

# 5<sup>th</sup> MENTORING & COACHING RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Lazarski University  
Warsaw, Poland  
23 – 24 June 2015

Editors: Zoltán Csigás  
Po Lindvall

## EMCC

*European Mentoring &  
Coaching Council*



2015

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RESEARCH CONFERENCE**

**LAZARSKI UNIVERSITY  
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## **THE EUROPEAN MENTORING & COACHING COUNCIL**

The European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) was established in 1992. It exists to develop, promote and set the expectation of best practice in mentoring and coaching across Europe and beyond, for the benefit of society.

The EMCC has more than 5,000 members in over 67 with 24 Affiliated Countries across Europe.

EMCC welcomes mentors/coaches, sponsors of mentoring/coaching, providers of mentoring/coaching training, researchers and others with an interest in the field. The European Quality Award (EQA), an international accreditation, provides rigorous standards underpinned by an evidence-based competence framework for providers of coaching and mentoring training programmes. The European Supervision Quality Award (ESQA) offers a similar award for Supervision training. The European Individual Accreditation (EIA) offers a similar accreditation for practitioners. Whilst the European Supervision Individual accreditation offers accreditation for supervisors of mentors/coaches.

The EMCC publishes the International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching, a journal for Mentors, Coaches, Researchers, Human Resource Professionals and Training Institutes.

The EMCC holds three conferences a year – an annual mentoring and coaching conference in November, a mentoring and coaching research conference in June and a mentoring eConference in the first quarter of the year.

For more information on the European Mentoring & Coaching Council have a look at [www.emccouncil.org](http://www.emccouncil.org)

## WHO IS THE SUPERVISOR?

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Dr Michel Moral  
France

**Abstract:** *We observed that the population of supervisors and coaches training for becoming supervisors reacts to specific situations in a specific manner. We have thus been wondering if their level of maturity is superior to that of coaches, as well as of the general population. In order to clarify this question, we conducted a quantitative study on a population of supervisors to understand if they have a specific defensive style. We used the Bond's Defence Style Questionnaire in its 72 items version. We compared with those for a population of coaches, and with the general population.*

*Results show that both coaches and supervisors have less immature defences than the general population, but that supervisors and coaches are not that different.*

### INTRODUCTION

During our collective supervisions and our ESQA supervisor trainings, we use tools like the DSQ (72 items version III-R) and the YSQ (75 items Version S-2) to help trainees identifying the way they function, as well as their blind spots. In addition, we have many opportunities to observe the behaviour of supervisees and trainees during exercises and debriefs. We noticed that, compared to psychologists and psychotherapists that we also supervise and train, coaches and supervisors have different personality profiles and behaviour patterns. For instance, nearly all coaches and supervisors have the active *Early Maladaptive Schema* (Young & al., 2003) *Unrelenting standards/Hyper criticalness (US)*. Also, compared to psychologists, who often possess a high *pseudo-altruism* Ego Defence, nearly all coaches and supervisors score from low to medium for that same defence. We also noticed behaviour similar to that of gifted children (like "knowing better than their parents") as well as self-generation fantasies.

We reflected on this and decided to be more attentive in identifying these patterns. The idea of differentiating coaches from supervisors emerged, and we decided to develop a methodology to assess the differences.

Analysing the personality profile of supervisors compared to that of coaches and to the general population might help to understand how coaching and supervision develop in a market: it is possible that in a country like France, where few supervisors are trained, this activity attracts specific personalities.

## GENERAL RESEARCH QUESTION

The general research question is the following: "Is there a specific personality profile of supervisors, or of coaches who want to become supervisors?"

## STATE OF OUR KNOWLEDGE

The research field, which we observe, is the coaching profession in France. Compared to the UK situation, several gaps can be noted: few supervisors have been trained, supervisor trainings emerged very late (compared to several other countries), and most coach supervisors in France have just decided at some point of time that they deserved to be supervisors.

The population of active *coach supervisors* in France (about 300) can be divided into the following sub-populations:

- Those who are not trained and have no intention to be trained (200 to 220)
- Those who are trained or eventually decided to be trained (80 to 100).

In addition, there are 100 to 200 coaches who are currently planning to be trained and to become coach supervisors.

There are presently only four supervision training schools in France, of which the oldest one started to operate in 2010.

We did not find any study similar to ours, namely differentiating supervisors from coaches. Several studies have been done on coaches, for instance that of Passmore & al. (2006), showing that the most frequently MBTI type in a population of 228 coaches was ENFP (19%), while the same type represents only 3.2% in a UK population sample (n=1634). The second most frequent MBTI type is INFP (11.4%), compared to 3.2% in the UK sample. Passmore also mentions that, in populations of managers, the TJ types predominate.

We have also identified 15 Ph.D. dissertations related to coaching supervision in the world. None of them addresses the question of the personality of the supervisor.

In the world of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, there are many reflections and studies related to the reasons why a person wants to become a therapist, but we could not find a single one asking the same question for supervisors.

## METHODOLOGY

Several approaches have been considered such as:

- Categorical personality questionnaires (Big5, 16PF, etc...)
- Dimensional questionnaires, especially YSQ (Young & al., 2003) and DSQ (Bond & al., 1983).

A dimensional approach appeared more flexible and more sensitive. Validity is a potential concern, because the dimensions are constructs designed by experts and not the outcome of a factorial analysis. These dimensions, however, are well accepted in the community of researchers.

We eventually decided to favour the concept of *Ego Defences* (initially described by Anna Freud in 1936 and then explored by Vaillant & al., 1976), because it relates to the developmental level of the person, and also because it is based on a situational model. Another reason is that data related to the general and French speaking population is available.

Ego Defences have a long history, which started with Anna Freud who defined these mechanisms in 1936: "Ego Defence mechanisms are the ways and means by which the ego wards off unpleasure and anxiety, and exercises control over impulsive behaviours, affects and instinctive urges".

The psychoanalyst Jean Bergeret (1974) established quite a precise pattern of Ego Defences for each category of the Psychoanalytic Classification of personality disorders:

| PSYCHOSIS    | BORDER LINE               |                              |                              | NEVROSIS   |
|--------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
|              | SEXUAL PERVERT            | OTHER BORDER LINE            | SOCIAL PERVERT               |  |
| DENIAL       | Denial of sex difference  | Some areas of reality denied | Denial of other's narcissism | INHIBITION<br>PSEUDO-ALTRUISM<br>IDEALISATION<br>REACTION-FORMATION<br>SUPPRESSION<br>DISPLACEMENT |
| SPLITTING    | EGO SPLITTING             |                              |                              |  |
| DISSOCIATION | OBJECT SPLITTING          |                              |                              |  |
|              | PROJECTION                |                              |                              |  |
|              | PROJECTIVE IDENTIFICATION |                              |                              |  |
|              | ACTING OUT                |                              |                              |  |

Such bridges with other categorical personality classifications exist and this was also a reason to opt for this approach.

In terms of measurement, George Vaillant (1971, 1976) attempts a quantitative assessment of the Ego Defences by using interviews. This approach exhibits good validity and fidelity, but the process is far too heavy for practical use here. Projective tests have been used by different authors (cf the review by Bonsack & al., 1998) and have appeared to be good detectors, but quantification of intensity as well as fidelity is poor.



A number of questionnaires have been developed during the same period, such as the *Defence Mechanism Inventory*, Gleser & Ihilevich (1969), the *Defence Mechanism Profile*, Johnson (1982), and the *Defence Style Questionnaire*, Bond & al. (1983).

We elected to use the *Defence Style Questionnaire*, which exists in different versions:

- The 67 items DSQ, *Defence Style Questionnaire*, Bond & al. (1983)
- The 88 items DSQ, Bond (1986), which has a poor discrimination
- The 88 items R, Andrews & al. (1989)
- The 72 items DSQ version 1, which was validated on 413 subjects
- The 72 items DSM-III-R DSQ, Andrews & al. (1993), which was validated on 712 subjects, of which a control sample (388) and a test-retest sample (89).

A French version was developed by Bonsack & al. (1998) in order to check face validity, internal consistency, the grouping of defence mechanisms into clinically pertinent defence styles, and the correlation with the DSM-IV. This study was done on 82 control and 140 patients, of which 59 were evaluated.

The results are that the psychometric features of the French version are **similar to the original scale**, although minor differences in individual defence mechanisms are present.

Eventually, the tool used in this study to measure the Ego Defences is the French version of the "72-item DSM-III-R labelled DSQ" validated by Andrews & al. (1993).

In this version, the Ego Defences are grouped into three factors:

- The Mature Factor groups Sublimation, Humour, Anticipation and Suppression
- The Neurotic Factor groups Inhibition, Pseudo-altruism, Idealisation and Reaction formation
- The Immature Factor groups Projection, Passive aggression, Acting out, Isolation, Devaluation, Autistic fantasy, Denial, Displacement, Dissociation, Splitting, Rationalisation and Somatisation.

## **OPERATING HYPOTHESIS**

Considering the above, our operating hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

*"The ego defences of supervisors or candidates to become supervisors are more oriented towards mature defences than the general population and the population of coaches".*

## POPULATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

Our study is quantitative and we tried to have a group as large as possible. The studied population consists of:

- A group of supervisors. Some attended or will attend our supervision training
- Coaches randomly recruited, or who are part of our individual or collective supervisions.

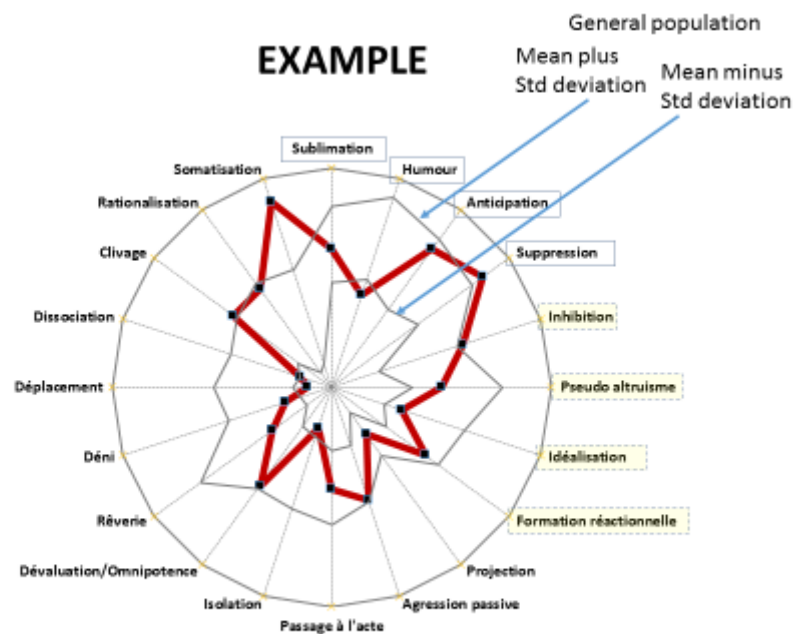
The total population is described below:

|   | Average professional experience |            |
|---|---------------------------------|------------|
|   | As a supervisor                 | As a coach |
| Supervisors: 18<br>Males: 9<br>Females: 9 | 3,5 years                       | 8,7 years  |
| Coaches : 41<br>Males: 12<br>Females 29   |                                 | 5 years    |

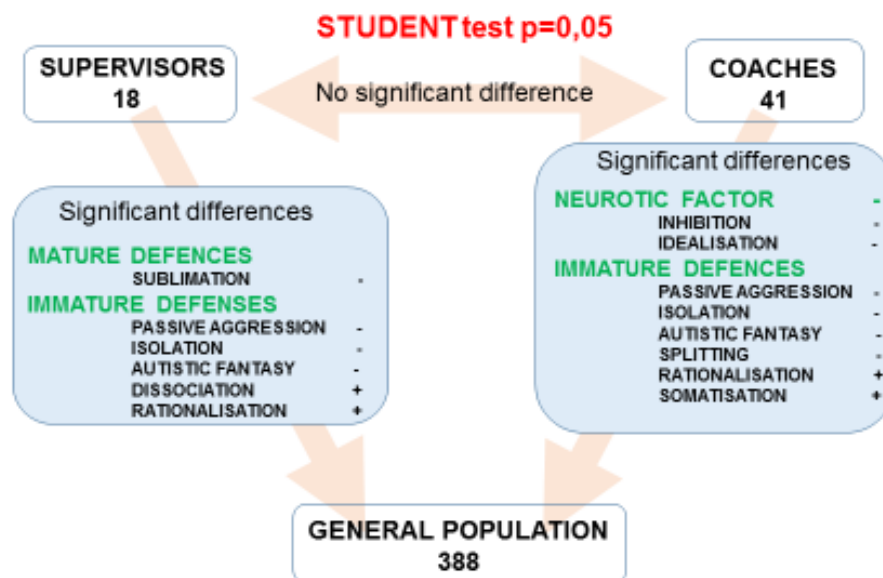
## RESULTS

We use the Student test to compare the three populations. Mean and standard deviation of the general population are the one shown in Andrews & al. (1993).

Each individual analysis looks like this (the results associated to that individual are presented in red):



The comparison of the three populations (supervisors, coaches and general population) is shown below:



The operating hypothesis is not confirmed: compared to the general population, the Mature Factor of Supervisors, as well as that of coaches, shows no significant difference. Looking into more details, the particular defence Sublimation is significantly lower for supervisors. This could mean that, compared to coaches, supervisors have a higher acceptance of who they really are, and behave accordingly.

Second, the *Neurotic Factor* of coaches is significantly lower than that of the general population, with *Inhibition* and *Idealisation* being the key contributors to that difference.

Third, the *Immature Factor* of supervisors and coaches are not significantly different from what is found in the general population. However, looking into the details, we can see that:

- Supervisors and coaches *rationalise* significantly more than the general population
- Supervisors and coaches have a significantly lower level of *Passive aggression*, *Isolation* and *Autistic fantasy* than the general population;
- supervisors have a higher level of *Dissociation* than the general population
- Coaches have a higher level of *Somatisation* and a lower level of *Splitting* than the general population.

Briefly said, if supervisors and coaches are not more mature than the general population, they are less immature, except that they all rationalise more.

The differences between coaches and supervisors are not statistically significant, despite the fact that they do not appear to differ from the general population in the exact same way.

## **DISCUSSION**

There are a number of biases that we are currently trying to eliminate by collecting new results: the size of the populations, the recruitment bias, and the fact that there is no social desirability assessment in the DSQ questionnaire.

We are also working to bridge our results with other elements available in the studied population (gender, age, experience, etc.).

## **LIMITS AND DEVELOPMENT**

The study is ongoing, as we have new trainees, supervisees and coaches or supervisors interested in participating. We plan to extend the study, in order to assess the impact of defence style of the supervisor on the alliance in supervision and on the coach's personal and professional development.

## **CONCLUSION**

A better understanding of the defence profile of coaches and supervisors will help to design new supervision techniques. In this research we have used concepts that are familiar to experienced practitioners. This should facilitate a dialog about what both researchers and practitioners observe in their practice, and how that relates to research.

We believe, however, that supervision is a system where the relationship can be much more than just two persons acting according to their respective defence system. Coaches and supervisors are specialists of the human relationship, and we can imagine that their capacity to open themselves to the other is quite high. For this very reason, we are considering a new research, which would be focused on *openness*. When we look at the literature, an emerging trend arises: coaching and its supervision are moving away from their traditional roots (psychotherapy in particular) to existing by themselves. More and more frameworks and techniques are now considering the positive potential of both coaching and the supervision of coaches, rather than the concerns.

For instance, mechanisms like empathy, confidence, resilience, love, altruism, humility, mindfulness, positivity, compassion might be considered and possibly measured. Research carried out by Richard Davidson (Wisconsin University) and Tania Singer (Max Planck Institute) opens the door to potential pragmatic studies on what is still considered as "non-measurable".

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr Michel Moral spent most of his career in an international environment as a manager and executive. In 2003 he created a coaching and supervision practice. He holds a Master degree in Science & Technology and a PhD. in Clinical Psychology. He has published a total of ten books related to coaching and management. He trains coaches at University, supervises coaches and trains supervisors with Florence Lamy. He is Vice-President EMCC France.

Florence Lamy is coach, psychotherapist and supervisor. She is specialised in business coaching and collective intelligence, working with people, teams and organisations. She teaches and supervises at the University Paris VIII and at the University Cergy-Pontoise. She has a private supervision practice and trains supervisors. Her training programme received the ESQA from EMCC. She has published 8 books and a play.

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