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## **Coaching for Development: The Constructive Developmental Framework (CDF)**

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### **Abstract**

This article describes CDF, a psychometric tool of use in consulting to clients' mental process. CDF follows a *constructivist* paradigm. The paradigm says that human beings construct their own 'reality' determined by two different strands of development over the lifespan: social-emotional and cognitive.

By probing social-emotional *meaning making* and cognitive *sense making* at some point of their adult development, CDF assesses individuals' or groups' *Frame of Reference* through two one-hour interviews scored in terms of their developmental level. CDF also includes a clinical-behavioural assessment whose results are interpreted in light of developmental level. The article refers to the three dimensions of CDF as CD (cognitive development), ED (social-emotional development), and NP (Need/Press Questionnaire).

Historically, CDF is a synthesis of five different strands of developmental research: research into social-emotional development (Kegan, 1982; 1994; Lahey, 1988; Laske, 2006), the structure of dialectical thinking (Adorno, 1999; Bhaskar, 1993), the development of dialectical thinking and reflective judgment (Basseches, 1984, 1989a-b; King and Kitchener, 1994; Laske 1999), psychodynamic underpinnings of work behaviour (Murray, 1938, 1948; Aderman, 1967), and the cognitive-developmental structure of organizational roles (Jaques, 1994, 1998).

This paper comprises four sections, a summary, and references. Section I describes the theoretical model CDF is based on. Section II clarifies the three dimensions of CDF. Sections III and IV regard applications. In Section III, using CDF for mentoring behavioural coaches is described, while in Section IV use of CDF with coachees is discussed. The summary comments on the relationship between behavioural and developmental coaching, pointing to the benefit of merging them in practice.

Keywords: adult development, coaching, frame of reference, process consultation, psychometrics.

### **Section I: Theoretical model**

#### Central Idea

The central idea of CDF is that the way in which people make meaning and sense of the real world unceasingly and dramatically changes over their life span, and is therefore a *developmental* issue. An associated notion is that behaviour and the use of skills (such as coaching skills) are determined by a person's present developmental profile, composed of:

- a social-emotional profile
- a cognitive profile
- a behavioural profile.

As a consequence, empirical data about workplace behaviour is evaluated in CDF based on developmental information about a person, rather than on its own terms as happens in behavioural coaching.

In terms of pedagogy, mastering CDF entails acquiring expertise in using three separate assessment tools and giving feedback on the relationship between their respective outputs:

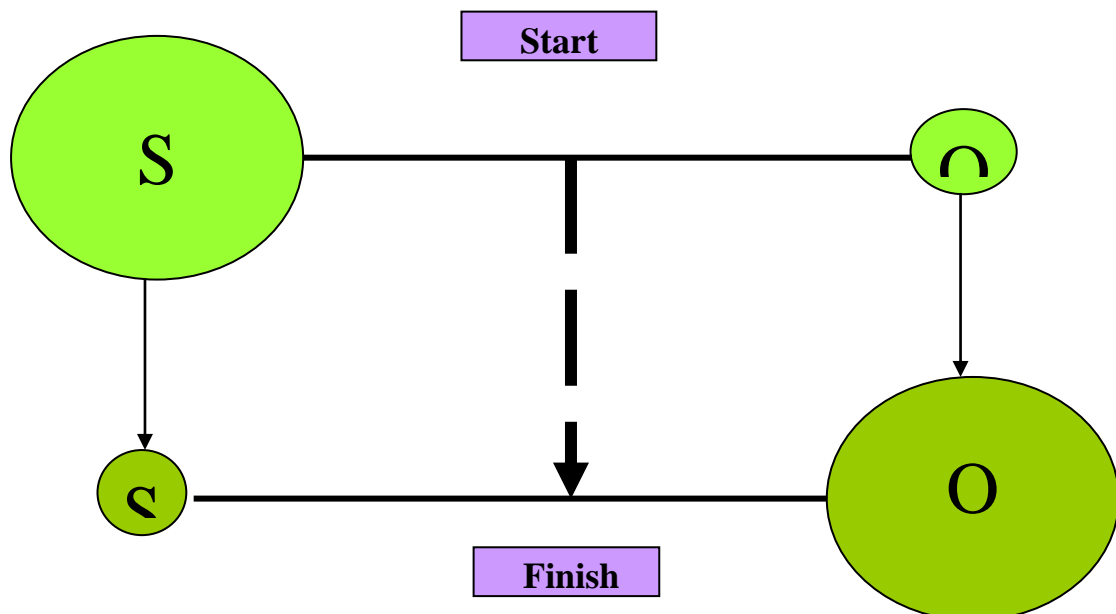
- Lahey et al.'s subject-object interview (1988; refined by Laske, 1999)
- Laske's professional agenda interview (1999; modified from Basseches's educational interview, 1984)
- Aderman's 'need/press' questionnaire (1967; derived from Murray, 1938, 1948).

#### The seminal role of J. Piaget

The research that underlies CDF synthesizes important developmental findings gathered during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As an inaugurator of CDF's research base, J. Piaget stands out.

A central notion of Piaget's research is that human development manifests in the degree to which an individual can take an 'objective' view of herself and the world, rather than remaining ego-centered. In studies of children and adolescents, Piaget showed that *ego-centricity gradually diminishes over the human life span*, along with the progressive development of formal logical thinking. This process, found as well in social-emotional development, is pictured below by the relative size of "subject" – what people are subject to and thus ego-centrally controlled by – and "object" – what through reflection people can make an object of, and thus become aware of. The larger the object, the lower ego-centricity, and the larger the mental space an individual is working in.

**Figure 1**  
**Loss of ego-centricity (subjectivity) over the life span**



Loss of subject (ego-centricity) corresponds to a gain in self-awareness, and manifests in three different but related domains:

1. Cognitive development (CD)
2. Social-emotional development (ED)
3. Behaviour (in CDF measured as 'need vs. press' or NP).

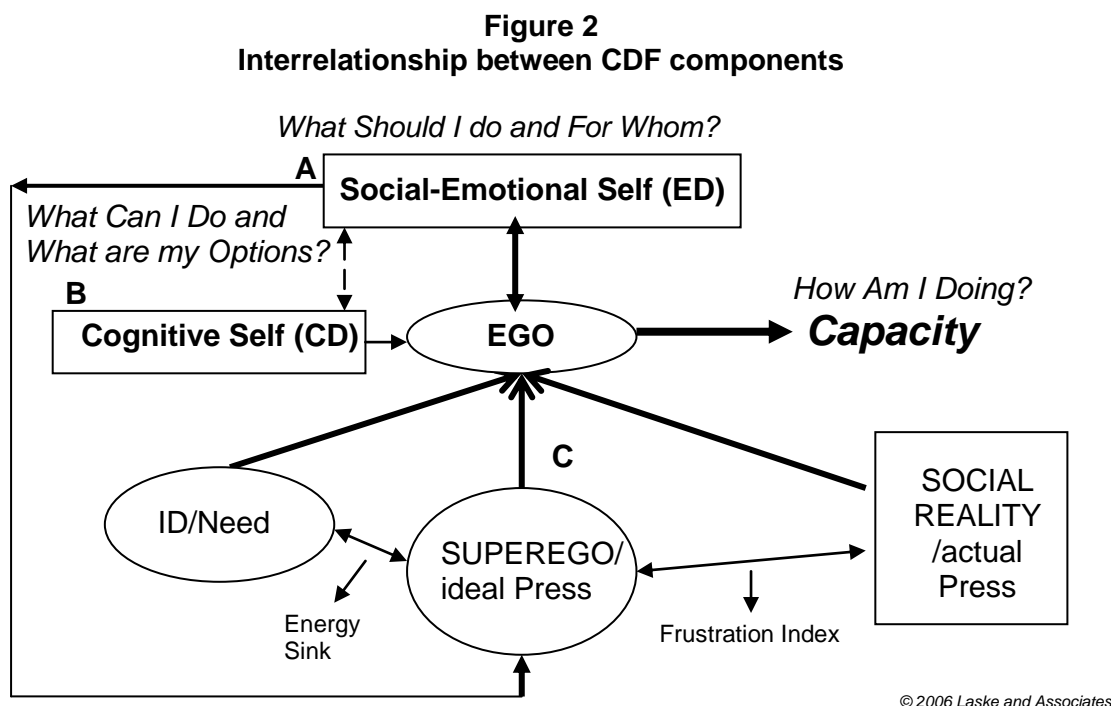
Informally, three associated questions typically asked and answered by individuals are involved here:

1. What can I know, and what can I do once I know?
2. What should I do, and for whom?
3. How am I doing?

Findings from CDF assessments give insight into how an individual answers these three questions. Such findings are of the greatest benefit for coaching and psychotherapy in which all of these questions are typically raised.

#### The tripartite nature of CDF assessments

As stated, CDF addresses three components of human behaviour. Fig. 2, below, shows their interrelationship.



As shown, Ego is in charge of behaviour. It is itself in unceasing transformation based on its roots in the social-emotional and cognitive self. There is no way one could separate the three components from each other in actual life and work.

Following H. Murray's psychoanalytic research (1938, 1948), the Ego is defined by its *psychogenic needs* and the pressures that stand against their fulfilment. Two kinds of pressures exist:

- The individual's *aspirations* deriving from the Superego (which may contract the needs) – "ideal press".
- The individual's *experiences* of social (e.g., organizational) reality – "actual press".

The huge task of the Ego is to establish a *modus vivendi* between Need and Press. Most likely, gaps will exist in the individual's makeup, not only between needs and aspirations, but also between the two kinds of press. The first gap [between needs and aspirations] saps energy away from actual work, and therefore is referred to as an *energy sink*. The second gap [between ideal and actual press] causes frustration, and is measured by a frustration index (Aderman et al., 1967, Aderman 1969). These two indexes determine the individual's **psychological balance** at work, that is, the degree to which an individual can actually make optimal use of his or her competences and knowledge.

Since, as shown, the Ego is a satellite of the individual's social-emotional and cognitive self (which are themselves constitutive of each other), the way the Ego resolves conflict within itself, its needs, and its needs vs. presses, is dependent upon

the level of an individual's social-emotional and cognitive development. Level of development will ultimately determine how far an individual, who by necessity has imported his need/press profile into adult life as a *pre-adult legacy*, will be able to "live with himself". The ability to do so will increase to the extent that the individual has mastered its ego-centricity both social-emotionally and cognitively.

More specifically, behaviour in the workplace is optimal if an individual's profile, measured a Likert scale from 0 to 9, shows no extreme (dysfunctional) needs and a low *Energy Sink* and *Frustration Index*. This situation is indicated by a high *Effectiveness Index*.

Since in CDF, an individual's need/press profile (NP) is interpreted developmentally, those consulting to an individual's mental process can give precise answers not only regarding strength and challenges of the individual's present performance, but can also explain why present performance is what it is, no more no less, and what the psychological cost to the individual is of being at a particular work place.

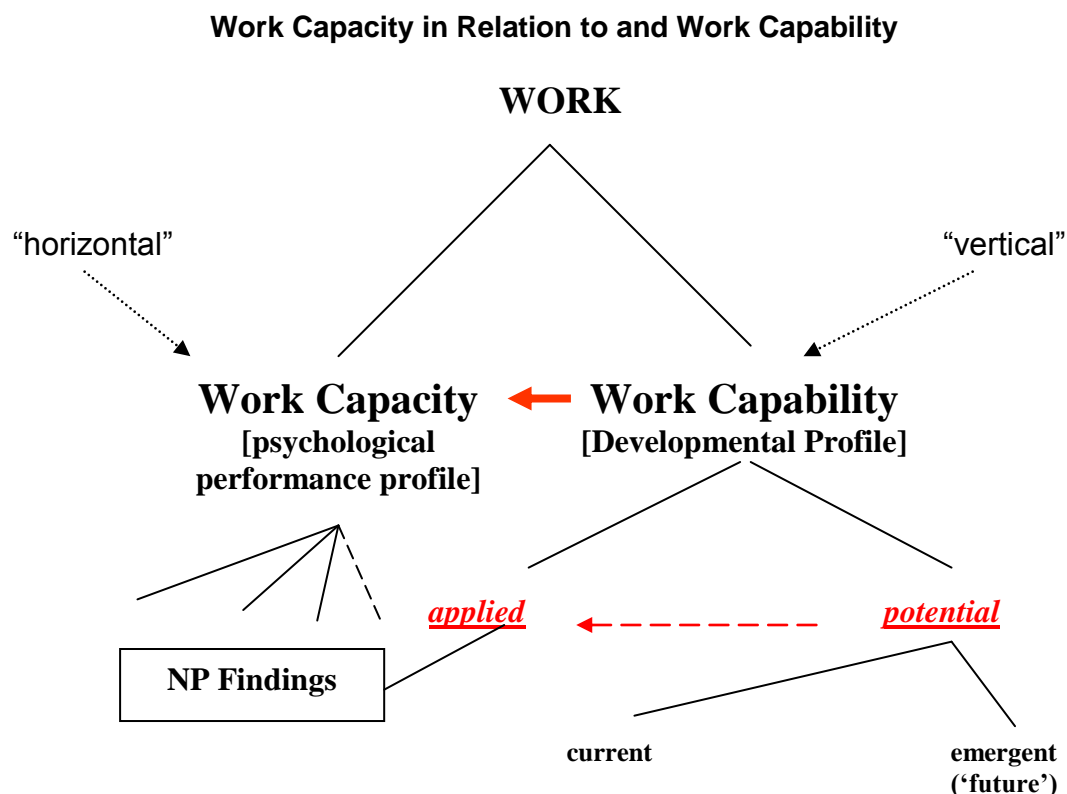
### Two Important Distinctions

In his life-long research on work, work capability, and the cognitive-developmental foundations of organizations, Elliott Jaques made two important distinctions fully honored in CDF, namely those between:

- work capacity and work capability
- applied and potential work capability.

For coaching and process consultation, these distinctions, once understood, are far-reaching.

**Figure 3**



The distinction of overriding importance is the second one, between two aspects of work capability, *applied and potential*. The second distinction amounts to a clarification of applied capability. **CDF assesses potential capability by way of two interdevelopmental interviews, while it assesses applied capability under the aspect of capacity through a questionnaire.**

Jaques defines work as the 'exercise of reflective judgment and discretion in the pursuit of a goal within a certain time period.' This simple definition puts the emphasis on cognitive development over the lifespan as the defining aspect accountability for work. In Jaques's mind, those who do work need to be assigned to roles whose level of work complexity they can be held responsible for on account of their level of cognitive development. Whether or not they can depends on the level of their systemic thinking which can be precisely assessed.

Equally importantly, the role a worker is in typically does not allow for him or her entire potential to be actually *realized*. This is an important consideration for process consultation and coaching. If we focus foremost attention on client's performance (applied capability), we are missing the individual's potential. This is a faux-pas since an individual is defined in what s(he) IS by her potential, not her applied, capability which only defines what the individual HAS and can therefore easily decide not to use.

As Jaques puts it (1994, 7, 21-23):

There exists substantial confusion on the subject of individual working capability, because of the common failure to separate out three main categories of human capability: current applied capability, current potential capability, and future potential capability. ...

Applied capability comprises potential capability (mental complexity) as a general factor applicable to all work, plus values and skilled knowledge which apply only to any specific role at a specific time. Applied capability will always be lower than potential capability, partly because our values and skilled knowledge are not often just in line with the roles we have the opportunity to occupy at any given time, and partly because the work as assigned by the manager into the role may not provide the opportunity to apply our full potential. ...

For this reason, both manager and coach/consultant ought to look out for a worker's developmental potential (*potential capability*), whether it is currently already available ('current') or is still emerging ('future').

*Current* Potential Capability, i.e., the highest level of work a person could currently carry, in work that he or she valued and for which he or she had the necessary skilled knowledge and experience, is a function of complexity of mental process (CMP) *alone*. ...

*Future* potential is the potential capability a person will possess at various times in the future as a result of the maturation of his or her level of complexity of mental processing (potential). There is a fundamental difference between a person's potential capability on the one hand, and values (interest/commitment) and skilled knowledge on the other.

The difference is that his or her potential capability is an innate property of *the person as a whole*, whereas a person's values and skilled knowledge are entities that have their own existence in their own right independently of

any particular person, **and which a person can acquire or shed.**

Compared to these fundamental distinctions, the first distinction made in Fig. 3 is primarily one between applied capability and capacity. As shown in the figure, capacity, assessed in CDF through the NP questionnaire, is the psychological balance a worker shows at the workplace, in particular a balance between his/her unconscious needs and the inner and outer pressures exerted on her.

Jaques's distinctions between aspects of work capability ought to concern not only organizational coaches. Since WORK, following Jaques, is ANY exercise of judgment and discretion, even in private life, **the distinction between coaching for performance and for potential is a crucial one.** The only difference between 'life' and 'work' coaching is that much of the former regards the INNER WORK an individual has to do to become a human being, while organizational work primarily regards the outer manifestations of work.

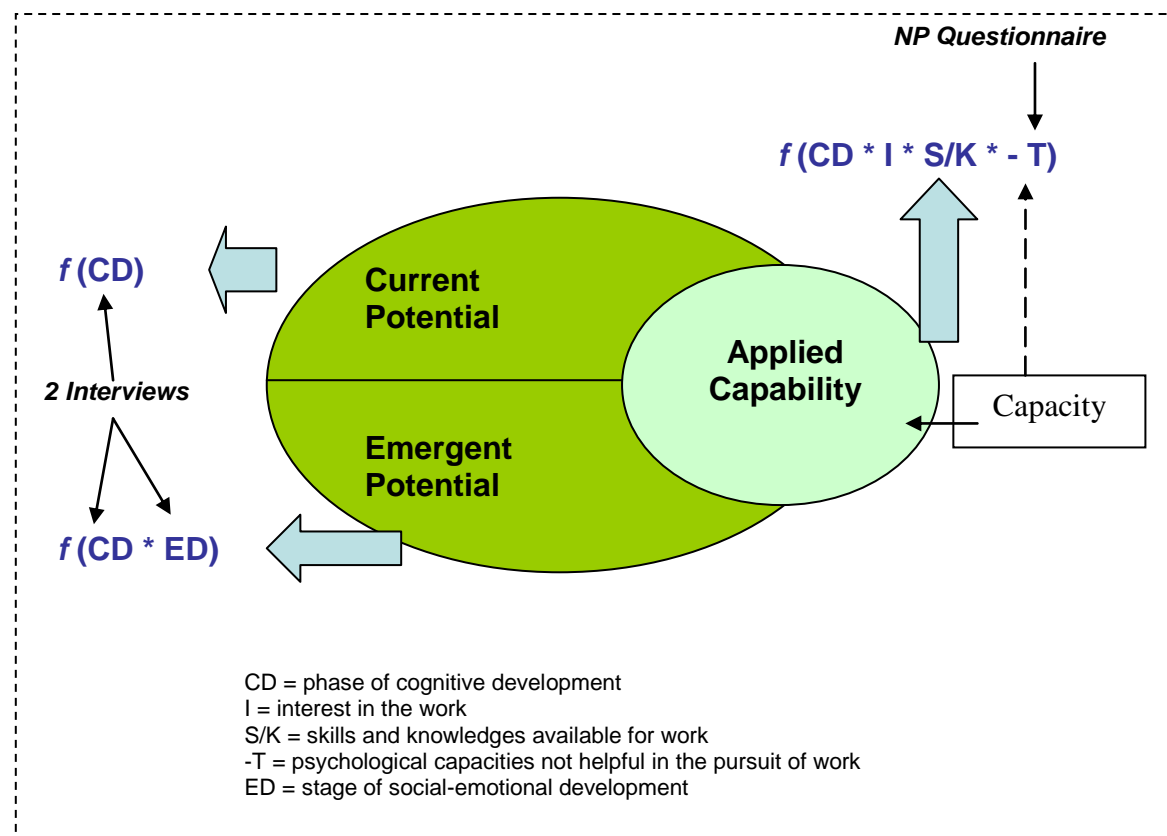
However, as every leadership development coach knows, in organizations, too, it is often the inner work that is primarily required. It is one of the benefits of using CDF that it makes it possible a clear distinction of aspects of work capability.

Actually, in the present context one can distinguish four different types of coaching, here listed in the order of increasing complexity:

1. coaching for capacity
2. coaching for applied capability
3. coaching for current potential capability
4. coaching for emergent potential capability.

I will comment on these types of coaching further based on Figure 4, below:

**Figure 4**  
**Three Aspects of Work Capability**



As can be seen, CD, the phase of an individual's cognitive development, pervades all aspects of applied and potential capability. Since, as Jaques says (1994, 21):

Applied capability comprises potential capability (mental complexity) as a general factor applicable to all work, ...

it is basically impossible to coach for applied capability (performance) without touching upon, even without one's knowing, potential capability, whether current or emergent.

As shown in Fig. 4, applied capability (AC) is a function of:

$$AC = f(CD * I * S/K * -T)$$

where '-T' stands for the capacity assessed in CDF by the NP questionnaire, and where CD is assessed through the cognitive-developmental interview. In addition, applied capability or "performance" is determined by the interest a person takes in her work (I), and the skills and knowledge (competence) she has acquired (S/K). As implied by '-T', absence of clinical symptoms, psychological balance is an important aspect of applied capability.

When coaching singles out 'performance,' it singles out applied capability without a true knowledge of a person's potential, current or emergent. While current potential is simply a function of an individual's level of cognitive development (see Fig. 4), emergent potential (EP) is much broader, since it can only be understood by inclusion of a person's of social-emotional meaning making:

$$EP = f(CD * ED)$$

It is a straightforward inference from the definitions of applied and potential capability, above, that behavioral coaching, being restricted to coaching for capacity as part of applied capability, is an severely and unnecessarily restricted form of process consultation that, one might say, "cries out for being merged with developmental coaching" in which CD and ED receive duly attention.

Typical coaching issues may be classified as follows. A client shows:

1. lack of psychological balance (capacity) because s(he) labors under large *energy sinks* (gaps between subconscious needs and professional aspirations)
2. lack of psychological balance (capacity) because s(he) labors under a large *frustration index* (gaps between professional aspirations and experience of organizational culture)
3. a gap between her level of cognitive and social-emotional development
4. [as a consequence of the above] a low *effectiveness index* depressing level of performance
5. a social-emotional *arrest* at a particular level of meaning making
6. a cognitive *arrest* in a particular phase of cognitive development (sense making)
7. a social-emotional *delay* in developing self-authoring capability
8. a cognitive *delay* in developing the ability of systemic, dialectical thinking.

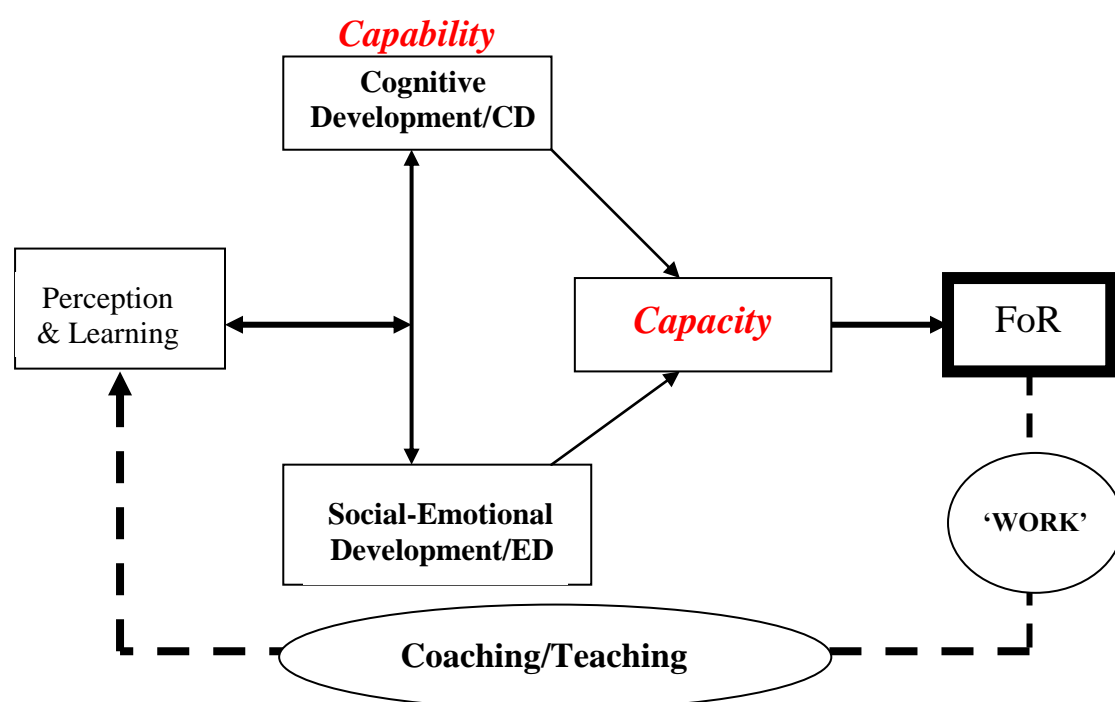
With CDF, all of these eventualities can be diagnosed, and interventions to deal with them can be designed, especially since all psychological imbalances can be explained (rather than just described) on developmental grounds.

#### Intermediate Summary

A good way to summarize what was said above about aspects of Capability and Capacity is to consider Figure 5 below. The figure presents a bird's eye view of the relationship between Capability and Capacity, showing how both of them ultimately determine an individual's **Frame of Reference (FoR)**.

By FoR is meant how the individual "frames (constructs) his world," and thus internally also constructs the workplace into whose physical manifestation s(he) steps day by day.

**Figure 5**  
**Origins of a person's Frame of Reference**



- FoR = Frame of Reference (World View)
- Capacity = An individual's psychological profile
- Capability = An individual's developmental resources.

The embedding of the feedback loop between FoR and 'Perception and Learning' is intentional. What is meant is that:

1. An individual's work is based on her Frame of Reference, or the way the individual constructs her world cognitively and social-emotionally, -- thus not primarily, but only indirectly, on her competences and capacity.
2. The individual's perception and learning cannot be equated with adult development, and is influenced by her Frame of Reference (world view).
3. The individual's learning, as distinct from adult development, is open to coaching and teaching interventions to the extent that there exists developmental potential interventions can tap.



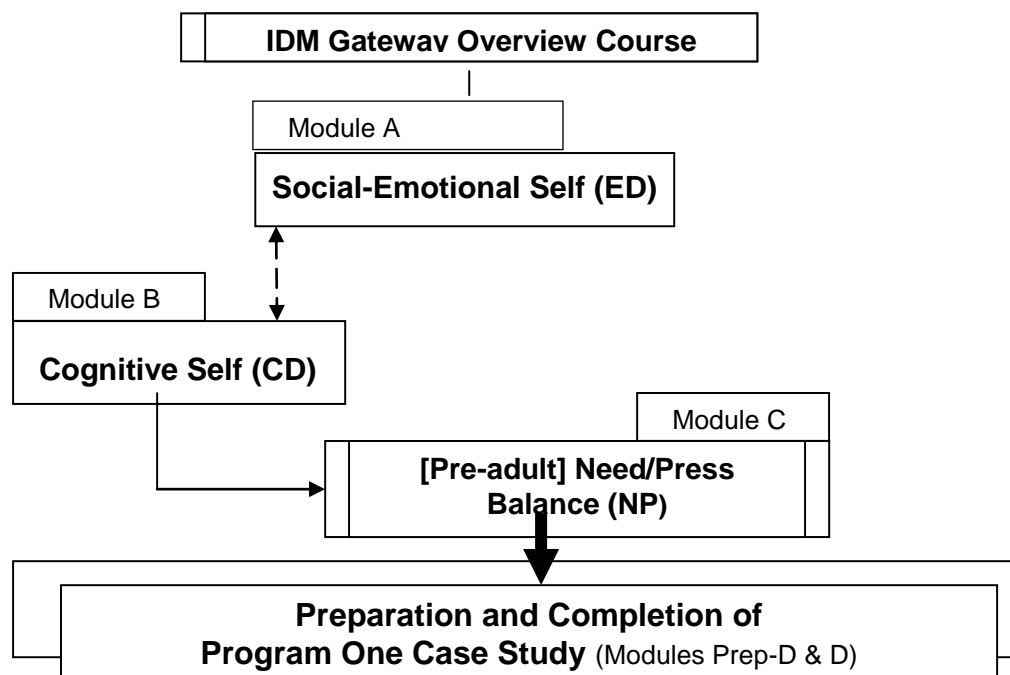
4. Learning and change of behavior may or may not translate into an adult developmental shift; it may simply reinforce a present developmental state (including arrest and delay).
5. The individual's work capacity – indicated by her Effectiveness Index -- acts as a filter that determines how far her developmental potential can make itself felt in her work.
6. The individual's capacity profile may hinder her potential from taking full effect, not only currently, but into the future (as far as emergent potential is concerned).
7. Identifying an individual's psychological profile with her developmental profile amounts to a reduction of developmental teleology to behavioural dynamics, something CDF is designed to hinder.

#### Pedagogical consequences

It is not hard to guess that conceptual distinctions made in CDF have pedagogical consequence. In accordance with the subtleties of CDF, teaching this methodology is meant to foster a more reflective practice than strictly behavioural "training" allows for. Learning to master the assessment of the three aspects of human capability is the crux of instruction at the *Interdevelopmental Institute (IDM)*, Medford, MA, USA ([www.interdevelopmentals.org](http://www.interdevelopmentals.org)).

As shown below, the CDF theoretical model directly translates into the structure of IDM *Program One*. This program requires 10-12 months of study and terminates in an individual case study in which all three CDF perspectives are combined for the purpose of formulating feedback, and designing a coaching plan, for an individual. Program One is deepened by Program Two, where three additional case studies are completed for the sake of deepening CDF practice. Program Three is an academic program for writing an academic thesis (Masters or doctoral) based on qualitative research using CDF. When applied to a larger sample, the resulting thesis merges quantitative and qualitative studies.

**Figure 6**  
**Teaching of CDF in IDM Program One**



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As shown, after an introductory overview (Gateway), students first study in depth the three CDF perspectives, thereafter learning to combine these in practical work documented by an actual case study. As testimonials show, this is a mind- and life-changing enterprise.

At this point, a short summary is in order.

1. The CDF model of development conceptualises adults in terms of their Capability (CD and ED) and Capacity (NP), focusing on their potential capability, with performance considered a reflection of potential.
2. In contrast to the overwhelming majority of coaching approaches, which are behavioural, CDF sees behaviour as based on Frame of Reference (FoR), and thus as an epi-phenomenon to be explained by reference to developmental level.
3. For each of the three aspects of the Capability/Capacity profile, CDF puts at the disposal of process consultants (e.g., coaches, mediators, etc.) three sets of methods. Of these methods, two are based on semi-structured interviewing, while behavioural data are gathered by way of a questionnaire.
4. The social-emotional interview derives from Lahey et al's *Subject-Object Interview* (1988), while the cognitive interview derives from research by Basseches and Laske's dissertation on coaching (1999), and is called *Professional Agenda Interview*.
5. The NP Questionnaire derives from H. Murray's and M. Aderman's work on the theory of psychogenic needs.
6. As a result of its developmental lineage, CDF conceives of "coaching" as an intervention in both the coach's and the client's adult development, and in this sense is *interdevelopmental*.
7. This entails for the coach that if s(he) is at a lower or same level of development than the client, s(he) can bring about behavioural *changes* but not developmental *shifts*. By inference, it implies that the client may be at risk for developmental arrest or delay due to lack of potential capability on the side of the coach.
8. Use of CDF entails that a coach or consultant has an ethical responsibility to know his/her own developmental position, failing which s(he) may delay or arrest the client's adult development. (The lack of acknowledgement of this fact by the coaching community constitutes the 'black hole' of coaching; see below).
9. In light of CDF, behavioural data requires developmental interpretation. It is here that the real strength of CDF resides: the bringing together of behavioural and developmental findings about a client for the purpose of comprehensive feedback and evidence-based formulation of a coaching plan.
10. Use of CDF in this fashion requires dialectical thinking since what is required is a coordination of distinct but inseparable systems. This way of working is not possible for everyone since it requires an appropriate level of cognitive development.

## Section II: The Dimensions of the CDF Instrument

Any theoretical model is only as good as is its implementation. In operational terms, CDF comprises two semi-structured interviews, one cognitive and one social-emotional, plus a psychological questionnaire gauging a client's psychological balance at work. The crucial link between these tools is the process consultant who not only administers the interviews and questionnaire, but is responsible for interpreting CDF findings expertly and ethically. The consultant is using himself as the instrument of his qualitative research, and therefore needs to adhere to strict standards of separating interview "content" from "structure" (e.g., stage). The extent to which a consultant is up to this task depends on his or her developmental level which, far beyond mere skills, shapes his ability to act as an instrument of qualitative-quantitative research.

From the client's point of view, engaging with CDF involves signing an agreement of confidentiality and engaging with two one-hour long developmental interviews and a 45-minute process of answering a questionnaire. In the assessment sequence, the cognitive interview comes first. The sequence is meant to guarantee an spcoa;-

emotionally “neutral” starting point on purely cognitive grounds, as a basis for more intimate conversations as typically arise in the social-emotional interview.

The difference between the two developmental interviews for the client is one of content, while for the coach it is one of methodology. The cognitive interview requires dialectical thinking and listening, while the social-emotional (‘subject-object’) interview requires developmental listening. (In expert uses of CDF, and in coaching benefiting from CDF training, these two abilities support each other and merge.)

### The Cognitive Interview

The cognitive interview is a tool for placing a client into one of four eras of cognitive development over the lifespan: *Common Sense, Understanding, Reason, and Practical Wisdom*. These eras, also referred to as **Orders of Mental Complexity**, (Jaques, 1998, 23, 69) differ in the attained level of systemic thinking, more precisely the degree to which purely logical thinking has been surpassed by a client in favour of a holistic and balanced view of reality.

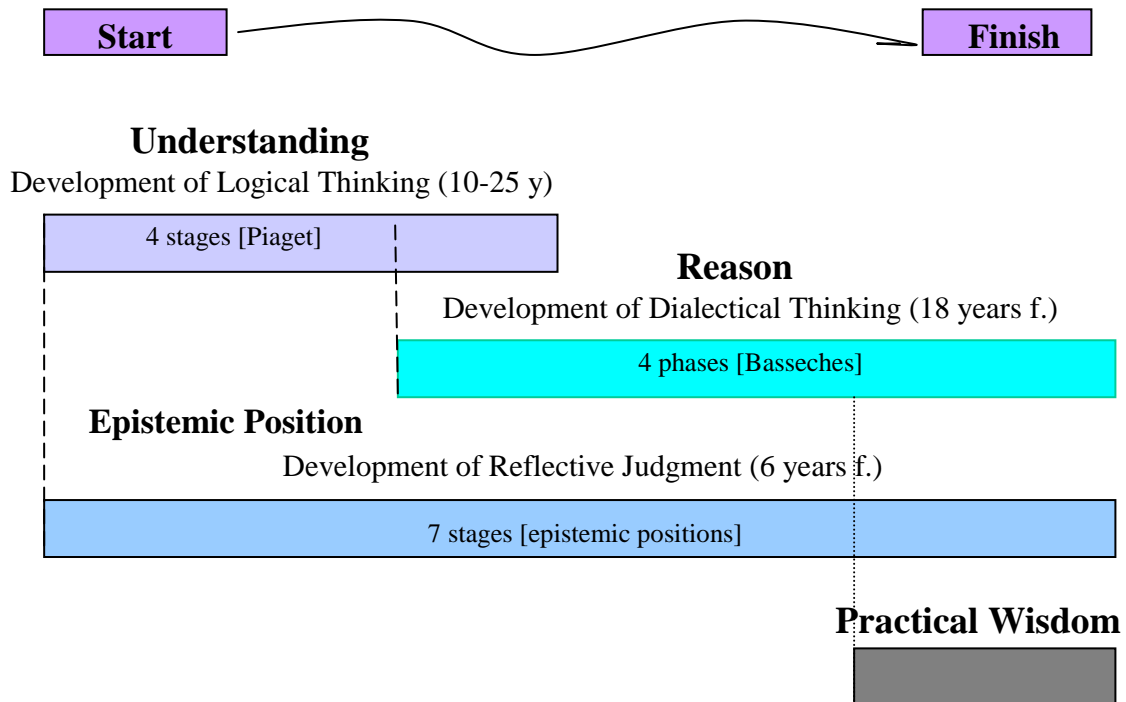
**Table 1**  
**Four Orders of Mental Complexity**

Orders of Mental Complexity		Description	Era of Cognitive Development
<b>Fourth Order</b>	Universal order	General principles and universals (Phronesis)	Practical Wisdom
<b>Third Order</b>	Conceptual abstract order	Conceptual abstractions (systemic dialectical thinking)	Reason
<b>Second Order</b>	Symbolic verbal order	Collections of intangible entities (formal logical thinking)	Understanding
<b>First Order</b>	Pre—verbal and concrete verbal orders	Here-and-now tangible entities	Common Sense

Since most professionals are delivering work in the Second and Third Orders of Mental Complexity, CDF focuses on the transition from the era of Understanding to that of Reason. This is the transition from formal logical to dialectical thinking. The cognitive interview gauges the client’s capability of dialectical thinking. This capability is gauged by taking note of the dialectical THOUGHT FORMS the client either is or is not using.

In some more detail, the cognitive interview is focused on a client’s professional agenda, and thus stays very close to the client’s place of work. Dwelling on content familiar to the client of largely emotionally neutral, it provides insight into the development of three interrelated but independent strands of cognitive development, namely, of *epistemic, logical, and dialectical cognition*, with emphasis on the latter two. As indicated in Figure 7, below, logical and dialectical thinking are a function of the development of *epistemic cognition*. This aspect of cognition regards the development of reflective judgment which increasingly strengthens a individual’s awareness of the limits of knowing and the uncertainty of truth (King and Kitchener, 1994).

**Figure 7**  
**Three Dimensions of Cognitive Development**



As shown in Figure 7, once logical thinking begins to develop from about age 10 onward, Common Sense is increasingly overtaken by logical thinking (Understanding) which, according to studies of Piaget and others, fully matures in early adulthood (age 25).

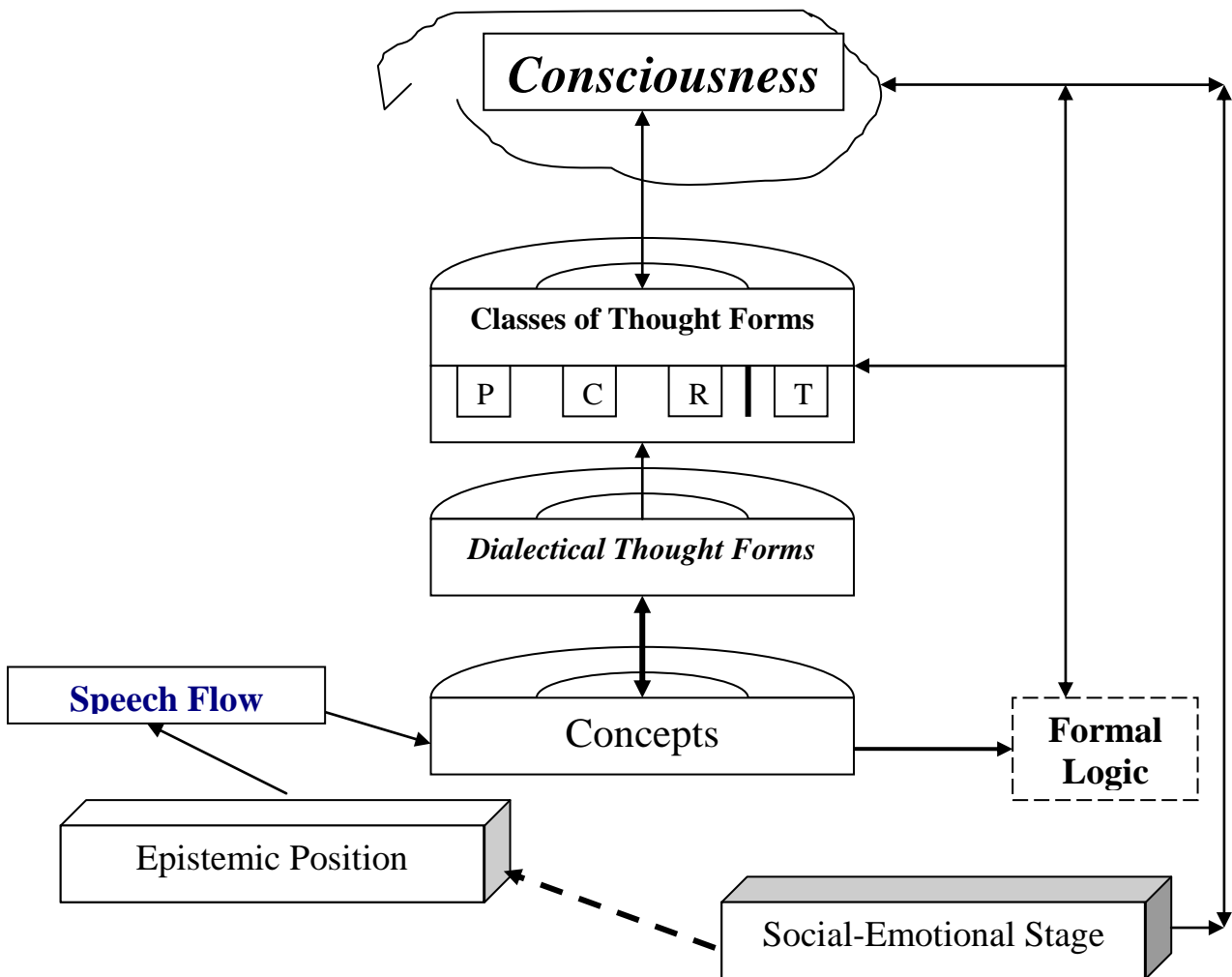
Importantly, in late adolescence (18 years f.) an individual's cognitive development undergoes momentous changes. We are witnessing an increasing overlap between the spurt toward fully mature "formal" logical thinking and the beginning of "dialectical" thinking. This overlap accounts for the revolutionary changes of mind and their attendant mental confusion during this time.

One can think of the transition from formal logical to systemic dialectical thinking as proposed by Figure 8, below. Essentially what happens is an expansion of the conceptual field, thus the mental space in which "thinking" occurs. This expansion manifests itself not only in the use of more highly abstract concepts, but an expanded foresight (time horizon) as well as the use of thought patterns called dialectical *thought forms*.

This development unfolds on the basis of a maturation of epistemic cognition which, in turn, is influenced by an individual's social-emotional development (of which below). As the individual loses ego-centricity through socialization, a better sense for the realities of life develops, such that the limitations of formal logical thinking begin to be seen. It then becomes the task of the young adult to find ways of conceptualising apparent paradoxes, contradictions, and untruths by using thought patterns of greater sophistication than formal logic allows for.

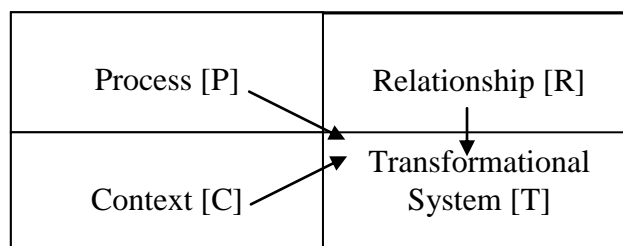
As shown in Figure 7, this leads an increase in focus of attention on dialectical thought patterns capturing aspects of Process (P), Context (C), Relationship (R) and transformational system (T).

**Figure 8**  
**Adults' use of dialectical thought forms in expanding**  
**their conceptual field otherwise limited by formal logic**



In order to capture the increasing flow of thought into dialectical thought forms (rather than pure formal logic), the cognitive interviewer is focused on four classes of dialectical thought forms. These classes are sets of tools representing the four quadrants of Dialectic, shown in Figure 9, below:

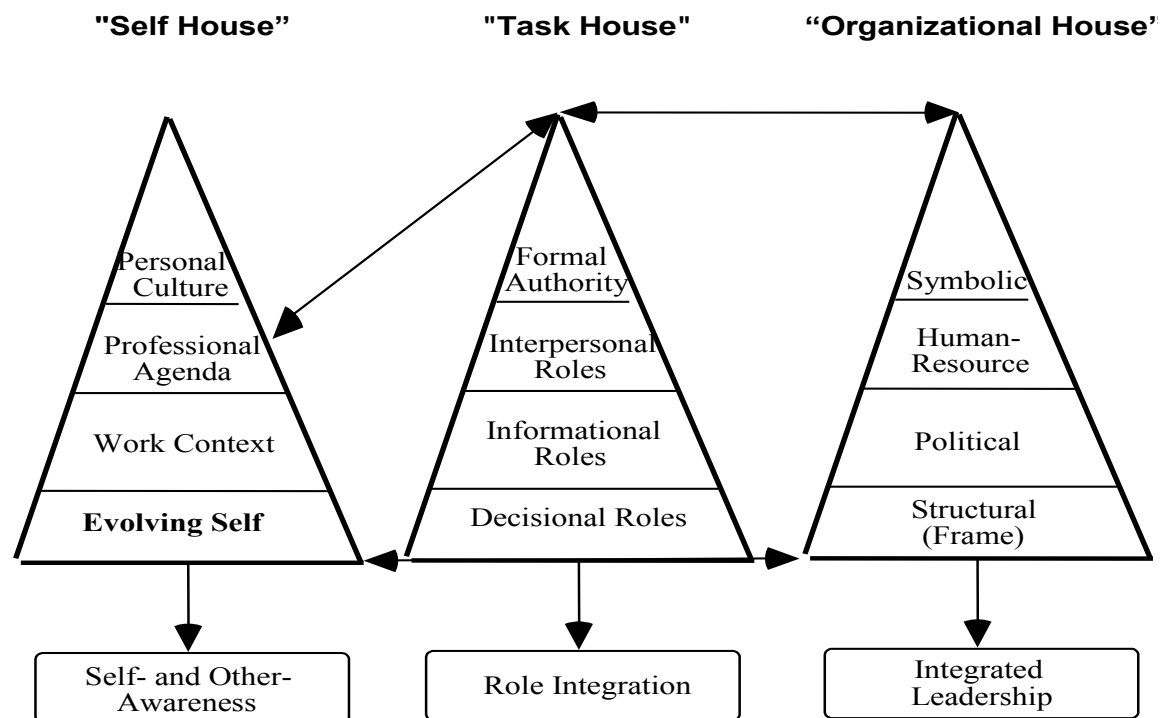
**Figure 9**  
**The Four Quadrants of Dialectic**



The interviewer uses her own dialectical thinking (as far as developed) to direct the client's attention to these four quadrants, an activity best called "dialectical listening." Such listening is sensitive to how social and psychological reality is constructed by a client.

More specifically, the interview moves the client through three related mental spaces, called *Houses*. As a consequence, the interviewer spends about 15-18 minutes in each of the Houses, shown in Figure 10.

**Figure 10**  
**The Three Houses of the Cognitive Interview**



Individually, the Houses are referred to as *Self House*, *Task House*, and *Organizational House*, respectively. Their structure derives from different, but related, theories, -- the first from Haber's theory of supervision (1996), the second from Mintzberg's theory of organisational structure (1989), and the third from Bolman and Deal's systemic view of organizations (1991).

In the context of Houses, the interviewer functions as a **neutral observer of the client's 'movements-in-thought' in and between the Houses** (Laske, 2007a). Each of the "floors" of the Houses provides the interviewer with pertinent questions based on which the client's phase of cognitive development can be gauged. In particular, it can be ascertained in how far the client is "stuck" in formal logical thinking, and in how far s(he) can develop systemic and holistic conceptions of her workplace and career.

Typically, the interview proceeds from the emotionally neutral Task House – where functions, roles, and tasks are topical – to the Organizational House where four different, interrelated, *mental frames* through which to view organizations, are in focus (Bolman & Deal, 1991). The interview concludes in the Self House where the client's professional agenda, work context, and personal values are central.

In this way, the cognitive interview progresses from a neutral domain to more person-focused, motivational issues that will be further deepened in the second, social-emotional interview.

The “floors” of the Houses are primarily of interest for the interviewer who uses them to generate *probe questions* as a function of the flow of the conversation. Here, as in the social-emotional interview, staying close to the client’s *train of thought* is crucially important. This is achieved by using three *guide questions* (one for each House) and as many *probe questions* as are needed to explore the depth of the client’s thinking in terms of dialectical thought forms.

The three guide questions are:

1. What is your present function and authority in the organization, and what roles and tasks follow from these?
2. How would you describe the way in which your work is embedded in the larger organization?
3. What would you say is your own professional agenda, and what motivation let’s you do this work?

Once interviews have been recorded and transcribed, they are evaluated based on the *Dialectical Thought Form Framework* (DTF, Laske 2008) initially developed by Basseches (1984) and put into the form of a scoring manual by Bopp (1981; revised by Laske, 2008). In accordance with the four quadrants of dialectic (Fig. 9), thought forms of each class (quadrant) occurring in client speech are weighted for explicitness from “weak” (1) to “strong” (3). Weightings are summarized at the end of the scoring process, and expressed in terms of percentages of the optimum attainable dialectical fluidity. (Since there are 28 thought forms optimally elaborated by the client at level 3, the optimum equals 84).

The following cognitive score indicates the proportional use has made of dialectical thought forms in each of four classes (quadrants):

[P=10, C=33, R=38; T=25 (%)].

This score above might be verbalized as follows:

According to the cognitive interview, the client’s current *dialectical thinking* is characterized by a reasonable level and balance of thought form use in quadrants Context and Relationship, while her sensitivity to Process is underdeveloped. As a result, the client’s overall **Systems Thinking Index** (STI) is (only) 25 (%) [of the optimum].

The meaning of this statement needs further illumination. As indicated by arrows in Fig. 9, *systemic thinking* properly thinking is possible only to the extent that the first three classes of thought forms (P, C, R) are coordinated. This coordination is reflected in transformational thought forms of class T, and is a late development of dialectical thinking. Therefore, the fourth component of the cognitive score, called the *Systems Thinking Index* (STI) is the indicator of the level of capability at which an individual thinks in terms of the quadrants of dialectic.

The practical implications of these findings are best understood in the ‘bigger picture’ of Table 2, below (Basseches, 1984, 1989a-b; Jaques, 1998, 136; Laske, 1999, 2008):

**Table 2**  
**Alignment of levels of work complexity (Strata)**  
**with levels of cognitive and social-emotional development**

<b>Systems Thinking Index (CD) [Associated Epistemic Position]</b>	<b>Strata* [Levels of Work Complexity &amp; Associated Responsibility]</b>	<b>Social-Emotional Stage (ED)</b>
> 60 [7]	VIII	5
> 50 <= 60 [7]	VII	5/4 – 5(4)
> 40 <= 50 [6]	VI	4(5) – 4/5
> 30 <= 40 [6]	V	4
> 20 <= 30 [5]	IV	4/3 – 4(3)
> 10 <= 20 [5]	III	3(4) – 3/4
<= 10 [4]	II	3
< 10 [4]	I	2/3 – 3(2)

\* Typical organizational job titles are, from top to bottom: Board Member, CEO, EVP, VP, General Manager, Unit Manager, First Line Manager, Operator/Staff.

As shown in the table, levels of work complexity (Jaques's Strata) are associated with different levels of cognitive and social-emotional development. The higher the level, the higher is the role accountability that can be entrusted to an individual.

In Table 2, **cognitive scores in column 1** (Basseches, 1984; Laske 1999) **are hypothetically aligned with social-emotional levels in column 3** (Laske, 2006, 2008). As indicated in Figure 8, above, **social-emotional levels, in turn, are a function of epistemic positions** ([in bold]; King & Kitchener, 1994). On account of this alignment, consultants can give effective feedback on gaps between cognitive and social-emotional development in an individual, not simply their "competence" or "talent."

On account of the alignment of Strata (level of work complexity) with developmental levels, the score

[P=10, C=33, R=38; T=25 (%)].

places the client in a role at Stratum IV of work complexity.

Should a client presently work on tasks commensurate with Stratum III [Unit Manager], his talent is being wasted since he could more appropriately be assigned to Stratum IV [General Manager]. Should the client presently do work at Stratum V [VP], his cognitive capability and foresight are being overtaxed.

Also, depending on the client's social-emotional score (see below), there might exist a gap between the two strands of the client's potential capability (ED and CD). In Jaques's terms, any such gap would point to the fact that the client's organization lacks REQUISITE ORGANIZATION (Jaques, 1998). Where that occurs, the two architectures an organization is based on – its role architecture and its capability



architecture – are out of sync. In short, by determining a client's developmental scores, the process consultant also diagnoses an organization's level of requisite organization.

### Effectiveness of Work and Time Horizon

The reader may wonder in what way dialectical thinking influences a client's work effectiveness and, even more so, the client's *developmental potential*. As shown in Section I, the client's current potential is defined by CD (cognitive development) alone. Therefore, the client's *Systems Thinking Index* (25%) is a good indication of what the client COULD DO if s(he) were given the opportunity or challenge to use all available cognitive resources.

An informal way of grasping the relevance of dialectic in this context is to consider that thinking occurs in a *mental space*, and that the size of this space defines the foresight an individual can be credited with, as well as the complexity of thought forms she can manage. As shown in Table 2, the difference between functioning in the second and third order of mental complexity lies in the size of mental space. This aspect was addressed by Jaques as **time horizon** (Jaques, 1998, Glossary).

If we define work, as Jaques does, as the exercise of reflective judgment and discretion in the pursuit of a goal within defined time limits, then time horizon is the *longest time-span of discretion an individual could handle in pursuing a goal path*. The longer the time horizon, the better can the individual cope with the unceasing change that occurs over time and the unforeseen obstacles to goal completion coming up along the way. Time horizon is also reflected in the responsibility felt by the individual (Jaques, 1998, 24):

As time-span (of a task) increases, the feeling of weight of responsibility increases, and the greater is the complexity of mental processing you need in order to cope. ... In other words, the greater your [current] potential capability, the greater your working outreach in time – the further into the future you can not only plan, but can carry those plans through to the point of realization.

To conclude, the cognitive interview explores to what extent individuals search for greater depth and totality “to see the reason, explanation, ground, or truth of being at the next level (of complexity) down” (Bhaskar, 1993, 97). They are able to “climb up” the ladder of Strata because of their cognitive development and increasing grasp of dialectical thinking. Proceeding along empirical lines, the interview relies on the cognitive rhythmic of movement within and between four *classes of thought forms* to calibrate empirically adults' depth of dialectical thinking, thereby assessing what level of work complexity they can optimally function on at a given point in time.

### The Social-Emotional Interview

As explained above, cognitive and social-emotional levels are inseparable from an individual's knowledge of limits of knowing and uncertainty of truth, or *epistemic positions*. Epistemic positions embody an attitude towards the world, a specific degree of openness to it. They have to do how **abstractions** are not only “understood” but “lived” (King and Kitchener, 1994). This notion is further detailed in Table 3, below.

As seen, the **cognitive logic of social-emotional development** manifests in how Self (S) and Other (O) relate in consciousness by way of an individual's feelings and actions. Self and Other are not “just thoughts,” but stark realities in everybody's life.

(Other is anything “not me.”) In this regard, Descartes’s dictum “cogito ergo sum” is very apt.

**Table 3**  
**Equivalence of social-emotional stage**  
**with epistemic position and developmental phase of dialectical thinking**

<b>Social Emotional Stage</b>	<b>Relationship of ‘Self’ (S) to ‘Other’ (O)</b>	<b>Epistemic Position Judgment</b> (Stage of Reflective Judgment and associated phase of dialectical thinking))
1	S is merged with O.	1
2	S and O are opposites, with O subordinate to S (and an instrument for S).	2
3	S internalises O, becoming defined by O.	3-4 [phase 1]
4	S experiences itself as a system related to O as a different, ‘other’ system.	5 [phase 2]
5	S knows to be incomplete without O, and is dialectically linked to O with which it shares common ground.	6-7 [phases 3-4]

As indicated, in epistemic position 1 (childhood to early adolescence), Self and Other are merged. As a result, a one--dimensional view of what is ME and NOT-ME is held which is starkly ego-centric. This cognitive state of affairs is not greatly improved when moving to stage 2, where Self and Other become opposites, in the sense that I am bent on knowing you, but only to the extent that I “think” you can serve as an instrument for my rescue when needed.

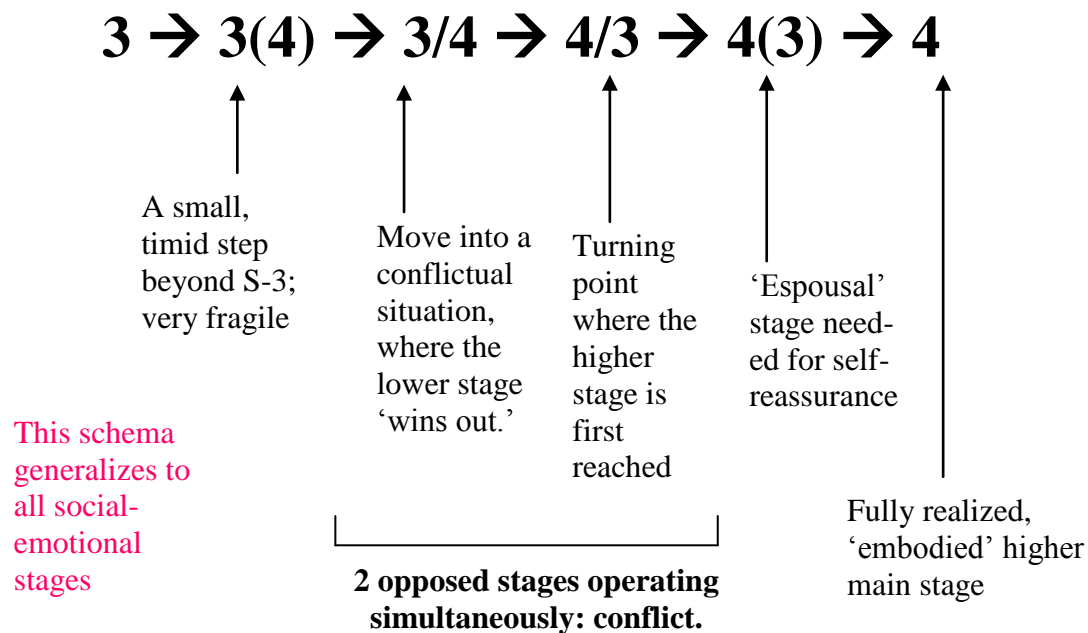
This for society unacceptable state of affairs only begins to improve when I learn to be influenced by your thoughts and feelings (thereby “internalising” Other). At that point, my *two-world hypothesis of social reality* (“I am me, and you are you”) breaks down. I am thereby returning to my initial mental state of oneness with you, only at a higher level, of other-dependence (stage 3) where I define myself entirely by your expectations (with all of the guilt caused by failing you that may arise).

At this other-dependent level, I am still largely ignorant of who I uniquely and authentically am, but at least I am approaching a “post-conventional” state where I can finally sort out my *internalised others* -- those voices I mistake for my own while they are only reflections of my upbringing and social environment. By doing so, I learn to march to my own drummer.

I am learning to manage myself as the *author* of my own life, paying the price for being different from others, and somewhat more lonely than I was previously. I am now inhabiting a self-made cage of my own integrity, unable to stand outside of it in a critical way. In this predicament, it is becoming clear to me (the hard way) that I may be getting developmentally stuck if I cannot acknowledge you as an agency in my own development. My respect broadens to compassion beyond other-dependence. But I have to break my own shackles first, and without any outside help.

**This is the stuff of the social-emotional interview.** The interview is a procedure for eliciting evidence about individuals' "feeling and thinking generator" (Lahey et al., 1988) by way of scrutinizing their speech flow. Research has shown that this generator is subject to constant and discontinuous change over the human lifespan.

**Figure 11**  
**Intermediate social-emotional stages notated**  
**(adapted Lahey et al., 1988)**



As shown in Fig. 11 (using the transition from social-emotional stage 3 to 4 as an example), humans' developmental tendency is to inexorably embrace a new world view. The new frame of reference *cancel*s, *include*s and *transcend*s the previous one. Moving to a higher vantage point, they find themselves in conflict about whether to act according to their present, reasonably comfortable, or the next higher, very uncomfortable, stage of meaning making (e.g., 3/4 vs. 4/3). Moving through that conflict, individuals reach a turning point where the higher vantage point begins to dominate their decision making. They are then on their way to becoming the author of their life.

Importantly, nobody makes meaning from a single stage. Individuals are typically 'distributed' over several stages in various proportions. We all live at a central stage or *Centre of Gravity*. This stage is associated with more or less pronounced ways of meaning making at lower and higher stages. **The lower stage(s) signal developmental risk (of regression), the higher ones, developmental potential (for less ego-centric living).**

#### Interview procedure

In order to gain clarity about what is a client's present centre of gravity, the CDF interviewer adopts the role of a pure listener. This becomes possible by way of using ten verbal *prompts* providing structure for the interview. The structure helps both interviewer and interviewee to focus attention. The table below lists the 10 verbal prompts used in CDF.

**Table 4**  
**Interview prompts in the social-emotional interview**  
 [adapted from Lahey et al., 1988, 428]

<b>Success:</b>	Can you think of a time in your recent work where you felt somewhat jubilant, feeling you had achieved something that was difficult for you, or that you had overcome something?
<b>Changed:</b>	If you think of how you have changed over the last year or two, or even months, regarding how you conduct your life, what comes to mind?
<b>Control:</b>	Can you think of a moment where you became highly aware that you were losing control, or felt the opportunity of seizing control, what occurs to you?
<b>Limits:</b>	If you think of where you are aware of limits, either in your life and/or work, something you wish you could do but feel excluded from, what comes up for you?
<b>Outside of:</b>	As you look around in the workplace or the family, where do you see yourself as not fitting in, being an outsider, and how does that make you feel?
<b>Frustration:</b>	If you think of a time where you were in a situation not of your choosing, where you felt totally frustrated, but unable to do something about it, what emerges?
<b>Important to me:</b>	If I were to ask you 'what do you care about most deeply,' 'what matters most,' are there one or two things that come to mind?
<b>Sharing:</b>	If you think about your need of sharing your thoughts and feelings with others, either at work or at home, how, would you say, that plays out?
<b>Strong stand/conviction:</b>	If you were to think of times where you had to take a stand, and be true to your convictions, what comes to mind?
<b>Taking risks:</b>	When thinking of recent situations where you felt you were taking, or had to take, risks, either to accomplish or fend off something, what comes to mind?

As seen, all prompts are asking the interviewee to visit his or her memory store and use free association, speaking freely about WHAT COMES TO MIND when s(he) remembers a certain life or professional situation. Prompts are selected exclusively by the interviewee who at any time can refuse to elaborate and choose another prompt. In most cases, no more than four or five prompts are used in an expertly guided interview.

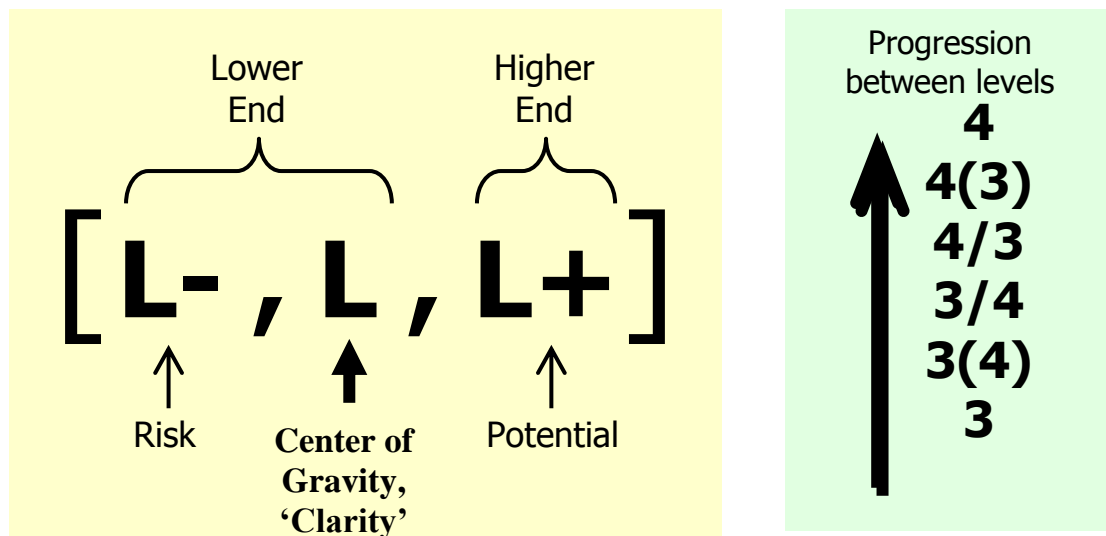
The prompts inaugurate a kind of *projective test* in which the client "projects" him- or herself into a verbal token, thereby providing authentic developmental information. The prompts not only structure the overall course of the interview but the interviewer's finer probing. Based on the prompts, the interviewer tests his or her hypothesis as to the level of the client's present stage of meaning making. In this way, the interview can "stand in the client's shoes". Foremost in this process is *developmental listening*, an art and science in itself schooled at IDM.

Once the interview has been recorded and transcribed, it is evaluated systematically. The focus in scoring the interview is threefold:

1. the client's present *centre of gravity* ("main stage")
2. the *range of stages* the client is 'distributed over'
3. the *proportion of developmental risk and potential*, indicated by the client's meaning making at lower or higher stages than the centre of gravity.

In order to understand this better, we need to review the underlying theoretical framework, following social-emotional notation.

**Figure 12**  
**The Risk-Clarity-Potential Index (RCP)**



The notation used in the figure conveys the oscillations of consciousness around a centre of gravity occurring. By following Laske's refinement of Lahey's social-emotional scoring (Lahey et al., 1988, Laske, 1999a), one can quantify these oscillations, showing their proportional size in regard to the centre of gravity (L) they are associated with. In this way, one arrives at a weighted score. The score makes explicit the developmental *Risk* of regression to the lower stage (or stages), and the *Potential* for advancing to the next higher stage(s).

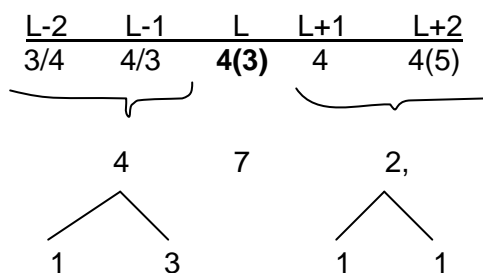
For instance, a social-emotional interview may yield a score of **4(3) {4:7:2}**. This score says that the client in question presently resides at a centre of gravity just below self-authoring (L-4(3)). To a smaller extent than his meaning making at the centre of gravity, the client is also subject to acting from a lower stage or stages at a proportion of 4:7, being simultaneously poised to move to a higher stage – in this case, L-4 – in a proportion of 2:7. Developmental risk is thus higher than potential, and the coach will want to take this finding into account when coaching plan and coaching strategy are decided upon, also consulting the cognitive findings about STI.

In general terms, the following information has been obtained:

My client's present meaning making is focused around the espousal of being a self-authoring person, which is both a pretence and a way for the client "to talk herself into" being the author of her life. As her RCP shows, she is rather strongly ensconced in her present centre of gravity {7}. Given that her developmental profile is more highly weighted toward risk than potential {4>2}, coaching should be focused on diminishing her developmental risk rather than boosting her potential (which is likely to get realized once risk diminishes).

The assumption made above is that the centre of gravity is associated with a single lower and a single higher stage. However, this might not always be the case. An individual may be distributed over a larger range of stages, as is shown in Fig. 13, below.

**Figure 13**  
**Internal structure of the Risk-Clarity-Potential Index (RCP)**



In this example, the compact RCP notation is the same as before, but the actual result of social-emotional scoring it summarizes is different. Here, the client's frame of reference is characterized by the fact that she is distributed over five, not only three, developmental stages, -- two lower and two higher stages associated with her centre of gravity. (This may make her less predictable to others, and even may suggest that she is 'confused' and has 'little self-understanding.')

**Accordingly, a different coaching strategy is required.**

The above notation is best understood in terms of how the social-emotional interview is evaluated. As in the cognitive interview, social-emotional scoring is based on the fundamental distinction between 'content' and 'structure.' *Content* is the story told by the client, while *Structure* is the social-emotional stage from which the client tells the story (focused around prompts).

A social-emotional interview of one hour length typically yields between 12 and 18 *structurally relevant* passages. In a special coding sheet, the assessor justifies his scoring of each passage. No assessor can work on his own before he has passed IDM Program One, and submitted a case study to document his scoring expertise. His results are checked for inter-rater reliability by the IDM Director of Education, just as is the case of scoring the cognitive interview. Independent scoring requires completing IDM Program Two, that is, delivering three additional case studies.

## **Mentoring Behavioral Coaches Using CDF**

### The Need-Press Questionnaire

By administering two developmental interviews, the consultant has gained insight into the client's current (CD) and emergent (ED) *potential* capability: She now has evidence of the client's developmental whereabouts and resources, and is thus able to situate the client within the landscape of mental growth. Specifically, a client can be positioned within a particular *Order of Mental Complexity* (CD) and *Order of Consciousness* (ED) both of which determine manifest behaviour. However, the consultant is still not sufficiently informed of the client's *current applied capability* (including her Capacity), despite the hearsay from the client and third parties. This is not good enough for evidence based coaching.

The missing information is exactly what M. Aderman's *Need/Press Questionnaire* (1967) provides the consultant with. Culled from H. Murray's research (1938, 1948), the questionnaire informs the consultant about the client's *psychogenic needs* in the workplace, as well as the self-imposed and organizational *pressures* ('*ideal*' and '*actual*' *press*) that hinder these needs from being fulfilled in optimal work experiences. As indicated in Figure 4, above, the client's applied capability (performance) is largely determined by his capacity profile (psychological balance).

In my discussion of the Need/Press questionnaire, below, I will review both the nature and use of behavioural data, based on an example. In particular, I will comment on how to use Need/Press data in mentoring behavioural coaches. In my experience, only the developmentally most highly developed coaches ask for being assessed through CDF or an equivalent methodology. I will later explain why the fact that such coaches are in the minority constitutes a pervasive *black hole* in present coaching and coach education.

*Presenting Problem:*

Sarah is a business coach with a thriving practice in which she focuses on higher-level executives of the banking industry. She has a strong background in Organizational Development as well as strong spiritual interests. Sarah asked to be mentored in order to become more effective with two particularly 'difficult' clients. One of them had conveyed to her that he felt she was, at times, 'pretty opinionated,' while Sarah perceived herself only as having strong personal convictions. The second client commented about her to peers that because of her idiosyncratic interpretations of what he brought to sessions he often did not feel 'understood' by her. Since Sarah has high opinions of her coaching expertise, and high standards of professional excellence, she was scandalized and shaken by her clients' reactions. She wondered whether there was something about herself that she did not entirely understand, some bottlenecks that it would be important for her to find out about.

From the vantage point of the questionnaire, as consultants we look at clients' presenting problem as a description of *symptoms*. In the questionnaire, such symptoms take the form of expression of needs, on one hand, and of self-imposed or external pressures (P), on the other. In the questionnaire, both Need and Press variables are divided into three interrelated clusters:

- self conduct
- approach to tasks
- interpersonal perspective ('emotional intelligence').

Each of the clusters is represented by six variables, laid out in terms of a Likert scale from 0 to 9. Values that fall at either end of the scale are considered behavioural extremes (thus primary coaching issues), with acceptable values falling somewhere in the middle, around "managerial norms" accumulated over many years of use.

The scale equally measures the "press side" of an individual's profile, distinguishing between *ideal* (Superego) and *actual* (social experience) press. Ideal press outcomes speak to the professional ideals of the client (her professional aspirations), actual press outcomes to how a client experiences an organization's cultural climate. (Administered to a group of employees, actual press outcomes deliver a corporate culture analysis.)

All 18 NP variables form a system, in the sense that challenges and strengths exacerbate and mitigate each other. Given that the extreme values of the scale pinpoint extreme, and values in the middle represent socially acceptable, values, one can say that NP focuses on the overall **balance** between needs and pressures an individual's work is based on. This is **in harmony with developmental scores which likewise focus on equilibrium.**

In terms of the discussion of CDF's theoretical model in Section I, clearly the Need/Press questionnaire determines a good portion of an individual's currently applied capability:

$$\text{Current Applied Capability} = f(\text{CD} * \text{I} * \text{K/S} * (-\text{T})).$$

Especially 'interest in the work' (I) and presence or absence of clinical symptoms (-T) get scrutinized.

In order to simplify the presentation, in this sketch of coach Sarah's data I will restrict myself to her behavioural challenges rather than also delving into compensating strengths.

**Table 5**  
**Sarah's Psychogenic Needs**

<b>NP Variables</b>	<b>Behavioral Imbalances</b>
<i>Self Conduct</i>	
1. Flexibility	Ruthless change agent
2. Need for power	Blurring of leadership skills and ego-needs
<i>Task Approach</i>	
3. Resourcefulness*	Need to win every battle; avoids negative experiences, impulsivity
4. Endurance	Weak engagement with tasks not of her own making
5. Quality of Planning	Poor use of cognitive skills, priorities emerging from own interests
6. Need to self-protect	Strong need to justify, be right, rationalize
<i>Emotional intelligence</i>	
7. Empathy	Limited ability to empathize; limited understanding of own motivation and impact on others
8. Helpfulness	Exaggerated need to 'help' (a hidden cry for help)
9. Bias	Highly discriminative as to whom to relate to; questioning others' motives.

\* Literally "counter-action," or need to counter-act experienced pressures.

As seen, Sarah encounters challenges to her psychological balance in all three clusters, most notably in how she approaches her tasks, but also in her self conduct and interpersonal perspective-taking. Given that these challenges are based on unconscious strivings, it is clear that her need to self-protect (#6) and her limited understanding of her own motivation and impact on others (#7) will make many of these challenges invisible to her.

Seeing her challenges with clarity is not helped either by her blurring of leadership skills and ego-needs (#2), and her need to win every battle and avoid negatives experiences (#3). All of these challenges are easily buried underneath an exaggerated need to help others which, in psychogenic terms, is essentially a loud cry for help.

Because Sarah models her clients according to her own developmental level (as all coaches by necessity do), she, the ruthless change agent (#1), has as little empathy for them as she has for herself. She therefore often comes across as aloof and undemonstrative, with a tendency to question others' motive much like her own (#9).



The above sketch of Sarah's psychometric findings can be understood and acted upon *professionally* only if her developmental profile is simultaneously taken into account.

**Table 6.**  
**Sarah's behavioural-developmental profile**

<b>Social-emotional Score (ED)</b> <b>[most generic]</b>	<b>Cognitive Score (CD)</b> <b>[more highly individuated]</b>	<b>Capacity (NP)</b> <b>[unique to Sarah]</b>
4 {9:7:4}  Alternative notation: 4(3) {3:6:11}	[34, 25, 30; 11 (%)];  Epistemic position=5	<i>Energy sink: moderate (30)</i> <i>Frustration: low (15)</i> <i>Overall efficiency: close to low (38)</i> <i>Attunement: good understanding of organizational functioning (29)</i> <i>Distortion of org. experiences: moderate (25)</i>

As seen, Sarah's specific challenges play out in a risk-laden social-emotional constellation and a cognitive profile characterized by a low Systems Thinking Index (11%). Her present ability to act as the author of her life (L-4) is compromised by great risk of regression to lower levels {9} and considerable espousal {4}. When we rewrite her stage to the stage below her present centre of gravity, namely L-4(3), to take a different view at her profile, her risk predictably diminishes and her potential shoots up, of course, because we are now calibrating her profile equivalently from the lower level.)

In the psychologically uncomfortable position to which she is presently subject, Sarah's psychogenic need constellation gets charged by additional conflict and frustration, especially since she is bent on being in control of herself as well as others (her 'helpfulness' notwithstanding). It is therefore understandable that she would be scandalized by insinuations that she is "opinionated" regarding coaching clients, and to learn that she often comes across to them as distant and hard to follow.

Given the developmental pickle Sarah is presently in, it is reassuring (at least to a developmental coach) that she has a strong potential for moving to a fully self-authoring position within 1-3 years (or so), and also, that in her thinking, she is well equilibrated in focusing attention on Process, Context, and Relationship with nearly equal strength (column 2).

What may hold her back is her very low *Systems Thinking Index* (11%) which shows pervasive absence of systemic thinking. This means that while she is capable of bringing to light what is in contrast, conflict, and generally incomplete or 'absent' from actual situations (P), and can generally see a situation's big picture (C) and what holds its component together (R), she is not very adept at combining thought forms from the different quadrants of dialectic.

As a result, her systemic view of situations, and of herself as part of situations, is underdeveloped (as her presenting problem shows). In terms of her cognitive profile, she has largely remained an orthodox logical thinker in the second Order of Mental Complexity (Stratum IV) while having acquired the social-emotional status of a person at Stratum V in the third Order of Mental Complexity.

This is more clearly shown in Table 7, below (see also Table 2, above).

**Table 7**  
**Sarah's CDF profile**  
**viewed in the organizational context of Strata**

<b>Systems Thinking Index (CD)</b> [Associated Epistemic Position]	<b>Strata*</b> [Levels of Work Complexity & Associated Responsibility]	<b>Social-Emotional Stage (ED)</b>
> 30 <= 40 [6]	V	4
> 20 <= 30 [5]	IV	4/3 – 4(3)
> 10 <= 20 [5]	III	3(4) – 3/4

\* Epistemic position [5] corresponds to phase 2 of dialectical thinking, where a thinker fails to coordinate thought forms, thus hindered from achieving an STI > 30.

When inspecting Sarah's potential for mental growth in terms of levels of work complexity and organizational accountability (Jaques, 1998, 69), we discover that she is presently positioned at Stratum III (STI=11%, between 10-20), while social-emotionally she is poised to move to stratum V where self-authoring is required. **It is developmental gaps such as Sarah's that are the root of most coaching and mentoring problems.**

### **CDF-Based Coaching**

#### The Black Hole of Coaching

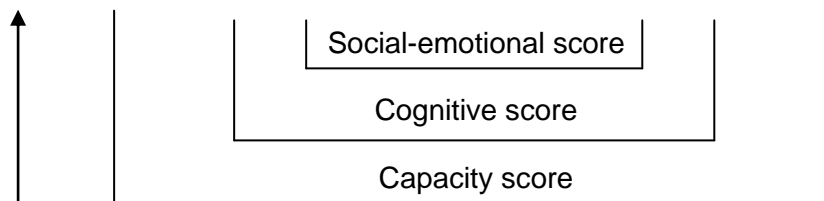
Having now acquired a reasonably good grasp of how to use CDF with coaches, the reader will realize that there is presently a **big black hole in the center of coaching practice and the coaching literature**. Pervading all extant coaching approaches, evidence-based or not, this hole is due to the **absence of ethical and pedagogical demands for coaches to know and acknowledge their own developmental profile** in relationship to clients.

At issue is the coaching culture as a whole as well as its research organs, not only a personal or pedagogical issue. Since statistically most coaches practice from level L-3, of other-dependence (rather than self-authoring, or L-4), the "coaching community" assumes that "coach and client speak the same language and see the world from the same vantage point" (O'Connor, 2007 [IDM Newsletter, ISSN 1559-7512, May 2007]). At the same time, coaches voice loud espousal of being stationed at a higher social-emotional level (L-4 of self-authoring). Coach "training" opportunities vastly outnumber those for coach education in which developmental thinking could be taught and expertly applied. As a result, coaching is presently restricted, at least in mandate, to what Jaques calls *current applied capability* ('performance'), and talk about potential (which is never assessed) remains just talk.

When considering the multiplicity of perspectives built into CDF, readers will probably agree that a *more adventurous mandate* than presently exists in the other-dependent coaching community can be envisioned. To this end, one can take one's cues from **the different ontological levels implicit in the CDF scores:**

#### The stratification of CDF scores

**Figure 14**  
**Hierarchy of degrees of generality**  
**of CDF scores**



In the figure, the different half-squares indicate different layers of social human nature (Bhaskar, 1993, 160) as expressed by CDF scores. On the uppermost, social-emotional level, we are dealing with “core universal human nature” (Bhaskar, 1993, 267), in the sense that every human being, in whatever culture, lawfully passes through the developmental landscape outlined by 20 or so different stages of social-emotional meaning making. As a result, the ED score is the *most generic* of the three scores, given that potentially millions of people can share a particular stage.

On the next level down, that of cognitive scores (CD), a greater degree of individuation and variety pertains. Here, the many possible weightings of uses of dialectical thought forms from four classes (quadrants) lead to assessment outcomes more highly unique to the individual than holds for the social-emotional score. As a result, one and the same level of meaning making can be associated (and is empirically found to be associated) with many different rhythmicitys of thinking, or ways of making cognitive sense of the world.

On the last, NP, level, finally, we encounter the *concrete singularity of the individual* (Bhaskar, 1993, 267), infused as it is by the more universal social-emotional and cognitive determinants that define a social being. Since the three CDF scores form, and point to, a *system in unceasing transformation*, namely the person, it is to be expected that there are multifarious inter-relationships between the scores, and that understanding these inter-relationships is of great help to process consultants and coaches.

The CDF profile does justice to the fact that any singular individual, paradoxically, owes its singularity to the universality shared with other human beings. **Being dialectically aware of this concrete merger of the individual and the universal in the person is the hallmark of professional developmental coaching.**

In light of Fig. 14, we can make a clear distinction between the *false* behavioural identity of coach and client professed by the other-dependent mind of the “coaching community,” on one hand, and the *core identity* of human nature recognizable in individuals’ social-emotional level, on the other. While the behavioural coach mistakes the concrete singularity of individuals (corresponding to the NP profile) for being the common ground on which to join clients, this singularity is exactly what is the least shared among the two parties. The NP profile is, rather, **a legacy involuntarily brought into adulthood by the client from an earlier, pre-adult, life** which s(he) is trying to “live with” as best s(he) can, and the same holds for the coach.

However, this fact is hidden from view for those who do not think developmentally, since they do not grasp what is truly universal in individuals, namely the (hidden)

cognitive and social-emotional dimensions that are thoroughly intermingled with behavioural idiosyncrasy, and this idiosyncrasy requires dialectical thinking to be analysed and understood.

#### Limitations of behavioural coaching

The limitations of other-dependent thinking in and about coaching practically show up in the notion of most behavioural coaches, that understanding adult development is a mere skills issue. The adult-developmental issue is seen as simply a matter of adding another tool to one's repertory for entering a client's world.

This view both misconstrues the pervasive influence of developmental level on the professional self of the coach, and erects a flimsy barrier between the two parties to the coaching that is unsupported by developmental evidence. **The un-dialectical unity of coach and client -- 'we speak the same language' -- is methodologically as false as the un-dialectical separation of the two parties ('I am the coach, and you, the client.')**

#### Contribution of CDF Scores to Coaching Practice

In light of the above, learning CDF accomplishes more than acquiring new skills. What is learned is that the social world is stratified in social-emotional and cognitive terms, and that coaching which disregards this fact is one-sided, whether it is "life coaching" or "business coaching." The commonality of human nature, to be engaged in life span development that can be precisely assessed, cuts through all carefully delimited coaching disciplines, trainings, and ideologies.

More specifically, the contribution to coaching made by the three different types of scores discussed in this paper is quite different, as outlined below.

- Social-emotional scores predominantly situate the client – as well as the coach – in the realm of mental growth, where questions about the *size of person*, and thus the *size of role* a person can fill are central. Pragmatically speaking, these scores embody the key for understanding where the client's goals come from, why they are presently what they are, and how to read what the client has to say "between the lines".
- Cognitive scores also situate the client, in particular in different Strata (levels of work complexity) of the second or third Order of Mental Complexity which indicate different levels of accountability and fit with organizational role. These scores shed light on clients' current potential capability, a measure of how deep an understanding and systemic reason they can be credited with. Pragmatically, these scores embody the key for understanding how a client pursues goals, and what goals are never set since they remain out of reach for the client.
- Need/Press scores do not so much situate as characterize the client as how s(he) presently copes with his or her pre-adult legacy that determines self conduct, approach to tasks, and interpersonal perspective (emotional intelligence). These scores provide knowledge of the client's actual behavioural bottlenecks as well as strengths at work (beyond the client's own knowing), by highlighting the unconscious psychogenic needs the client attempts to satisfy through work or by avoiding work. Therefore, they spell out the client's overall work efficiency as determined by existing energy sinks and frustration.
- In combination with each other, the three sets of CDF scores make visible the universal nature of the client as a social being as it appears filtered through his peculiar capacity profile and becomes manifest in his applied capability.

As these comments make clear, learning and using CDF is not for everyone. It is an assessment methodology that directly feeds off developmental research, and therefore requires a taste and ability for such research. This ability goes hand in hand with appropriate levels of social-emotional and cognitive development. Thus, the ability to acknowledge, and thrive based on the professional challenge posted by CDF is a matter of the consultant's own developmental profile.

### **Summary**

I have outlined a psychometric tool for use in developmental process consultation including coaching. The tool is based on cutting-edge research in adult development over the lifespan.

In presenting CDF, I have outlined the three dimensions of the instrument (CD, ED, NP) and their intricate interrelationship. I have discussed both the theoretical underpinnings and the practical applications of the instrument, and have given examples of how CDF is used, and the kind of insight into the client it enables a consultant or coach to acquire.

The examples given were meant to show that it would be a true advance in coaching if behavioural and developmental coaching would merge, both in pedagogy and practice. Failing that, it would seem to be difficult to escape what I have called the **BLACK HOLE OF COACHING AND COACHING RESEARCH**, which is due to the neglect of developmental research on the part of the coaching community. Thus, it stands to reason that the coaching field has some catching up to do if it wants to become a true profession.

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### Short Bio

Otto Laske is a clinical-developmental psychologist with roots in the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory as well as the Kohlberg School of research in adult development. He is also a composer and lyric poet, and has a legacy of writings in cognitive musicology, a discipline he founded in the 1970s. Laske is the Founder and Director of the *Interdevelopmental Institute* (IDM) where he teaches CDF ([www.interdevelopmentals.org](http://www.interdevelopmentals.org)). In the last 15 years, Otto has concentrated his philosophical and psychological insights on creating a *theory of work and of process consultation* based on developmental theory. He can be reached at [www.interdevelopmentals.org](http://www.interdevelopmentals.org).