantic relationships ( $M = 2.36$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ) had significantly higher levels of preoccupation than did those in work spouse relationships ( $M = 1.61$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ), mentor relationships ( $M = 1.54$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ) and close friendships ( $M = 1.53$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ).

In addition, *Hypothesis 6b* proposed that work spouses will experience significantly higher levels of inter-role conflict at home than will romantic partners, who will experience higher levels of inter-role conflict at home than will close friends, while mentor/mentees will experience significantly lower levels of inter-role conflict at home than all other types of relationships. This hypothesis was not supported as no statistically significant differences were observed for relationship type effects on inter-role home conflict (time),  $F(3,192) = 2.595$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .039$ ; or inter-role home conflict (strain),  $F(3,192) = 2.374$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .036$ .

*Hypothesis 6c*, which posited that romantic partners will experience significantly higher levels of intra-role conflict in the workplace than will close friends and work spouses, while mentor/mentees will experience significantly lower levels of intra-role conflict than all other types of intimate relationships, was not confirmed. Although levels of intra-role conflict significantly differed across relationship type,  $F(3,192) = 3.219, p < .05, \eta^2 = .048$ , contrary to this hypothesis, Tamhane post hoc tests suggested that romantic relationships ( $M = 1.22, SD = 0.31$ ) had significantly lower levels of intra-role conflict than did those in close friendships ( $M = 1.46, SD = 0.58$ ) and mentor relationships ( $M = 1.68, SD = 0.56$ ). Work spouse relationships ( $M = 1.41, SD = 0.68$ ) did not significantly differ from the other relationship types on levels of intra-role conflict.

Contrary to *Hypothesis 7a*, which proposed that mentor/mentees will experience significantly higher levels of inter-role facilitation than will close friends and work spouses, who will experience significantly higher levels of inter-role facilitation in the workplace than will romantic partners, Scheffe post hoc tests for levels of inter-role facilitation,  $F(3,192) = 6.625, p < .05, \eta^2 = .094$ , suggested that romantic relationships ( $M = 3.75, SD = 0.68$ ) had significantly higher levels of inter-role facilitation than did those in close friendships ( $M = 3.18, SD = 0.74$ ). No significant difference existed between work spouse relationships ( $M = 3.58, SD = 0.59$ ), mentor relationships ( $M = 3.30, SD = 0.64$ ), or close friendships.

Furthermore, contrary to *Hypothesis 7b*, which proposed that mentor/mentees will experience significantly higher levels of intra-role facilitation than will close friends and work spouses, who will experience significantly higher levels of intra-role facilitation in

the workplace than will romantic partners, Tamhane post hoc tests for levels of intra-role facilitation,  $F(3,192) = 4.005, p < .05, \eta^2 = .059$ , suggested that romantic relationships ( $M = 3.55, SD = 0.65$ ) had significantly higher levels of intra-role facilitation than did those in close friendships ( $M = 3.05, SD = 0.87$ ). No significant differences existed between romantic relationships, mentor relationship ( $M = 3.20, SD = 0.87$ ), or work spouse relationships ( $M = 3.46, SD = 0.66$ ).

*Hypothesis 8a* could not be tested due to the removal of the social support items from the social support and alienation scale. *Hypothesis 8b* proposed that mentor/mentees will have significantly lower levels of alienation from co-workers than will close friends, who will have significantly lower levels of alienation than will work spouses, and romantic partners will have the highest level of alienation in the workplace. No statistically significant relationship type effects were observed for alienation,  $F(3,192) = 2.477, p > .05, \eta^2 = .037$ .

*Hypotheses 9* proposed that romantic partners will have higher levels of negative affect than will work spouses, who will have higher levels of negative affect than will close friends. In addition, mentor/mentees will have the lowest level of negative affect. This hypothesis was not confirmed as no statistically significant relationship type effects were observed for negative affectivity,  $F(3,192) = .684, p > .05, \eta^2 = .011$ .

*Hypothesis 10* posited that close friends will have higher levels of positive affectivity than will mentor/mentees, who will have higher levels than will work spouses, who will have higher levels of positive affect than will romantic partners. Positive Affectivity significantly differed between relationship types,  $F(3,192) = 2.987, p < .05$ ,

$\eta^2 = .045$ . Partially confirming this hypothesis, Scheffe post hoc tests suggested that mentor relationships ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ) had higher levels of positive affectivity than close friendships ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ), however this result was only approaching significance ( $p = 0.06$ ). No significant difference existed between work spouse relationships ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ) and romantic relationships ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ).

Finally, a MANOVA was also run on a measure of emotional well-being for exploratory purposes, however no significant differences between relationship types were present ( $F(3,192) = .260$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .010$ ).

#### *Exploratory Post-Hoc Analyses*

Given that the characteristics of the work spouse relationship have not been previously examined or defined empirically, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 45-item work spouse characteristics questionnaire. Item development for the questionnaire was theoretically based. A thorough review of popular media articles allowed us to generate scale items based on the characteristics, behaviours, and challenges of the work spouse relationship (e.g. Forbes.com; Wikipedia). In addition, items that assess the characteristics of a romantic relationship (e.g. I am romantically interested in this person) and that are identified in popular media as not being characteristics of work spouses, were added to the questionnaire to confirm that the work spouse relationship is different from a romantic relationship.

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on all 45-items of the work spouse characteristics questionnaire. 25-items double loaded on several factors and were removed from the analyses. Six factors were extracted from the remaining 20-items (see

Table 4). The extracted factors, however, did not present a clear picture of the expected work spouse characteristics. Therefore, given the exploratory nature of the Work Spouse Characteristics scale, a second analysis was conducted. To improve the subjects to variables ratio, 45 univariate ANOVAs were run to identify only those items that significantly differentiate ( $p < .001$ ) by relationship type. A total of 27 items from the original 45-item measure significantly differed by relationship type. An exploratory factor analysis using a principal component extraction method and a varimax rotation was conducted on the 27 self-report work spouse characteristic items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .89, indicating that the present data was suitable for principal components analysis. Similarly, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating sufficient correlation between the variables to proceed with the analyses.

Six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were extracted from the 27 items; however, four items double loaded on several factors and were therefore removed. Another factor analysis was conducted with the remaining 23-items and five factors were extracted. Two of these factors were only made up of two items each, and therefore these factors were removed. A final, three-factor solution using 19 items provided the clearest extraction. These three factors accounted for 64% of the total variance. Table 5 presents the 19 items, their factor correlations, communality estimates, and item-total correlations. Communalities were fairly high for each of the 19 items, ranging from .42 to .96.

Table 4.

*Summary of 20 Items from the Work Spouse Characteristic Scale and Factor Loadings from Principal Components Analysis of 45 Items with Varimax Rotation (N = 184)*

Original Subscale Item Name	Component Loading					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
We are honest with one another	<b>0.77</b>	0.13	0.01	-0.07	-0.12	0.10
We are open with one another	<b>0.78</b>	0.17	0.08	0.01	-0.19	0.15
We offer support to one another	<b>0.69</b>	0.25	0.12	0.07	-0.20	0.16
This person would like to see me succeed	<b>0.73</b>	0.23	0.16	0.04	0.17	-0.02
This person has my back	<b>0.74</b>	0.27	0.08	0.05	0.04	0.08
I trust this person	<b>0.80</b>	0.05	0.15	0.03	0.02	0.09
Our friendship/relationship is strong because we share similar experiences in the workplace	0.09	<b>0.75</b>	0.00	-0.03	-0.08	0.12
This person has abilities that complement my abilities	0.29	<b>0.83</b>	0.02	0.17	0.06	0.06
This person has knowledge that complement my knowledge	0.27	<b>0.82</b>	0.16	0.15	0.07	-0.04
This person offers support with work related projects	0.28	<b>0.75</b>	-0.12	0.13	0.15	0.02
I am physically attracted to this person	0.16	0.02	<b>0.92</b>	0.11	-0.03	0.18
I am romantically involved with this person	0.21	-0.01	<b>0.91</b>	0.14	-0.07	0.04
I bicker with this person	0.00	0.17	0.17	<b>0.78</b>	0.13	0.01
I nag this person	0.04	0.05	0.10	<b>0.84</b>	0.11	0.04
This person and I are competitive with each other	0.02	0.07	0.02	<b>0.76</b>	-0.03	0.22
My friendship/relationship with this person improves my chances of getting a promotion	-0.01	0.04	-0.06	0.08	<b>0.92</b>	0.05
My friendship/relationship with this person improves my chances of getting a raise	-0.16	0.08	-0.02	0.12	<b>0.90</b>	0.05
When I learn information or gossip at work, they are the first person I tell	0.30	0.09	-0.10	0.01	0.03	<b>0.67</b>
I refer to this person as my work spouse or my work husband/wife	0.03	0.02	0.23	0.19	0.08	<b>0.82</b>
Other people say that this person and I act like a married couple	0.15	0.06	0.55	0.19	0.00	<b>0.68</b>
Eigenvalues	3.85	2.77	2.19	2.11	1.86	1.77
% of Variance	19.25	13.86	10.93	10.54	9.28	8.82
Coefficient Alpha	0.87	0.85	0.92	0.75	0.85	0.73

Note. Boldface indicates highest factor loadings.

Table 5.

*Summary of 19 Items from the Work Spouse Characteristic Scale and Factor Loadings from Principal Components Analysis of 27 Items with Varimax Rotation (N = 184)*

<i>Original Subscale Item Name</i>	<i>Component Loading</i>			<i>Communality</i>	<i>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>		
We are open with one another	<b>.77</b>	.16	.03	.63	.68
We offer support to one another	<b>.77</b>	.23	.11	.66	.73
This person has my back	<b>.76</b>	.12	.06	.59	.68
This person would like to see me succeed	<b>.75</b>	.05	.16	.59	.68
I care for this person	<b>.75</b>	.22	.27	.68	.78
This person offers emotional support	<b>.73</b>	.22	.15	.60	.73
I trust this person	<b>.72</b>	.11	.11	.54	.64
This person gives me comfort	<b>.64</b>	.28	.31	.57	.69
I share personal experiences with this person	<b>.63</b>	.26	.17	.49	.61
I know this person's issues or problems in the workplace	<b>.62</b>	.25	.07	.45	.58
I refer to this person as my work spouse or my work husband/wife	.03	<b>.79</b>	.17	.65	.62
I share a secret language with this person	.28	<b>.76</b>	.10	.66	.64
We finish one another's sentences	.28	<b>.73</b>	.28	.69	.73
Other people say that this person and I act like a married couple	.14	<b>.71</b>	.47	.73	.70
When I learn information or gossip at work, they are the first person I tell	.28	<b>.58</b>	-.08	.42	.43
We have nicknames for one another	.31	<b>.53</b>	.28	.46	.56
I am romantically interested in this person	.19	.23	<b>.93</b>	.96	.97
I am romantically involved with this person	.21	.11	<b>.91</b>	.88	.90
I am physically attracted to this person	.17	.26	<b>.91</b>	.92	.91
Eigenvalues	8.18	2.45	1.54		
% of Variance	43.03	12.87	8.12		
Coefficient Alpha	.91	.84	.97		

Notes. Boldface indicates highest factor loadings. Component 1 = Closeness, Component 2 = Work Spouse, Component 3 = Love. Corrected item-total correlations show the Pearson  $r$ s between the item and its subscale.

Factor 1: Closeness (eigenvalue = 5.58) accounted for 29% of the variance and had ten items; Factor 2: Work Spouse (eigenvalue = 3.38) accounted for 18% of the variance and had six items; Factor 3: Love (eigenvalue = 3.21) accounted for 17% of the variance and had three items. Corrected item-total correlations ranged from .43 to .97, and Cronbach's coefficient alpha ranged from .84 to .97 among the three factors, indicating good subscale reliability. Items that weighed the most on each factor guided the development of factor names. The present three-factor model was deemed the best solution because of its conceptual clarity and ease of interpretability.

The three factors were correlated with all study variables (as shown in Table 2). The closeness factor correlated most highly with intimacy ( $r = 0.70, n = 228, p < .01$ ) and commitment ( $r = 0.69, n = 226, p < .01$ ), and moderately with passion ( $r = 0.54, n = 226, p < .01$ ). Closeness was also correlated with inter-role facilitation ( $r = 0.62, n = 216, p < .01$ ), intra-role facilitation ( $r = 0.48, n = 212, p < .01$ ), and inter-role preoccupation ( $r = 0.20, n = 210, p < .01$ ). In terms of motivation for entering into the relationship, the closeness factor was positively correlated with the love motive ( $r = 0.49, n = 210, p < .01$ ) and the ego motive ( $r = 0.31, n = 208, p < .01$ ) and negatively correlated with the job motive ( $r = -0.19, n = 208, p < .01$ ). Finally, negative affectivity was positively correlated with the closeness factor ( $r = 0.19, n = 209, p < .01$ ).

The work spouse factor, containing items that describe the qualities of the work spouse relationship, was significantly correlated with intimacy ( $r = 0.48, n = 228, p < .01$ ), passion ( $r = 0.64, n = 226, p < .01$ ), and commitment ( $r = 0.56, n = 226, p < .01$ ). The work spouse factor was also correlated with inter-role facilitation ( $r = 0.39, n = 216,$

$p < .01$ ), intra-role facilitation ( $r = 0.32, n = 212, p < .01$ ), and inter-role preoccupation ( $r = 0.39, n = 210, p < .01$ ). There was a small positive correlation between the work spouse factor and inter-role work conflict on strain ( $r = 0.16, n = 218, p < .05$ ), inter-role home conflict on time ( $r = 0.17, n = 216, p < .05$ ), and work alienation ( $r = 0.26, n = 210, p < .01$ ). In terms of motivation for entering into the relationship, the work spouse factor was positively correlated with the love motive ( $r = 0.53, n = 210, p < .01$ ) and the ego motive ( $r = 0.46, n = 208, p < .01$ ). Finally, negative affectivity was positively correlated with the work spouse factor ( $r = 0.15, n = 209, p < .05$ ).

The love factor describes characteristics of a romantic relationship, and was highly correlated with passion ( $r = 0.91, n = 226, p < .01$ ), and moderately correlated with intimacy ( $r = 0.40, n = 228, p < .01$ ) and commitment ( $r = 0.56, n = 226, p < .01$ ). The love factor was also correlated with inter-role facilitation ( $r = 0.31, n = 215, p < .01$ ), intra-role facilitation ( $r = 0.26, n = 211, p < .01$ ), and inter-role preoccupation ( $r = 0.57, n = 209, p < .01$ ). There was also a small positive correlation between the love factor and inter-role work conflict on strain ( $r = 0.14, n = 217, p < .05$ ), inter-role home conflict on time ( $r = 0.24, n = 215, p < .01$ ), inter-role home conflict on strain ( $r = 0.26, n = 212, p < .01$ ), and work alienation ( $r = 0.25, n = 209, p < .01$ ). Finally, on motivation for entering into the relationship, the love factor was positively correlated with the love motive ( $r = 0.69, n = 209, p < .01$ ) and the ego motive ( $r = 0.60, n = 207, p < .01$ ).

### Discussion

In the current study, I sought to characterize the new concept of a work spouse relationship and compare it to three known types of intimate relationships in the

workplace: close friendships, romantic relationships, and mentor relationships. In particular, the use of constructs drawn from literature on romantic workplace relationships and work-family conflict lends to a well-rounded understanding of the characteristics of a relationship, including the love quality of the relationship, motives for engaging in the relationship, role conflict and facilitation caused by the relationship, perceived alienation from others, and effects on individual health and affectivity. The present study is a first attempt at empirically characterizing and defining the work spouse relationship, in addition to extending our current understanding of the other types of intimate relationships at work.

The current results have numerous implications for both research and practice. First and foremost these findings have set the stage for empirical discussion and future examination of a workplace relationship that is quickly gaining popularity. Our preliminary attempt to characterize the concept of the “work spouse” has led us to conclude that the work spouse is indeed a unique type of relationship that exists in the workplace. Individuals in work spouse relationships share a close bond. The relationship is highly intimate, not to the extent of a romantic relationship, but more so than a mentor relationship. Furthermore, the work spouse relationship has high levels of passion (e.g. attraction, excitement, adoration) and is motivated by love (e.g. sincere affection, companionship, friendship), once again not to the extent of a romantic relationship, but more so than a close friendship or mentor relationship. This characteristic, which is contrary to the popular belief that work spouse relationships are strictly platonic, could be attributed to the finding that work spouse relationships occur 96% of the time between

opposite sex individuals (similar to romantic relationships). On the other hand, 79% of close friendships and 67% of mentor relationships occur between individuals of the same gender. In the grand scheme of things, the intermixture of men and women in the workplace is relatively new. In the past, attraction to an individual outside of one's committed relationship could be managed by avoiding that person. However, if this individual is a co-worker that one is required to work with on shared assignments, (present findings show that 80% of those in work spouse relationship are in the same work group) then avoidance becomes much more difficult. Eyler (1992) suggests that it is inevitable that men and women working together will feel an attraction towards one another, yet most do not wish to pursue a sexual or loving relationship (present findings show that 84% of those in a work spouse relationship are also in some type of committed relationship or marriage). Therefore individuals have found a way to manage and balance their sexual energy towards one another, forming an intimate relationship that is not romantic, but not platonic either. Although he lacks the term (he calls this relationship "more than friends, less than lovers"), what Eyler (1992) is essentially describing is the work spouse relationship.

Furthermore, findings from the work spouse characteristics scale suggest that prominent features of the work spouse relationship include openly referring to one another as a "work husband" or "work wife", sharing a secret language, finishing one another's sentences, sharing nicknames, a high degree of openness, support, and trust, the sharing of personal experiences, and acting like a married couple. One study participant described her work spouse relationship in the additional comments section of the survey:

*“My “work-husband” is a very close friend within the office. We share experiences, stories, jokes, complaints. We support each other and enjoy spending time together at work. Outside of the office we have very little, if no communication. He has his partner, whom I have met and get along with well, and I have my husband. Being able to share our work frustrations with each other allows us to leave it here at the office and not take them out on our family members at home. I have never felt any romantic feelings for this person, nor has he felt them for me. But he gets me coffee, I’ll pick him up some lunch, I’ll make comments about his wardrobe, and we both “nag” each other.”*

The participant highlights that “outside of the office we have very little, if no communication”. This lends support to the thought that the work spouse relationship occurs strictly within the workplace. Although the current quote and other anecdotal evidence does suggest that the significant other at home is aware of the work spouse relationship (and may occasionally socially interact with the work spouse), it seems that if contact with one’s work spouse were to occur outside of the workplace, the relationship might change form (i.e. become a close friendship). For example, if a woman were to chastise her “work husband” at work for not eating his vegetables, she would most likely not do this if she were to accompany her work husband and his significant other to dinner. Perhaps the work spouse relationship can only truly exist in the workplace.

In addition, the participant’s quote speaks to both inter and intra role facilitation, which is positively correlated with the work spouse factor, further suggesting that involvement in the work spouse relationship helps individuals to successfully balance their roles within the workplace and within their work spouse relationship.

However, the work spouse relationship is not always beneficial in the workplace. The work spouse factor is moderately correlated with inter-role preoccupation, possibly due to distractions caused by high levels of intimacy and passion between work spouses. Furthermore, there is a small correlation between the work spouse factor and inter-role

home conflict (time). Characterizations of the work spouse in popular media sources discuss the conflict that may arise at home when an individual confides more in their work spouse than their actual spouse or significant other. However, this type of conflict is more likely to fall under measures of strain as opposed to time, and no significant correlation existed between the measure of inter-role home conflict (strain) and the work spouse factor. However, a small correlation between the work spouse factor and inter-role work conflict (strain) may add some insight into the home conflict (time) correlation. Perhaps inter-role conflict occurring at work as a result of a work spouse relationship causes strain for these individuals to the extent that it instigates spending time thinking about the conflict at home, which in turn propagates inter-role conflict at home. This may also explain the small correlation between the work spouse factor and negative affectivity, given that increased amounts of conflict are associated with increased levels of negative affect. Future research should examine the impact a work spouse relationship has on the “real” spouse at home. What feelings and attitudes do home spouses have about the work spouse relationship? How do these feelings and attitudes impact everyone involved?

Having a partner or spouse at home may actually contribute to the occurrence of work spouse relationships in the workplace. Recall that 84% of those in a work spouse relationship are also in some type of committed relationship or marriage. The perception that a sexual relationship is out of bounds or not possible (due to having a significant other at home), may serve to promote or instigate the development of this type of intimate relationship at work. In other words, individuals have a work spouse because they have a

home spouse. If both individuals engaging in a work spouse relationship did not have partners or spouses at home, instead of being work spouses they may pursue a romantic relationship instead, as there would be no reason not to act out any sexual feelings. A small, but significant, correlation between the work spouse factor and co-worker alienation suggests that co-workers may perceive the relationship negatively. Perhaps acting like a married couple at work when one also has a spouse at home carries a stigma similar to extra-marital affairs, garnering a certain, albeit small, amount of co-worker disapproval. Future research should explore the nature of one's relationship at home (using Sternberg's Theory of Love) and the likelihood and motivation for pursuing a work spouse relationship. Maybe those who are more secure in their home relationship are more likely to pursue a work spouse relationship for job and friendship reasons, while those with unhappy home relationships may engage in a work spouse relationship for reasons of love or as a means of compensating for the shortcomings at home.

A note of caution: researchers should be careful not to consider the work spouse relationship solely as a sexually frustrated pairing, whereby the individuals involved can't act out their attraction because they are morally obliged to maintain fidelity to their partner at home. Although work spouse relationships have high levels of passion, the current study also suggests that individuals of differing sexual orientations also engage in work spouse relationships:

*"I am gay, in a long-term same-sex relationship and my work wife is a married straight woman with two kids."*

This would suggest that the quality of the work spouse relationship goes beyond passionate feelings and tamed sexual desires, given that individuals of different sexual

orientation would most likely not want to pursue a sexual relationship with one another yet still exhibit the qualities of a marital relationship. My survey did not gather data on participant sexual orientation and therefore further research is required to tease apart the nature of the work spouse relationship and the characteristics of the individuals involved in these relationships.

Furthermore, the current study did not examine whether both participants in the work spouse relationship were equally engaged in long term relationships or marriages outside of the workplace. In other words, does the work spouse relationship normally occur between two individuals who are both in committed relationships? Can an individual who is single maintain a work spouse relationship with another individual who is in a committed relationship? Future research should examine both inter and intra-role conflict (at home and at work) that may occur when one individual in a work spouse relationship is single and the other is in a committed relationship.

The current results also contribute to our understanding about the characteristics of romantic relationships in the present day workplace. A large amount of research was conducted on the increasing presence of romance in the workplace in the late 1970's to the late 1980's, uncovering a general consensus felt by managers and co-workers alike: romantic relationships at work are detrimental to the work team and do not belong in the workplace (Anderson & Hunsaker, 1985; Mainiero, 1986; Pierce et al., 1996; Quinn, 1977). Relationships that developed between supervisors and subordinates were met with fear of favoritism and information sharing, leading to jealousy and work team conflict.

However, the very nature of the workplace fosters the development of close relationships, and the presence of company rules or policies did little to prevent people from falling in love and pursuing a relationship (Schaefer & Tudor, 2001). Furthermore, research focusing on positive aspects of romance in the workplace found that co-workers and managers were accepting, and many times excited about romantic relationships that were motivated by love between equal status coworkers. In fact, these types of romances were even found to increase employee morale and productivity (Mainiero, 1986). The current findings show that the types of romantic relationships that are favored in the workplace are essentially the types of romances that are occurring today, that is, 97% of the romantic relationships surveyed occur between co-workers and are characterized by high levels of intimacy, passion, and commitment, and are motivated by love (as expected in *Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 5* respectively).

That being said, individuals in romantic relationships did report significantly higher levels of inter-role preoccupation (as expected in *Hypothesis 6a*), confirming previous findings that a workplace romance is distracting for participants (Quinn, 1977). Individuals were highly motivated by their ego to engage in a romantic relationship at work, a measure using items such as “sexual experience” and “excitement”, which is highly correlated with levels of passion. What’s more, a strong correlation between passion and inter-role preoccupation suggests that it is the feelings of sexual attraction, romance, and excitement about the relationship that is mainly contributing to a lack of focus at work. Yet, Mainiero (1986) found that ultimately the feelings of preoccupation

with the excitement of being in a new relationship eventually calmed down as the relationship matured, allowing participants to restore their previous level of focus.

Besides inter-role preoccupation, however, individuals involved in work romances did not experience increased amounts of any other type of role conflict in comparison to other types of intimate relationships. In fact, contrary to expectations (in particular *Hypothesis 6b, 6c* and *7*), those in romantic relationships at work experience less intra-role conflict, and more inter-role facilitation (in the workplace and at home), compared to other types of intimate relationships at work. Given that 64% of the romantic relationships in the current study are occurring laterally between coworkers who work in the same work group, it appears that the facilitation that is occurring is a result of positive working behaviours, such as improved working relationships and access to resources, as opposed to negative behaviours that lead to intra-role conflict, such as favoritism. This suggests that organizations are beginning to take a positive and proactive approach to the presence of romance at work (Schaefer & Tudor, 2001), such as putting in place policies and guidelines that prevent intra-role conflict from occurring, while also improving organizational attitudes surrounding romantic relationships at work; two areas that require up-to-date research (Carson & Barling, 2008). Overall, romantic relationships at work should no longer be viewed as unfavorable working relationships and future efforts should be made to examine the positive outcomes of romance at work.

As expected in *Hypothesis 4*, individuals were motivated to engage in mentor relationships for job-related reasons. Yet notably, mentor relationships had significantly higher levels of positive affectivity compared to close friendships, contrary to

expectations (*Hypothesis 10*). A possible explanation for this finding is the direct, on the job support that is offered by the mentor relationship. Engaging in a relationship with an individual who is, for example, more senior within the organization can stimulate inspiration, interest, and enthusiasm for the job, and a determination to meet expectations (Kram, 1983). For the mentor, engaging in a developmental relationship with a junior employee serves to challenge and stimulate one's efforts and investment, rousing feelings of pride when success is achieved (Kram, 1983). In addition, a mentor relationship offers support to the individuals involved while also avoiding the personal issues and negative affectivity that may arise when a relationship becomes more intimate (e.g. close friendship).

In the process of attempting to study intimate relationships at work, it was my intention to gather a sample of individuals who genuinely worked with their "best friend"; that is, someone with whom one shares a close emotional bond going beyond mere acquaintanceship. Surprisingly however, close friendships scored only slightly higher on levels of relationship commitment than mentor relationships. Intuitively, close friends maintain a commitment to one another that should extend beyond the existence of that friendship within the workplace. However, it is possible that close friendships in the workplace merely gain that title as a result of comparisons made to other workplace friendships. In other words, one's "close friend" at work may more accurately be "the closest friend out of all their friends in the workplace". As suggested by Berman, West, and Richter (2002), it would be more instructive in future research to distinguish the actual closeness of a friendship at work by the nature of that friendship, for example a

work lunch-friend, a get-together-on-weekends-friend, a computer-techie-friend, or a life-long-friend.

Overall, intimate relationships in the workplace were positive experiences for those involved. Measures of inter-role conflict at work and at home (time and strain-based) were not significantly different by relationship type, suggesting that having any one of these four types of intimate relationships in the workplace is not associated with increased levels of role conflict. Individuals in intimate relationships at work perceived low levels of alienation from co-workers (contrary to *Hypothesis 8*), suggesting that the presence of these types of intimate relationships in the workplace are gaining greater acceptance among those observing them. In addition, no differences in negative affectivity between the relationship types indicate that one relationship does not negatively affect individuals more than any of the other intimate relationships at work (contrary to *Hypothesis 9*).

The second part of this study involved a preliminary attempt at empirically exploring the characteristics that define the work spouse relationship, based on definitions put forth in the popular media. In order to accomplish this objective, a Work Spouse Characteristic Scale was developed. Factor analyses identified three components in this newly developed scale (work spouse, closeness, and love). The work spouse factor seeks to describe the underlying qualities unique to the work spouse relationship and is moderately correlated with intimacy, passion, and commitment. Given that individuals in work spouse relationships scored highly on intimacy, passion, and commitment, this factor appears to be a valid measure of work spouse characteristics.

On the other hand, the love factor was included on the scale with the intention to differentiate the characteristics that are not part of the work spouse relationship.

However, a very high inter-correlation with the passion component on Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale (1986) suggests that the love factor is tapping the same construct as Sternberg's passion component. Additionally, the closeness factor correlates highly with Sternberg's intimacy and commitment components, suggesting that this too is tapping the same construct as intimacy and commitment. Therefore, it is recommended that both the love factor and the closeness factor are not included in the Work Spouse Characteristic Scale.

Given the small sample size of individuals in work spouse relationships, the current research was unable to confirm that participants in work spouse relationships do in fact score higher on the work spouse factor compared to individuals in other types of relationships. Reasons for such a small sample size within the individuals surveyed could be that the work spouse relationship is not yet prominent in the workplace. However, it may also be due to the minimal usage of the term "work spouse". Although the current survey defined the concept of the work spouse using a definition from the popular media, it is possible that many individuals are engaging in this type of relationship but have not named it as such. Based on my personal experiences in speaking with people, many individuals understood the idea of the work spouse relationship (having either witnessed it or heard about it from friends) however had yet to hear the term "work spouse". Furthermore, the work spouse term may be associated with a certain stigma for heterosexual individuals. For example, if a man has a relationship at work with another

man that fits the criteria of the work spouse construct yet both men are heterosexual, referring to one another as “work spouses” may be associated with being homosexual. To put this in context, consider police officers, a profession that is largely made up of males who work in close partnership with one other individual (also most likely to be male). The characteristics of their relationship may fit those of the work spouse, however they may prefer to call one another “partners” or friends. This raises additional questions about the types of workplaces that breed work spouse relationships. Does the “work spouse” term only arise in workplaces with equal ratios of male to female employees? Do the individuals involved in work spouse relationships perform similar job duties, whereby an innate understanding of each other’s work roles fosters a deeper level of kinship (e.g. doctors working in the emergency room)? Additional research is required to further test this measure against a larger sample of individuals, from a variety of professions, participating in work spouse relationships.

Finally, the implications that the work spouse relationship has within the organization should be considered in future research. For example, does the work spouse relationship facilitate productivity for both the individuals involved and the organization as a whole? Perhaps the work spouse relationship brings the same type of excitement that romance is said to bring to the workplace (Mainiero, 1986) without the stigma associated with a romantic relationship.

### *Limitations*

There are several potential limitations that should be considered when evaluating the results of the current research. First, just under half of participants did not complete

the online survey, however a study conducted by Schalm and Kelloway (2001) suggests that response rate is unlikely to adversely affect the validity of survey findings. In addition, the measures relied on self-report data, which raises the possibility that mono-method bias may have accounted for the differences between relationships, pointing to the need to replicate current findings using multiple methods.

Second, the use of an original (rather than standardized) scale to measure the perceived alienation construct would benefit from additional validation efforts (though the factor and reliability analyses provide initial evidence of reliability and validity).

Third, the cross-sectional design of the study allows for only a snapshot of the characteristics of the relationship types at one point in time. Although this is appropriate in the earlier stages of research, relationships are not static; they develop and change over time, therefore the need for longitudinal research is needed to examine the changes in workplace relationships over time. For example, what is the impact on the organization when different types of relationships end? Furthermore, future research should gain insight into the development of workplace relationships as they mature, for example, do workplace relationships move along a continuum, evolving from a mentor relationship or friendship, to a work spouse, and ultimately becoming a romantic relationship? Cross-sectional data also limits causal inferences. Future research should examine whether engaging in relationships at work can enhance work-life balance, social support, and health and well-being.

Fourth, these findings are limited by small sample sizes within the work spouse and mentor relationship groups. In tests of multivariate analysis of variance, small sample

sizes lead to lack of power and increase the risk of making a Type 2 error. As a result, I was unable to test group differences on the components from the exploratory factor analysis. Future research should attempt to verify the Work Spouse Characteristic Scale using a larger sample of individuals from work spouse relationships.

In summary, the current results extend a preliminary characterization of the work spouse concept, with the finding that the work spouse is a unique relationship in the workplace that, although different, closely mimics the romantic relationship.

Furthermore, romantic relationships were found to be less detrimental to the organization than previously thought. Future research needs to continue developing the work spouse construct and examining the implications of all intimate relationships in the workplace.

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## Appendix A

## Saint Mary's University

### Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Subjects

This is to certify that the Research Ethics Board has examined the research proposal or other type of study submitted by:

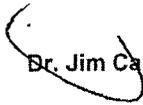
Principal Investigator:	DONOHUE, Meghan (Student)
Faculty Supervisor:	KELLOWAY, Kevin
Name of Research Project:	Till' 5 pm Do Us Part: Intimate Relations in the Workplace. Working Title: Close Relationships in the Workplace.
REB File Number:	09-272

and concludes that in all respects the proposed project meets appropriate standards of ethical acceptability and is in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Conduct of Research Involving Humans.

Please note that approval is only effective for one year from the date approved. If your research project takes longer than one year to complete, submit Form #3 (Annual Report) to the REB at the end of the year and request an extension. You are also required to submit Form #5 (Completion of Research) upon completion of your research.

Date: 9 February 2010

Signature of REB Acting Chair:

  
Dr. Jim Cameron

## Appendix B

### Telephone Recruitment Script

**Researchers: Meghan Donohoe and Dr. Kevin Kelloway from Saint Mary's University.**  
**Topic of the Survey: Close Relationships at Work and Role Conflict**

#### Telephone Preamble for Compiling Representative Sample of Respondents

Good Afternoon/Evening, My name is \_\_\_\_\_, from The Marketing Clinic in Halifax. We are looking for people to participate in a Masters research project for Dr. Kevin Kelloway and Meghan Donohoe from Saint Mary's University. The research topic is on close relationships in the workplace and role conflict. A close relationship could be someone at work you share a close bond with, for example a best friend, romantic relationship or a work spouse. (If they ask, a work spouse is a platonic relationship that resembles a marriage. Therefore, it's like having a friendship with a coworker at work that resembles a relationship you would have with your husband or wife, without the sexual or romance aspect.)

The study involves completing one survey on the internet through a link provided to you. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes of your time. We understand that this is time consuming and would like to remunerate you for your time by entering your name in a draw for one of five \$100 visa gift cards.

Would you consider participating in such a research project for Masters student Meghan Donohoe and Professor Kelloway of Saint Mary's University?

If no: Thank them for their time and end the conversation.

If yes: Thank you so much for agreeing to participate. We have to ask you some qualifying questions,

1. Are you over the age of 18 years?
2. Do you currently work more than 20 hours per week in a workplace with other employees?

Once again, the survey will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.

1) Web-based ----- What is your email? \_\_\_\_\_

\*We can also mail them the survey in paper and pencil form if they mention that they would like to participate but do not have access to a computer or to the internet. If they mention this, ask them if they would like the survey mailed to them.

May I have your mailing address?

Thank you so much. You should receive the survey link within 5 days, and if you could complete it as soon as you are able, it would be greatly appreciated.

If participants have any questions concerning legitimacy, please provide the contact information below:

Meghan Donohoe (Main Researcher)  
Department of Psychology  
Saint Mary's University  
Phone # 902-880-3382  
Email: meghan.donohoe@smu.ca

Kevin Kelloway  
Department of Psychology  
Saint Mary's University  
Phone # 902-496-8616  
Email: kevin.kelloway@smu.ca

## Appendix C

### Participant Informed Consent

#### Close Relationships in the Workplace

REB # 09-272

Meghan Donohoe and Dr. E. Kevin Kelloway  
Department of Psychology Saint Mary's University  
Halifax, NS B3H 3C3  
Phone 880-3382; Fax 496-8287;  
meghan.donohoe@smu.ca

#### INTRODUCTION

We are researchers in the department of Psychology at Saint Mary's University. As part of a Masters thesis project we are conducting research looking at people's close relationships in the workplace. In this study we are interested in the different types of relationships and friendships that exist in the workplace and how these relationships affect work and family roles.

#### WHAT WILL I HAVE TO DO?

Participating in this study involves completing an electronic survey. The survey is expected to take approximately 50 minutes of your time.

#### WHAT WILL I GET FOR PARTICIPATING?

We appreciate the time commitment you are providing to us by completing our survey. As a thank you for your time, you will be entered into a draw for a chance to win one of five \$100 visa gift cards. In order to enter your name into the cash prize draw, you will be required to enter your email address so we can contact you for prize notification. This identifying information will be kept separate from your survey data and will only be used for the purpose of the cash prize draw.

#### WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS FOR PARTICIPATING?

There are minimal risks involved in the study. However, some people may find it emotional to answer questions about the intimate nature of their relationship or friendship. Although the information you will be providing us through this survey is very important, if at any point in completing this survey you feel that it is causing your stress or anxiety levels to increase, we encourage you to stop filling out the survey. If you complete the survey but later feel an adverse reaction (characterized by a persistent emotional response brought on by reflecting on your work relationship or friendship), we encourage you to seek council from your Employee Assistance Plan or your family physician. We also invite you to alert us to this response so that we can make changes to the survey if necessary. Our contact information is provided below.

**HOW CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY?**

You can stop completing the survey at any point in the process. You are also free to skip individual items in the survey.

**WHAT WILL BE DONE WITH MY INFORMATION? WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO IT?** The information you provide in this survey is anonymous and confidential. The only individuals who will have access to the survey data are the researchers named on this form and their research assistants. Please note, that all results from this research will be reported at the group level, meaning that we will not be providing anyone else with information pertaining to your individual responses.

**HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION OR FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THIS STUDY?**

For more information about this study or to voice any concerns or questions you may have regarding this research please contact one of the researchers at:

Meghan Donohoe  
Department of Psychology  
Saint Mary's University  
Phone # 902-880-3382  
Email: [meghan.donohoe@smu.ca](mailto:meghan.donohoe@smu.ca)

Kevin Kelloway  
Department of Psychology  
Saint Mary's University  
Phone # 902-496-8616  
Email: [kevin.kelloway@smu.ca](mailto:kevin.kelloway@smu.ca)

**Certification:** This research has been reviewed and approved by the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions or concerns about ethical matters, you may contact Dr. Jim Cameron, Acting Chair of the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board at [ethics@smu.ca](mailto:ethics@smu.ca) or 902-491-8653.

By selecting "Agree", you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study.

## Appendix D

## Workplace Relationships Survey

Think of the closest relationship you currently have at your place of work. This could be someone at work that you spend the most time with or share a close bond. There are several types of close relationships that can develop in the workplace. These include:

A Best or Close Friendship: this is a close emotional bond that goes beyond acquaintanceship but excludes romance.

A Romantic Relationship: this is a relationship where some element of mutual sexuality or physical intimacy exists.

A Work Spouse: this is a platonic relationship that has the same features of a marriage such as intimacy and affection, but is NOT sexual.

**This survey is interested in learning more about the closest friendship or relationship you currently have at your place of work.** Please think only about the person at your work that you have the closest friendship or relationship with while answering the following questions.

What type of close relationship are you involved in with this person at work?

1. Best or Close Friendship
2. Romantic Relationship or Marriage
3. Work "Spouse" (work "wife" or work "husband")
4. Mentor Relationship
5. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 1: Relationship Characteristics

1. At work, this person is my...:
  - a. Co-worker
  - b. Direct Supervisor
  - c. Senior Manager
  - d. Subordinate
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. How is this person's position in the organization related to yours?
  - a. In the same work group
  - b. In a different work group
  - c. Other \_\_\_\_
3. What is the gender of this person? Male Female
4. What is your gender? Male Female
5. How long have you been in your friendship/relationship with this person?
6. How long have you known this person?
7. Are you currently involved in more than one close friendship/relationship at work?
  - a. If yes, how many?
8. Is this person in a committed romantic relationship outside of the workplace?
9. What is your marital status? (Single; married; in a committed relationship; divorced; common-law; widowed; other)

Triangular Love Scale (Sternberg, 1997)

Think about the person you identified as being closest to you in your place of work and answer the following questions about your friendship/relationship with this person.

1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

Intimacy

- I received considerable emotional support from this person
- I am able to count on this person in times of need
- This person is able to count on me in times of need
- I value this person greatly in my life
- I am willing to share myself and my possessions with this person
- I experience great happiness with this person
- I feel emotionally close to this person
- I give considerable emotional support to this person
- I have a comfortable relationship with this person
- I have a warm relationship with this person
- I communicate well with this person
- I share deeply personal information about myself with this person
- I feel that I really understand this person
- I feel that this person really understands me
- I feel that I really can trust this person

Passion

I cannot imagine another person making me as happy as this person  
There is nothing more important to me than my friendship/relationship with this person  
My friendship/relationship with this person is very romantic  
I cannot imagine life without this person  
I adore this person  
I find myself thinking about this person frequently during the day  
Just seeing this person is exciting for me  
There is something almost 'magical' about my friendship/relationship with this person  
I idealize this person  
I find this person to be very personally attractive  
I would rather be with this person than with anyone else  
I fantasize about this person  
When I see romantic movies or read romantic books I think of this person  
I especially like physical contact with this person  
My friendship/relationship with this person is passionate

Commitment

I will always feel a strong responsibility for this person  
I expect my love for this person to last for the rest of my life  
I can't imagine ending my friendship/relationships with this person  
I view my friendship/relationships with this person as permanent  
I am certain of my feelings for this person  
I am committed to maintaining my friendship/relationship with this person  
I could not let anything get in the way of my commitment to this person  
I have confidence in the stability of my friendship/relationship with this person  
I view my friendship/relationship with this person as a good decision  
I know that I care about this person  
I feel a sense of responsibility toward this person  
Because of my commitment to this person, I would not let other people come between us  
Even when this person is hard to deal with, I remain committed to our  
friendship/relationships  
I view my commitment to this person as a solid one  
I plan to continue in my relationships with this person

Work Spouse Characteristics Questionnaire

Think about the person you identified as being closest to you in your place of work and answer the following questions about your friendship/relationship with this person.

Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)

1. I depend on this person for supplies
2. I share personal jokes with this person
3. I share a secret language with this person
4. I share personal experiences with this person
5. I share gripes about the workday with this person
6. When I learn information or gossip at work, they are the first person I tell
7. I know this person's favorite food
8. I know this person's issues or problems in the workplace
9. I am physically attracted to this person
10. I am romantically interested in this person
11. We finish one another's sentences
12. We have nicknames for one another
13. We are honest with one another
14. We are open with one another
15. We offer support to one another
16. This person is more interested in what happens at work than my significant other at home.
17. Our friendship/relationship is strong because we share similar experiences in the workplace
18. This person has skills that complement my skills
19. This person has abilities that complement my abilities
20. This person has knowledge that complement my knowledge
21. This person offers support with work related projects
22. This person offers emotional support
23. I am romantically involved with this person
24. This person would like to see me succeed
25. My friendship/relationship with this person improves my chances of getting a promotion
26. My friendship/relationship with this person improves my chances of getting a raise
27. My friendship/relationship with this person makes me a more productive worker
28. My friendship/relationship with this person keeps my work problems from interfering with my home life
29. This person has my back
30. I bicker with this person
31. I nag this person
32. This person nags me

33. I trust this person
34. This person offers me advice
35. I care for this person
36. I spend lunch with this person
37. This person is my closest corporate confidant
38. This person knows what I'm thinking
39. This person and I are inseparable in the workplace
40. This person and I are competitive with each other
41. This person is the dominant one in our friendship/relationship
42. I am the dominant one in our friendship/relationship
43. This person gives me comfort
44. I refer to this person as my Work Spouse or my work husband/wife
45. Other people say that this person and I act like a married couple

## **Section 2: Role Conflict and Role Facilitation**

Thinking about the person you identified as being closest to you in your organization, read the following statements and choose the best response for each item.

### Inter-role Work Conflict

(Adapted from Work and Family Conflict Scale (Kelloway et al., 1999))

1 (never) 2(rarely) 3(sometimes) 4(almost always) 5 (all the time)

### *Adapted FIW Time Measures*

1. I would put in longer work days if I had fewer demands from this person.
2. This person's demands interrupt my workday.
3. This person's demands make it difficult for me to take on additional job responsibilities.
4. I spend time at work making arrangements for this person.
5. This person's demands make it difficult for me to have the work schedule I want.

### *Adapted FIW Strain Measures*

1. When I am at work, I am distracted by this person's demands.
2. Things going on in my close workplace friendship/relationship make it hard for me to concentrate at work.
3. Events that occur in my close workplace friendship/relationship make me tense and irritable on the job.
4. Because of the demands I face in my close workplace friendship/relationship, I am tired at work.
5. I spend time at work thinking about the things that I have to do this person.
6. My workplace friendship/relationship puts me in a bad mood at work.

Inter-role Home Conflict

(Adapted from Work and Family Conflict Scale (Kelloway et al., 1999))

1 (never) 2(rarely) 3(sometimes) 4(almost always) 5 (all the time)

*Adapted FIW Time Measures*

1. I would spend more time at home if I had fewer demands from this person
2. This person's demands interrupt my home life
3. This person's demands cause tension for me at home
4. I spend time at home making arrangements for this person

*Adapted FIW Strain Measures*

5. When I am at home, I am distracted by this person's demands
6. Things going on in my workplace friendship/relationship make it hard for me to concentrate at home
7. Events that occur in my workplace friendship/relationship make me tense and irritable at home
8. Because of the demands I face in my workplace friendship/relationship, I am tired at home
9. I spend time at home thinking about the things that I have to do for this person
10. My workplace friendship/relationship puts me in a bad mood at home

Inter Role Facilitation

(Adapted Work Family Facilitation (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004))

1 (never) 2(rarely) 3(sometimes) 4(almost always) 5 (all the time)

1. My friendship/relationship at work helps me deal with personal and practical issues at home
2. My friendship/relationship at work makes me a more interesting person at home
3. Having a good day with this person at work makes me a better companion when I get home

*Adapted Family Work Facilitation*

1. Stress in my workplace friendship/relationship makes me irritable at work
2. Talking with this person helps me deal with problems at work
3. The love and respect I get from this person makes me feel confident about myself at work

Inter Role Preoccupation

1. I find myself constantly thinking about this person when I'm at work
2. I have missed important appointments or meetings at work
3. I can't focus on my work
4. I find myself constantly thinking about this person when I'm at home
5. I have missed important appointments or events involving my family
6. I am distracted at home

Intra Role Conflict

1 = strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree

1. This person expects more from me than I want to give
2. I have received a promotion from this person
3. I have received a salary increase from this person
4. I have given a promotion to this person
5. I have given a salary increase to this person
6. I feel I should pick this person for projects
7. I feel pressured to give a salary increase to this person
8. I feel pressured to give a promotion to this person
9. I feel bad if I don't pick this person for project
10. This person expects more from me than I can give

Intra Role Facilitation

As a result of my relationship or friendship in my workplace...

1. I get along better with my co-workers
2. I am more easy going at work
3. I am happier at work
4. I am a better listener at work
5. I am more open to new ideas
6. I get along better with my family at home
7. I am more easy going at home
8. I am happier at home
9. I am a better listener at home

Relationship Motives (Dillard & Broetzmann, 1989)

How important is each of the following items as a reason for entering into your close workplace friendship/relationship? (1 = not at all important, 5 = very important)

(Love motive)

- sincere affection
- looking for a spouse or long-term partner
- companionship
- love
- friendship

(Job Motive)

- advancement in the organization
- increased power
- increased prestige
- job security
- easier work

(Ego Motive)

- excitement
- adventure
- sexual experience
- conquest
- thrill

Work Alienation

1(Not at all) 2(Rarely) 3(Once in a while) 4(Some of the time) 5(Fairly Often)  
6(Often) 7(All of the time)

1. My co-workers support my work friendship/relationship
2. My significant other at home supports my work friendship/relationship
3. I am afraid that my co-workers gossip about my work friendship/relationship
4. I know that my co-workers gossip about my work friendship/relationship
5. I feel better at work as a result of my work friendship/relationship
6. I feel increased anxiety at work as a result of my work friendship/relationship
7. I feel alienated from my co-workers as a result of my work friendship/relationship
8. I am concerned about the way others at my workplace perceive me
9. My co-workers are jealous of my work friendship/relationship
10. My significant other at home is jealous of my work friendship/relationship
11. My co-workers think that I am being favored as a result of my work friendship/relationship
12. My significant other at home knows about my work friendship/relationship
13. I spend time outside of work with my workplace friend
14. My significant other at home socializes with my workplace friend

**Section 3: Health and Well-being**

General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) (Goldberg, 1992)

Read each item and indicate how you have been feeling on average in the past 3 months.

1(Not at all) 2(Rarely) 3(Once in a while) 4(Some of the time) 5(Fairly Often)  
6(Often) 7(All of the time)

1. Have you been able to concentrate on whatever you're doing?
2. Have you lost much sleep from worry?
3. Have you felt that you're playing a useful part in things?
4. Have you felt capable of making decisions about things?
5. Have you felt under strain?
6. Have you felt that you couldn't overcome your difficulties?
7. Have you been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities?
8. Have you been able to face up to your problems?
9. Have you been feeling unhappy and/or depressed?
10. Have you been losing confidence in yourself?
11. Have you been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?
12. Have you been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered?

PANAS – Positive and Negative Affectivity Scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988)

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. In the past 3 months, have you been feeling...

1(very slightly or not at all) 2(a little) 3(moderately) 4(quite a bit) 5(extremely)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| interested   | irritable  |
| distressed   | alert      |
| excited      | ashamed    |
| upset        | inspired   |
| strong       | nervous    |
| guilty       | determined |
| scared       | attentive  |
| hostile      | jittery    |
| enthusiastic | active     |
| proud        | afraid     |

**Section 4: Demographics**

1. How long have you been employed with your current organization? \_\_ years

2. How old are you? \_\_ years of age

3. What is your occupation?

4. What is your approximate annual salary?

\$30,000 or less

\$31,000 – \$50,000

\$51,000 - \$70,000

\$71,000 – \$90,000

\$91,000 - \$120,000

\$121,000 or more

At this time we invite any additional comments you may wish to share with us.