

Making a Cognitive Case Study Following the IDM Cohort Method

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The Goal: dissolving thought fixity in yourself and your clients

The Means: writing a cognitive case study based on DTF, the Dialectical Thought Form Framework

*The core curriculum of the DTF [Dialectical Thought Form] Academy focuses on the **dissolution of thought fixity accomplished through structured listening**. In listening to others, thoughts transform themselves into moments of dialectic. You then discover that moments of dialectic are associated with thought forms, and that these are **generators of fresh thinking**. In this way, what began as a fixed thought ends up as a fluid dialogical thought process, first with others, and then internally with yourself. (This is not new: Hegel first wrote about it in 1807).*

Dissolving fixed thoughts into a fluid state is more difficult than it is to dissolve sensuous or social experiences by way of perspective-taking. This is because fixed thoughts have the 'I', the power of the negative, as their essence, and this power is difficult to dissolve except in internal or external dialogue with others (by which the 'I' becomes a positive energy and a motor of dynamic collaboration).

Training at the DTF Academy leads to building intuitions of complexity in yourself and building complexity awareness in your client(s). You are changing both the client's world and your own, but not without making an intellectual effort. (Hegel called it 'the effort of the concept'). Once you have a grounding in complex intuitions, you can leap-frog clients' work by building *dialogically savvy* Apps that prompt their users 'to think again'.

In DTF training, effort is directed to freeing determinate thoughts from their fixity in order to give actuality to your real strength: you own inner dialogue. Since this dialogue is so buried by the years-long habit to pay no attention to it, you need the assistance of another party. By choosing a client (as if you were a coach or mentor), you enable yourself to focus on another person's speaking, and this paves the way to getting access to your own inner dialogue for the first time.

'Interview' as Midwife

In DTF training, you are appointing your 'interviewee' to empower your internal listening in collaboration with him or her. Based on moments of dialectic (MoD) and their associated thought forms (TFs), listening becomes analytical. Since you already master analytical thinking, you have an easy start.

What clients, innocent of their own internal process, say, is a world construction (object) that can be reflected-upon by the two parties to the interview, and analyzed by you to the extent that you know MoD and TFs. The law here is that of 'garbage in/garbage out': *you can only hear those thought forms you have already internalized.*

A fivefold opportunity

DTF training gives you a fivefold opportunity to build dialectical intuitions (intuitions of complexity):

1. In *conducting* the interview (conversation), you exercise your knowledge of Moments of Dialectic (MoDs).
2. In *evaluating* your transcribed interview for structure, you learn to select structurally relevant interview fragments and thereby expand your listening, text fragment by text fragment, by 'going over the words' (that is, by re-generating them in your mind).
3. In *re-evaluating* your preliminary scoring of interview text with a cohort led by a facilitator, you strengthen your mastery of MoDs and TFs and internalize them by intensely discussing interviews of all cohort members.
4. In *giving feedback* to your client (interviewee), you learn to become precise in speaking the language of TFs (as you may do as a team facilitator).
5. The more you anticipate (2) when conducting (1), the less 'anecdotal' and the more 'scorable' do your interviews become. *This is what you learn by making further case studies.*

Tools Used

Although interviewing is a dialogue and thus flexible, it can benefit from a protocol. In this training, we use the *Three Houses Protocol* (THP) in which we conceive of the client as an intuitive thinker who constructs "world" before our ears and eyes in real time. By recording and transcription, we capture the client's world construction for the sake of analysis based on deep listening.

THP is a template for generating conversations. It uses a small number of (11) concepts appearing as the ‘floors’ of three ‘houses’. Each concept is used as a conversation starter. For the interviewee, it becomes a reflection point.

Logistically, a THP concept is a ‘cognitive prompt’ that provides focus for both parties. Floors/concepts are linked differently in different houses; they need to be carefully distinguished in order to link them purposefully. The interviewer gradually learns when to transition to another concept, guided by the depth of thinking of the interviewee (within given time limits of about 20 minutes for each House.) Houses are entered and left behind in a timely manner and deliberately, in order to promote interview transparency, thus *scorability*.

The tripartite protocol can be used in 2 very different ways:

- A. *The orthodox way*, in which the interviewer prompts the client to spell out what s(he) presently does at work (what are your functions; how does the work environment influence your work; what’s in it for you to do this work?)
- B. *The ‘DDO’ way* in which the interviewer makes use of the up-front question: “what did you hire your company for in terms of your self-development, and how, therefore, would you like to work in the company as your sponsor?”

The second use of the THP is more difficult for both parties since both parties are dealing with what they **imagine** work could be like, or should be like, rather than what it is.

Doing so entails:

1. both parties are invited to imagine the future of work.
2. the interviewer uses the 11 categories/floors of THP for inviting the interviewee to imagine his/her self-development at work in terms of roles to fulfil, environments to scale the work in, and motivation for mental growth.
3. the interviewee is prompted to spell out in detail his ‘development on the job’ in terms of 3 separate dimensions: task, environment, self.
4. the interviewer must ‘stand in the interviewee’s shoes’ even more than in orthodox interviewing since s(he) must develop a sense of how the other party ‘envisions’ rather than ‘understands’ their work (which are of course related).
5. the interviewer must ‘tune’ the other party to think aloud in an unsettled and challenging future of work without losing his/her focus on MoDs leading to TFs.
6. In this pursuit, **Context** – consisting of many layers -- becomes the ‘grounding’ dimension for imagining future work.
7. **Process** – task process, environmental process, self process – must be probed in all three Houses in terms of what emerges and evolves for the interviewee.

8. **Relations** must be probed as intrinsic interrelationships between imagined workspaces.
9. Since Context is imagined, probing **transformation** is focused on how an imagination can be concretized without turning it into just another context.

Clearly, the DDO way of using THP requires more than a knowledge of MoD; it employs TFs to prompt and enlarge the client's imagination from a developmental perspective. It is therefore advisable not to use the DDO way for a first case study (but you can, of course, try it at your own risk).

Steps Comprised by a Case Study

Case Study Training is team work. It evolves in a cohort, in phases:

- A. *Preparatory phase*: you do (and the cohort reviews) 1-2 short, 15-min. long transcribed interviews with friends and colleagues (2-3 cohort hours).
- B. *Interviewee selection phase*: you select an intelligent and open-minded client, with a view to creating a business relationship.
- C. *Preliminary scoring phase*: you get to work on reading (re-creating internally), analyzing, and scoring an entire interview, bringing parts of it to class as they evolve. You are responsible for guiding the cohort through your selection of fragments and their scoring, putting your justification for the scoring up for discussion.
- D. *Definitive scoring phase*: after cohort discussions of your work, you refine your scoring, working toward submitting a definitive case study.
- E. *Submission phase*: you submit a first version of your case study for feedback from the facilitator.
- F. *Facilitator evaluation phase*: the facilitator goes through each case study pairing your scoring with his/her own for the sake of deep thinking about the client's thinking, ultimately for the sake of *inter-rater reliability*. This takes the facilitator 2.5 to 4 'evaluation hours' per study. (In this time frame, participants can do a second 1-hr interview).
- G. *Definitive submission phase*: having received facilitator feedback and pondered it, you are now able to submit your best work so far.
- H. *Feedback preparation phase*: the facilitator discusses the definitive study with each participant, including how feedback might be given to the client, in writing or verbally, to optimize the client's learning.

Group work on the case study ends.

Summary:

1. We need 10-12 *contact hours* over 3 months, including the preliminary 2-3 hours for discussing short 'practice interviews'.

2. We meet according to a flexible schedule so that each time we meet, 1 or 2 participants can take the lead in discussing their work with the cohort. In this way, the case study gradually comes along.
3. Once a case study has been submitted, the facilitator requires 2.5 to 4 *evaluation hours* per participant to give written feedback.
 - a. This feedback is meant to lead to validated results that can be presented to the interviewee in the form of a supervised (written) feedback report conveying findings to him/her in an understandable and practical manner.
 - b. On top of scoring the interview as a co-rater, the facilitator gives *verbal* (1-hr) feedback on each case study; this feedback includes the preparation of (verbal or written) feedback to the client and must be solid enough for the interviewer to negotiate a coaching/mentoring plan or other kind of collaboration (such as building an App).
4. For a cohort of 5, a facilitator expects to spend a total of 30 hours on the training.

The training should not exceed 3 months.

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