

## **THE EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT ORGANIZATION: A PRACTICE AND THEORY-BASED APPROACH FOR CULTURE AND LEARNING**

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### **Abstract**

This manuscript examines a robust opportunity for approaching and applying emotional intelligence (EI) in organizational culture and learning contexts. To date, the preponderance of EI research and focus has been at the individual level of analysis. The interpersonal, social aspects of EI – and the according opportunities for fusing EI with organizational culture – have not emerged in a substantive manner. Guided by theoretical underpinnings: practice theory; structuration and institutionalization; and sensemaking and habitus, this manuscript explores the readiness and plausibility for integrating EI into organizational culture and learning. Action learning is proposed as the vehicle for empirically testing, reflecting, and advancing EI's relevance, acceptance, and prominence in organizational culture.

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## Introduction

The Emotional Intelligence Training and Research Institute (EITRI) 2014 conference theme has as a major focus creating cultures for organizational success. This theme dovetails with a major finding and implication for future research from the author's dissertation (Rude, 2013a): exploring organizational culture vis-à-vis its influence on emotional intelligence, or EI (and vice versa). Picking up from where the dissertation left off, which signaled culture's undeniable role in shaping a leader's EI development throughout his or her professional and personal journeys, this paper moves the scholarly conversation towards an alliance between EI and organizational culture. It continues the research on EI and its impact as proffered by Rude (2013b).

In addition to culture, EI has widespread theoretical applicability to organizational learning: it is based on a conceptual framework underpinned by structuration (Giddens, 1984), institutionalization (Barley & Tolbert, 1997), pragmatism (Dewey, 1916, 1938), experiential learning (Dewey, 1916; Illeris, 2011; Kolb, 1984), communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and organizational culture (Hatch, 1993; Schein, 2010). Likewise, organizational culture is replete with panoply of definitions. Also, research on culture has associated it with many organizational outcomes (Schein, 2010) to include those affiliated with EI-related characteristics (e.g., commitment, motivation).

## Statement of the Problem

Using EI (Nelson & Low, 2011; Rude, 2013a) as a vehicle for illuminating practice theory (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011) and theory-in-practice (cf Argyris & Schon, 1978) provides real-world application and acknowledges the inherent dualisms that result (e.g.,

individual and organizational learning; institutions and actors; assimilation and accommodation). Inherent dualisms can produce tensions, such as those that explore learning and different levels of analyses. “It is clear that organizational learning is not the same thing as individual learning, even when the individuals who learn are members of the organization ... yet organizations learn only through the experience and actions of individuals” (Argyris & Schon, 1978, p. 9).

The dualism of EI possessing both psychological and sociological dimensions, while providing a holistic account that could prove useful to organizational knowledge and learning, may be viewed as a paradox: one that at best achieves workable certainty vice a clean, orderly resolution (Luscher & Lewis, 2008). Moving “toward greater collective emotional intelligence” (Emirbayer & Goldberg, 2005, p. 507) sounds easier than a tried-and-true experiential application. This may explain why, for instance, emotions are little more than a de facto commodity to be managed (Vince & Gabriel, 2011), or that managerial EI is the principal driver behind emotional attachments to organizational factors such as identity (Prati, McMillan-Capehart, & Karriker, 2009). I believe these views extol far too narrow an aperture that simply cannot accommodate the breath and positive influence EI can have on an organization. Even research purporting to emphasize EI and organizational culture instead addressed individual leader styles affecting one construct or the other – and asserted that “cultural intelligence is related to [EI] but it picks up where [EI] leaves off (Benjamin, Gulliya, & Crispo, 2012, p. 62). These examples evidencing a lack of appreciation for (or unwillingness to) bind EI with organizational culture have led to uncertain research outcomes thus far.

### **Purpose and Research Question**

To explore and hopefully overcome the pervasive challenges cited above, this paper subscribes to the following (and generally sequential) logic trail:

1. EI begins at the individual level of analysis, with self-awareness typically cited as the starting point for EI discovery (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995; Nelson & Low, 2011; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).
2. Organizations are social mechanisms as they involve multiple individuals in a workplace environment (Goleman, 1998; Illeris, 2007, 2011).
3. EI manifests in an interpersonal, relational context through the display of social awareness, empathy, and decision making, among other attributes (Nelson & Low, 2011).
4. Effective leadership is an inherently social endeavor (Yukl, 2010).
5. Organizational culture is a complex phenomenon which has widespread implications for both organizational and individual (e.g., leader) success (Rude, 2013c; Schein, 2010).

This manuscript proposes a plausible sixth step in this logic trail: the degree to which EI and organizational culture are explored in tandem. This leads to an overarching research question: Can an organization be emotionally intelligent? A closely related question is, how do culture and learning impact the integration of EI at the organizational level of analysis?

To explore this research interest, the narrative that follows commences with a discussion of EI, followed by a review of EI's relevance in specific organizational milieus: practice theory; structuration and institutionalization; and sensemaking and habitus. Afterwards, theories

associating the reciprocal relationship between EI and organizational culture are examined. Then, a conceptual model is presented for integrating EI into organizational learning by employing action learning (Marquardt, 2011). The manuscript concludes with implications of a theoretically-based EI practice orientation for organizational culture, learning, and associated challenges.

### **Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a relatively new concept; it was not defined as a term until 1990 by pioneers Mayer and Salovey. Since then and especially after Goleman (1995, 1998) brought EI into the mainstream, discourse on EI has grown exponentially. EI is seen as either ability-centric (Salovey and Mayer, 1990) or focuses on integrating related abilities that can be learned (Vigoda-Gadot & Meisler, 2010; Nelson & Low, 2011; Rude, 2013a). Perhaps and for this reason, organizational learning about EI has been somewhat circumspect, especially if EI is viewed as an ability that can be managed (Vince & Gabriel, 2011).

This manuscript adopts the Nelson & Low (2011) definition of EI: “A convergence of *learned abilities* [emphasis added] that facilitate (a) the accurate knowledge and value of self, as well as responsible actions based on personal worth and dignity; (b) a variety of strong, healthy relationships; (c) the ability to work well with others; and (d) productive reactions to the demands and pressures of everyday life and work” (Rude, 2013a, p. 30). In this context, the psychosocial aspects of EI can be appreciated at both the individual and organizational levels of analyses. To date, however, the prevalence of EI research has been individually-focused. The unique contribution of this manuscript extends the EI learning discussion into an organizational context, using specific constructs described below. It is proposed that only by positioning EI

into organizational domains can it begin to transcend boundaries (Carlile, 2004) and become appreciated as a valuable, practice-oriented organizational implement. This contextualization commences with a discussion of relevant theoretical foundations.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

I view workplace dynamics through a social constructionist lens. I agree with the Antonacopoulou and Gabriel (2001) summation that this lens considers “emotions [as] social phenomena ... emotions are culturally shaped [and] are culturally mediated” (p. 437). This aligns with dissertation research (Rude, 2013a) in which research subjects repeatedly referred to culture as an influencing variable as regards one’s ability to express EI in the organization. Pulling this thread forward brings in a discussion around specific theoretical constructs explored below: practice theory in an organizational learning context; structuration and institutionalization; and sensemaking and habitus.

**Practice Theory and Organizational Learning.** “A focus on practice challenges us to bridge different levels of analysis, and to do so in different ways” (Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks, & Yanow, 2009, p. 1309). In their article, those authors explained that putting practice into practice, especially in expansive institutional settings, can be challenging. Perhaps, this is especially apropos for learning about EI, which can evoke strong and negative emotions (Dirkx, 2009; Nesbit, 2012). The litmus test for EI in a practice theory context is whether it will “make a difference in the local process of organizing” (Nicolini, 2009, p. 1392). The interpersonal, relationship-driven focus of EI (Nelson & Low, 2011) is drawn into the morass of interconnectivity inherent in social life (Nicolini, 2009). If “practice is central to understanding work” (Brown & Duguid, 1991, p. 40), one must understand informal environs in which EI can

manifest through a variety of social settings such as communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Using Nicolini's (2009) zooming-in, zooming-out metaphor, focusing in on EI may limit its perceived usefulness to the intrapersonal aspects, such as feeling good about oneself and 'managing' one's emotions in a helpful, constructive manner. Where EI has not yet taken root, and which fueled the desire for this manuscript, is the zooming-out feature: showcasing its value-added proposition for practitioners to, over time, pervasively engage EI throughout an organization. Expanding EI's aperture from a narrow focus to the expanse of organizational terrain involves changing fundamental in-house assumptions (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011) about EI's nature and impact. By transitioning this conceptual framework to a theory-in-practice and then theory-in-use (Argyris & Schon, 1978), we can move across learning boundaries (Antonacopoulou, 2006; Carlile, 2004) and "extend our observation to the different places where it (EI) shows up ... building an appreciation of how local practices participate in larger configurations" (Nicolini, 2009, pp. 1408-1409). Arguably, this would promote the contagion effect associated with zooming-out. Moreover, constantly moving EI through the recursive loops of reflective thought and action would complement habitual nature that, when taken together, results in change (Miettinen, Paavola, & Pohjola, 2012). This would heed the call by Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) in focusing EI on "the apparatus of practice theory ... dynamics of everyday activity (and) how these are generated (since) *everyday actions are consequential* in producing the structural contours of social life" (p. 1241).

The shift of a practice-based focus of EI from individual to organizational learning is illustrated in Figure 1 below; the Venn diagram shapes reinforce the inherent overlap between employee and employer learning spaces.

Figure 1

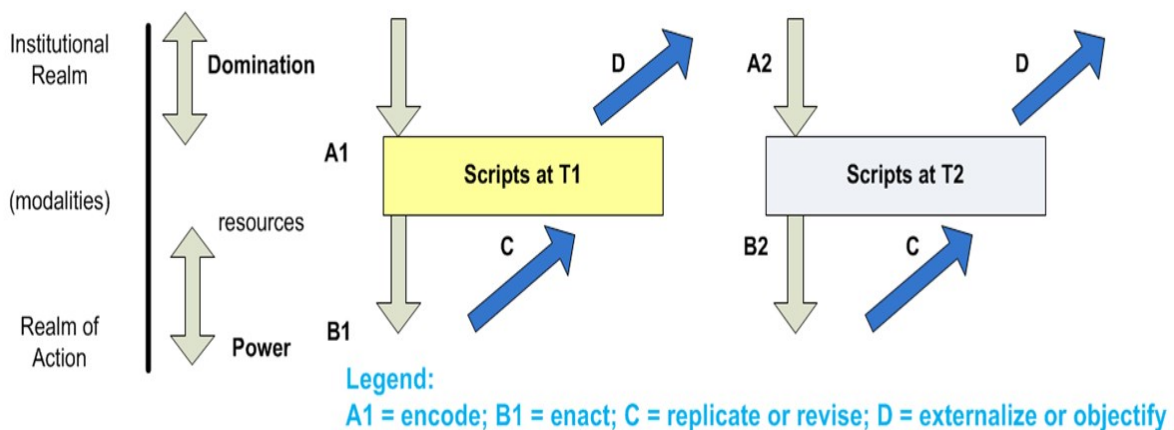
*Transition of EI to Organizational Learning*

**Structuration and Institutionalization.** This manuscript draws on structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) which focused on the interaction between structure and actors across time and space. Subsequently, an associated institutionalization theory surfaced (Barley & Tolbert, 1997). Institutions are “shared rules and typifications that identify categories of social actors and their appropriate activities or relationships” (Barley & Tolbert, 1997, p. 96). In this sense, actors can be change agents who elucidate how institutions signify, dominate or legitimize action. Institutionalization deprives the perception that individual agents are ontologically apart from their context (Voronov & Vince, 2012). Neither cognitions nor emotions are, in isolation, sufficient to attend to organizational dynamics (Voronov & Vince, 2012); this aligns with the Nelson and Low (2011) paradigm that emotion (and, by extension, EI) are inherently bound together with rationality and cognition.



Scripts are the means by which enactment occurs in institutions. Scripts, actors, and time are central figures in the context of EI. If scripts are “observable, recurrent activities and patterns of interactions characteristic of a particular setting (Barley & Tolbert, 1997, p. 98), then actors and time influence whether and to what degree EI achieves ‘characteristic’ status. Agents can maintain or disrupt the institutional order, creating a ripple effect of stability or change (Voronov and Vince, 2012). Accordingly, structuration and institutionalization theory will be integral to helping identify when organizations pay attention to EI and what EI-related experiences organizations remember (Kim, 1993; Weick, 1995). The encode-enact-replicate or revise-objectify process as depicted in Figure 2 below recalls double-loop learning in which inculcated mental models are introduced into and then affect organizational action (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Kim, 1993). In this manner, EI is a practice-based theory reinforced through structuring mechanisms among agents and between agents and the institutional environment: a “collective production of emotional scripts” (Vince & Gabriel, 2011, p. 337).

Figure 2

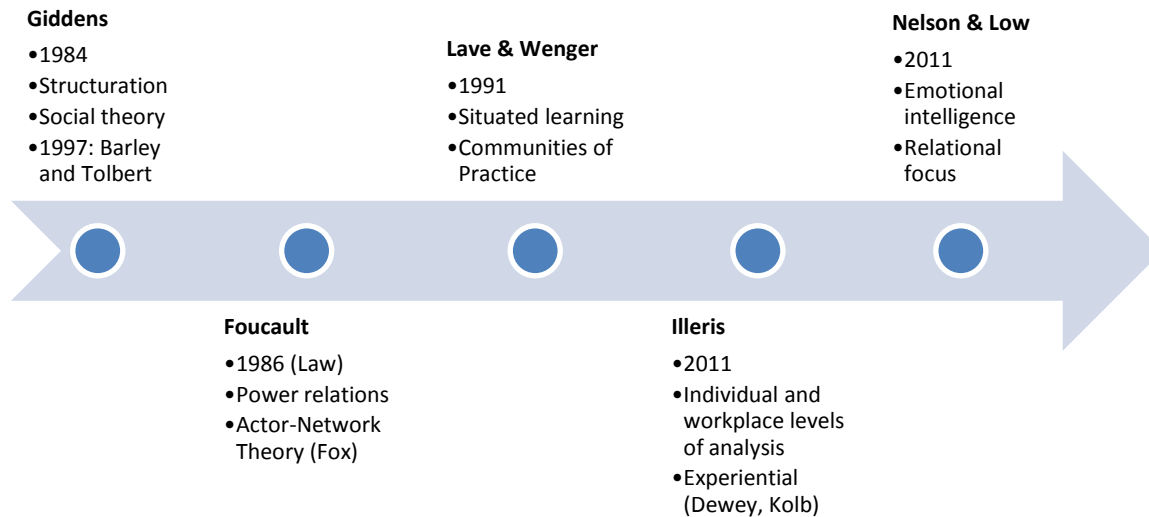
*Structuration Theory*

Note: Adapted from “Institutionalization and Structuration: Studying the Links between Action and Institution” by S. R. Barley and P. S. Tolbert, *Organizational Studies*, 18(1), p. 101. Copyright 1997 by EGOS.

Before transitioning to a discussion on sensemaking and habitus, Figure 3 offers a chronological illustration of seminal theorists relating to structuration, institutionalization, practice theory, experiential learning, and EI.

Figure 3

*Chronology of Seminal Theorists and Contributions*



**Sensemaking and Habitus.** Sensemaking and habitus are typically not combined in a theoretical manner, yet seem to be highly correlated in terms of exploring EI vis-à-vis organizational culture. A sensemaking environment and Bourdieu’s (2000) concept of *habitus* are indispensable when discussing organizational culture. Many similarities and overlapping concepts should emerge in the discussion that follows.

**Sensemaking.** In his seminal publication, Weick (1995) defined sensemaking as “what it says it is, namely, making something sensible” (p. 16). Sensemaking has seven properties applicable to organizations, all of which relate to EI, as described in Table 1, below:

Table 1

*Organizational Sensemaking and EI*

<b>Organizational Sensemaking Property</b>	<b>Association with EI</b>
Grounded in identity construction	“People learn about their identities by projecting them into an environment <i>and observing the consequences</i> ” (p. 22, emphasis added)
Retrospective	“Whatever [has occurred] will influence what is discovered when people glance backward” (p. 26).
Enactive of sensible environments	“People are very much a part of their own environments” (p. 31)
Social	“Those who forget that sensemaking is a social process miss a constant substrate that shapes interpretation and interpreting” (p. 39)
Ongoing	“People chop moments out of continuous flows and extract cues from those moments” (p. 43)
Focused on and extracted by cues	“Watch how people deal with prolonged puzzles ... [and how] people embellish that which they extract” (p. 49)
Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy	“Sensemaking is about plausibility, pragmatics, coherence, reasonableness, creation, invention, and instrumentality” (p. 57)

Note: Adapted from *Sensemaking in Organizations* by K. Weick. Copyright 1995 by Sage Publications, Inc.

In leveraging sensemaking as an organizational construct, Weick (1995) also suggested that “novel moments in organizations” (p. 86) are those which capture and sustain employees’ attention. These moments are profound opportunities for observing employees trying to “make sense of what they notice” (p. 86). Noticing, for example, organizational silence (Morrison & Milliken, 2000) can detract from a healthy proliferation of EI. I propose that capturing these meaningful, sensemaking moments are instrumental in understanding how EI and culture affect one another.

**Habitus.** This theory “reflects the principle of practical comprehension or embodiment, which manifests itself in agents’ thinking and acting in particular ... ways” (Voronov & Vince, 2012, p. 64). A social construct, habitus “is endowed with meaning and interest” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 128) and modulates expectations. Bourdieu (1991) explained *habitus* specifically as “a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways” (p.

12). Habitus becomes repeatable events or what Schein (2010/1985) labeled as *basic assumptions*. Bourdieu (1991) also suggested that the social environment constructed to form a connection that individuals associated with unique words and symbols which, in turn, help to create a reality within a community (Sheffield, 2013) or organization.

Although Bourdieu (1992) did not specifically highlight EI in the habitus context, Voronov and Vince (2012) logically extended habitus by acknowledging the interwoven relationship of emotions, cognitions, and society. (Simply stated, it becomes a “both/and” not an “either/or” proposition (Carr, 2001)) The habitus expansion fortifies the alignment between EI and organizational culture: habitus helps us understand situations in which individuals may (or may not) express emotions and overtly export EI into social settings. Cultural ramifications for suppressing EI may lead to what Voronov and Vince (2012) classified as an agent’s disinvestment, diminished psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999), and organizational silence – particularly if there are dissimilarities between employees and managers (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Salient organizational culture considerations are explored in the section that follows.

### **Organizational Culture**

Culture has been defined as the informal nature of an organization (Barnard, 1938; Katzenbach & Kahn, 2010). Definitions of organizational culture abound (Martin, 2002). Rude (2013c) offered an expanded perspective of organizational culture that in part amalgamated seminal works from Geertz (1973), Hatch (1993), Martin (2002), and Schein (2010):

Culture is represented by basic assumptions that are shared by groups within an organization, richly described through the espousal of values and symbols that assign

substantive meaning to tangible artifacts (e.g., stories, rituals, norms). Culture is dependent on leadership as well as the express sanctioning by employees (p. 10).

Rude (2013d), which in a practitioner-oriented publication highlighted implications drawn from Rude (2013c), offered that “culture is an undeniable force to be reckoned with” (p. 38) and that leaders must attend to emotional cues throughout the organization. Calls for employee sanctioning of cultural meaning ascribed to by managers is being accorded increased attention, to the extent that such meaning is “influenced by how vertical relations, horizontal relations, cognitive schemes, and involvement in external institutions combine with each other” (Grant, Morales, & Sallaz, 2009, p. 349). In their depiction of the “magic of the informal” (p. 23), Katzenbach and Kahn (2010) highlighted shared values, informal networks, and communities as having notoriety; further, they offered that storytelling and shaping experiences are integral to senior leaders understanding informal dynamics within an organization. Freedman and Ghini (2010) offered six techniques to check the cultural pulse of an organization. Table 2 below affiliates those checkpoints with EI:

Table 2

*Culture and EI Checkpoints*

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Factor Definition</b>	<b>Proposed Affiliation with EI</b>
Alignment	To what extent are people involved in their organization’s stated mission and the execution thereof? Do they feel a sense of belonging to the organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion</li> <li>• Engagement</li> <li>• Psychological safety</li> <li>• Social awareness</li> </ul>
Accountability	To what extent to people in the organization see themselves and others following through on commitments? Are they motivated and do they take responsibility for their choices and the outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation</li> <li>• Responsibility</li> <li>• Emotional investment</li> </ul>
Collaboration	How well do people interact with one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social awareness</li> </ul>

	another and share information? Do they work and solve problems together?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open communication</li> </ul>
Leadership	What level of commitment do employees have to their leaders? How do they perceive their leaders and leadership throughout the organization? Are people capable, competent, and worth following?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social awareness</li> <li>• Connection</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Emotional investment</li> </ul>
Adaptability	Are people seeking change? Are they ready to adapt? Are they flexible problem-solvers and open to innovation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision making</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Emotional investment</li> </ul>
Trust	Do people have a sense of faith and belief in the organization and its leaders? Can people rely on the integrity of others? Do they have confidence in others' abilities and intentions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional investment</li> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Engagement</li> <li>• Integrity and honesty</li> <li>• Empathy</li> </ul>

Note: First two columns adapted from *Change: Transforming Your Organization with Emotional Intelligence*. by J. Freedman and M. Ghini, pp. 100-101. Copyright 2010 by Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Press.

**A Culture of Learning.** As understood in research conducted by Antonacopoulou (2006), an organization's learning culture has potentially profound impacts on how individuals learn (Brown & Duguid, 1991), what they learn, and even how learning is construed as meaningful. These speak directly to Schein's (2010) work on artifacts, espoused values, and assumptions. As offered by Rude (2013a), learning about EI can begin in the classroom (i.e., to understand EI fundamentals and to discover its intrapersonal properties) but needs to evolve into a social setting in order for the interpersonal dynamics of EI to be discovered, honed, and transmitted to others. This evolution dovetails with Antonacopoulou's (2006) perspective to "fully reflect the social complexity of learning" (p. 469).

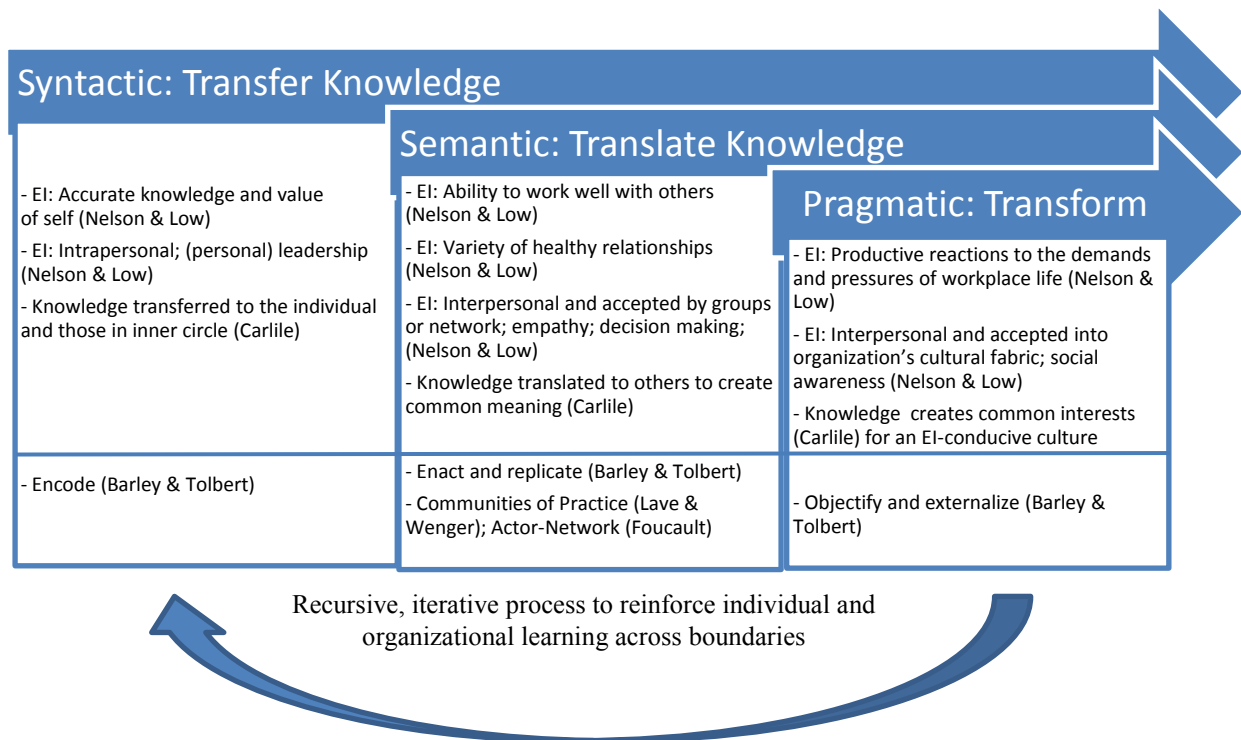
**Integrating EI into Organizational Learning.** To engage EI in the organizational learning environment is probably not a heuristic venture. "Intuitively, it is a much shorter conceptual leap to see organizations as cultural entities than to see them as cognitive ones" (Cook & Yanow, 2011, p. 365). Meanings derived from learning "come about and are maintained through interactions among members of the organization" (p. 366). Here, Cook and

Yanow (2011) are aligned with Hatch (1993) who extended Schein’s (1985/2010) work by acknowledging the criticality of symbols which connote meaning to the artifacts. As Hatch (1993) cautioned, however, cultural changes are most effective when taken in incremental steps and aligned with the organization’s change cadence (March (1991) offered similar advice).

Meanings correlated with EI can be socialized into the organizational learning fabric by recognizing the boundary issues that Carlile (2004) addressed. Figure 4 below demonstrates the conceptual progression of EI across Carlile’s boundaries. [Although Carlile’s (2004) boundary paradigm did not focus on EI per se, it was focused on how knowledge can permeate and transcend across the organizational terrain; hence, its relevance seems appropriate in this context.]

Figure 4

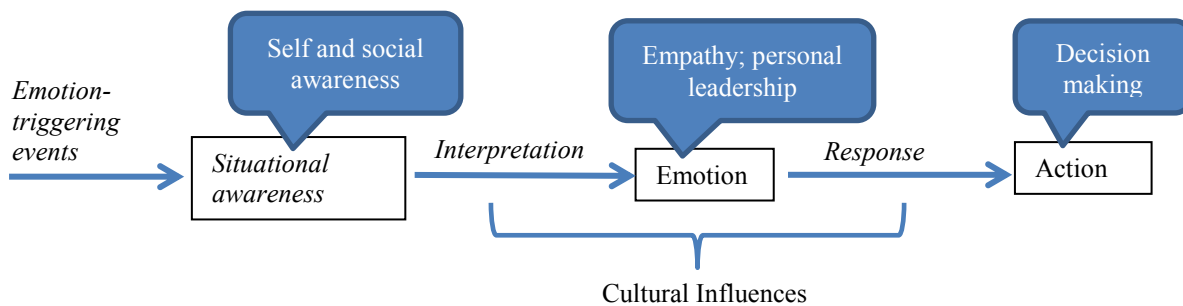
*Conceptual Progression of EI Knowledge Across Boundaries*



**The EI: Organizational Culture Relationship.** Earlier, it was proposed that the EI: organizational culture affiliation is reciprocal in nature. In that regard and as a complement to the knowledge boundary-spanning effects of EI, culture has tremendous influence on emotional processes. “Culture ... influences the selection of an action or behavior as a response to the event” (Herkenhoff, 2004, p 75). Herkenhoff (2004) also opined that leadership and effectiveness are promoted through the EI: organizational culture association. Ways in which this can happen are illustrated in Figure 5, which adapts Herkenhoff’s (2004) work and instills key leadership attributes described by Nelson and Low (2011).

Figure 5

Cultural and Leadership Influences on EI



Note: Adapted from *Culturally Tuned Emotional Intelligence: An Effective Change Management Tool?* by L. Brinkerhoff, p. 75. Copyright 2004 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

The theoretical discourse above focused on underpinnings related to EI and organizational culture as well as, how learning can be instrumental for bridging this chasm. In that vein, an action-based learning tool – action learning – is advocated as the research lens to explore the phenomenon of constructing an alliance between EI and organizational culture. That is the focus of the next section.



### **Proposed Research Agenda: Action Learning**

A paradigm shift absorbing EI's acceptance and inculcation into organizational learning requires more than an understanding of functionalist and interpretivist views (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). To that end, this manuscript proposes a conceptual framework that leverages action learning – a proven successful leadership development technique promoting adaptability in unfamiliar situations and enhancing interpersonal competence (Marquardt, 2011). Action learning, with its roots in pragmatism (Dewey, 1916 et seq), experiential learning (Illeris, 2007, 2011; Kolb, 1984), and situated learning (given the problem's in situ orientation) (Lave & Wenger, 1991), has been cited as a useful and resource-efficient leader development intervention (Day, 2001; Rude, 2013a; Yukl, 2010). It can also infuse productive reactions when conflicts emerge and facilitate collaboration by constructively harnessing emotions (Schlaerth, Ensari, & Christian, 2013).

The term *action learning* can be bifurcated into *action* – a results-oriented focus to solve a real-world, timely problem – and *learning* – using reflection and inquiry as its basis. Through the EI-in-practice lens, action learning can serve as “a means and a model to examine the potential or alternative views of organizational activity through spontaneously occurring experiments that are simultaneously informed and checked by experience” (Brown & Duguid, 1991, p. 50). Action learning is an excellent environment in which to explore team member's psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999), particularly when EI-related observations or discussions arise. Action learning may also test the degree of congruence between theories-in-practice with theories-in-use (Argyris & Schon, 1978). “Incongruities between espoused theory and theory-in-use” (Argyris & Schon, 1978, p. 56) may surface and it is only through the double-loop process that organizations can learn about, for example, approaches for integrating

EI into the workplace milieu. “Double-loop learning that must go on at the individual level must also go on at the systemic level” (p. 167).

Action learning would provide an ideal setting for, as noted by Dr. Cherniss of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations (CREIO, [www.eiconsortium.org](http://www.eiconsortium.org)), securing organizational support for emotional intelligence efforts.

Adapted from the CREIO report and Marquardt (2011), action learning:

- Links EI to a business need, as action learning addresses an important concern;
- Establishes a mechanism for teams to develop the problem solving strategy;
- Uses research to evaluate the program and demonstrate its value;
- Infuses EI into the organization in a novel way through the art of questioning and reflecting;
- Promotes finding emotionally intelligent leaders to guide outcomes from the action learning project; and
- Helps crystallize when the organization is ready for the necessary incremental change to adopt EI in broader settings.

The proposed research agenda would have two overarching elements: (1) a retrospective (Weick, 1995) exploration of the impact of prior action learning interventions on EI’s impact at the individual and (especially) organizational levels of analyses; and (2) using future action learning interventions as a way to consciously integrate EI into collective processes. The former would focus on surveys and other instruments to gather empirical data on EI’s presence and influence in the action learning experiences to date. The latter would use certified action learning coaches having expertise and credentials in EI as catalysts for “testing the waters” as

regards infusing EI into organizational conundrums (the action part) and enduring change (the learning part). The latter would also rely mainly on qualitatively-oriented organizational research methods to attend to the ways in which subjects experience the phenomena (Gill, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

Currently, at the organizational level of analysis, EI is an outsider looking in. This manuscript submits that EI's integration into organizational learning is not unlike an individual becoming an insider (Brown & Duguid, 1994), being perceived as legitimate (Lave & Wenger, 1991) or being accepted into social settings (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Perhaps, the intrapersonal aspects of EI are seen as 'safer' than exploring the interpersonal dynamics that arise. Another possible factor is time: there may not be a willingness to adopt the incremental change sponsored by Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, and Corley (2013), Hatch (1993), or Rude (2013c, 2013d) as integral to enduring cultural transformation. A robust opportunity exists for advancing a research agenda that empirically affiliates the mutually beneficial relationship between EI and organizational culture using the action learning vehicle.

EI demands reflection and inquiry, which parallels action learning (Marquardt, 2011), pragmatism (Dewey, 1916 et seq) and deuterio-learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978). These challenges confront organizations whose canonical features currently detract from learning advancements. This manuscript is a step towards addressing this nascent learning and knowledge opportunity by forwarding a research proposal that should provide fruitful results and implications for furthering this worthwhile discourse. In showcasing action learning's potential, I believe that the prospects for emergent practice-theory approaches and applications that fuse EI with organizational culture and learning are tremendously exciting.

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