

DEVELOPING MENTORING & COACHING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

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MEN & WOMEN, COACHES & EXECUTIVES FACING CHANGE2

PROFESSIONAL CULTURE OR GENDER: WHICH ONE PREVAILS?

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ABSTRACT

According to the Systems Theory, a change 2 is a move from a stable state to a very different stable state. A tool based on first System's Theory was designed by the authors to measure the ability to achieve a change 2, that is to say the ability to transform.

It has already been applied to populations of coaches and executives in France and Morocco (Moral et al., 2011) and the results showed significant differences between coaches and executives. In addition, people involved in collective work are less inclined to change. Finally, little difference is observed between France and Morocco.

In this piece of research, we compare men and women in populations of coaches and executives in France.

Results show no significant differences between the genders and only a slight correlation between a team's ability to transform and the presence of women in the team. One of the possible conclusions is that managerial culture and coaching culture prevails over gender.

ORIGINALITY/VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

Very few quantitative studies on System's Theory have been carried out. Measuring the ability of a team or an individual to change is a new area of research. A comparative measure of this ability for men and women is a significant contribution to understanding management and coaching.

Keywords: change 1, change 2, preservation, transformation, gender, men, women

INTRODUCTION

In a previous research (Moral et al., 2011), we used the Change2Team tool to study the differences between populations of coaches and executives in France and Morocco. The main aim of the Change2Team tool is to assess the ability of teams to achieve a change 2; we also studied 8 management teams in detail.

Since this first research, the population of Change2Team users has increased and we have specifically documented different variables, particularly gender. The number of management teams has also increased and we have the chance to study the impact of the presence of women in these teams.

The Change2Team tools aimed at measuring the ability to change and, more specifically, the ability to make a lasting change. The tool identifies the behaviours (functioning modes) that are characteristic of a person working in a system such as a team.

Some of these behaviours are unique to the person (personality or culture) whilst others are inspired or imposed by the system. Therefore, a given person will behave in a different way if he works at Google or at a Ministry. The explicit and implicit rules of these two systems in terms of *audacity*, for example, are different.

The analysis of populations with an identical activity, coaches or executives in particular, in contact with various environments reveals homogenous functioning, which leads to the hypothesis of a **culture inherent** to these professions.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This time around, we are interested in the differences between men and women within two populations: managers and executives on the one hand, and coaches on the other.

We are also interested in the conclusion drawn by Anita Woolley (Woolley et al., 2010) concerning correlation (0.23) between **collective intelligence** and the **presence of women** within the team. This author links this correlation to that (0.26) between collective intelligence and total social sensitivity. In fact, women have better social sensitivity, as measured with the "Reading the Mind in the Eyes" test (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001).

It is now accepted that the innate differences between men and women are affected by social construction in order to shape *gender*, with various historical and cultural impacts. The populations that we have studied have, in addition to the French culture, a professional culture: the "coaching culture" or "managerial culture". Other cultures are involved such as those from the area of responsibility (sales or production for example) and those from the industry in which the players work (luxury or automobile for example). We have decided to disregard the effect the last two points may have.

Anita Woolley's study as well as social sensitivity differences noticed, suggest that certain characteristics innate to each gender are reflected in professional behaviours. We are also interested in potential links between collective intelligence and the ability to transform.

Finally, the measuring tool relates partly to the person and partly to the system, so we have developed an analysis method to approach this sharing.

The questions we pose are the following:

- Is there a difference between male and female *coaches* in the ability to manage the process of change?
- Is there a difference between male and female *executives* in the ability to manage the process of change?
- What is the impact of the presence of women on the ability of a team to change?
- How the system influences the behaviors of coaches and executives?

Sex and gender

The differences linked to gender differences and social roles attributed to each gender in society are reflected in several closely interlinked semantic fields which include:

- *social attribution* (men and women) is the sexual identity attributed to the person by society.
- *sex* (male and female) is the anatomical difference.
- *sexuality* (feminine or masculine) refers to the sexual behaviours of each sex.
- *gender* (masculine and feminine) is the difference between the roles and social behaviour.
- *Virility (masculinity)* and *femininity* are the characteristics deemed to be inherent to each sex.
- *paternal* and *maternal* refer to innate or socially acquired parental behaviours.

Each of these semantic pairs are biological (particularly for the first three), psychological and sociological (particularly for the last three). It should be noted that these six pairs don't exist in every language. For example, in German, the word "geschlecht" refers to both sex and gender.

As for managers, executives and coaches, the two pairs that interest us are *sex* and *gender*. If the first is clear, the second is the result of complex conceptual evolution. It was first described in the works of Margaret Mead (1935)¹ where she says that "Culture forms identity". This notion reappeared later from Simone de Beauvoir (1949) then from the sexologist John Money in 1955 (*gender role*) and was used by Robert Stoller, in 1968, in his psychoanalytical thinking.

The experimental, cognitive, developmental psychology trend mentioned it at the same time (Kohlberg, 1966) under the name "*gender stability*" then attempted to integrate it into systems theory (Bem, 1981) under the name *gender system*. We should note that Sandra Bem had developed a gender measurement tool in 1971: the BSRI. From a sociology point of view, Janet Chafetz and Rae Blumberg were pioneers in the late 60s and the terms *gender, innate gender and learned sex roles* appeared in the early 70s (Oakley, 1972; Chafetz, 1974).

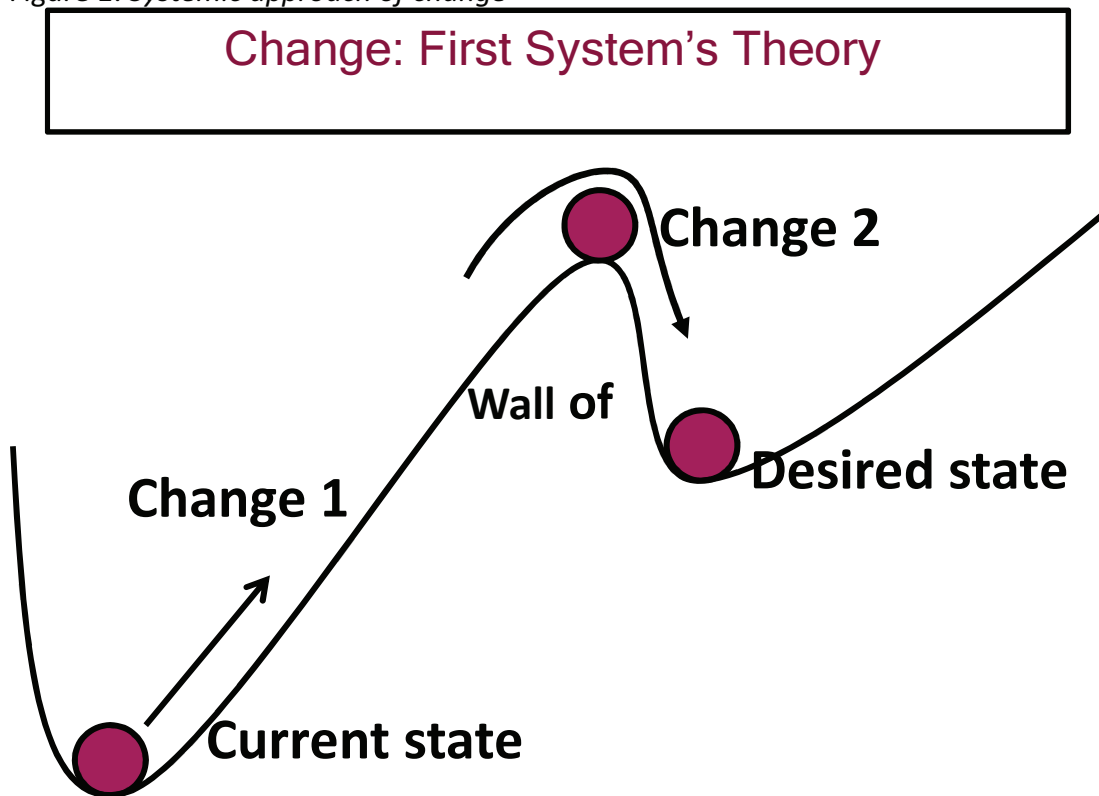
The various gender theories are based on an *attribution* concept, which then decline a string of effects corresponding to the culture's implicits. Social challenges and therefore social pressure refers to *work, family, sexuality, reproduction and authority* (Wearing, 1996). Being a man or woman in a given culture at a given time means being subject to a conformity requirement, as evidenced in language, ideology, artefacts (clothing), the code of interactions (interruptions, turn to speak) and social structures. The person may be jostled if he is involved in several cultures (country, job, company) with contradictory conformity requirements.

The measurement tool

Change 2 is a transformation of a system (such as a team) such that the new state is stable and cannot naturally regress to the initial state. As represented in Figure 1, it is like a small ball in a valley which can move to another valley separated from the first one by a mountain. Change 1 is like climbing the mountain but being unable to reach the top. In this case, natural gravity will pull the ball back down to its initial position.

¹ Margaret Mead studied sexual behaviours among three populations of New-Guinea. the Arapesh (gender equality), the Mondugunor (men dominant by violence) and the Chambuli (Women dominant by property).

Figure 1: Systemic approach of change



When the ball is at the top, it can either fall on the right to a new stable state or fall back to the initial position.

In order to succeed in a Change 2, the *Transformation* forces (those providing the energy needed to move to another state) must exceed the *Preservation* forces (those trying to maintain the system in its current state).

Preservation and *Transformation* forces are qualified and measured with a tool, Change2Team, which was developed by Michel Moral and Stephane Vallée in 2009. A paper and pencil version of the tool was previously designed in 2007 by Florence Lamy and Michel Moral and used until 2008 with clients.

The basic idea is based on observing some of the processes active in groups and teams. For instance, groups usually agree that assiduity, punctuality, confidentiality and readiness are key, among others, to sustaining well-being.

In Change2Team, assiduity, punctuality, confidentiality and readiness have been aggregated into what we call a *functioning mode*: **Respect**.

We have defined ten such functioning modes; five of them (**Respect, Listening, Contribution, Presence and Feedback**)² are characteristic of the *preservation* attitude (attitude being taken as defined by Allport, 1935) and the outstanding five (**Metaposition, Audacity, Explicitation**³, **Humility** and **Openness**)⁴ represent the *transformation* forces.

The conception of these ten functioning modes was inspired from the first, second and third System's Theories and refined after coaching experimentation with client teams. These ten modes of functioning are mutually exclusive.

The questionnaire puts forwards 20 situations with four possible responses for each situation. These 20 situations are representative of the different stages of team activity: assembling (a project team), analysing (a situation and signals from the market etc), creating (a process, an organisation, a product) and executing (deploy, decide, and do). In the tool it is possible to equally distribute the questions between these stages or favour one of them when a client wants to focus on it. In this study we have used the version of the tool with equally distributed questions.

The questionnaire is given to each member of the team who can distribute 3 votes among the 4 possible responses. They can give the three votes to one response or share them out between three different responses.

² Exact definitions are as follows:

Respect : Protecting the group and its members, being punctual, respecting confidentiality and delivering on time.

Listening : Trying to understand, reformulating and exploring misunderstandings.

Contribution: Participating, cooperating, sharing and avoiding shallowness.

Presence : Being present. Being here now and getting involved in what is going on.

Feedback : Giving sincere feedback on the positive and proposing options for the negative.

³ This is a neologism. It means making explicit what is implicit.

⁴ Exact definitions are :

Metaposition : Observing the group, interactions, others, enlightening the process.

Audacity : Daring to think, daring to dream and daring to do.

"Explaining": Daring to say, daring to meta-communicate and daring to oppose.

Humility : Suspending judgment, questioning our uncertainties, accepting doubt and being patient.

Openness : Accepting being surprised, learning with pleasure and accepting being amazed.

Each functioning mode is therefore represented by 8 responses and can receive a maximum of 24 votes.

Some adjustments are made in the program to account for the fact, for example, that a person who puts their three votes on one of the four possible responses will be more in favour of that particular kind of behaviour.

It is assumed *a priori* that a “Change 2” is possible only if the *Transformation* rate (sum of the votes given to the five *Transformation* functioning modes) is prevalent.

If we go into more detail, the selection frequency of a functioning mode determines if it is *minor, balanced* or major. The modes' high and low selection frequencies are translated by the fact that the person tends to play down or exaggerate these functioning modes regardless of the context. There are 3 possible zones for a functioning mode.

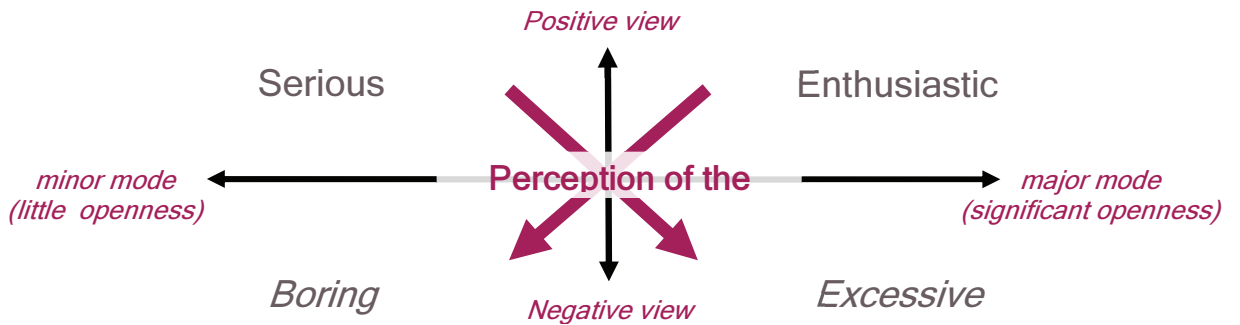
Table 1: *Minor, balanced and major functioning modes*

Minor mode	Balanced mode	Major mode
20% below the average		180% above the average

When a functioning mode is minor or major, everything happens as if the person has lost his ability to act according to the context, or act "automatically" depending on their personality and role. We also talk about "**personal functioning mode**".

- The first consequence is the difficulty in using other functioning modes, which may be useful in a given situation.
- The second consequence is to perceive a person having the opposite representation (major/minor) negatively, or even conflictually.

Figure 2: Mutual perceptions in the **openness** functioning mode



The diagram above shows the negative perception mechanism of the other in the case of the **openness** functioning mode. Thus "serious" (minor positive openness) does not see "enthusiastic" (major positive alertness) but "excessive" (major negative openness).

Similarly, "enthusiastic" does not see "serious" but "boring" (minor negative openness).

This approach means we can study, according to our panel (man/woman/coach/executive), the distribution of the **personal functioning modes** (major & minor) and compare them to the overall functioning modes.

The population studied

The population comprises three groups:

- coaches mainly recruited from groups of peers who answered the questionnaire with the motivation to learn about the tool.
- executives requesting individual coaching.
- executives in a team requesting team coaching.

Table 2: Population

	Men	Women	Total
Coaches	63	86	149
Isolated executives	11	9	20
Executives in a team	82	34	116
TOTAL	93	43	136
Number of teams			15

The population is French. We have aggregated all the executives (isolated or in a team) for gender comparison purposes.

RESULTS

Table 3: *Average Preservation and Transformation for the sub-populations*

gender	role	All the functioning modes		Just the "Personal" functioning modes	
		Preservation	Transformation	Preservation	Transformation
women	coach	55%	45%	64%	36%
men	coach	54%	46%	63%	37%
women	executive	59%	41%	84%	16%
men	executive	55%	45%	82%	18%

This table shows the distribution (preservation/transformation) for the functioning modes in general and **personal functioning modes** according to gender and profession.

The latter are calculated by totalling, for each functioning mode, the occurrences in major mode or minor mode. We note that the "personal mode" relates to an average of 10% of executives and 8% of coaches. In the case of executives (men or women), this is over 17% for some modes (listening, presence, feedback and explicitation). In the case of coaches (men or women), this is over 15% for listening, feedback, explicitation and metaposition.

The populations were compared with the Student test at $p=0.001$. The homogeneity of variance was checked at $p=0.0005$.

We didn't notice any significant difference between the averages for the male coaches and for the female coaches neither for any of the ten functioning modes, nor transformation or preservation, as well as for the personal functioning modes relative to preservation or transformation.

However, there are significant differences between male and female coaches for personal functioning modes. Women are more audacious than men for example.

This is the same for managers and executives.

We note that the executives have a higher level of preservation than the coaches, which we already observed in the previous research.

The teams were compared and the results are summarised below:

Table 4: *Transformation in teams with women*

Industry	Type of team	Transformation %	% women in the team
Change management	Exec board	47 %	44%
Distribution	IT board	46 %	15%
Construction (Morocco)	Exec board	45 %	0%
Communication	Exec board	43 %	0%
Communication	Exec board	43 %	25%
Distribution	IT board	43 %	10%
Manufacturing	Sales board	43 %	33%
Services	Exec board	42 %	50%
Coaching	Exec board	40 %	71%
Automotive	Sales board	36 %	11%
Distribution	IT board	35 %	14%
Distribution	Finance board	34 %	100%
Airline	Ops board	31 %	0%
Chemistry	Exec board	30 %	33%

The correlation factor (the effect of women on transformation) is -13% which means that the presence of women in a team slightly reduces the Transformation ability. Due to the small number of teams, we need to be careful as other factors might have a bigger impact.

The correlation coefficients are often more higher for some functioning modes:

Contribution	: -23%	Listening	: +20
Presence	: -32%	Respect	: +31%
Alertness	: -20%	Explicitation	: +39%

These results show that if the presence of women only slightly modifies the team's ability to transform, their presence gives rise to a different style of leadership for the team: more explicit, more respectful, but less opened.

DISCUSSION

The absence of a significant difference between men and women, whether for the coaches or the executives, when using the Change2Team tool may give rise to several interpretations.

Firstly, we can put forward the hypothesis that the measuring tool is not related to sex or gender differences.

However, we can also put forward the hypothesis that the "professional culture" of coaches or executives prevails over being a man or a woman. These two professions are closely related. For the coach, it is the essence of their activity to support a transformation. For the executive asking for a coaching, it is his or her objective to succeed some kind of transformation.

Thirdly, we can put forward the hypothesis that other variables prevail. For example, the industry sector for executives, or age.

Finally, there is evidence of a recruitment bias since executives who were part of the population studied requested for coaching. Also, the coaches were the ones interested in the Change2Team tool. We will strive to control these biases as we continue our research.

CONCLUSION

Gender, an effect of social construction weighing on men and women, is perhaps undergoing uniformisation within some professions. Judith Butler (1990) posed the following question: if gender is only acquired, why are there only two genders? Over the centuries, civilisations have, for various reasons, ensured that there are only two genders, but is this what our civilisation wants? If the answer to the second question is that our civilisation wants gender uniformity, our results seem to show that this is heightened.

It seems, although this will require more in-depth work, that the presence of women within a group changes some functioning modes.

We hope we have opened up some avenues for thought. We remain convinced that the only way to decide between these numerous ideas, springing up here and there, is quantitative research.

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