**The Fifth Frame**

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**Abstract**

Bolman and Deal (2017) presented four traditional frames of reference through which the complexity of an organization and its issues can be discerned. They identified the (a) structural, (b) human resources, (c) political, and (d) symbolic frames as the classifications for understanding the challenges in the body of an organization. For the purposes of this article, we, the authors, defined, summarized, and provided examples of each of the four frames. Furthermore, we developed the idea for and assessed the use of a new frame that accounts for a less tangible but critical element of an organization's essence. We discussed the “eudemonia” frame as one that people use to understand the perceived harmonious synergy of an organization and its relation to many critical components. The proposed new frame serves as a grounding force enabling anyone utilizing the four frames to recenter and refocus their interpretation of a complex issue in an organization’s core. It serves as an additional lens through which organization members calibrate thoughts and analysis to ensure a greater level of synergy between the perception of the individuals and the overall well-being of the organization as its own entity. Much like a tuning fork can be struck against a variety of objects to align sound frequencies, the fifth frame can be applied to all frames of thinking to gauge alignment of strategic thinking, decision making, problem solving, collaboration, and success in any organizational context.

*Keywords*: educational leadership, eudemonia, frames of reference, harmonious resonance, organizational theory, synergy

As students in a Futuristic Organizational Theory doctoral class, we studied Bolman and Deal’s (2017) theory of the four frames: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic, through which issues and challenges of organizations can be understood. Through our study of the frames, we developed an idea for a fifth theoretical frame. We discussed the benefit of adding a frame called “eudemonia.” In essence, leaders can use this frame to understand the experience of organization members as they perceive the synergy or harmonious resonance of all components of the organization. This universally experienced tone of open mindedness, approachability, positivity, and wellness, as it is experienced by the organization as a whole, becomes the frequency to which each element of the organization tunes. While we considered other terms for the name of this frame, we felt it was necessary to capture a holistic sense of wellness and jocundity. The metaphor for understanding this frame is the tuning fork of the organization. Essentially, this frame overlays the other four frames as a comprehensive lens for understanding how all aspects of the framework, and the organization, are tuned to an effective harmonious resonance experienced by the members of the organization (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Interconnected Nature of the Eudemonia Frame*

Diagram

Description automatically generated

*Note.* This figure is a conceptualization of the interconnectivity of the eudemonia frame with the other frames discussed by Bolman and Deal (2017).

The landscape of public education in the 21st century abounds with complexities, nuances, and challenges that were previously inconceivable. In a day and age where educational leaders are faced with an array of contexts and circumstances that involve a variety of stakeholders, ever-evolving demands, and limited resources, the need for strategic thinking, collaboration, and innovation cannot be over emphasized. Sasnett and Ross (2007) wrote, “Bolman and Deal note that leaders view organizational experiences according to leadership styles or frames. They define the four frames of leadership as structural, human resources, political, and symbolic” (p. 1). The addition of the eudemonia frame serves to provide a space for people to address the synergy of all components of their organization and establish metrics of measurement to determine the perception of members as it relates to the harmonious resonance they are experiencing.

**The Four Frames of Leadership**

**Structural Frame**

According to Bolman and Deal (2017), the structural frame focuses on clear organizational goals and the roles and relationships of individuals and groups within an organization. In the structural frame, the priority is to help the people and groups in the organization meet the goals and mission of the organization in the most effective ways possible. Organization members who view problems through the structural frame try to minimize personal distractions in favor of focusing on the organization’s mission and goals. Organizational leaders attempt to increase productivity and effectiveness by getting the right people in the correct roles and utilizing the appropriate structures to assist each person or group in meeting their goals. People use the structural frame to create and maintain structures and policies that assure the effective coordination of organizational goals, strategies, technology, and people. Prioritizing effective structures ensures that resources (i.e., people), training, communication, time, and money, are used effectively. The structural frame establishes the mission, goals, and expectations for the organization, people, and the design of the work to enhance the organization’s accomplishments.

Organization members who develop effective structures to assess issues and institute and track changes are more likely to assist the organization in its success. Changing institutional structures works well when goals are clear, when cause-and-effect relationships are well understood, and when there is little conflict, uncertainty, or ambiguity. This frame focuses on the “how” of change. People using the structural frame primarily focus on strategy, clarifying tasks and responsibilities, setting measurable goals and deadlines, and creating systems and protocols that enhance the work of the organization’s members. Within the scope of the structural frame, the organization itself can be thought of as a well-oiled machine, requiring precision movements of many cogs. As such, leaders and their teams need to be direct, focused, and methodical.

**Political Frame**

The political frame takes on a perspective that aids people in viewing organizations as ongoing contests of opposing viewpoints that arise from individual and group interests (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Bolman and Deal (2017) acknowledged there is a large percentage of people around the globe who despise politics and politicians. More importantly, they pointed out that, “a jaundiced view of politics constitutes a serious threat to individual and organization effectiveness” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 185). In a podcast interview for Nestell & Associates (2022), Bolman stated the political framework typically has two conditions. The first condition is a scarcity of resources, such as money, and the second is that some individuals or groups have thoughts on how resources should be distributed. This can lead to conflict, which leads to power becoming a key resource (Nestell & Associates, 2022). Organizations are made up of individuals and groups of people who compete for resources. Individuals may be in one or several groups within the organization that have opposing interests, values, and/or beliefs on how the resources should be allocated. These opposing views create a need or wanting for power and control, which may cause individuals or groups to attempt to coerce, build coalitions, and negotiate to achieve their agenda. The political frame discusses the need for power within organizations to reach goals and objectives, which puts politics at the apex of any decisions that are made.

The political frame plays an integral part in the education system. When a school district has leaders who respond to the individuals and groups within that organization, there is a general cohesiveness, which, in turn, leads to better student outcomes. When leaders bargain for and allocate scarce resources effectively, positive results may occur (Bolman & Deal, 2017). After collecting 7 years of student achievement data in one school district, Hoogseen (2020) identified collective efficacy as an important factor in sustaining progress, raising student achievement, and closing the achievement gap among diverse populations. In terms of the political frame, this sense of power, or the ability to achieve a goal, benefited students. It appears that in this case, power adhered to the collective group and through bargaining, educators created a cohesive, synergetic school. When individuals and groups are working in this type of environment and are seeking the same outcome with scarce resources, there can be positive outcomes.

**Human Resource Frame**

Bolman and Deal (1991) discussed the human resource frame as, "focusing on human needs and assuming organizations that meet basic human needs will work better than those that do not" (p. 151). Leaders who validate feelings and relationships inspire their employees to perform their jobs at a higher level and with a sense of empowerment (Manix et al., 2021). Human resource leaders look at problems through interpersonal terms and search for ways to harmoniously adjust the organization to fit the people, or they adjust the people to fit the organization’s synergy (Tan et al., 2015). Leaders who value the human resource frame also value relationships and feelings and seek to lead through facilitation and empowerment (Tan et al., 2015).

The human resource frame is a critical lens to use within education. Schools have vision and mission statements to describe their founding purpose and significant organizational commitments. It is the why and what they do. Tan et al. (2015) noted organization leaders must fit the right people to the right job. In addition, leaders need to hire people who believe in and will facilitate the shared vision and mission for a school to run harmoniously. The staff within the facility sets the tone for how the day will run for students and how successfully the year will end. A good leader is like the conductor of an orchestra. They must ensure all are playing together and in the right key.

As in education, organizational leaders must fit the right people into the right roles in the world of business. When a leader is given a program to manage, they must select staff leaders willing to work together to create a shared vision. These individuals then choose and support the right personnel within their areas of responsibility to do the job and achieve the program goals. The leaders must set daily, weekly, and monthly meetings at all levels to facilitate communication and avoid organizational conflict so all voices are heard. Also, leaders must use the information gathered at these meetings and be receptive to the ideas and input generated from all members of their teams.

**Symbolic Frame**

Bolman and Deal’s (2017) symbolic frame includes three central components: meaning, belief, and faith, all of which are at the core of any individual’s synergy or organization’s harmonious resonance. Often, organizations create and use symbols to exemplify these critical pieces because, “Symbols carry powerful intellectual and emotional messages; they speak to both the mind and the heart” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 243). Leaders and followers use myths, vision, stories, heroes and heroines, rituals, and ceremonies to symbolize their “why,” or the reason they invest time and energy into their responsibilities. Like a temple, which is Bolman and Deal’s (2017) metaphor for the symbolic frame, these symbols represent more than what is on the surface. They remind organization members about what they stand for and help them feel special about what they do. With these well-established symbols, people carry history, values, and group identities into future tasks. It is through these symbols, whether tangible or not, that leaders and followers produce a culture in which everyone feels connected and purposeful.

         In the corporate world, BMW was the perfect example of the ways in which a business can use the symbolic frame to enhance performance and improve culture. In the 1950s, BMW almost went bankrupt when they invested in two new car models that did not find success in the consumer market (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Instead of closing the business’s doors, the executives invested in a new mindset, one saturated with the need for openness, breaking down barriers among workers, and generating commitment. When BMW established these values, or symbols, they used them as a focus for hiring the right people, a process that only included those who shared the same values. Once hired, designers, workers, engineers, and managers trained new employees in the BMW Way by providing them with an education on the business’s history and mission (Bolman & Deal, 2017). In doing so, the company provided ways for everyone to informally relate to one another from the start, encouraging the need for connectivity. BMW used values and stories not only as symbols, but as the driving force behind hiring and keeping employees who all share the same “why.” This is a key component of a successful business.

         The education field is ripe with symbols. They are both tangible and unseen, considering the use of mascots, vision statements, shared values, traditions, stories, school colors, and so on. Although it is not often spoken about, one of the strongest symbols a school can produce is a hero or heroine. For example, Bolman and Deal (2017) wrote about a gentleman named Joe Vallejo, who served as the custodian at a junior high school in California. Not only did Joe complete his daily job responsibilities, he also provided many other services to students and their families, including giving feedback to teachers, acting as a liaison between families and the school, and helping to reach compromises at parent-teacher conferences. After he retired, the school commissioned a patio to be named in his honor, which is still there today, even after his passing. Staff and families keep his legacy alive through the stories they carry into the future. Therefore, he serves as a symbol that binds the school and community together. Educational organizations can use symbols in many ways, but all stakeholders need them to have a sense of identity, connectedness, and purpose.

**The Unifying Frame: Eudemonia**

Eudemonia, stemming from the Greek Eudaimonia, is a term that describes the overall state of being regarding the wellbeing of a specific entity (Moore, 2022). Eudemonia is a complex concept in that “. . . eudaimonia has the whole element of subjectivity built into it. It is simultaneously both less and more prescriptive and dives quite deeply into the ideas of virtues and virtue ethics” (Moore, 2022, p. 4). In organizations that have members who strive to produce products, experiences, or services that meet the ethical needs of that organization, eudemonia describes the transverse state of ethical well-being. Bastos (2022) described eudemonia as well-being related to “optimal experiences and functioning” (p. 3). This description aligns with the vision of many organizations. Bastos went on to elaborate that a eudemonia existence means to “know what goals you have . . . express your goals” (p. 27), which is similarly aligned with the symbolic frame. Also, Bastos expressed that eudemonia means “developing your best potentials” (p. 27) which often happens within the human resources frame, “engaging in activities” (p. 27) which relates to the political frame, and “focusing on capabilities and skills” (p. 27), which can be most seen in the structural frame of an organization.

Many people may be able to identify an organization in which they have been involved where the eudemonia frame needed intervention and focus. In these cases, people may describe the organization as having a negative feeling. They may label their time with the organization as something they dreaded or a place in which they struggled to find purpose or make connections. One cause of this may be the harmonious resonance or synergy of the organization was not in alignment with their own anticipation of what participating in an organization would feel like. The environment and climate of the organization may have felt uncomfortable, unsupportive, hostile, or even toxic. In these organizational cultures, it can be difficult to pinpoint what is making the experience challenging; nonetheless, the feeling remains intensely undesirable.

**Structural and Eudemonia Frames**

When one considers the structures within an organization, one thinks about the policies, procedures, schedules, day-by-day operations, systems, and structures that are in place. These structures are generally designed with the intent to ensure that an organization’s everyday functioning is conducive to meeting and achieving desired goals. Conversely, a disconnect between structural elements and an individual’s synergy or organization’s harmonious resonance can create discord, deplete precious time and resources, and hinder progress toward achieving intended outcomes and goals. Within an educational setting, for example, a school’s goal usually includes ensuring equitable practices and structures are in place so that all students can learn and meet grade level learning outcomes. However, when instructional practices, course offerings, student schedules, and structural deficiencies exist that enable some but not all students to meet these goals, a disconnect between the structural and eudemonia frame is evidenced. Similarly, a car manufacturing organization may have the goal of mass producing their quality product to maximize profit on the market. However, should the same manufacturer lack the infrastructure and staffing needed to operate machinery, conduct quality control tests, and ensure the proper materials exist to manufacture the vehicles, the goals of the manufacturer cannot be realized.

The eudemonia frame ensures that structural deficiencies can be identified and addressed in a way that fosters individual synergy and collective, harmonious resonance within the community. The strike of the eudemonia tuning fork enables any stakeholder in an educational community to realize that revision to instructional practice, student scheduling, and course offerings might be necessary to better align with the overall purpose and harmonious resonance of the organization. A striking of the same metaphorical tuning fork reverberates the disconnect between the day-to-day structures of car manufacturing and the manufacturer’s overall purpose. Subsequent actions may address staging deficiencies, solutions to material shortages, and new processes that streamline quality control testing. Be it within an educational community, a car manufacturing corporation, or elsewhere, the structural calibration of the eudemonia frame affords groups and individuals the purpose to use one’s gifts to help others, thereby raising each individual’s sense of synergy and efficacy within any organizational context.

**Political and Eudemonia Frames**

The political framework plays an integral role in any organization. There is often daily conflict between the power, the coalitions, and the interest groups due to their differences in values, beliefs, information, interests, resources, and perceptions of reality. The political framework within the public school system is typically unbalanced. Educational equity for students, classroom sizes, curriculum, staff salary, and teacher workload are a few pieces of public education that can be lopsided toward one or more groups. When there is an offset between interest groups, there can be disproportionate visions and general angst within the system. For example, when federal or state testing agencies report poor standardized assessment scores, then teachers and administrators may request better testing methods. If no changes are made, there can be an imbalance in power, resulting in poor harmonious resonance and synergy. Contrarily, when the federal and state testing systems send out surveys and representatives to ascertain the problems and listen to and respond positively to educators, there can be a synergetic positive harmony within the political framework.

The eudemonia framework ensures a balance within the political framework. When those who have authority and power truly comprehend the issues among different coalitions and then make amenable changes, leaders can create harmonious resonance. The eudemonic tuning of the fork can reverberate when there is synergy among individual perceptions, coalitions, and individuals within the public-school setting. When those in power assess the pulse of different coalitions through positive bargaining agreements, attend to the needs of identified coalitions, and seek out any issues that may be surfacing, they develop a positive political framework. As an additional benefit, they may increase synergy and create positive outcomes for all students and staff within the school system they serve.

**Human Resource and Eudemonia Frames**

Villajos et al. (2019) postulated a theory that "Human Resource (HR) practices can contribute to the development of idiosyncratic deals (negotiation of individual HR practices) that might facilitate employees' creativity, and eudemonic well-being in the long term and, thus, the sustainability of these organizations" (p. 1). Eudemonia can be defined as happiness, welfare, well-being, and sometimes the science of happiness (Moore, 2022). Villajos et al. noted that positive HR practices may be linked to improved performance and increased well-being. When employees participate in human resource practices, their leaders consider their needs and inclinations. This participation can prevent problems and create a more supportive environment, thereby creating a state of creating eudemonic well-being (Villajos et al., 2019). In essence, eudemonia and the human resource frames are inextricably linked because they are tied together by a focus on everyone’s synergy and the organization’s harmonious resonance, which both contribute to overall well-being.

**Symbolic and Eudemonia Frames**

         The symbolic frame in any organization encompasses the ways in which symbols portray meaning, belief, and faith. Symbols can be just about anything, but Bolman and Deal (2017) highlighted myths, vision, values, heroes and heroines, stories and fairy tales, rituals, ceremonies, metaphors, humor, and play as the prominent vessels for symbolic meaning. Together and separately, these symbols hold all kinds of meanings with positive and negative connotations. Ideally, symbols embody and portray the mind and heart, or eudemonia, of an organization. Leaders and followers must continuously use symbols as ways to tune into the harmonious resonance of their organization. To achieve this synergy, they need to use their tuning fork to check the frequency at which they serve their inner purpose.

When considering the symbolic frame and its connection to eudemonia, there are a few types of symbols that stand out from the rest, primarily because they create happiness and well-being through a sense of purpose. An individual’s “why” or purpose of action can be found in myths, vision, values, and heroes and heroines. Bolman and Deal (2017) described myths, vision, and values as symbols that, “imbue an organization with deep purpose and resolve” (p. 248). Myths are typically the stories behind the development of any organization, and they help to reiterate purpose and meaning. For example, when Southwest Airlines Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Herb Kelleher readied the company’s first plane for flight and met resistance from a Texas sheriff, he ordered his staff to fly the plane anyway, and even made an offbeat comment about leaving tire tracks on the sheriff’s uniform if necessary (Bolman & Deal, 2017). In a way, Kelleher’s fantastical declaration, as well as the myth itself, set the course for Southwest Airlines and became a symbol that displayed the company’s purpose and “why” regarding persistence. Kelleher’s story became a symbol all organization members could discuss and use to feel the harmonious resonance it takes to achieve a goal.

Furthermore, myths help to build values and vision, which are all symbols found in this frame that epitomize eudemonia. Essentially, values help people feel special regarding what they do every day (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The values that matter most are the ones that organization members live and breathe—the ones directly connected to their purpose, happiness, well-being, and synergy. In any organization, vision is created when members shape their values and purpose into what their organization will look like in the future. Vision embodies an organization’s resolve (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The Malala Fund, founded in 2013 by Malala and Ziauddin Yousafzai, is a non-profit that holds its vision at its core and makes all decisions based on how each step will take that vision into the future. In essence, their harmonious resonance, that sense of collective synergy, impacts every single decision. Their purpose for action is the education of all girls world-wide, with a vision that one day, all girls will have access to free secondary education. To achieve this vision, the organization invests in education activists, advocates to hold leaders accountable, and raises girls’ voices for all to hear (Malala Fund, n.d.). Each of these actions move stheir vision forward.

**The Malala Fund**

         The Malala Fund is an organization that uses numerous symbols as a tuning fork to constantly return to the need for individual happiness, well-being, and synergy. This organization uses a heroine, stories, values, and vision to justify its call to action, which is free access to public education for all girls worldwide. The hero of the organization is Malala herself, but her father, Ziauddin, plays a huge role as well. In 2008, when the Taliban, an extremist terrorist group, took control of Malala’s hometown in Pakistan, they forbade girls from going to school. Ziauddin, the headmaster of a girls’ school in their village, continued to operate his school anyway. He knew and understood the importance of providing an education for everyone, regardless of a terrorist group’s order. In 2009, Malala, with the encouragement of her father, began to speak out against the Taliban’s rule regarding girls and education. She gave speeches in public areas, continued to go to school every day, and even allowed filmmakers to produce a documentary about her family and their struggles in Taliban-ruled Pakistan, all of which put a deathly target on her back. In 2012, on her way home from school on a public bus, a Taliban member shot Malala in the head. She woke up 10 days later in a British hospital and withstood 2 years’ worth of surgeries and rehabilitation in the recovery process. Although she has not returned to her beloved Pakistan since the day she was shot, she and her father made a choice to establish The Malala Fund and continue to fight for girls’ rights to education, regardless of the danger. In 2014, Malala became the youngest person to win the Nobel Peace Prize (Malala Fund, n.d.; Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013). Clearly, Malala is a hero who influences her organization members’ decisions and actions. Paired with the story of her near death, her heroism and resolve to continue fighting for her values and vision, regardless of the threats from extremist terrorist groups, have allowed The Malala Fund to invest 22 million dollars into girls’ education in eight countries on multiple continents (Malala Fund, n.d.). These symbols and the organization’s adherence to their eudemonia, or their harmonious resonance, has created a situation for success.

         Furthermore, The Malala Fund has a very specific strategic plan directly aligned to their vision and values. The organization stated their vision as, “A world where every girl can choose her own future” (Lei et al., 2020, p. 4). Their values encompass the importance of setting ambitious goals, daring to be brave, valuing differences, thinking creatively, and acting with integrity. Together, the organization’s vision and values impact every decision the members make because each outcome must positively impact their purpose and keep them in harmony with one another. Because they continuously align with their eudemonia, they are able to use their tuning fork synergy to work toward their goals, which are to challenge the norms that limit girls’ potential, increase investment in girls’ education, improve education quality for all, develop a global network of advocates, deliver change in specific geographical locations, and turn up the volume on girls’ voices (Lei et al., 2020). Through the development of their strategic plan and its adherence to the organization’s vision, values, and goals, the members have created a symbol they can use to remind themselves of their purpose for action every minute of every day, which can only result in positive impacts on their well-being. Altogether, their hero, her story, their vision, and their values are not just symbols used to enhance their symbolic frame, they are the vessels through which members create harmonious resonance and show courage in doing so.

**Conclusion**

Eudemonia is the unifying frame that provides organizations with ways to view issues regarding the synergy of every element that makes up an organization. The eudemonia frame is the keystone of an interconnectivity between all four frames outlined by Bolman and Deal (2017) in *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*. Members of an organization benefit from continued work and progress in the areas related to the harmonious resonance maintained by that organization. More studies should be done in research topics related to the eudemonia frame and its impact on organizational success. The development of this fifth frame will allow organizations a framework to view challenges, issues, or successes within the synergy of their institution.

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