

## **CDF: A Methodology for a Developmentally Aware Society and an Introduction to Volume 1 of Measuring Hidden Dimensions**

Otto Laske, Interdevelopmental Institute, 2015

### Abstract

This article introduces to the *Constructive Developmental Framework* (CDF), addressing those readers who want to learn to use the methodology. CDF is seen as a comprehensive framework for consulting and coaching, much like NLP, but on a higher level of consciousness. Its main intellectual strength lies in establishing a methodology for the deconstruction, through dialog, of less developed thinking and meaning making, for the sake of client benefit. Viewed more broadly, CDF is a framework for “coaching for society” that can lift individuals’ and teams’ developmental level.

The paper consists of 6 sections:

1. Introduction
2. The social-emotional component
3. The cognitive component
4. The psychological component
5. Bringing all CDF components together
6. Conclusion

### Introduction

Fifteen years ago, I brought together, for the first time, insights into the two main strands of adult development with psychological insight into what I refer to as individuals’ “Need-Press Profile”. To my astonishment, nobody had done so before. I found it hard to understand how one could achieve a comprehensive picture of oneself or of clients without what, since 1975, developmental sciences have taught us. It seems that there are many internal barriers adults have to cross before getting interested in “where they are developmentally”. What is missing in society is a longitudinal grasp of the development of human consciousness over individuals’ life span. This lack causes un-estimable waste of human resources that are either neglected or denied their full unfolding.

The notion that human beings are unceasingly “under development” and remain so until the end of their life is a scientific achievement of the first order for which we have had to wait thousands of years. This notion can be visually expressed in the form below:

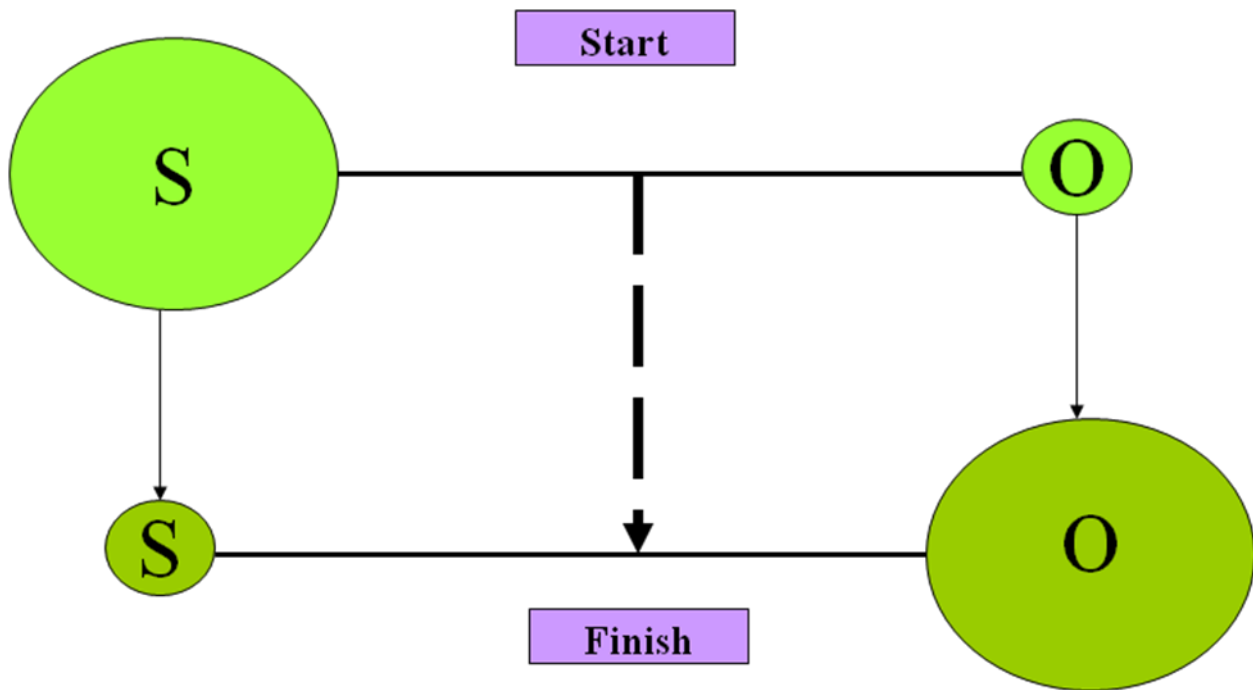


Fig. 1 Adult development originates in loss of ego-centrism (Piaget)

Human beings are born as a very big subject associated with a non-existent or very small object, and they die in the opposite position, as a very small subject associated with a huge cosmos that continues without and after them. This circumscribes the HUMAN CONDITION both emotionally and cognitively. The dramatic changes that occur over an individual's lifespan are centrally noticeable in his/her "Frame of Reference" (FoR), the way s(he) looks at the world which determines how the world shows up for him or her. A contributing factor is the psychological one, not indicated in Fig. 1 since the extent to which it changes over one's life time is not by far as dramatic as is the developmentally unfolding Frame of Reference.

**We can say, thus, that CDF, the *Constructive Developmental Framework*, is a theory of human frame of reference.** This is another way of saying that CDF provides tools for describing, as well as acting upon, how the world shows up for individuals at different stages (levels) of their development over the lifespan. Expertly used, CDF serves as an assessment methodology that can help people understand "where clients presently are developmentally".

To serve this purpose, CDF comprises 3 components each of which provides a different description of an individual and of individuals as team members:

Component	Description
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<p><b>Social-emotional (ED):</b> researched by semi-structured interview (Kegan)</p>	<p>How people internally position themselves toward others and themselves over the life span, thus “making meaning”.</p>
<p><b>Cognitive (CD):</b> researched by semi-structured interview (Basseches, Laske; Bhaskar)</p>	<p>How people think beyond formal logic, using “dialectical” thought forms that expand logical ones, thus “making sense”.</p>
<p><b>Psychological (NP):</b> research by Need-Press Questionnaire (Murray)</p>	<p>How people’s behavioral <u>needs</u> differ from their super-ego ideals (ideal <u>press</u>) and how their ideals relate to their organizational experiences (actual <u>press</u>)</p>

Fig. 2 The three CDF components spelled out

The three components are intrinsically linked since they describe three aspects of a single frame of reference:

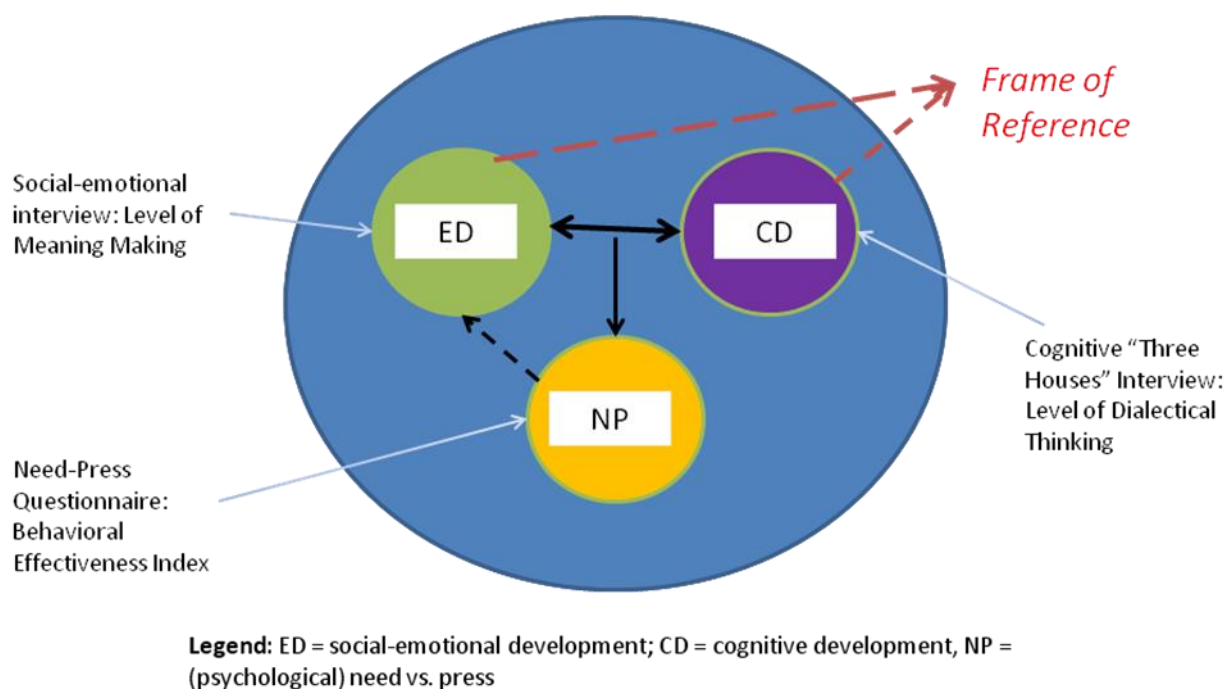


Fig. 3 Links between the three CDF components and ways to obtain empirical data for each

In a more global perspective, CDF is a model of what a society has to provide for its people to realize their potential fully, which can be done only outside of the “generalized master-slave relationships” (R. Bhaskar 2008) that have so far characterized human societies, where privileged groups are able to develop themselves further than others at the cost of others (but often don’t do so). CDF is therefore a tool for understand what a “just society” could look like.

Although the book you are about to delve into is not going into great depth about these philosophical issues, nevertheless I would see my book as a contribution to concrete utopianism characterizing a free society. The book is a workbook or textbook for those who, serving others, want to understand their clients in depth relative to themselves as coaches, mentors, consultants, teachers, professionals generally, including politicians. As you will come to understand, this requires CDF users to become experts in “humble inquiry”(Schein 2013) who subordinate themselves to their clients by “interviewing” them about how they make meaning and sense of their experiences. In short, CDF defines a *dialogical turn* in the social sciences.

On a practical level, this book is about entering in one’s client’s experience of both life and work and the relationship between them. As Fig. 1 indicates, this is a matter of assessing what kind of “loss of ego-centricity” (to speak with Piaget) a person has so far undergone: the incremental loss of being focused on oneself as Number One (rather than on others and the cosmos one is part of).

Clearly, there being only a single consciousness, to arrive at a big picture of an individual, all three components of CDF must be brought into play together. The figure below depicts a person’s

psychological “need/press” profile as embedded in two developmentally maturing selves: social-emotional and cognitive.

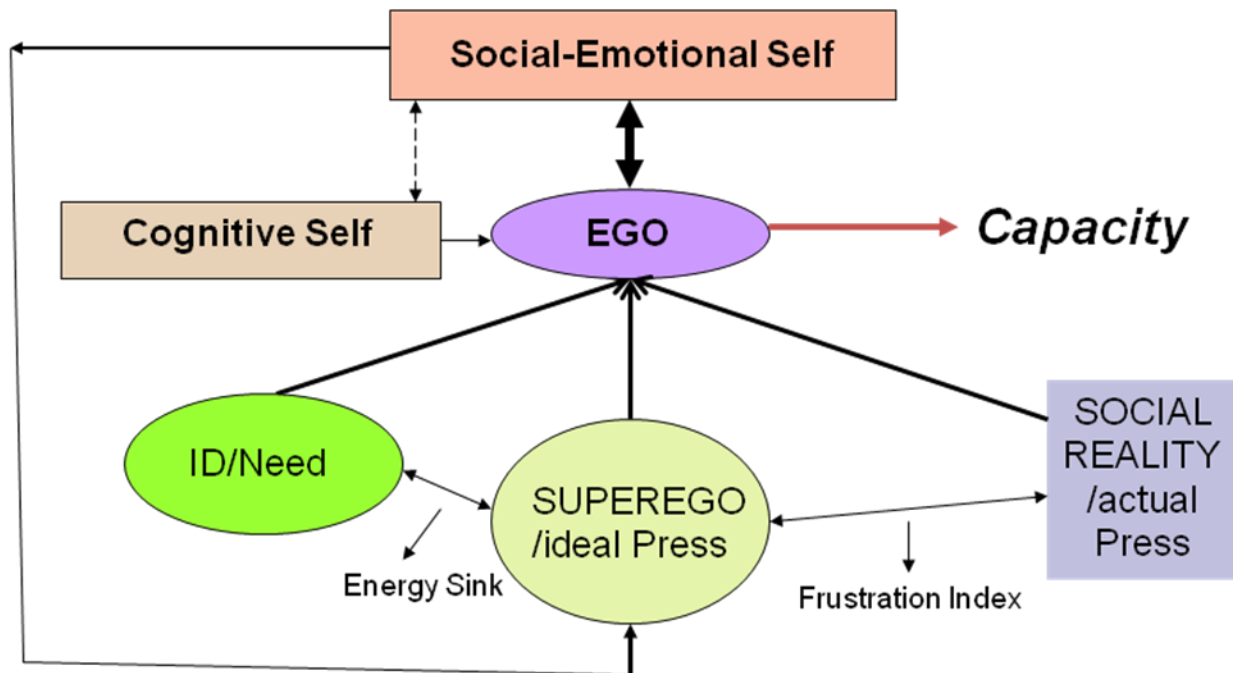


Fig. 4 The egoic self embedded in a social-emotional and cognitive self

As seen, CDF distinguishes Ego from Self. It sees the former as embedded in, and kept safe by, the latter. This embedding is really a life saver: without being able to grow your Ego in a developmental holding environment, you would be forever stuck with your own little “personality” which largely derives your family of origin and its social status.

As seen above, the Ego – which is the seat of behavior – is under the influence of two Selves: a social-emotional one “making meaning”, and a cognitive one “making sense” of the real world. By “making” is meant construction through the mind, which is different in every mind. What is constructed by individuals, the real world, is embodied not only in social reality, but also in the physical reality of the world whose necessity, as a body, you are subject to. In other words: your mind is part of the world and thus underlies its necessity like everything else, and this necessity makes it ceaselessly “develop” as well as die.

Please note that this book, volume 1 of *Measuring Hidden Dimensions*, is focused on just 1 of the 3 components shown in Fig. 2, namely, the social-emotional self. This self is often hard to distinguish from the psychological Ego, both being largely unconscious. For this reason, the book teaches the reader a special interview (way of listening to others) through which this distinction between what is developmental and what is psychological can be clearly made. The book thus does not cover the cognitive self. Rather, it points to volume 2 of *Measuring Hidden Dimensions* which deals with the cognitive development of adults from formal logical to dialectical thinking. (Since 2015, there exists

a short, compact version of volume 2 entitled “Dialectical thinking for integral leaders: A primer; see Laske 2015).

Why would anybody want to learn to understand and use CDF (which is a lot of work)? For two reasons: you would learn a lot about yourself (why you succeed and fail right now), and equally much about clients you may have, in whatever capacity you work with them. As an immensely valuable by-product of learning CDF, you would learn to listen to others in a totally new way. Why? Spoken language not only has a content but has *structure*, and this structure is that of stages of development and of phases of dialectical thinking.

For this reason, a major learning that occurs in absorbing CDF occurs in LISTENING. This book as well as volume 2 teaches you to understand others by listening very deeply. I speak of “developmental listening”.

Taking now a look at the entire environment of working with clients as a coach, this is what we have before us:

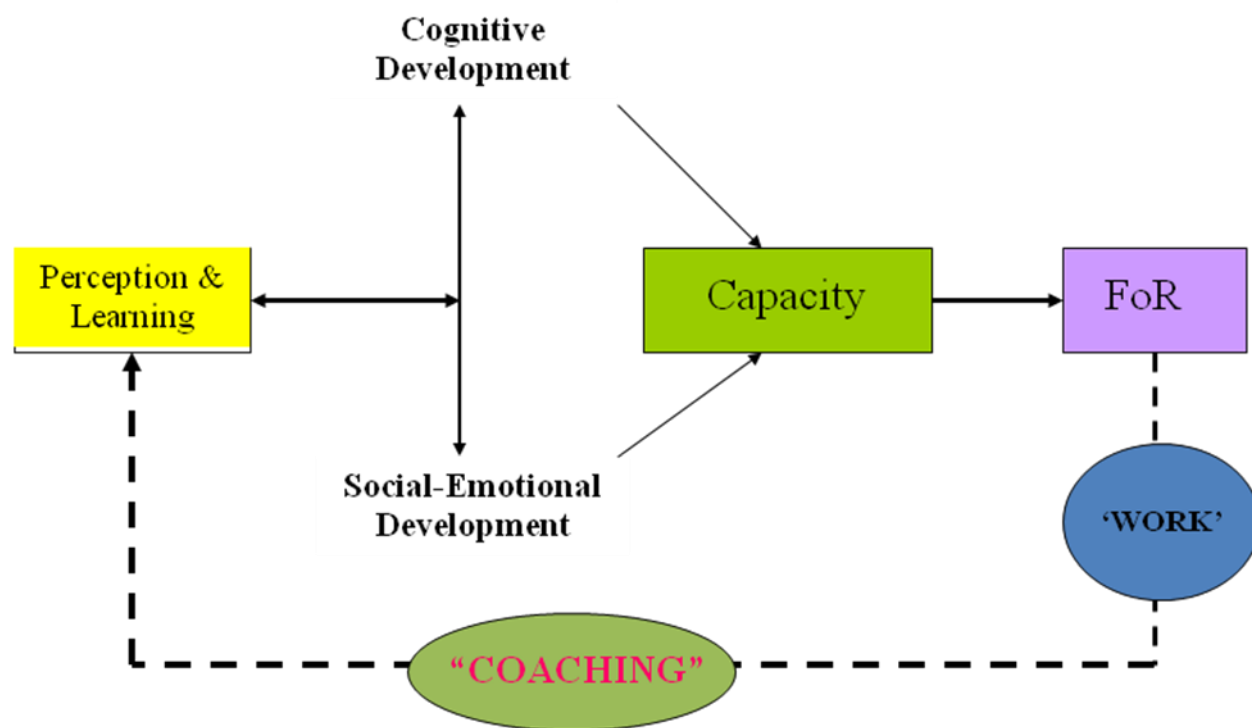


Fig.5 Coaching and Consulting happen at the intersection of horizontal learning and vertical development

While learning and perception happen on a “horizontal” plane, cognitive and social-emotional development happens on a “vertical” plane that intersects it. Both planes are always present. CDF makes it possible to separate and therefore also to link the 2 planes. (You can’t link what you have not completely separated.)

Therefore, when listening to clients in humble inquiry, the dialog you are co-creating will require of you to know two versions of the theory of FoR that is CDF: the social-emotional and the cognitive one. The present book only deals with the first one.

### The Social-Emotional Component of CDF

Human emotions are a social product; they differ from society to society, and are therefore also a product of culture. However, despite the many different cultures we know of or may know from experience, there is one thing emotions in different cultures have in common: they follow “stages of development” we can recognize through speech, evaluate through interviews, and give feedback on in writing or conversation.

What are these stages?

To clarify social-emotional development, consider Fig. 6, below. As seen, adults unconsciously position themselves emotionally according to 5 “stages” indicating an increasingly more mature view of themselves (FoR). Their developmental trajectory is characterized by an alternative focus on self and others; it reaches from the “instrumentalist” adult who uses others as her instrument to the “self-aware” adult who no longer defines herself by origin, education, profession, social rank, but simply as “human being” (and thus mortal). Between each main “stage”, there exist 4 intermediate stages (Lahey et al., 1988; Kegan 1982) which to assess is of priceless advantage for a coach, mentor, consultant, or teacher because of their ability to reach into clients’ experience.

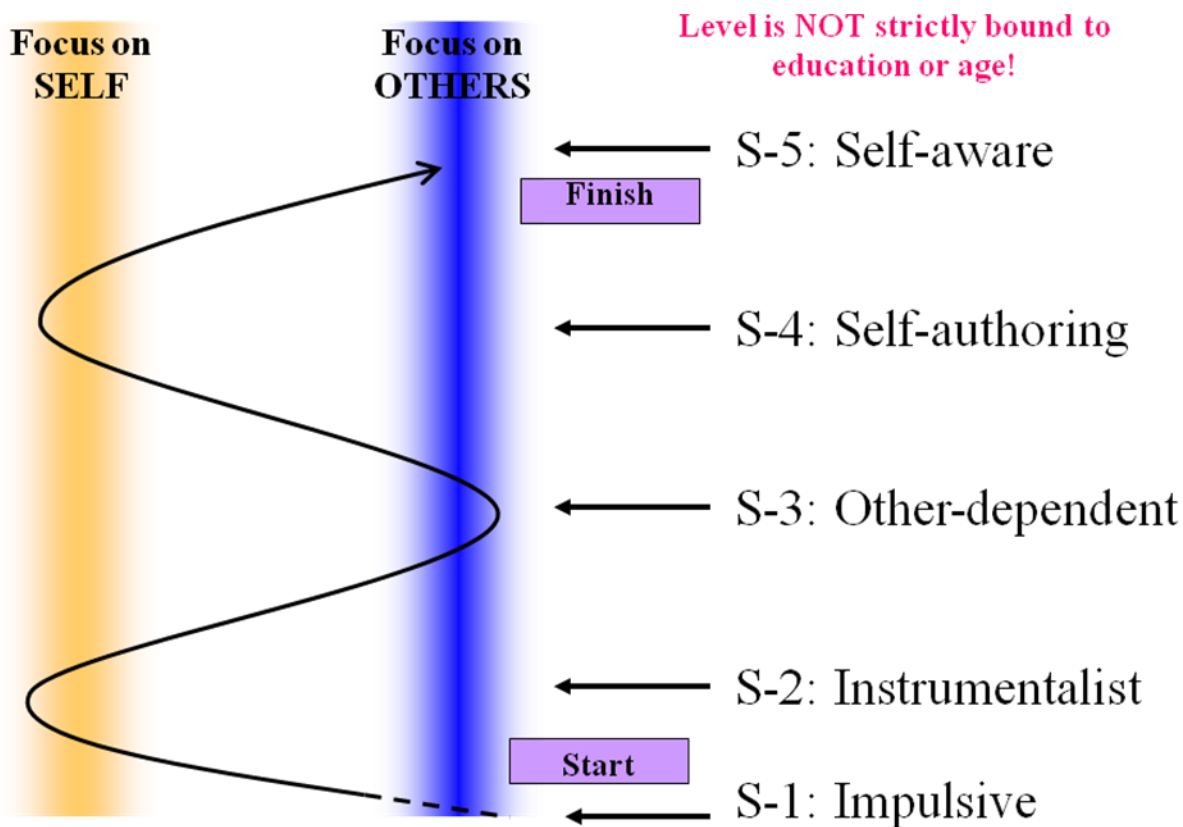


Fig. 6 Kegan stages of social-emotional development

As we move “upward” from S-1 (children), we oscillate around a focus on self and on others which describes how much ego-centrism we have been able to shed. The movement from one stage to another may take a decade. Therefore, in CDF we also learn to think in intermediate stages (see below).

You might think that going from one intermediate stage to another is a kind of learning. But it is rather more than that, because as you accede to another stage, a dramatic change of world view occurs in you. While psychological experiences remain the same, their developmental coloring does not. As a result, there is “level 3 anger” which is very different from “level 4 anger”. Equally, there are “level 3 marriages” in which partners are other-dependent and “level 4 marriages” where they are self-authoring. In terms of the four main stages, then, we are dealing with individuals who are altogether different:

1. The instrumentalist individual uses others as tools for satisfying own needs and desires. S(he) lives in the world of Thomas Hobbes -- a jungle in which the stronger eats the weaker (10% of people).



2. The other-dependent individual who defines herself by the expectations of physical and/or internalized others who are needed to safeguard her own self image (65% of people).
3. The self-authoring individual who is secure in her own value system, respecting others but not subordinating herself to them when making decisions, even if risking rejection or death (25% of people). (M. Luther: “Here I stand, I can do no other”.)
4. The self-transforming individual who is no longer defining herself by her origin, education, social rank, etc., but is aware of her own limitations and common humanity, and thus capable of ceding own advantages to the realization of the common good (<10% of people).

Shown in a more fine-grained fashion (where each subsequent step stands for greater loss of ego-centrism or maturity) and disregarding the instrumental stage, L-2, this looks as follows:

<b>L-3</b>	<b>Made up of others' expectations; 'our world' hypothesis</b>
<b>L-3(4)</b>	In need of 'handholding' by physical other to act on own behalf
<b>L-3 /4</b>	<i>Conflicted over, and unsure about, own values, direction, worth, capability</i>
<b>L-4/3</b>	<i>Conflicted, but with more detachment from internalized viewpoints, resolving to level 4 self-authoring</i>
<b>L-4(3)</b>	Nearing self-authoring, but remaining at risk for regression to others' expectations
<b>L-4</b>	<b>Fully self-authoring decision maker respecting others; 'my world' hypothesis, secure self-generated value system</b>
<b>L-4(5)</b>	Begins to question scope and infallibility of own value system; aware of own history
<b>L-4/5</b>	Conflicted over relinquishing control and taking risk of critical exposure of own view
<b>L-5/4</b>	Conflicted, but increasingly succeeding in 'deconstructing' self; committed to flow
<b>L-5(4)</b>	Fully committed to deconstructing own values, benefiting from divergent others
<b>L-5</b>	<b>No longer attached to any particular aspect of the self, focused on unceasing flow, transformation, not formation</b>

Fig. 7 Change of social-emotional orientations over the life span

Ask yourself now: where in this hierarchy of stages AM I?

The Cognitive Component of CDF (see volume 2 of MHD, 2008)

Emotions separate us, while thinking links us, according to CDF. (Common emotions seem to link us but do so only behaviorally and socially but not structurally). If that is the case, what is the structure of thinking we need to understand in ourselves and others to create collaborate intelligence, say, in teams?

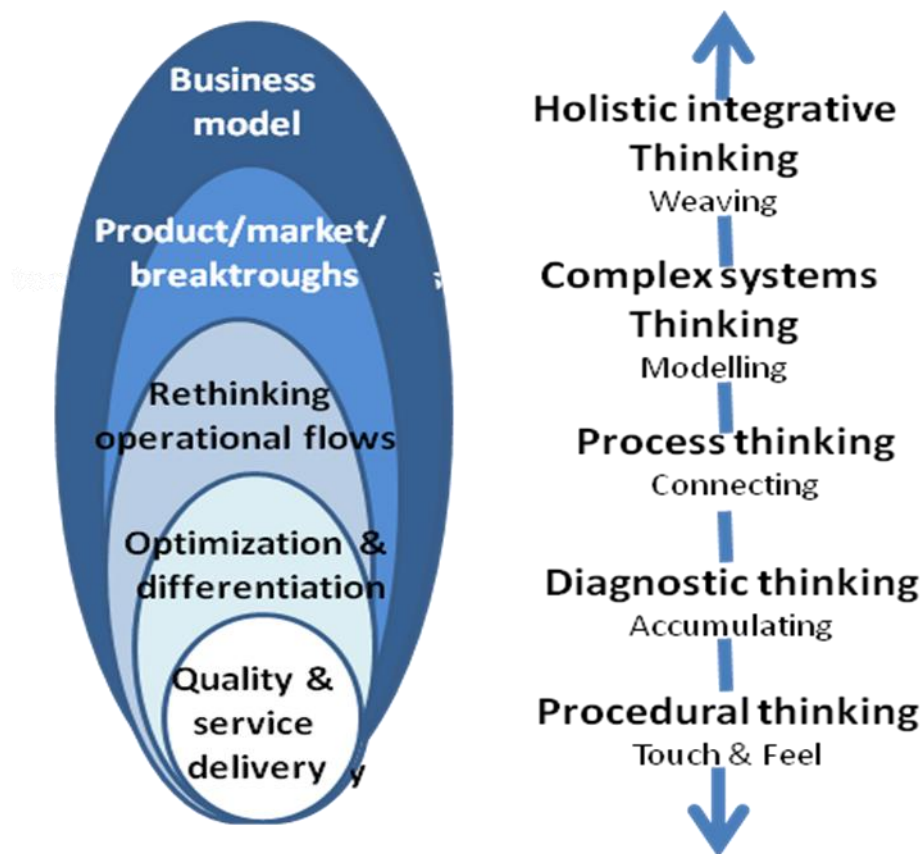


Fig. 8 Five levels of role accountability in organizations, requiring different coaching and mentoring approaches (Courtesy Jan De Visch, 2010, 2014)

While meaning making determines how we function in the social world, sense making or “thinking” is much broader, and determines how we function in both the social and physical

world, and how we “know” these worlds. Today, whether in business or education, this “cognitive” dimension is vastly neglected, despite the fact that it may well constitute the most important dimension of commercial and academic success.

But considering levels of thinking complexity by themselves is not enough in work in organizations.

Organizations are composed of different levels of role accountability. Each of these constitutes a different *universe of discourse* with its own idiosyncratic way of thinking, as shown in Fig. 6 above. Importantly, executives are focused on the future, not the present; they are not thinking about quality and service delivery; they are rather thinking about product and market breakthroughs and how to re-define ineffective business models. However, one cannot anticipate the future using logical thinking for which the world remains a static configuration. Holistic thinking is needed. Central for work at the upper levels of accountability is the capability to think holistically and systemically, and do so with great fluidity (De Visch 2014, 2010).

This kind of holistic and systemic thinking, however, only gradually develops over the life span. As empirical research shows, it develops in adults in four phases, each definable by a “fluidity index”:

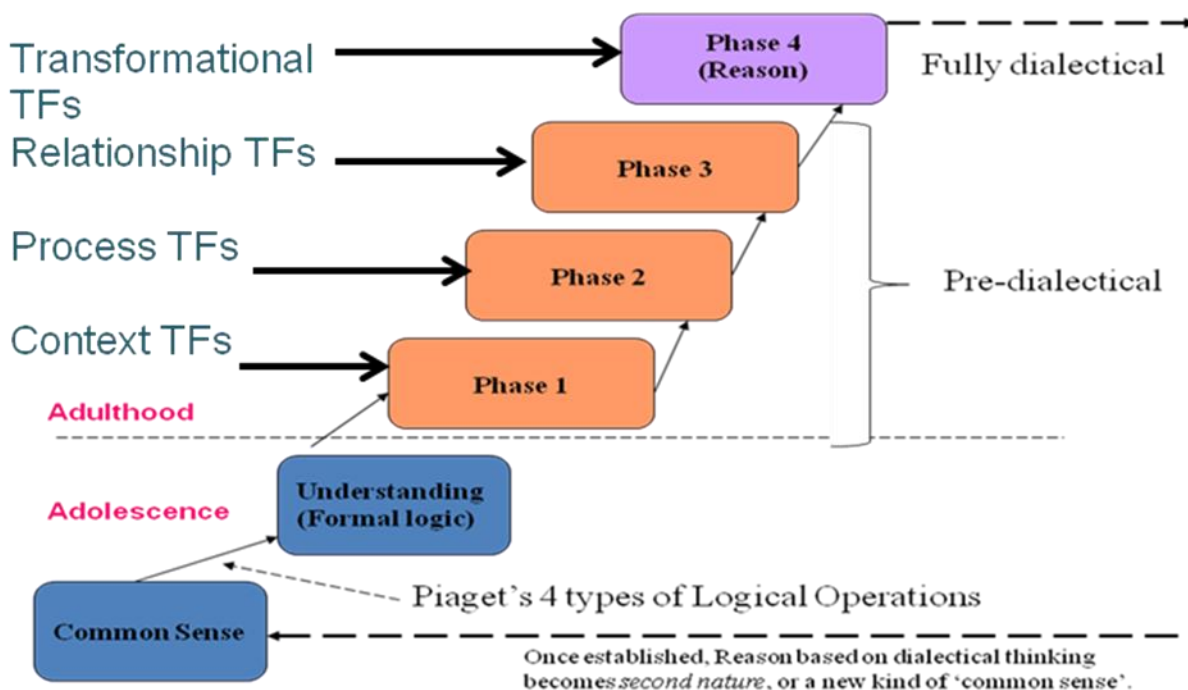


Fig. 9 Four phases of dialectical thinking development

In each subsequent phase individuals use “dialectical thought forms” in an increasingly more complex and coordinated way (see also Laske 2015).

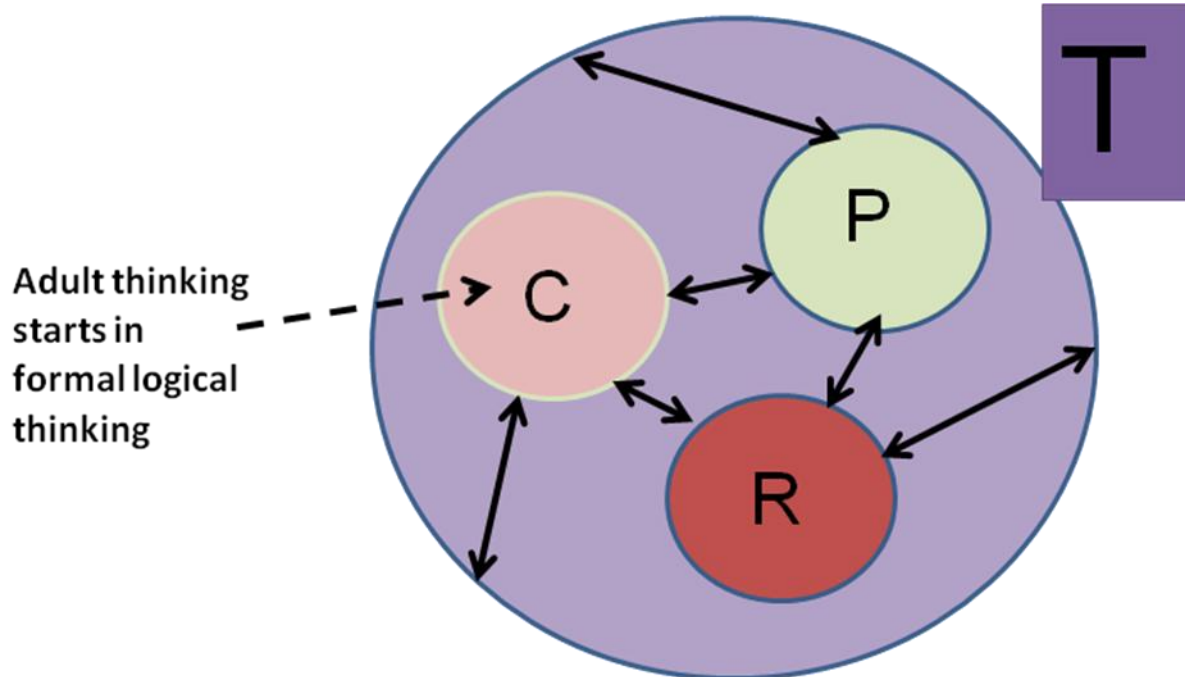
What is Dialectical Thinking?

Dialectical thinking takes very seriously “what is not there”, that is, absences (Roy Bhaskar, 2008). These absences define the past and the outside of everything that exists, plus things themselves. In this way, dialectical thinking is able to take seriously that natural necessity, which also transfers to social necessity, makes the world unceasingly transform itself. Since the human body and mind are part of the world, they, too, are in constant transformation. It is this fact that logical thinking constantly tries to skirt. But the world is simply not “logical”. Logic, although important for orienting oneself in life, never catches up with the reality of the world. It is for this reason that is of central importance for humans, to transcend logical thinking toward dialectical thinking.

A simple way of understanding the dialectic running the world is to focus on its four “moments” and think of them as associated with human “thought forms” (Laske 2015). In line with the moments, CDF distinguishes four classes of thought forms called Context (C), Process (P), Relationship (R), and Transformation (T). Dialectical thinking is at its peak when these thought forms are used and coordinated by an individual or team in a flexible way. We speak of fluidity of dialectical thinking, which is measured by DTF, the Dialectical Thought Form Framework.

As shown in Fig. 10, below, each of the moments of dialectic makes visible to the thinker a different aspect of the world. Take a beehive. Thought about in Context terms, it is just a wood box with wax-coated frames inside. But its life is not in the box, but in the seasonal processes the bees undergo and the relationship they entertain with each other and their queen. Only when we put C, P, and R together can we also “think” the beehive as being in constant transformation. And this transformation is its reality.

Alas, formal logical thinking is firmly ensconced in C – Context --, and therefore cannot grasp P, R, or T. It is only when thought forms representing these four dimensions are *coordinated* in a thinker's mental process that truly transformational thinking emerges in middle and late adulthood. If left unschooled, such thinking never develops, to the detriment of not only the individual but society at large.



**C=Context:** getting at the bigger picture

**P=Process:** understanding emergent change

**R=Relationship:** understanding interdependencies

**T=Transformation:** understanding imbalance and shifts

Fig. 10 The four moments of dialectic, giving rise to dialectical thought forms

To get an inkling of the need for transformational, “dialectical”, thinking, imagine an executive team deliberating how to change its present business model to beat the competition, increasingly consisting of small, lean, and mean organizations. (Such small organizations are without much of a legacy structure, and therefore are able to change their business model quickly and by directly responding to customers.) How far is an executive team going to get when thinking about a new business model in terms of formal logic? Not very far.

### The Psychological Component

As shown in Fig. 2, below, one way of assessing an individual’s psychological profile is to follow Freud and distinguish between the Id (Need), Superego, and Social Reality all of which the Ego is supposed to bring into harmony (failing miserably). Following a Freudian, M. Aderman, we can then associate with this triad a set of variables that, when asked questions about in a questionnaire, will show us how an individual’s needs relate to his/her superego ideals (ideal press) and how the latter show up in the person’s social reality, e.g., in an organization (actual press). Any gap between his/her need and ideals will constitute an “energy sink”

diminishing his/her effectiveness at work, while any gap between his/her ideals and social reality (i.e., organizational culture) will show up as degrees of frustration. When we put energy sink (loss of energy) together with frustration (stress), we arrive at an *efficiency index* that tells us what is an individual's cost of doing the work s(he) does, and where s(he) suffers most.

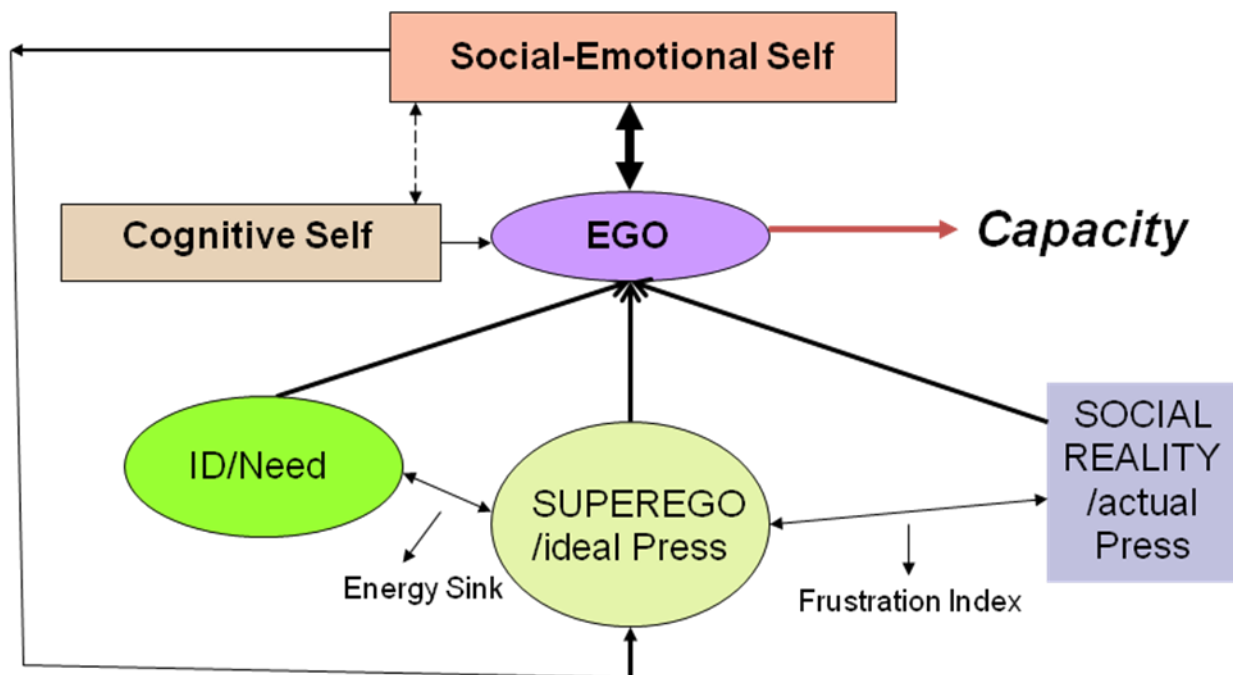


Fig. 4 The psychological Ego embedded in a social-emotional and cognitive Self

Since the Ego never manages to bring its three components into harmony, we can take some solace from the fact that, embedded in the developmental Self, the Ego increasingly gets a chance to become mature, namely, by losing its ego-centricity as much as possible. At times, attempts to hold on to ego-centricity is paid for by arresting or stalling social-emotional and even cognitive development.

#### Bringing all CDF Dimensions Together

Clearly, it is here that we need to think the three components of CDF together. We need to understand how psychological suffering can be remediated by developmental interventions on the social-emotional and cognitive level. CDF helps us to do so, in fact, it is cut out for such work.

In a more global perspective, we also need to bring together the social-emotional dimension of meaning making (maturity) with the cognitive fluidity of a person (or team) in terms of the use of dialectical thought forms, as shown in Fig. 9, below.

<b>Thinking Fluidity of Clients</b>	<b>Levels of Responsibility *</b>	<b>Social-Emotional Maturity of Clients</b>
>50	VIII	5
	VII	5/4 – 5(4)
>30	VI	4(5) – 4/5
	V	4
>10<30	IV	4/3 – 4(3)
	III	3(4) – 3/4
<10	II	3
	I	2/3 – 3(2)

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

Fig. 11 Requisite levels of thinking capability and social-emotional maturity for each of 8 levels of organizational accountability

Although the hypothesis presented in the table above requires further testing by way of empirical research, it nicely demonstrates how every level of accountability in an organization is associated with a certain requisite level of capability, both cognitive and social-emotional. (We are not speaking of competences here since there is completely determined by an individual's capability, so that they can be said to be pure abstractions.)

The match of the middle column in Fig. 9, of levels of responsibilities, with the two outer columns representing capability, is what E. Jaques had in mind when he spoke of Requisite Organization (1998). Following Jaques, in CDF we speak of matching "size of person" (in the outer columns) with "size of role" (in the central column). As this indicates, CDF is not only a theory of adult frame of reference. It is also a methodology for achieving the match of people's size of person and their size of role which is of vital importance not only for organizational management, but also for the well-being of the people who do work in organizations.

### Conclusion

Let's go a step further and think of developmental levels in the context of a society at large. We then see the following picture:

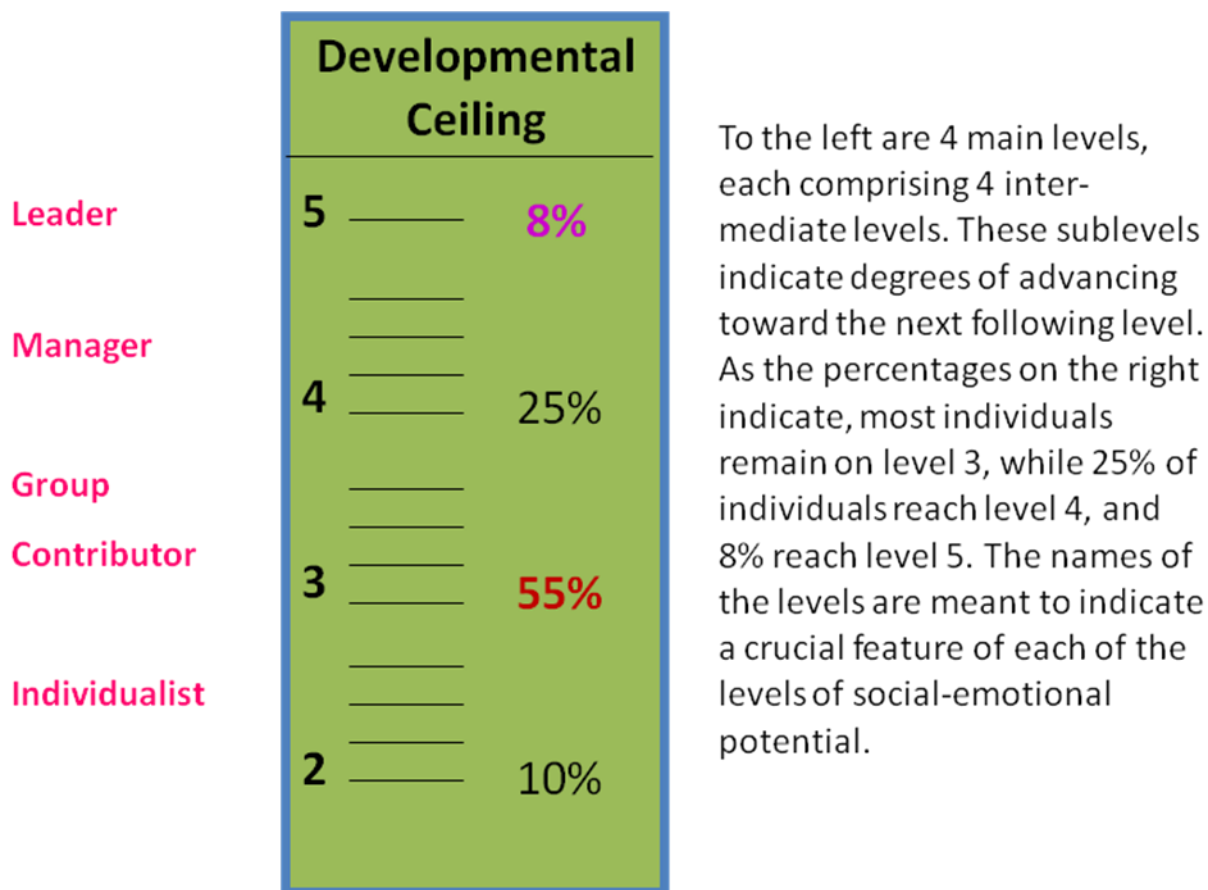


Fig. 12 Adult-developmental attainment levels in Western societies

As shown, 55% of western populations remain at social-emotional stage 3 or the intermediate levels between stage 3 and 4, but do not reach the self-authoring stage 4. Also, the level of self-aware leadership is reached by fewer than 8% of a population. This is a sobering statistic regarding the future of western society.

From the point of CDF, there is something wrong with societies in which the majority of adults remains other-dependent, as seen in Fig. 12. This is surely a reflection of the society we live in, and we can easily think of better societies in which more than 20% of people reach stage 4. In fact, in terms of how our society works, outgrowing other-dependence is the hallmark of being a professional. The question arises what is the use of coaching if it does not become engaged in lifting individuals to stage 4?

I would concur with Roy Bhaskar (2008) that what holds societies back from a brighter outlook on adult development, such as the ability to act from a self-authoring and self-aware level, are generalized **master-slave relationships** imposed by the modes of production and distribution of western capitalistic society.



CDF throws a bright light on these relationships, suggesting that the higher attainment and maturity levels *could be different* if society were transformed to leave more room for the full development of all of us as a condition of the full development of each.

This is the main philosophical and ethical idea behind CDF, and also the legacy of CDF. As you will notice, this goes far beyond the notion of improving performance in organizations within capitalistic societies that conventional coaching remains to be wedded to.