

Chastity in the Workplace

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Most businesses are aware of the costs associated with sexual harassment in the workplace—on the victim side, these costs include psychological health issues, lower organizational commitment, higher quit rates and absenteeism, decreased job satisfaction, and lost career opportunities;¹ on the company side, these costs include policy formation and implementation costs, litigation costs, productivity and turnover losses, and reputational damage.²

Business are also concerned about limiting sexual harassment in the workplace, as is evidenced by efforts to train employees (over 70% of businesses in the U.S. have sexual harassment training programs³) and ethics consulting companies' appeal to companies' desire to

¹ For studies regarding psychological health issues, lower organizational commitment, higher quit rates, and absenteeism, see: European Commission (1998), U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (1995), Willness et al. (2007), Chan et al. (2008), Fitzgerald and Cortina (2017), Schneider et al. (1997). For a focus on psychological distress in particular, see: Nielsen and Einarsen (2012), Dansky and Kilpatrick (1997) (which argues specifically that targets are more likely to experience PTSD), Friborg et al. (2017) (which argues that the effects of harassment are more severe when a coworker harasses than when a client does). For the claim that harassment leads to a loss of job opportunities, see National Academy of Sciences (2018).

² For claims about litigation costs, see U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2018a) and Rutherglen (2015). For findings about turnover costs, see: McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone (2017) (which shows that targets of harassment are 6.5 times as likely to leave as are non-targets) and Merken and Shah (2014) (which claims that employee turnover cost is the largest actual cost with respect to sexual harassment). For claims about absenteeism, see Khubchandani and Price (2015) (which argues that harassed employees are 1.7 times more likely to take two weeks off work than are non-harassed employees). For claims about decreased productivity, see: Willness et al. (2007), Sojo, Wood, and Genat (2016), and Raver and Gelfand (2005). For issues related to policy implementation, see: Fitzgerald, Swan, and Magley (1997) and Hemmasi, Graf, and Russ (1994). For findings about reputational damage caused by harassment, see: Hersch (1991) (which argues that after employment discrimination litigation, firms suffer substantial loss in value) and U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2018b).

³ This claim is made in Cole (2017). It is true that some businesses implement training merely to comply with the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines (2018), but many businesses offer training beyond what is required by those guidelines.

limit sexual harassment as part of their marketing material.⁴ Strict policies and punishments are generally taken to be the most effective means of deterring harassment;⁵ however, policies are expensive and time-consuming to develop, revise, and enforce, and, as is the case with most wrongdoing in the workplace, it is better for companies and their employees for businesspeople to display attitudes, dispositions, and behaviors that make policy enforcement unnecessary, especially when policy development is absent or enforcement is ineffective, as has been the case with respect to sexual harassment.

A good place to begin an inquiry into the kinds of attitudes, dispositions, and behaviors that are valuable in the workplace with respect to sexual harassment in particular is to investigate chastity, a virtue with respect to sexual attraction. Although the business ethics literature contains work on sexual harassment, it has very little to say on chastity or its value in the workplace even though unchaste behavior underlies the prevalence of sexual harassment. The hope is that once the reason and locus of chastity is identified, the professionals who know how to train businesspeople in developing virtues will better be able to focus their attention and efforts.

This article begins this investigation into chastity worth having in the workplace,⁶ taking typical company policies as a guide for what kind of chastity is worth having in the workplace. I

⁴ For example, Price Waterhouse Cooper's ethics consulting page reads, "The culture of an organization has never been more important. In the age of transparency, a single incident, such as sexual harassment, bullying, or discrimination, can have a profound and long-lasting effect on brand, reputation, and shareholder value. You need to anticipate and effectively manage your workforce risks to build trust, both with employees and customers." (<https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/hr-management/workforce-of-the-future/managing-workforce-risk.html>) Accessed July 8, 2019.

⁵ For support of this claim, see Fitzgerald, Swan, and Magley (1997), Willness et al. (2007), and Hersch (2019).

⁶ A note on the methodology in this paper. The methodology is axiological: it focuses on answering the question, in workplace contexts in particular, what is chastity worth having? The axiological approach is specifically distinct from four other approaches: 1) A linguistic approach, which analyzes the term 'chastity,' its etymology, its cognates, and the propriety of using related terms. It might be that chastity worth having in the workplace diverges from how the term 'chastity' is typically or appropriately used, because perhaps the term sometimes applies to behaviors or dispositions that are not worth having in the workplace. 2) A conceptual analysis, which seeks to define the necessary and sufficient conditions of a particular, univocal concept ("S is chaste =_{df} ...") until the account is

begin with the assumption that chastity is a virtue, an excellent disposition or a particular state of a person having to do with sexual activity, whether it is refraining from certain kinds of those activities, avoiding thoughts about certain kinds of those activities, or regulating desires for certain kinds of those activities. This assumption is broad enough to capture what chastity is assumed to be in most of the extant philosophical and theological literature on chastity.⁷ I then ask: for what reasons is chastity worth having in the workplace? I consider four answers—harm prevention, respect for employee consent/dissent, respect for others’ dignity, and conflict of interest avoidance—and I examine workplace policies that enforce chaste behavior in search for a unified and underlying reason for these policies. If we can find such a reason, we’ve found a primary reason that it is worth being chaste in the workplace, and so with respect to the chaste person, the need to enforce of sexual harassment policies will be reduced if not eliminated. In the process of locating the primary reason for the value of being chaste in the workplace in particular, we will be given tools to develop an account of chastity worth having in the workplace, which I will argue is primarily cognitive, rather than volitional or affective. I will conclude that chastity is the disposition not to construe a coworker as a satisfier of one’s sexual interest, and I argue that chastity is valuable in the workplace because it secures coworkers’ ability to have their contributions appropriately valued.

In what follows, then, I will first consider reasons for workplace policies that enforce chaste behavior and encourage chaste dispositions—harm prevention (Section 1), respect for

immune from counterexamples. It might be that the account of chastity in the workplace here is not immune to occasional but peripheral counterexamples. 3) A search for a “metaphysically fundamental” attitude, virtue, or state. It might be that chastity worth having is defined functionally and spans across multiple more-fundamental attitudes, dispositions, or states. 4) An examination of religious texts to determine which kinds of attitudes or behaviors described as ‘chastity’ are encouraged, commended, or commanded. It might be that chastity worth having in the workplace is not specifically addressed in religious texts, though the hope is that chastity as it is articulated in the conclusion of this paper is compatible with religious views on chastity.

⁷ See, for example, Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II-II.151, Augustine, Sermon LXXXII, Hume (1751/1998), 5.2.44, Anscombe, (1972), and other works from this collection.

employee consent (Section 2), respect for others' dignity (Section 3), and conflict of interest avoidance (Section 4)—and I then develop an account of chastity worth having in the workplace (Section 5).

Stage 1: Harm Prevention

The first paragraph of this article emphasized the well documented patterns of harms (and risks of harms) that sexual harassment causes. This long list of harms is often used to argue that companies ought to have and enforce policies that prevent the unchaste behavior that leads to those harms. The risk of these harms is often calculated by Ethics and Compliance software that tracks sexual harassment training and anonymous reporting and provides organizations with data and analytics that is used for risk management reasons—to limit the organization's liability. This software sometimes comes with proprietary algorithms that determine ethics risk factors and calculates the return on investment for applying certain risk management efforts,⁸ and these software companies appeal to risk reduction to market their particular products.⁹ So, risk reduction/harm mitigation is one reason for implementing policies against sexual harassment and for the value of having broadly chaste dispositions in the workplace—chastity in the workplace reduces harm to employees and to the business as a whole.

⁸ For example, NAVEX Global's RiskRate® is a score given to companies to indicate their risk level and the greatest drivers of risk to the company. The company will also calculate a business' return on investment for developing and enforcing ethics and compliance policies. (<https://www.navexglobal.com/en-us/products/riskrate-third-party-risk-management-software>) Accessed July 8, 2019.

⁹ In addition to Price Waterhouse Cooper (in footnote 4) NAVEX Global (in footnote 8), Deloitte's ethics and compliance page reads, "At a time when risks are increasing, what are the building blocks upon which to build a world-class ethics and compliance program that not only protects an organization from internal and external threats, but also enhances its brand and strengthens its relationship with all stakeholders?" (<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/risk/articles/building-world-class-ethics-and-compliance-programs-making-a-good-program-great.html>) Accessed July 8, 2019.

For another example, Convercent's home page advertises that it can help "Identify, Characterize, and Mitigate E&C [ethics and compliance] risk," under which a bullet point reads, "Reduce your risk and costs associated with fines, penalties, and lawsuits." (<https://www.convercent.com/>) Accessed July 8, 2019.

Several recent articles provide taxonomies of the harms that result from sexual harassment in the workplace, both to the victims and to the organizations in which the harassment occurs,¹⁰ and a list of these harms and more was given in the first paragraph, so I will not take up space doing that again here. It is worth noting, however, that although the kinds of harms can be described, the severity of the harms is notoriously difficult to determine: sexual harassment is often unreported, and reports about the percentage of cases that go unreported vary widely; surveys about whether sexual harassment has occurred differ in approaches—some ask whether the respondent has been sexually harassed, whereas others ask whether the respondent has experienced particular behaviors listed by the survey; and surveys that are given over many years have wording changes that alter the meaning of the survey question.¹¹

If we conclude that unchaste behavior in the workplace poses a severe harm to employees and businesses, there still might be other reasons for creating and enforcing policies against unchaste behavior. And if harm prevention is not the only reason for creating and enforcing such policies, we can further ask whether harm prevention is the primary reason for creating and enforcing policies against sexual harassment.

We do, in fact, have reason to think that harm prevention is not the only reason for creating and enforcing policies against unchaste behaviors; enforcement of policies against spying and stalking reveal some other reasons for valuing chastity in the workplace. Consider the following examples.¹²

¹⁰ For recent articles with taxonomies of the harms caused by sexual harassment in the workplace, see Shaw et al. (2018) and Hersch (2019).

¹¹ See Hersch (2019), 8-11.

¹² Not included here is an example involving exploitation, which is another example of wrongdoing without harming, as in Valdman (2009).

Spying: An employee spies on other employees in restrooms for voyeuristic reasons without disclosing any of this information to anyone else. The company leadership that would take responsive action knows for certain both that no one else will learn of the spying and that the spying employees will never come in contact with their victims.

Stalking: A small group of employees hacks into other employees' personal mobile devices without permission in search of sexually explicit content. They keep their findings to themselves, and all records of the stalking will be deleted before anyone discovers it.

Such actions do not harm the victims; they do not inflict pain, cause emotional distress, or result in financial harm—the victims are completely ignorant of the privacy violations and would otherwise interact with and be interacted with in exactly the same way as if the spying/stalking had not occurred, and the victims would not feel differently from how they would feel were the spying/stalking not to have occurred. Definitions of ‘harm’ in the philosophical literature vary, but the specifications in **Spying** and **Stalking** either make it so that the victim was unharmed (on, e.g. Feinberg’s (1987) definition of ‘harm’ as involving a setback to one’s interests), or, if the definition of ‘harm’ is wide enough to include being wronged in a way that does not affect the understanding, affections, or behavior of the victim, it is difficult to see what work harm is doing to help one understand anything beyond being wronged.¹³ Despite the fact that this behavior does not harm its victims, these unchaste behaviors are still worth prohibiting in the workplace. If an anti-stalking or anti-spying policies should be put in place solely to prevent harms, then the policies should not be enforceable (or should be excepted) in

¹³ See Smith 2004 for a defense of this claim.

Spying and Stalking, but since it is worth enforcing those policies in the above examples, harm prevention is not the sole reason for worthwhile workplace policies.

Chaste dispositions would significantly reduce, if not eliminate, the occurrence of such the behaviors in **Spying and Stalking**. Let us, then, continue to look for the reason for prohibiting the unchaste behaviors in the examples in order to discover the primary reason that it is worth being chaste in the workplace.

Stage 2: Respecting Consent/Dissent

One might think that the spying/stalking employees' actions in **Spying and Stalking** should have been prevented by workplace policies precisely because the victims would have dissented to the spying and stalking.¹⁴ If so, honoring individuals' dissent to certain behaviors is one reason for developing and enforcing policies against unchaste behaviors in the workplace. In addition, the ability to consent and dissent is *prima facie* a valuable human good, one that is perhaps constitutive of complete personhood and inclusion in the community of moral agents.¹⁵ Chastity then protects against certain kinds of behaviors to which others would dissent in the workplace and is thus a way of protecting a valuable human good. In addition, if workplace policies are solely for the sake of preventing situations in which some people display behaviors

¹⁴ Before continuing, I should clarify the terminology used here. 'Dissent' here is the opposite of consent. (Non-consent is just not to consent.) As consent is to acceptance, dissent is to rejection. For example, when someone says they wish not to be touched, inappropriate touching is not problematic just because the victim did not consent to the touching—it is worse because of the fact that the victim dissented to it. Similarly, assuming that the spying/stalking employees should obtain consent before spying/stalking, it is still presumably worse for the victims were they to have dissented than if they were simply not to have consented to the spying/stalking employees' actions had they been made aware of those actions.

¹⁵ This view is shared by those who believe autonomy is a basic human good, including Kantians like, well, Kant (1785/1983) and Korsgaard (1996), and Utilitarians like J.S. Mill (1859/1978), ch. 3.

One can also see the movement from the previous section to this one as a movement from a consequentialist justification for prohibiting unchaste behaviors to a deontological justification for prohibiting those behaviors. Whereas the former appeals to the consequences of displaying unchaste behaviors, the latter appeals to the need to protect a feature inherent to one's personhood. This movement will be more apparent by the next section.

to which others dissent, and if everyone were chaste, there would be greatly reduced need for workplace policies that restrict behaviors related to sex.

Although some workplace policies prevent some situations to which individuals dissent, workplace policies do not prevent all these situations; individual dissent is often not respected even by permissible and worthwhile policies and procedures. The kind or range of dissent worth respecting in the workplace often differs from the kind or range of dissent worth respecting outside the workplace. For example, in the workplace in particular, corporate policies might require an employee to perform additional job duties (such as additional hours, menial paperwork filing, and additional reporting) on the spot that they would not perform were they not pressured into doing so by virtue of job loss, poor evaluations, etc. These policies create an ultimatum that constitutes a threat: do this work or be fired.¹⁶ Similarly, employees can be forced to cease a romantic relationship with a coworker if such a relationship violates worthwhile workplace policies, even if each partner would dissent to the dissolution of the relationship.

These actions do not respect employees' dissent as dissent is typically understood in other contexts. Imagine, for example, one party to a serious dating relationship telling the other, who desires not to have sex until marriage, "Have sex with me right now or I'll end this relationship," ("Do this or you're fired from this relationship.") Such a threat, by virtue of its influence on the recipient's decision making, both disrespects the recipient's dissent to sex and goes even further by invalidating the recipient's consent were the recipient to offer it. On many

¹⁶ I take this ultimatum to be a threat, because 1) all the alternatives are undesirable to the recipient, 2) the person who makes the threat artificially narrows alternatives for the recipient in order to create unfavorable results for the recipient—the alternatives are not merely natural consequences—and 3) the narrowed options are made known to the recipient. Literature on threats usually reference a baseline for the recipient to which the alternatives are relative, but I take actual baselines not to be relevant to a threat; someone could be threatened even if they weren't made any worse off by either option, as long as it was unknown to the recipient whether they were being made worse off by the alternatives presented to them. See Nozick (1969), 447, Feinberg (1986), 198, and Wertheimer (1987), 217.

theories of consent, threats and resulting pressure invalidates the recipient's consent,¹⁷ and according to almost all sexual harassment training, threats invalidate consent. The invalidation of consent by threats is a position maintained by the U.S. government's guidance on federally-funded universities' definitions of consent for purposes of Title IX training: "There is no consent when there is force, expressed or implied, or when coercion, intimidation, threats, or duress is used. Whether a person has taken advantage of a position of influence over another person may be a factor in determining consent." (U.S. Government 2014) In addition, in the medical ethics literature, where informed consent is discussed at length, threats (even threats involving minimal bodily harm) can invalidate the voluntariness condition on consent, making it so that the patient is either unable to consent, or, if they consent, cannot provide valid consent.¹⁸ Such threats *ipso facto* also disrespect the recipient's dissent—per Title IX training and the medical ethics literature, force, intimidation, and threats disrespect the recipient's dissent. In contrast, in a workplace when an owner tells an employee to accept a paperwork-filing position or lose employment, either the threat and resulting pressure does not invalidate the employee's dissent

¹⁷ Alan Wertheimer's position is an exception to this standard. According to Wertheimer, the recipient can (validly) consent in the above dating threat/ultimatum case (2003), 151, 164, 170. This is because, on Wertheimer's view, the threat/ultimatum is not coercive, and it is not coercive since the recipient does not have the *right* to remain in any relationship with the ultimatum-giver. Here's a case that tells against Wertheimer's position: Suppose a man in a very rural area puts fuel in a somewhat-absentminded victim's car each day for years so that the victim loses track of where to get fuel and forgets to pay attention to the fuel gauge. The man, who one day does not put fuel in his victim's car, follows the victim until she becomes stranded, very far away from any housing, and offers her fuel in exchange for sex, which she desires not to have. It does not seem that she could offer valid consent to sex with him for the fuel, even though she does not have a right to have the fuel. The dating example is similar—one party has kept the relationship going, and if breaking it off would result in a cataclysmic or traumatic event for the other party, the recipient of the ultimatum seems not to be able to consent to sex with the ultimatum-giver. (Thanks to Raja Halwani for pointing me to Wertheimer's example.)

Note, however, that even if this objection to Wertheimer's view is unconvincing, Wertheimer might ultimately agree with the conclusion of this section that respecting employee dissent is not the primary reason for the value of chastity in the workplace, evidenced by Wertheimer's position that respecting another's consent is not necessary for initiating morally permissible sexual relations (see his 2003), 155-156.

¹⁸ "[T]he prevailing medical ethos tends to treat more cases as cases of coercion than this [previous] philosophical definition [of coercion] would suggest. A threat to cause even slight pain unless a patient acquiesces would be taken to invalidate her consent." (Eyal 2019)

as it is typically understood or disrespecting employee dissent is sometimes permissible in workplace contexts.

Of course, there are contexts in which coworkers must respect others' dissent. This respect is violated when, for example, a manager threatens an employee in a way that pressures the employee into providing personal favors for the manager. It is impermissible for the manager to tell an employee that the employee must buy the manager groceries or be fired (when that task is not within the employee's job responsibilities). Such an ultimatum is impermissible not just because it requires the employee to do something to which the employee would otherwise dissent (otherwise other worthwhile policies would be impermissible, as shown in the previous paragraph) but because the reason for the ultimatum is not primarily to benefit the company but is instead solely to benefit the individual manager.

This contrast is instructive. It reveals that in the workplace, employees can sometimes permissibly be pressured against their dissent (as it is commonly-understood) to perform tasks that are primarily for the sake of the company's benefit but not those that are solely for the personal benefit of an individual so long as the employee wishes to retain employment with the company.

Respecting employee dissent, then, does not have the role that one might think it has if one extrapolates from what is required in the context of individual relationships; if a workplace policy is made for the sake of the organization as a whole and pertains to an employee's behavior on the job, employee dissent, as it is typically understood, can be permissibly overridden.

What has been said here is compatible with it not being the case that every kind of dissent can be overridden for the organization's goals; instead, the point is that there are some cases in which individual dissent can be overridden for the sake of company goals. Further, an

organization can never simply force an individual to perform an action “no matter what.”

Instead, organizations can give employees ultimatums that constitute a threat relevant to their employment and such a threat is both permissible and would disrespect employee dissent as it is typically understood. If chastity, then, is worth having in the workplace, it is not worth having merely because it respects the dissent of others in the workplace—our account of the consent involved needs to be more nuanced than it is typically understood. Instead, chastity is worth having in workplace contexts because it respects a certain kind or range of dissent that is different from the kind or range of dissent worth respecting outside of workplace contexts.

To discover what kind or range of dissent is worth protecting with company policies, we can look to a reason besides respecting dissent for which there are worthwhile company policies against **Spying** and **Stalking** above. Perhaps that reason will provide insight into the kind of dissent worth respecting with company policies. One such reason for worthwhile policies like those against **Spying** and **Stalking**, which is also a general reason for respecting others’ privacy, is to prevent violations of the victim’s dignity.

Stage 3: Dignity Violations

One often-cited reason that privacy violations are morally impermissible, even when they do not harm their victim, is that by taking someone’s personal information without their permission, one is thereby removing the victim’s ability to maintain boundaries that define their position in their community.¹⁹ Applied to the workplace, even if the extracted personal

¹⁹ The specific account articulated here is very similar to that given by Rachels (1975), with some additions later in the paragraph, though the position described here is also compatible with views held by some others who hold that privacy violations violate one’s right to be able to maintain boundaries essential to forming certain kinds of relationships, e.g. Bloustein (1964), Fried (1970), Gerstein (1978), Shoeman (1984), Inness (1992), Bok (1982), Gavison (1980), and Moore (2003).

information does not harm the victim, one's viewing of private information creates a kind of relationship that changes the victim's position in their work environment. This is because certain kinds of information dissemination influence the kinds of relationships one has within their community. For examples in which kinds of information indicate the nature of one's relationships: one's spouse has different information about them (e.g. what they look like when they're at their worst) than do one's acquaintances; one's bank teller has different information about their customer (e.g. what their account balances are) than does that customer's close friends; and one's employer has different information about their employee (how the employee is performing) than does the employee's parents. Exactly what kinds of information are standard for each type of relationship can vary by culture and sub-culture; yet, information is an important or essential way to shape one's relationships. Most relevant to **Spying and Stalking**, the kind of information businesspeople have about their coworkers is different from the kind of information that, say, married partners have about each other. In **Spying and Stalking**, the spying/stalking employees are creating a close kind of relationship that changes the nature of the relationships that otherwise would have simply been coworker relationships. In short, one can acquire a different kind of, and more intimate, relationship to another person by acquiring certain kinds of information about them.

By extracting personal information from someone, the extractor acquires a non-permitted close relationship with the victim and thereby removes the victim's ability to maintain boundaries that are essential to maintaining the kind of community of which the victim is a part. Why is it important to maintain a certain kind of community in which one has a certain position? The answer is that one's position in certain kinds of communities is a basic or foundational good

It is worth noting that dignity violations are not the only reason for every worthwhile company policy. Often workplace policies are worthwhile to comply with legal regulations or to protect others from harm. The point here is that chastity does not merely satisfy policies that are intended only to protect others from harm and respect dissent.

for an individual, and if one has no control over their position in their of community, then this basic or foundational good is unprotected. Since foundational goods are worth protecting, it is worth creating policies that protect one's privacy, even if not protecting it does not always harm the individual.

To summarize the conclusions so far: chastity is worth having in the workplace because it protects an important human good—one's position in their community. This good is worth protecting even if its loss does not harm the victim. And when that community is a workplace community, the important human good that is protected is not just any kind of individual consent/dissent, since individual consent/dissent can be overridden for the sake of another good—a fundamental good that has to do specifically with one's position in the workplace community.

At this point, one might wonder whether one's position in the workplace community is specifically related to the organization's interests, where 'interests' here is meant to refer not just to any interests an organization has but what interests organizations *should* have. In the above section on preventing harm, **Spying** and **Stalking** involve actions performed for personal interests, not the interests of the companies involved, and in the section on respecting consent/dissent, the employee whose job was threatened were they not to take on additional responsibilities had their dissent disrespected for the sake of the organization's (legitimate) interests. The same is true when coworkers are asked to dissolve a relationship. One might then think that what best protects a person's position in their workplace community is when everyone in the community acts for the sake of the organization's interests, so chastity is ultimately worth having in the workplace because it protects the organization's interests against conflicting personal interests. It is to this issue that we turn in the next section.

Stage 4: Conflicts of Interest

Protection against conflicts of interest is the often-cited reason for worthwhile policies preventing nepotism and workplace romances. Workplace policies prohibiting romantic relationships do so because romantic relationships tend to incline coworkers, as a result of romantic incentives, to deviate from the good of the workplace community. This deviation could include distraction, discrimination, power imbalances, or untoward interaction if the relationship ends acrimoniously. In fact, were workplace superiors to have both access to the occurrence of romantic or sexual interests and the means to prevent them by means of a policy, they would likely do so, even if those relationships do not have the status of a dating relationship, so long as doing so would not create greater losses or injustices. Chastity, then, would prevent the need for the application of these policies and would protect the organizations' interests against conflicting personal romantic or sexual interests.

Chastity is, then, valuable both because it protects *individuals' position in their workplace community* against individual sexual interests—the conclusion of the previous section—and because it protects *the organization's interests* against individual sexual interests. One can then reasonably ask whether one's position in the workplace is also in the interest of organizations, and if one's position in the workplace is in organizations' interests, we can ask: what about one's position in the workplace is in the interest of the organization? I will maintain the answer that it is in the interest of organizations (and it is a good thing) for the organization's members to be appropriately valued for their contributions to the workplace. Chastity helps to secure this interest against conflicting individual sexual interests, and it also helps to protect this

good by preventing others from removing the victim's ability to maintain boundaries in their workplace community.

To show how chastity helps to secure one's ability to be appropriately valued for their contributions to workplace success, let us again look to worthwhile workplace policies, this time contrasting policies against workplace romances with policies against different partnerships between coworkers, like married partners. Even in workplaces in which office romances are reasonably prohibited, it is often reasonable to allow some married partners to work together. In fact, anti-nepotism policies often group spouses together with sibling and parent-child relationships. Behind this division between workplace romances on one hand and spouses/family members on the other seems to be the idea that married partners, like siblings, are better able to curb romantic and sexual interests whenever those interests would interfere with the well-functioning of the business community than are dating couples.²⁰ There might be reasons not to allow spouses to work together—favoritism, for example, as it is with other nepotistic relationships—but spouses' inability to curb sexual interest does not seem to be the reason not to allow spouses to work together, whereas dating partners' inability to curb (or difficult with curbing) sexual interest does seem to be the reason not to allow dating partners to work together.

Other reasons an organization might have for disallowing dating relationships in the workplace—the tenuous, complicated, transient nature of many dating relationships—do not seem to be the ultimate reasons for disallowing such relationships. In fact, even if an organization knew that a pair of coworkers' dating relationship would not end unfavorably before both partners quit (for reasons independent of their relationship), it might be worthwhile for a company to require the dissolution of the relationship. The dissolution requirement might

²⁰ If some spouses are unable to curb their sexual interests at work, that might be a reason to prohibit the couple from working together, just as coworkers are often prohibited from entering into dating or romantic relationships for the same reason.

be worthwhile because individuals in some kinds of the above relationships tend to relate to each other as if the other is a satisfier of sexual interest; that way of relating to each other is likely to prevent simultaneously relating to the other in a way that conduces to appropriately valuing the other's contributions to the workplace,²¹ in part due to distraction from other aspects of a person or, in the extreme case, a reorientation of a view of that person that prevents appreciating their other contributions entirely, subsuming work life into romantic life and interpreting much of the other person's workplace actions in light of romantic opportunities.

To summarize, the fundamental good that has to do with one's position in their workplace community and a good that is in organizations' interests is to have each worker's contributions toward workplace success appropriately valued. This is revealed by the reasons behind workplace policies that enforce chaste behavior, like those against workplace romances, contrasted with the reasons behind policies against married people working together—nepotism policies. Since it is in organizations' interests for each individual to have a position in their workplace community in which they are appropriately valued for their workplace contributions, it is worth having chastity in the workplace, where chastity protects against the sexual interests that interfere with appropriate valuation of others' contributions toward workplace success.

We can now ask exactly what chastity worth having in the workplace is. Whatever it is, it will be some sort of disposition that prevents one's sexual interest from interfering with one's appropriate valuation of others' contributions to workplace success.

The Account: Workplace Chastity Worth Having

²¹ Likewise, if married couples saw each other as satisfiers of sexual interest while at work, such a way of relating would be a reason for an organization to require the couple not to work together.

Although many virtues, chastity included, involve cognition, acts of the will, and desiring or affective states, according to the view I'll propose, the value that chastity has in the workplace lies primarily in the agent's cognitive states.²² Workplace chastity worth having, I propose, is a negative virtue: it is the disposition not to construe others in the workplace as a means of satisfying sexual interests,²³ when construing someone as a satisfier of sexual interests interferes with appropriately valuing their contributions. Someone who has the chastity described here—that is, who does not construe coworkers as a means of satisfying sexual interests—will not perform the actions in **Spying** and **Stalking**, will remove a reason for individuals to try to acquire a non-permitted close relationship with the victim, prevent conflicts of interests caused by sexual relationships in the workplace, prevent some possible workplace harms, and reduce the need to enforce policies against sexual harassment.

To discover whether a cognitive view of the value of chastity in the workplace is more valuable than are other views of the value of chastity in the workplace, we can contrast versions of chastity. First, let us consider a subject who has chaste desires and feelings but unchaste cognition. In other words, the subject has no sexual desires or feelings toward a coworker, but the subject sees the coworker as a potential satisfier of sexual interest. This can happen when a coworker has a reputation for indiscriminately having sex with coworkers but the subject does not want to have sex with the coworker or feel attracted to the coworker. In this case, the subject is treating the coworker as spies/stalkers could treat their victims. A subject could spy on or stalk

²² The usage here conflicts with Harry Frankfurt's (1971), 8, use of 'will', according to which 'will' refers to the agent's effective first-order desire. Similarly, my usage of 'volition' below differs from Frankfurt's. It's worth noting that Frankfurt uses those terms as terms of art, and such uses are nonstandard.

²³ Two notes: 1. Chastity is not framed positively (e.g. seeing another as a coworker), because one could be chaste without seeing another in any particular way. For example, a chaste person might see a coworker as an obstacle to their own ends and not as a coworker, but since they do not see their coworker as a satisfier of sexual interest, they are chaste, even if they also see others in less-than-desirable ways. 2. It might be that a full virtue of chastity includes a positive direction of sexual dispositions expresses itself as a negative virtue in the workplace. (Thanks to Eric Silverman for making this point.)

a coworker without any sexual desire fulfillment/attraction in mind, perhaps instead spying merely out of curiosity, and in so doing does not harm but still wrongs the coworker. For the same reason that this kind of behavior is worth prohibiting in the workplace, it is valuable not to see others as sexual objects, even if the victim is unaware and even if no desire or attraction is involved.

Now suppose the reverse is true: a subject has sexual desire for/attraction to a coworker but does not see the coworker as a satisfier of sexual desire. This occurs when someone sees a sexually attractive coworker as off-limits or simply unavailable. In this case, the subject merely has an unfulfilled desire or attraction, and the effect is similar to other situations in which coworkers are unfulfilled—when they are, for example, hungry (unfulfilled desire to eat), lonely (unfulfilled desire for companionship), tired (unfulfilled desire for sleep), or bored (unfulfilled desire for enjoyment). Although it is undesirable for coworkers to be hungry, lonely, tired, or bored, there is no policy against those states, and those states interfere with valuation of coworkers just as much as does, say, mild illness. For this reason, I've proposed that the value of chastity in the workplace lies more in a cognitive state than in desires or feelings.

Second, consider a subject who has chaste volitions but unchaste cognition—the subject construes the coworker as a satisfier of the subject's sexual interests but the subject does not choose to act on this way of seeing the coworker. This kind of situation can happen when one adheres to strict external rules against workplace romance or harassment or fear of accusation. If a subject sees a coworker as a satisfier of sexual interest but acts as if the coworker is not, the situation is similar to spying on a coworker but acting as if the spying has not occurred. As before, for the same reasons there are worthwhile policies against spying and stalking, even if spying or stalking is unknown to the victim and does not result in harm, it is valuable in the

workplace not to see others as sexual objects, as doing so creates a kind of unauthorized relationship with the victim that crosses boundaries that define their position in their workplace.

Now suppose the reverse is true: a subject has chaste cognition but unchaste volitions—the subject does not see a coworker as a satisfier of sexual interest but chooses to act as if that coworker is a satisfier of the subject’s sexual interest—by acting flirtatiously, for example. In this case, the subject’s behavior is out of alignment with the subject’s way of seeing the coworker; the subject has no grounds to treat coworkers as if they are a satisfier of that interest. In a situation like this, the subject merely needs instruction or training in how to act around coworkers so that the subject’s behaviors align with their view of their coworkers. In this case, the subject lacks social awareness, and the effect is similar to someone who is used to using profanity or harsh speech at work with no ill intentions; such a person merely needs to be trained about how to act appropriately in the workplace.²⁴ Although it is undesirable for coworkers to need training, it is easier for organizations to correct such behaviors with workplace procedures than it is to correct individuals’ perceptions of their coworkers as sexual objects. For this reason, I’ve proposed that the value of chastity in the workplace lies more in a cognitive state than in acts of the will.

The cognitive view proposed here explains why being unchaste inhibits appropriate valuation of other’s workplace contributions. Just as when one construes Wittgenstein’s duck-rabbit as a duck, one cannot simultaneously construe the duck-rabbit as a rabbit (one needs to switch back and forth), construing a coworker as a satisfier of sexual interest tends to prevent or inhibit simultaneously seeing other’s value to the workplace.

²⁴ This situation is rare, as is indicated by the current consensus that sexual harassment training is ineffective at reducing harassment. (See Hersch 2019, 11.)

One upshot for the proposed view is that, possibly, someone can make it so that they do not see a coworker as a satisfier of sexual interest while at work but, once both parties are finished working, see each other as satisfiers of sexual interest by means of a gestalt shift. For example, just as someone can see Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit as a duck at one moment and as a rabbit at another, a married couple for example might easily be able not to see each other as satisfiers of sexual interest when they are working together but see each other as satisfiers of sexual interest when they are not working.

Another upshot is that seeing another as a coworker is compatible with knowing that the person could be (and can be seen as) a satisfier of sexual interest. With Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit, when someone sees the image as a duck, someone who does this can simultaneously know that the image can be seen as a rabbit, all while seeing the image as a duck instead of seeing the image as a rabbit. Similarly, someone might be able not to see someone as a satisfier of sexual interest, all while knowing, in a somewhat academic way, that the coworker could satisfy their sexual interests.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to develop an account of chastity worth having in the workplace. To do so, I have looked at worthwhile workplace policies to examine the reason that chastity would be worth having in the workplace. Although it is important to prevent harms, that is not the only reason for developing and enforcing policies that curb some kinds of workplace behaviors related to sex—as revealed in **Spying** and **Stalking**. Nor is respecting consent/dissent always worth respecting in the workplace, though both the cases in which consent/dissent is not respected and the **Spying** and **Stalking** cases were instructive—they pointed us in the direction

of a human good that is protected by those policies—one's position in their particular community. In addition, policies against workplace romances often protect against conflicts between organizational and personal interest. I then asked what it is about individuals' position in their community are organizations interested in, and I maintained that organizations are interested in having their employees' workplace contributions appropriately valued. Then, by contrasting policies against workplace romances with organizations' not having policies that prevent spouses from working together, concluded that chastity prevents relating to others in a way in which one's sexual interests interfere with appropriate valuation of other's contributions to workplace success. Having then discovered the reason for chastity, I proposed an account of chastity worth having in the workplace: it is the disposition not to construe others as a satisfier of sexual interest. To motivate this account, I revisited cases used in the previous sections to show that the proposed account does the work that an account of chastity needs to do, and I argued that the value of chastity worth having in the workplace lies more in cognition than in volitions or desiring/affective states by considering the relative value of different views of the value of chastity in the workplace.

The argument and account above is intended to start a conversation about the virtue of chastity, which is underexplored in the Business Ethics literature. The hope is that others will contribute to this conversation in a way that moves our understanding forward in order to better equip organizations and professionals with the information they need to best direct their resources toward training businesspeople to develop this important workplace virtue.²⁵

²⁵ Thank you to Eric Silverman for his comments on several previous drafts.

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