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The Managerial Couple: Superior-Subordinate Relationships As a Unit of Analysis[1]

James Krantz

WORKLAB
21 E. 10th Street - #11C
New York, NY 10003
(212) 979-5325
www.Worklab.com

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Introduction

The superior-subordinate relationship (called the "managerial couple" in this article) is pervasive in hierarchical organizations and essential to their effectiveness. Through this primary interpersonal link, the delegation of work the division of labor, and accountability are all realized. Together, both members of the managerial couple must accomplish a job, but neither can control that job individually. Therefore, each must trust the other while coping with feelings of dependence on the other. The extent to which each relies on the other and can be let down by the other often touches upon deep-seated anxieties.

Managerial couples in work organizations take on a life of their own, replete with shared fantasies, hopes and disappointments, collaborative dialogue, and collusive, defensive patterns. On one end of a continuum is the productive creative evolving and mutually stimulating couple. On the other is the rigid stalemated sometimes mutually punishing relationship characterized by excessive conflict numbing detachment or debilitating dependency.

The managerial couple is a unit of analysis which I believe organization theorists have generally underrepresented. This two-person field has its own systemic properties and like other elements of a system, such as divisions or individuals is in reciprocal relationship with its system and its parts. The couple is influenced by and influences its context.[1]

Consider the following managerial couple. Sarah, the president of a for-profit urban medical center has been widely recognized for the innovative programs she initiated in the hospital. Al, a new vice president for community based programs, oversaw two major units. One unit had been actively involved in he restructuring and re-focusing programs that received so much recognition; the other unit had been largely outside of this new strategic orientation. Al's predecessor had felt unable to intervene deeply in this second unit. Part of Al's new assignment then was to bring this Unit into the hospital wide change agenda. Sarah was eager to have this work begin and realized, along with Al, that he needed to develop a vision that would both embody the hospital's strategic orientation and could serve as a blueprint for the unit's development.

The following incident typifies the difficulties this managerial couple experienced. The hospital management was accustomed to developing strategic plans collectively, believing that it had produced good results. Sarah thus encouraged Al to benefit from the other top managers and

to build on their experiences in planning and implementing programs appropriate to the hospital's mission. She also realized the others could contribute an understanding to Al's unit over time.

While Al agreed that he needed a "vision" for the unit, he responded to her suggestions and prodding in a way that made Sarah feel dismissed and unwanted. She encouraged him to set up a meeting with the senior management group and offered to help him design the meeting so that it would be effective and lively. She felt Al's reluctance, so she suggested several times that he call a consultant the hospital used to help in designing working meetings. Again, though he didn't say so to her, Al conveyed through his actions that he did not want to call the consultant.

Sarah and Al were heading towards a stalemate. Al claimed he felt increasingly pressured while Sarah reported she felt increasingly angry dismissed and aggressive toward him. Finally Al scheduled a meeting in a deeply ambivalent way. He tried to line up others' schedules on very short notice for a busy executive group, selecting a day when the vice president of the large nursing unit, someone with an invaluable contribution to make, was typically out of the hospital. Moreover the executive team's consultant was also unavailable.

The importance of the event however was generally recognized and the meeting was arranged. Sarah sensed that because Al had not "taken in" her supervision and direction, he did not really "own" the meeting. Instead, sullen and resentful, he appeared to be doing it out of obligation to Sarah rather than in a spirit of collaboration and shared development. His inability to own his task was clearly illustrated by his scheduling the meeting in Sarah's office, as if it were her meeting rather than his.

As the date approached, there was no briefing or preparation for the group's work and Sarah sensed that Al wasn't ready. She was anxious about the meeting failing not only for the project itself but for what it signaled about their relationship, and about Al's entry into the executive team. At this point direct communication seemed impossible so she indirectly suggested to Al through another member on the team that if he wasn't t ready perhaps he should postpone the meeting. Al decided to go ahead, knowing, by his own recounting, that he wasn't ready and that he would "get his behind kicked." Exactly this happened. As the meeting unfolded Al was painfully unprepared and the meeting lacked a design or focus, leaving the other team members with no effective way to participate .This in turn enraged Sarah who became quite punitive and critical.

What is happening here? The working relationship between Sarah and Al is unsatisfying for

both and the work they are producing is of low quality. The two have developed a relationship characterized by certain patterns, anxieties, and defenses which gives it a recurrent systemic quality. Each had some enduring tendencies, traits, and ways of taking up their roles that were observable across settings. Yet together they seemed to bring out the worst in each other and together create a pairing that continually elicited Al's passive sullen ineptitude and Sarah's overbearing punitive dissatisfaction They were each depending on the other -- Sarah on Al to accomplish an important job she had delegated to him and Al on Sarah for leadership and authorization The experience of this interdependency was frightening because it entailed a mutual vulnerability to the other including a susceptibility to other's irrationality and fears.

This paper attempts to unravel some of the strands that go into shaping this important relationship. First, I explore the central characteristics of the managerial couple as distinct from other pairwise relationships either in or outside of organizations. Then I consider three psychodynamic frames of analysis useful for understanding the forces that shape the managerial couple: the interpersonal relationship, the pair embedded in the work group, and the pair as a function of intergroup relations. The impact of structure on the managerial couple is then considered.

Characteristics of the Managerial Couple

Every managerial couple shares two features that distinguish it from other kinds of couples. First, every managerial couple contains a hierarchical boundary. Work in hierarchical organizations is divided into discrete segments to allow for the management of subtasks. Each successive structural differentiation creates a level of authority, with a manager retaining responsibility for the original sphere and the subordinate being delegated a more delimited area to handle. The manager and subordinate meet, therefore, at a juncture in the organization where an internal boundary has been created, and each couple must manage the transactions across this boundary.

A superior's accountability for a subordinate’s performance - the second feature of the managerial couple - is simultaneously the curse and blessing of the arrangement. On one hand, it enables organizations to adhere to a primary mission and to multiply effort efficiently through successive levels of delegation and accountability. On the other, it ties the subordinate and manager together in an emotionally charged, interdependent bond: they need each other to succeed. While the levels of influence obviously differ, each can damage or empower the other. What gives each couple its distinctive character is the way accountability, authority and

dependence coalesce within this human relationship and define its internal process as an element of the larger organization.

The subordinate has been delegated tasks, and the superordinate manager has responsibilities. These responsibilities include those delegated to the subordinate but not *vice versa*. This is the *sine qua non* of the managerial couple - the superior is accountable to his or her own superior, in turn, for what the subordinate does. Superiors can only be held accountable if they have authorized their subordinates to be responsible for some subpart of their own responsibilities and have sufficient authority to hold the subordinate accountable. Thus the boundary between the two is an authority boundary as well as a task boundary, and the two must handle the issues of authority between them. Equally, this is why the superior is vulnerable to, and dependent upon, the subordinate: inadequate work by the subordinate threatens the superior's position with respect to his or her own boss.

The impact of this task/authority boundary on the human relationships involved is enormous and differentiates it from other pair relationships in the organization, such as lateral or collegial ones. This boundary, and the need for the individuals in the couple to transact across it to accomplish work, elicits powerful emotions within the pair. Dependency in both directions is established and each individual's emotional response to authority is activated. The managerial couple, as a result, becomes a vehicle for expressing deep archetypal processes

The Interpersonal World of the Managerial Couple

Each individual in the managerial couple must tolerate the irrational substrata of complex authority relations if the pair is to be creative and productive. Those involved must confront inner conflicts associated with issues of independence and dependence, rivalry, giving and getting, controlling and being controlled, competing and cooperating, success, failure, evaluation, trust and accountability, sharing mutual recognition of differences, etc. (Gould, 1985; Levinson, 1959; Zaleznik, 1966). And such dilemmas face not only the individuals in the couple but the pair itself which establishes enduring patterns and propensities that define the two-person field as a unit of analysis with its own properties.

While the impact of interpersonal influence is pervasive, the means by which couples establish and maintain recurring patterns is enigmatic and elusive precisely because the most profound influence is unconscious and not known by either party (Stern, 1989). An important clue however can be found in the research in group and organizational life which shows that the

anxieties and defenses elicited in such settings are of a powerful early and primitive sort (e.g., Bion, 1959; Jaques, 1955; Menzies, 1961; Kernberg, 1980).

Group life resonates with same of the earliest most troubling conflicts of group members, including those which are reawakened when authority figures are symbolically equated with parents. Subordinates often relive and attempt to rework emotional experiences with their superiors that they had with their parents as young children. As these and other important very early feelings are revived, the resulting anxieties often lead members of the couple to engage in psychological maneuvers designed to reduce the painful feelings, maneuvers which often subject the pair to difficulty in working together.

The way these defensive maneuvers bind working couples to one another in a sort of joint enactment process has been conceptualized as "projective identification" by psychoanalytic writers (Horowitz, 1983; Ogden, 1979). Painful doubts and anxieties lead one or both of the pair to disavow some important but troubling aspect of their own selves and project it into the other. The recipient, also more susceptible under stressful conditions, actually enacts this projected part as if it were him or herself, absorbing the feelings and behaviors associated with the rejected parts. As a consequence, each party relates to some bothersome part of him or herself, which has been split off and projected into the other, as if it were actually a trait of the other, who then begins to enact that behavior. Thus one may despise or fear or even love same part of oneself that has been lodged in another, as if it actually were an attribute of the other.

Sarah and Al exhibited the kind of mutually reinforcing pattern of projective identification that results in a stable yet rigid pairing. Sarah was embarrassed by the failure of one hospital unit to align with the widely recognized changes, feeling this reflected unfavorably on her performance and reputation. Further, as is typical in such situations, she was anxious about her appointment of Al. Would he be as competent and productive as she hoped? Al shared complementary feelings of worry about his becoming a fully respected member of this executive team and performing well at this new and higher level.

Sarah, as was her bent, tended to deny her own sense of uncertainty and doubts, a trait which heightened her confidence and enhanced her considerable leadership capacities in many situations. In this instance, however, she projected her doubts onto Al, whose already existing worries were amplified; he now felt especially doubtful and incompetent in relation to Sarah not only because of his own makeup but because of Sarah's disowned feelings, which he was taking on as well. She distanced herself from Al, and her contact with him took on a tense and slightly suspicious texture, partly because she was relating not only to Al but to certain

unwanted parts of herself that were now lodged in him.

As Al became less able and more frightened, he grew more passive, splitting off his own aggressiveness and sense of mastery. The idea of acting authoritatively and risking possible failure under these conditions made him feel extremely vulnerable and exposed. As a consequence, he disowned these parts of himself and projected them into Sarah, who now had to manage not only her own aggressiveness, competent, and dominating aspects, but her subordinate's as well. Feeling as if she had to be aggressive for both of them, Sarah then felt and behaved in an overly responsible manner. In relating to Sarah, Al now not only had to face her frightening assertiveness, but the frightening parts of himself which he had projected into her. Sarah became increasingly aggressive and critical while Al became more passive, self-protective and incompetent. A stable but dysfunctional relationship is thus established.

In mild form, projective identification in the managerial couple, as in any pair, can promote sensitivity, empathy, and understanding as each is able to put themselves "into the other's shoes" (Gilmore and Krantz, 1985). But when it shapes the relationship with greater intensity and rigidity, the effects can be crippling to the collaboration. Not only is the interaction disabled by anxious withdrawal or excessive conflict and contempt, but the individuals are left depleted. The manager who disowns and projects away his or her aggressiveness, for example, will be unable to act decisively in managerial situations calling for action. Alternatively, if the superior's dependency and vulnerability has been split off and projected into the subordinate, as with Sarah, the boss will likely have trouble receiving bad news from the subordinate, and the subordinate is likely to be helpless and submissive. The resulting collaboration will be flawed as a result of the shared, two-person pattern created.

Thus, managerial couples create unconscious agreements in order to maintain mutual misperceptions as a defense against recognizing underlying problems, conflicts, or differences (Alderfer, 1986) inherent in achieving and maintaining collaboration across lines of authority. While the degree to which these misperceptions are used and maintained depends partly upon each member's individual development (Gould, 1988), there are also a variety of organizational or systemic influences on managerial couples.

The Couple in The Group

Managerial couples work and interact within a group context, and are therefore profoundly influenced by the group's dynamics. A variety of systemic and group-level dynamics can cause managers and subordinates to regress (Kernberg, 1988), rendering the individuals of the managerial couple even more vulnerable to disabling forces. Particular individuals, as members of groups, are induced into roles (Redl, 1963; Rioch, 1979) on behalf of the entire group. Thus every couple contends not only its own internal dynamics and interrelations, but must carry some degree of emotional freight for the group.

An important contribution to understanding the couple in the group is Bion's (1959) description of how groups tend to elicit pairings among their members and use them as projective targets for unconscious group emotion. What he calls the Basic Assumption Pairing Group will invest its hope and creative excitement in a pair. In a sophisticated work organization, this emotional background can support many creative pairings, as leadership shifts around the group (Gould, 1985).

Managerial couples must often bear the weight group fantasy. In a higher functioning group, this may support the couple and foster welcomed, stimulated collaboration between pairs within the group. Under the impact of intensified anxiety, however, its more primitive manifestation appears, in which the "pairing group" invests wildly grandiose hopes in one of its couples, who then become the repository for all possibility in the group. The managerial couple can easily then become burdened by these projections and overwhelmed with such high expectations, while the others passively await the pair's magical creation. The group's idealization of its messianic couple will, for example, create strong pressures for the pair to deny its aggressive and conflictual dimensions, and thereby rendering the couple less capable of achieving sophisticated collaboration. And of course it will be doomed to disappoint the expectant others. Finally, a creative pair may elicit jealousy and destructive envy from other group members, in part because of the measure of exclusivity inherent in any true interpersonal joining.

A good example of both dynamics can be seen in *Powerplay* by Mary Cunningham (1984), her story about the events at Bendix surrounding her meteoric rise and pairing with the chairman, William Agee. Agee was regarded as a Wunderkind who would save the endangered company. Both loved and despised, he went about changing the culture of managerial work in the company. He hired Cunningham, a bright young Harvard MBA, as his executive assistant whose analytical ability consistently outshone that of the older executives.

She and Agee grew increasingly closer, while the deep changes Agee pursued in a turbulent environment created enormous anxiety. From her description (p. 98), it seemed as if, over time, the two of them could trust only each other. The pair, according to this book and other sources, became an object of enormous interest and concern within (and outside) the company, representing both hope and danger at different times. From a group-as-a-whole perspective, certain factions invested the couple with great hope; it would produce the Bendix of the future, a firm making high-tech electronics rather than used auto parts. Yet the envy, hatred, and resentment grew fiercely, until finally the board forced Agee to fire Cunningham.

While the strong connection between the two may have been partly independent of the powerful emotional forces within Bendix at the time the couple was unconsciously used by the group to contain, or enact, the hope for a magical renewal of the company. This, and the attendant envy and resentfulness toward them, clearly had a disastrous impact on their ability to collaborate effectively. Both the hope and the envy drove them together; they progressively became isolated from other resentful senior executives and simultaneously responded to the board's expectation that they would accomplish wildly grandiose results. As they came to enact these irrational dynamics they progressively lost touch with the company and became increasingly disabled.

Thus to the extent the managerial couple is "containing," or enacting, some aspect of the whole group's emotional life, it is subject to forces that can amplify powerful emotions. When the work group is in the grips of a too powerful unconscious process, the managerial couple will have to contend with the underlying fantasies being used defensively to evade task-based anxieties, and the corresponding emotional states will suffuse the collaboration.

The Couple and the Intergroup Relationship

Not only are managerial couples embedded within groups, they may also constitute the interface between two organizational groups C for example, structurally-based hierarchical and task groups such as headquarters and field units or marketing and sales, as well as "identity" groups such as women and men or blacks and whites. The superior and subordinate, while being members of the same group from one perspective, from another are members of two different groups, which in turn subjects them to another set of powerful dynamics.

The superior and subordinate each have their own peer-level groups, which are brought together by the managerial couple. By representing their work roles, each becomes imbued

with the outlook and unconscious orientations of its group memberships and, equally, each symbolizes its group to the other. Inevitably, the historic intergroup relationship between the two units the couple represents will be enacted within its own relationship.

A vertical chain of three managers in a human service organization providing a range of services to an adolescent population is a good illustration. The commissioner, who oversaw the entire operation, had a tense relationship with the director, who headed up the long-stay center treating the most disturbed children in the agency. The director, in turn had an equally tense working relationship with the heads of the dormitories.

These managerial couples were having difficulty in working effectively. According to the director, the commissioner-director couple was characterized by mistrust; communication and dialogue were poor, and as a result, the commissioner doubted his director's ability. Ultimately, the two discovered that their relationship was, in part, enacting a historic mistrust and suspicion between the field institutions and headquarters.

Hierarchical group as well as identity group relations were shaping relations between the pair. Historically, the central office was run by white managers identified with governmental affairs, while the field institutions were run by black managers who identified more with the children and their plight. The task of forcibly institutionalizing poor black children, even if they were trying to help those in their control, was anxiety-provoking for socially concerned managers, black and white alike. Elements of social oppression and racism were inevitably manifested in the work of the organization; the feelings they engendered had to be managed by all segments of the enterprise.

The anxiety and pain were often culturally simplified through a process in which the field units attributed all the racism and oppression to headquarters staff, who were mostly white, and came largely from a higher social class, and of course were more closely linked to the larger issues of political governance. Through such attribution, the field units were able to exonerate themselves psychologically from confronting the complexities of belonging to the enterprise. Senior headquarters staff managed their mixed feelings differently. They disavowed the part of themselves that was ill at ease with the agency's work and projected it onto the field managers, believing the latter weren't invested in the agency's overall well being but instead were parochially concerned with their own narrow interests. Field-headquarters relations were tense and adversarial, as one might expect. The commissioner and the director recreated this intergroup dynamic inside their own relationship, with each feeling both misunderstood and mistrusted. Only when they saw the link between their experience as a pair and the dynamics

of headquarters-field relationships did they understand the chronic and seemingly obscure roots of their own strained working relationship.

The Couple and the Formal Organization

All human relationships involve irrational, unconscious dynamic processes, deeper connections in which the meaning of the relationship for each, is rooted. The irrational, unconscious background to the managerial couple can also be the wellspring of creativity, zest, and excitement or the source of destructiveness and detachment.

Traditional organization theory has excluded recognizing the irrational affective dimensions of role relations. The legacy of Weber's (1947) theory of bureaucracy is a normative orientation toward an impersonal, rational conception of organizational life, based on a foundation of rationally-derived structures. In this scheme, furthered by Taylorist approaches and the "scientific management" tradition, rationally-derived structures allow for the elimination of irrationality and unwanted emotion from role performance (Levinson, 1989).

Yet we also know that people inevitably bring more to their work roles than only those capacities required by their tasks (Rice. 1965). People use their work roles to manage their anxieties and meet other socio-emotional needs as well as to satisfy their needs to accomplish work alone. Thus the irrational dimensions of life are brought into the workplace and find expression in social relations. Indeed, by emphasizing impersonality, an organization may drive emotional needs underground, thereby increasing people's irrational responses to work. In such an environment, a subordinate, for example, feeling punished by a superior's evaluation, may sullenly withdraw from work or punish his or her own subordinate in turn. The "repressed returns."

While rationally-derived structures cannot eliminate the uncontrollable realm of human feeling and irrationality from organizational life, they can shape and channel it. The presence of the irrational bond between the managerial couple is shaped by the formal structure in which the couple is embedded and by the bit of the structure that is embedded within the couple - the boundary of authority and delegation between them. Structure can help link the irrational bonds to the managerial couple's work, and thereby facilitate it, or it can enhance the potential disturbance within the working pair.

When role definitions are confused, vague, or inappropriate to an organization's tasks the

result is regression on the group level to dysfunctional, anti-task cultures (Kernberg, 1980; Menzies, 1979; Hirschhorn, 1988). Unclear role definitions create significant conflicts between members of the managerial couple as well: people can easily arrogate authority to themselves, one hand, or deny accountability on the other, resulting in distorted internal boundaries.

The case of David, who managed a section of an R&D lab for a pharmaceutical company, illustrates how an inadequately structured situation can stir deep and disruptive interpersonal dynamics. As section manager, he was responsible far the unit's performance, though he had no authority to remove subordinates from their positions. He was in a particularly difficult situation with Mary who worked below standards but not with such glaring incompetence that David's own superior would fire her. Yet the unit operated under very tight performance standards, and Mary could undermine David's performance without his being able to respond effectively leaving David vulnerable and exposed for his own performance in relation to his boss.

Consequently, David felt persecuted by Mary and expressed his helplessness and rage by becoming suspicious and punitive. The situation touched on some of his very deep anxieties about control and dependence. The couple's interaction developed into a rigid pattern of suspicion and concealment; both were locked into dealing with each other's personal defense because the formal structure failed to enable David to manage his dependence on her productively. With the requisite authority he might have removed her or, alternatively been able to shape her performance through the process of genuine accountability.

Finally, the managerial couple is not only affected by the organization's structure, but affects it as well. When the couple is regressive, pressures will arise to blur or obfuscate the formal role relations even more. This leads to an increased avoidance of anxiety and confronting issues of dependability, accountability, and trust, which are inevitably painful in a failing collaboration.

The case of Sarah and Al illustrates this nicely. Sarah wanted Al to take more initiative with the strategic planning process. Over time, a considerable amount of anxiety had built up over this event. As both sides tended to engage in mutual projective processes and got locked into the stalemate described earlier, lines of accountability tended to blur. Sarah did not feel she could trust Al to carry out her wishes, so she pushed him to do a task without really delegating it to him. Al then felt demeaned; he wasn't being given an authentic delegation but rather performing in a rote fashion, leading him to blur the lines of accountability from his side. This led to an odd set of actions conveying the confusion over whose meeting it was. For example, the invitation to the meeting from Al was: "Sarah wants me to have a meeting." Thus, in this

instance, the formal structure that lodged accountability and responsibility clearly within the supervisory structure gave way to a vague, fused sense of responsibility as the couple defended against confronting the painful realities of the collaboration at that moment.

Not only does investment in formal structure create the conditions in which people can work productively, it also provides an ongoing way to understand a working relationship. A considered formal structure provides a model against which the managerial couple's actual collaboration can be assessed. Though she had developed a difficult pattern with Al, Sarah was an exceptionally capable manager and supervisor. She was able to understand how off-track her relationship with Al had become, in part, because she saw how cloudy the lines of accountability had gotten. The model of organizing and the clearly delineated boundaries to which their management group aspired, and often reached, stood in sharp contrast to the confused, blurred pattern of accountability she had with Al. This difference provided the essential diagnostic information. Her investment in formal structure provided a set of principles to help guide her in the relationship and thereby understand the defensive processes, which in turn enabled them to establish fuller, productive collaboration.

Managerial Implications

All members of any organization are involved in managerial couples and are inevitably affected by the forces discussed in this paper. The two person relationship can become very loaded, both because of what is inside it and because of what is projected into it by others. Managers tying to improve organizational functioning are likely to benefit from considering the managerial couple as a unit of analysis - both as a source of invaluable information as well as a locus for development.

This requires appreciating the many forces which are finding expression through, and shaping, the pair's working relationship. Unbundling these various influences can be confusing and difficult. As the case of Sarah and Al illustrates, managerial of structure and boundaries provide a point of departure for sorting out different influences. One of the key functions of manager al leadership is to provide conditions which support accountability.

Accountability, and its capacity to harness social dynamics to task, occurs only in conjunction with certain patterns of authority and can be achieved only when the formal boundary across which the members of a managerial couple transact has certain characteristics (Jaques, 1976). Clearly defined roles and well negotiated distribution of shared responsibility enable members

of the working couple to understand their interpersonal relationship in the context of the larger shared task and its human meaning. An enabling formal organization and rationally designed structure allows members to bring their irrational feeling-full aspects into productive relation to the task. Defensively derived structures and boundaries pit the inevitable irrational connection between the couple against the demands of task, and are thus disabling.

While inadequate structures are often the source of difficulties in the managerial couple, enabling structures can be undermined as the result of other regressive pressures that are rooted in interpersonal, group, and inter-group dynamics. These are more difficult to ferret out and understand, although managers often enhance their own competence by developing the reflective capacity to see how these wider systemic forces are enacted by working pairs. Outside consultation is often helpful in exploring these elements because of the unconscious nature of these powerful emotional undercurrents, or worse, because the pair has gotten locked into patterns dominated by projective identification.

Conclusion

As with all social realities, understanding the managerial couple requires taking multiple levels of analysis into account. The individual, interpersonal, group, and intergroup perspectives all help to untangle the many determinants of the managerial couple's life. Similarly, to appreciate the managerial couple in context as a systemic process, an understanding of the impact of the social and technical subsystems is necessary to explore the couple's experience.

The changing social, economic, and political situation is naturally represented microcosmically in the evolution of working couples, putting them under greater stress. Vastly greater diversity in the workforce means that many more couples will have to manage the tendency toward projection and splitting that racial, ethnic, and gender differences promote. Increasingly complex and unpredictable settings render ritualized, unexamined pair arrangements maladaptive (Hirschhorn, 1988). Turbulent environments make demands on both organizations as a whole and their constituent manager al couples to achieve an ongoing, active, adaptation and learning.

Every boundary in the midst of managerial couples contains the seeds of conflict; these are inherent in an organization's needs to make decisions based on function and efficiency rather than in their personal interests of people. Nonetheless, in deep and genuine collaboration there

is also the possibility of creativity and mutual growth (Hirschhorn, 1988; Gould, 1988). Achieving this is the challenge for the pair and for the group in which it is situated.

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Endnotes:

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1. This paper looks at the managerial couple relationship in its organizational context, and examines its major components from a socio-technical perspective. By socio- technical perspective I am referring to a frame of reference first developed by Trist and his colleagues at the Tavistock Institute (e.g. Trist and Bramforth 1951; Trist et. al. 1963) which emphasizes the interrelatedness of the functioning of the social and technological subsystems of an enterprise.

The social system refers to the people in the work situation and the relationships among them, including their particular physical and psychological characteristics and requirements. The social system includes the cultural mechanisms which govern social relations. The technical system refers to aspects of formal organization such as procedures, policies, techniques, tools, and structures which are used by the social system to accomplish work. Sociotechnical studies show that the two subsystems are related to one another, serve as constraints on each other, and must be effectively fit to one another to achieve optimal functioning

Typically used to describe manufacturing systems (Cummings 1978), the design of jobs (Davis 1978), methods of organizing overall enterprises, and a philosophy of work organization (Emery 1982), socio-technical systems theory is a frame of reference which can be used to study the relationship between and within any level of a system. Although efforts have been made to explore the interpersonal dimensions of work relations (i.e. Bennis, et.al. 1979; Argyris, 1962; Baird and Kram, 1983; Gabarro, 1987) and the interpersonal aspects of authority relations (e.g. Rioch, 1970; Kernberg, 1980; Levinson, 1969; Kets de Vries, 1979), this is the first time I am aware of socio-technical systems theory offering specifically used to shed light on the managerial couple.

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