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Lewin’s Leadership Legacy

By Neil E. Grunberg

Abstract

Kurt Lewin’s intellectual contributions mirror his Gestalt philosophy. That is, each of his individual theoretical and experimental contributions to action research and group dynamics had value; together they formed a whole greater than the sum of the parts. Remarkably, his work from almost a century ago regarding organization development and social psychological processes continues to be relevant today. This paper begins with Lewin’s lessons that I learned from his mentees. Next, several of Lewin’s contributions are discussed with regard to leadership. Then, the influence of this work on current concepts of leadership assessment and development, change leadership, and team performance is presented with regard to the Leader-Follower Framework (LF2) and the “AID” approach to optimize team performance—Adaptive, Innovative, Distributed Leadership and Followership.

Keywords: leadership, followership, field theory in social science, change theory, leader-follower framework (LF2), adaptive-innovative-distributed (AID) approach

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Introduction

As a student in the 1970s, I was introduced to Lewin’s work and was inspired by its originality and applicability to real-world issues. For decades, I approached my own research on addiction, stress, and behavioral health with Lewin’s problem-focused, action-oriented, socially-relevant approach in mind. I gained an even greater appreciation of Lewin’s work a decade ago when tasked to help create a leadership education and development program for health-care professionals. As my colleagues and I dove into the leadership literature, I was struck by the value of several of Lewin’s conceptual contributions to leadership development and team building, including Leadership Styles, Field Theory in Social

Science, and Change Theory. Although Lewin has continued to be cited in organization development, sociology, and social psychology publications, too few modern leadership scholars, educators, coaches, and practitioners are aware of much of Lewin’s work central to leadership and teams.

For my contribution to this special issue of *OD Review*, I share lessons learned indirectly and directly from Lewin and applied to my study of leadership during the past 10 years. First, I summarize several of Lewin’s lessons that were ingrained in me primarily from his mentee and my Ph.D. mentor, Stanley Schachter, and also that I learned from two of Lewin’s other mentees, Leon Festinger and Morton Deutsch. Next, I summarize Lewin’s

lessons that I have found particularly useful from his published work. Then, I explain how these lessons have influenced my scholarship, especially my study, publications, and teaching regarding leadership, followership, and teamwork.

Lewin's Lessons Through his Mentees

Lesson #1: Explain complex concepts in understandable ways

My introduction to Kurt Lewin was in a graduate course in Social Psychology in 1975 at Columbia University. Stanley Schachter—my Ph.D. mentor and, himself, a mentee of Lewin—assigned us portions of *Field Theory in Social Science* (Lewin, 1951). We were expected to be able to understand, explain, and apply Lewin's notions of life space, tensors, vectors, hodological space, tension, force, locomotion, barriers to completion, goal regions, and so on, as well as the derivation of the Zeigarnik Effect. That experience is burned into my memory (perhaps I never fully completed my understanding of these concepts and, according to the Zeigarnik Effect, uncompleted tasks are remembered, whereas completed tasks are forgotten) for several reasons: (1) the material did not resemble in any way the Social Psychology undergraduate course I took at Stanford University; (2) the mathematical organization appealed to me because I had earned my undergraduate degree in Medical Microbiology and "hard" sciences; (3) after the most mathematically-gifted graduate student answered questions about Lewin's concepts and derivations, Professor Schachter looked intensely at the rest of the class, asked if the explanation was correct, and I nodded—that was a mistake. The next thing I knew Schachter looked at me and said, "Grunberg, you're nodding, so you agree with those answers? Then explain Lewin's concepts in your own words and derive the implications of the concepts in a different way that makes sense." My memory of the episode after that was largely expunged because of my racing heart rate, through-the-roof blood pressure, and completion of the task. But apparently I responded adequately because Schachter said nothing after my response.

Most importantly, I learned the importance of being able to explain complex concepts in my own words and in an understandable way to others. Lewin's lesson #1 to explain all concepts clearly and without jargon has guided my teaching, scientific presentations, professional writing, interviews with journalists, testimony as an expert witness, and podcasts for the general public.

Lesson #2: Maximize perspectives to address questions

As I earned my Ph.D. in Psychology, I frequently interacted with a well-known Lewin mentee, Leon Festinger. I learned that my mentor Stanley Schachter had joined the Lewin group after World War II to earn a Ph.D. with Lewin; that Lewin passed away unexpectedly and prematurely; so Schachter completed his doctoral dissertation with Festinger's guidance who had completed his own doctoral studies with Lewin and was Lewin's Assistant Professor (in the European tradition). Interestingly, Festinger always referred to Schachter as his colleague and fellow graduate student, while Schachter referred to Festinger as his colleague and doctoral dissertation adviser. They both had a similar intense, critical, intimidating interpersonal style. In marked contrast, I also had the good fortune to study social psychology and conflict resolution with Morton Deutsch at Columbia—another Lewin mentee. Deutsch's interpersonal style was gentle, warm, and supportive, in marked contrast to Schachter and Festinger. Over the years I met other Lewin students and was struck how they all were bright and passionate about their work, yet they had extremely different personalities, perspectives, interpersonal styles, and interests. I remembered and applied Lewin's lesson #2 regarding the value of different perspectives as I grew my own group of dozens of talented graduate students, research assistants, and collaborators and sought to maximize diversity of perspectives around shared interests and problems in order to learn as much as possible about each issue and its interpretation by others.

Lesson #3: Think creatively

Lewin's creative approach to each topic he studied inspired my own out-of-the-box thinking which I brought to studies of addiction, stress, traumatic brain injury, and eventually leadership and followership. In my graduate program, we were required to write an original paper applying some aspect of mathematics to psychology. Columbia University had a tradition of Psychophysics and had merged its Ph.D. programs in Experimental Psychology and Social Psychology, separating them from the Clinical Psychology program at Columbia's Teacher's College where Professor Deutsch taught. Most of my peers focused on statistical analyses or mathematical applications, such as Markov Chains, multidimensional scaling, Bayesian vs. non-Bayesian statistics, and so on. I decided to learn more about Lewin's work, so I tackled his 1936 *Principles of Topological Psychology*. I was drawn to this title because I had previously studied elementary topology in an advanced mathematics class and could not figure out how topology—or "rubber sheet geometry"—could possibly apply to social psychology. My eyes and mind were opened by Lewin's attempt in this work and in his 1951 *Field Theory in Social Science* to conceptualize and "mathematize" the tensions and forces acting on each of us within our own life spaces, from other people, and from situations, as well as the relationships among people who enter our life spaces. This innovative merging and application of concepts across disciplines along with the application of principles of topology to frame the relationships and forces on thinking and behaving was a marked departure from the use of a more standard, Euclidian geometry and was an extraordinary insight of Lewin and his lesson #3.

Lesson #4: Get out of the ivory tower (conduct "Action Research")

Although I joined Schachter's laboratory to study drug addiction, at the beginning of my second year of graduate work, Schachter decided that we were to study the psychology of money. Choosing to come to the Columbia Psychology Research Ph.D. program because of its reputation for

scientific and experimental rigor, having focused my undergraduate studies on medical sciences, and having just completed an intense Summer Medical Physiology course at Columbia's College of Physicians & Surgeons, I thought that Schachter was joking. It was, however, no joke. In fact, this departure from my research experience only conducting controlled laboratory experiments proved to be a valuable lesson how to initiate and conduct a new line of research relevant to the human condition. Rather than churn out laboratory study after laboratory study focused on nar-

in rats and worked in an operant psychology laboratory to try to create a miser rat who bar pressed for tokens to exchange for other tokens or for food (I named that particular rat "Stan"—you can imagine how that went over). We also visited with and learned from executives at a world-class New York City department store about how they advertised, marketed, and organized goods to maximize sales. I could go on and on about the "real world" outside the ivory tower of academia approaches through which we tried to gain multiple perspectives about the psychology of money. When

and colleagues was their study and identification of leadership styles. As my colleagues and I developed the initial version of our conceptual framework regarding leader assessment and development, we realized that Lewin's elegant, overarching formulation, $B = f(P, E)$, also was extremely relevant. Broadening our work from leaders to leadership; to include followers and followership; and to address team building, morale, cohesiveness, and performance; we realized that Field Theory in Social Science provided a valuable conceptual guide. Most recently, in our attempt to describe how to optimize team performance, we built upon Lewin's discussion of Change. Each of these topics is addressed below with a brief summary of the core principles offered by Lewin in the first half of the 20th Century and how they influenced and were incorporated into our current, 21st Century conceptualizations of leadership, followership, and team-building.

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Leaders and Leadership Styles

Lewin and colleagues initiated the description and study of various leadership styles and their impact on the behavior of followers. In a pioneering study, Lewin, Lip-pitt, and White (1939) studied behaviors of participants in small groups experiencing three different leadership styles: authoritarian (or autocratic), democratic (or participative), and laissez-faire (or delegative). This identification and study of three different leadership styles was a marked departure from the focus on the abilities, attributes, and actions of individual leaders professed by Thomas Carlyle (circa 1840) as "Great Man Theory" and appearing in stories from antiquity, including Homer's epic poems, the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey* (8th Century B.C.E.). Lewin et al.'s three types of leadership, in contrast, focused on actions and functional relationships among participants in small groups, consistent with his work on group dynamics. Lewin and colleagues' distinction among leadership styles inspired many scholars, directly and indirectly, to study and consider relevance and effects of different types of leaders and leadership. Day (2001) distinguished between leaders and leadership;

row topics, I learned the value of gathering information from various sources, people, and settings in the community to investigate and solve issues. In other words, I learned how to conduct "action research" to complement more traditional, experimental approaches that we used. For example, in addition to literature reviews that we conducted relevant to the psychology of money, Schachter brought in real-world (i.e., outside academia) experts in finance, investing, tax law, trusts & estates law, marketing, and so on to tutor us about their perspectives regarding the psychology of money. We interviewed and studied all sorts of people about their views and practices relevant to money. I, for example, was assigned to become an expert on Andrew Carnegie, why and how he became a philanthropist. We designed and conducted human laboratory studies to compare reactions to gaining versus losing money. In addition, we observed hoarding behaviors

Schachter said, "I want you to follow, befriend, and interview 'bag ladies' about their collections of garbage," that was too much for me, and I finally had the courage to say, "No!" Yet, I did not realize that I was indirectly learning Lewin's lesson #4: to pay attention to issues in the real world, to leave the ivory tower and get into the field across the moat, to learn about and to address and attempt to solve socially-relevant questions/topics/issues/problems. The value of action research along with rigorous laboratory studies has stayed with me for the past 45 years.

Lewin's Lessons Through His Scholarship Relevant to Leadership

Evidenced by the varied contributions to this special issue of the *OD Review*, Lewin's work influenced several different important topics. With regard to leadership *per se*, the most apparently relevant work of Lewin

he referred to leaders as human capital and intrapersonal characteristics, as contrasted with leadership as social capital and interpersonal relationships and activities. Many different types and styles of leaders and leadership have been offered following Lewin et al.'s pioneering work, including (partial list in alphabetical order): adaptive, affiliative, allostatic, authentic, authoritative, autocratic, change, charismatic, coercive, collective, courageous, cross-cultural, democratic, distributed, facilitative, heart-centered, innovative, inspirational, laissez-faire, participative, resonant, servant, shared, situational, strategic, thought, transactional, transformational, visionary, and so on (Day & Antonakis, 2012; Grunberg & Barry, 2024; Heifetz et al., 2009; Metcalf et al., 2023; Northouse, 2021; Woods et al., 2004). Consideration of what leaders do and how they relate to and influence others' (i.e., followers') attitudes and behaviors derives from Lewin's study of leadership styles.

Leaders and leadership are irrelevant and meaningless without followers and followership. Followers are team members who contribute or do not to the activities and situations in which they work. Followership refers to the activities of individuals who are not in designated leadership roles. Followers and followership have received increased attention over the past several decades. Several scholars have offered distinctions about follower types and followership styles, just as Lewin initiated distinctions among leadership styles. Kelley (1988) proposed several different follower types based on the dimensions of dependent vs. independent thought and passive vs. active involvement. Chaleff (1995) distinguished among follower types based on their courage or lack of courage to support or to oppose the leader. Kellerman (2008) differentiated follower types based on their level of engagement. Barry and Grunberg (2020) considered and incorporated concepts from all of these approaches by distinguishing among followers according to a dimension of engagement (based on Kellerman and Kelley), an orthogonal dimension of extent of alignment with the leader and team, and considering whether followers

have the courage (based on Chaleff) to align or not with the leader and team.

Lewin's identification and discussion of leadership styles was only one aspect of his contributions to the study of leadership. His mathematical approach to describe and predict behaviors of individuals and of relationships among individuals is central to his influence on the study and understanding of leadership and followership.

$B = f(P, E)$

Lewin's *Principles of Topological Psychology* (1936) was presented in a mathematical style to describe and predict behaviors, cognitions, and motivations that was unique, and provided a foundation which he used to address relationships among people. He offered several equations to describe, explain, and predict human behavior: $B = f(S)$; $B = f(L)$; and $B = f(P, E)$, where B = behavior, f = function of, S = situation, L = life space, P = personal characteristics or simply person, E = environmental characteristics or simply environment. These equations are intended to convey that people's behaviors depend on situations in which they were (past experiences), are (present situation), and will be (future goals, plans, etc.). Or, in other terms, our behaviors depend on our "life space"—that is, the entirety of who we are, biologically and psychologically, and our lived experiences. The equation that includes P and E is the best known of these formulations and is, perhaps, the clearest presentation of these concepts and relationships. $B = f(P, E)$ is meant to convey that our behaviors depend on both who we are (P) and the environments (E) that we experience. P includes everything about each of us, biologically (including genetics, physical appearance, anatomy, physiology, physical health, injury, or illness, and so on) and psychologically (including personality, abilities, beliefs, biases, cognitions, motivations, emotions, and so on). E includes the psychological, physiological, physical, social, cultural environments which influence us, including what happened in our past, what we are currently experiencing, and what we anticipate, expect, or seek in the future. B depends on both P and E .

The comma between P and E is intended to convey that exactly how these elements combine, interact, or affect each other varies depending on the situation. In other words, according to Lewin, human behaviors are not singular and cannot be captured fully by trait theory; instead, human behaviors depend on who we are broadly within the situations, experiences, expectations, and contexts that comprise the "environments" of our life space.

Lewin did not restrict his study to individuals acting alone. Instead, he sought to understand behaviors of humans to influence and to be influenced by other humans—resulting in a vast array of interactions and relationships ranging from social support, sense of community, cooperation, mutual understanding, friendship, and love to tribalism, aggression, fear, hate, warfare, and genocide. Field Theory in Social Science attempted to provide a way to describe, study, understand, and predict relationships and interactions among people as well as the behaviors, cognitions, and motivations of individuals.

Field Theory in Social Science

Lewin's *Field Theory in Social Science* (1951) impacted ways to understand individual behaviors as well as social influence, leadership, and followership. He extended his notions of $B = f(P, E)$ and $B = f(L)$, where L includes P and E , to actions (or locomotions) within life spaces (L , or P and E) from descriptions of individuals to relationships among individuals and groups, including social impact. According to Field Theory, each person's B (behaviors or actions) depend upon factors that represent underlying motivations as well as the social environment or context in which we find ourselves. More specifically, Lewin proposed that:

- » Tensions and forces operate within each of us depending on our individual life space, including our cognitions (including beliefs, opinions, perceptions, thoughts), motivations (i.e., why we act and think as we do), and experiences, and influence whether and how we behave in each situation;

- » Tensions and forces within each of us are affected by our desires, concerns, aspirations that Lewin labeled as “goal regions” which either have positive or negative valence of varied quantity depending on whether and to what extent we want to reach or to avoid these goals;
- » Tensions and forces influencing our behaviors also result from interactions with other individuals, including whether we are motivated to affiliate with or to avoid others who “enter” or interact with our life space, and whether we are driven to be influenced by or ignore these others.

people and potential influence (a *sine qua non* for “leadership”).

Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950) conducted a remarkable field study that was derived from Field Theory and which revealed how relationships and interactions powerfully affect opinions and behaviors. They studied the behaviors, attitudes, opinions of people who lived in a university housing development that resulted in some people interacting more frequently based on their “functional distance” (i.e., the extent to which people run into each other) rather than on “physical distance” (i.e., the actual physical distance between spaces that people occupy) or initial

Lewin recognized the importance of understanding change and offered a simple, three-stage approach to conceptualize change that focused on organizational change and teams within the organization: unfreeze, change, and refreeze. First, identify systems, processes, practices, culture, etc. currently “frozen” in place and “unfreeze” them (i.e., accept that change is needed). Second, determine exactly what needs to be changed and how to make the changes. Third, establish or “freeze” new systems, processes, practices, culture, that seem more appropriate for the organization.

In addition, according to Field Theory, there are barriers and variables that affect our ability to think about and to “locomote” (i.e., behave actively) within our life space. Field Theory proposed that the geometric subfield of topology is most relevant to describe the relationships and interactions of people’s life spaces with each other, including leaders and followers, and the activities of leadership and followership. Topology (also known as “rubber sheet geometry”) was used as the mathematical construct within Field Theory to describe relationships and social influence among individuals because it emphasizes connections and interactions *per se*, rather than using finite metrics of distance and shape as described by traditional Euclidean geometry. As such, topology captures and highlights relationships among

personal preferences and activities. People who interact more frequently because their paths crossed were more likely to come to share opinions and become friends. For example, people who simply walked on the same path or down the same hallway, interacted more frequently, and came to share opinions and attitudes. In other words, people whose life spaces interacted more frequently had greater influence on each other than did people whose life spaces interacted less frequently—regardless of personality, backgrounds, life experiences, or physical proximity! Deutsch’s (1949) notions of promotive and contrient interdependence to describe cooperation versus competition, respectively, Festinger’s Theory of Social Comparison (1954), and Schachter’s Theory of Affiliation (1959) were, to some extent, extensions of Field

Theory with regard to types of interactions among several individuals’ life spaces.

Change Theory

It has been said that the only constant is change (Heraclitus, c. 500 B.C.E.). Leaders and followers must embrace change to allow individuals, teams, organizations, and systems to adapt and improve depending on the situation (Grunberg et al., 2023). Lewin (1947) recognized the importance of understanding change and offered a simple, three-stage approach to conceptualize change that focused on organizational change and teams within the organization: unfreeze, change, and refreeze. First, identify systems, processes, practices, culture, etc. currently “frozen” in place and “unfreeze” them (i.e., accept that change is needed). Second, determine exactly what needs to be changed and how to make the changes. Third, establish or “freeze” new systems, processes, practices, culture, that seem more appropriate for the organization. As with Lewin’s other concepts described briefly above, his approach to Change and Leadership influenced many others to address “change,” including our own concepts of change discussed below (Grunberg et al., 2023).

Lewin’s Influence on our Leadership Scholarship and Activities

In 2014, I was asked to help redesign my university’s leadership education program for medical students. Because our university educates medical students, advanced practice nursing students, psychologists, and dentists to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces and Public Health Service, leader and leadership education and development are central to our mission. To accomplish the assigned task, a core team was established that included individuals who had substantial knowledge and experience in military medical leadership, medical and graduate education, curriculum design, assessment, and relevant scholarship. My role on this new team was to ensure that we considered the extant leadership literature and best practices. That’s when I turned back to Lewin’s lessons. Our LEAD

(Leadership Education And Development) team:

- » Conducted thorough literature reviews that considered many perspectives relevant to the topic (Lewin's lesson #2)
- » Connected with people who had experience as leaders, studied leadership, provided leadership education and development programs (Lewin's lesson #4)
- » Considered all that was relevant and put it together in creative ways (Lewin's lesson #3)
- » Communicated a conceptual framework and education and development program designed to be understandable to learners (Lewin's lesson #1)

Our literature reviews included reading countless academic publications as well as consideration of many leader development programs provided by academic institutions, business consultants, and leadership coaches. Following Lewin's lessons to consider many different, relevant perspectives (lesson #2) and to get out of the Ivory Tower (lesson #4), we visited and learned from military leaders and educators at the U.S. Air Force Academy (Colorado Springs, CO), U.S. Coast Guard Academy (New London, CT), U.S. Military Academy (West Point, NY), and U.S. Naval Academy (Annapolis, MD). We also spoke with faculty members at the U.S. military "war colleges" (where senior leaders are trained) and with leadership scholars, educators, government leaders, health professionals, and business consultants outside the military. We attended conferences focused on leadership and hosted three leadership education summits to broaden and deepen our network of relevant contacts,

As Lewin is often quoted as saying, "There is nothing as practical as a good theory." Our own version of this maxim is that, "There is nothing as practical as a good conceptual framework." We scoured the literature to find a single, best conceptual framework upon which to base our leadership education and development program. We found many valuable and relevant approaches and lessons, but each seemed to be missing something

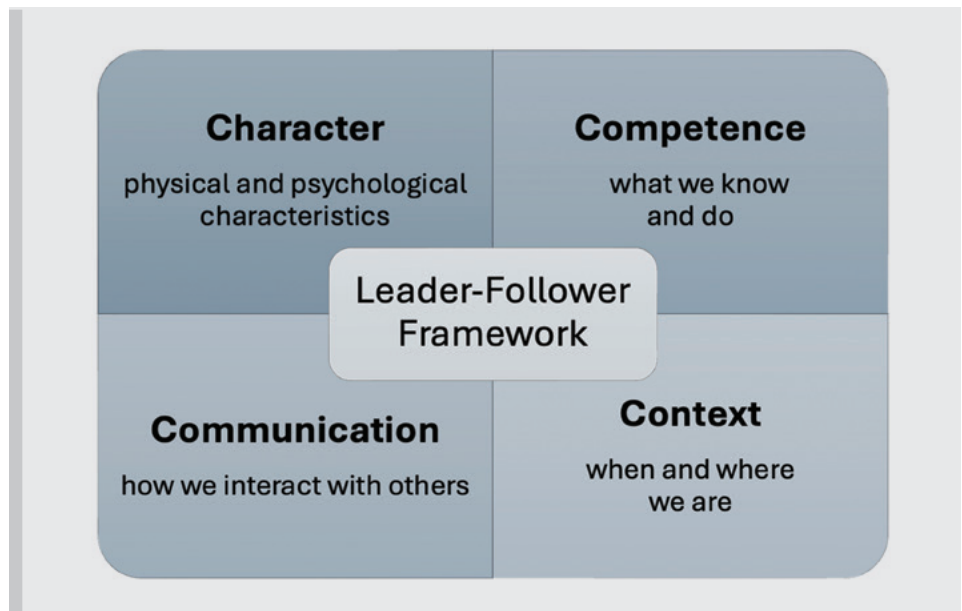


Figure 1. Leader-Follower Framework

collaborators, and advisers and to include many perspectives and experiences (Barry et al., 2018; Barry et al., 2019; Grunberg et al., 2018). We drew from all of these sources to formulate a creative and comprehensive conceptual framework for leader and leadership education and development (aka LEAD)(Lewin's lesson #3); to communicate it in an understandable manner (Lewin's lesson #1) and have continued to develop it based on experience and input from colleagues and learners . . . and, of course, based on Lewin's work.

The Leader-Follower Framework (LF2)

As Lewin is often quoted as saying, "There is nothing as practical as a good theory." Our own version of this maxim is that, "There is nothing as practical as a good conceptual framework." We scoured the literature to find a single, best conceptual framework upon which to base our leadership education and development program. We found many valuable and relevant

approaches and lessons, but each seemed to be missing something. So, instead, we extracted what we believed was the essence of several different approaches and, with Lewin in mind, organized the elements in an easily understandable manner.

We first identified four key elements of leadership to guide the assessment and development of leaders: Character, Competence, Context, Communication as shown in Figure 1.

- » Character (i.e., Who we are) refers to physical and psychological characteristics, including appearance, demographics, personality, values, biases. It is similar to Lewin's "P."
- » Competence (i.e., What we know and do) refers both to knowledge and skills relevant to specific roles as well as to transcendent or general leadership knowledge and skills (e.g., critical thinking, decision-making, problem solving, motivating others, emotional intelligence). It is an aspect of Lewin's "B."
- » Context (i.e., When and Where we are) refers to physical, psychological, social, and cultural environments. This broad notion of Context was inspired by Lewin's "E" and is meant to include all that is experienced within a life space.
- » Communication (i.e., How we interact with other people) includes sending and receiving information, verbally and nonverbally. Communication is another aspect of Lewin's "B."



Figure 2. Four Nested Levels of Psychosocial Interaction

These four elements operate across four levels of psychosocial interaction as shown in *Figure 2*:

- » Personal: the individual’s psychological and biological characteristics (Lewin’s “P”)
- » Interpersonal: dyadic relationships (interaction of two life spaces)
- » Team: group of people working together toward common goals (multiple life spaces)
- » Organizational: large groups and systems (an overarching collection of life spaces)

We initially coined the term FourCe-PITO for the four “C” elements operating across four psychosocial levels or PITO and to convey the strength of the elements (Callahan & Grunberg, 2019; Grunberg et al., 2018).

We came to understand that it was equally important to develop ourselves and others as leaders and followers, so we expanded our concepts and programs to include followers and followership and renamed our conceptual framework the Leader-Follower Framework or LF2 as shown in *Figure 1* (Barry & Grunberg,

2020). Lewin’s influence on this conceptual framework was substantial, especially the inclusion of elements that captured B, P, E, and which applied intrapersonally and interpersonally in accordance with Field Theory.

AID to Optimize Teams

The more we have learned, thought, taught, discussed, and written about leadership, the more we have come to appreciate the importance of team building, cohesiveness, morale, and performance. Field Theory, of course, addresses relationships among people and is, therefore, relevant to align the behaviors of team members (leaders and followers) toward common goals (i.e., “goal regions”). But to optimize team performance, it also is critical to accept and embrace change—including change in personnel, resources, and situations. Lewin’s Change Theory was quite simple but it spawned many other versions which all accept that change is necessary and inevitable. Recently, we brought together several different leadership approaches that include acceptance of change to “AID” teams: Adaptive, Innovative, and Distributed Leadership as shown in *Figure 3* (Grunberg & Barry, 2024). Each of these approaches relates to Lewin’s lessons and principles.

Adaptive leadership and followership refer to adaptation (or change) to challenging situations and variable, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments (Heifetz et al., 2009). Yarnell and Grunberg (2017) extended this approach to leadership and followership and coined the term “allostatic” leadership and followership to include learning, changing, and strengthening following each challenge. Similar to Lewin’s Change Theory, the Adaptive/Allostatic approach to enhance team effectiveness emphasizes changed responses during and after a given experience or situation in order to improve subsequent responses.

Innovative leadership and followership also emphasize change but in anticipation of, that is, before a given experience or situation (Metcalf et al., 2023). The innovative leadership and followership approach includes structured change within oneself and team members to achieve the most



Figure 3. Aid Leadership Model

engagement, cohesiveness, and performance of the team. This approach includes strategic, tactical, and holistic activities, as well as self-awareness, with regard to individual and organization development.

Perhaps the most challenging change for many people (especially for titular leaders) to optimize team performance is to interact in ways that get the most from each team member; that is, to structure and perform as a team that allows for every member to lead and to follow, depending on intrapersonal and interpersonal variables. Or, in other words, to change in accordance with the interaction of the life spaces of all team members to optimize team mission and goals

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(i.e., to enter common goal regions). To this end, we advocate three related, but distinct approaches to leadership and followership: distributed, shared, and collective. Distributed leadership and followership emphasize interactions among team members (similar to Field Theory) and distribution of leadership and followership roles, tasks, and responsibilities among the team members depending on the situation; context; knowledge, skills, and abilities of the team members, i.e., $B = f(S)$; $B = f(P, E)$ (Woods et al., 2004). Shared leadership and followership refer to participation and collaboration among all team members and emphasizes the influence of the group (Carson et al., 2007). Collective leadership and followership refers to equal participation among all team members (Yammarino et al., 2012).

Summary

Kurt Lewin's indirect and direct contributions to study, understand, and develop leadership, followership, and teamwork are substantial and continue to be valuable today. Lewin's indirect influence includes lessons passed on by his own mentees based on Lewin's approach to research and scholarship. Specifically:

- » Lesson #1: Explain complex concepts in understandable ways
- » Lesson #2: Maximize perspectives to address questions
- » Lesson #3: Think creatively
- » Lesson #4: Get out of the ivory tower (conduct "Action Research")

His direct influence to study, understand, and develop leadership, followership, and teamwork through his own work include:

- » Leaders and Leadership Styles
- » $B = f(P, E)$
- » Field Theory in Social Science
- » Change Theory

Lewin's indirect and direct lessons and contributions have influenced current concepts and programs addressing leadership, followership, and teamwork including:

- » The Leader-Follower Framework (LF2)
- » AID to optimize teams

Conclusion

Kurt Lewin's contributions to social psychology and organization development are truly remarkable because of his creativity,

consideration of various perspectives, real-life applicability, and communication of complex concepts. With regard to the study of leadership, followership, and team-building, Lewin's intellectual legacy is impressive and remains relevant to guide current concepts and programs focused on leadership, followership, and team assessment, education, development, and action. We hope that this paper has clearly conveyed the profound impact of Lewin's Leadership Legacy and that readers are inspired to embrace and apply Lewin's lessons to their own action research and contributions.

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complex, genuine ‘experience’ and, thus, a life-space together. This manifestation, sometimes called ‘we made a connection’, emerges within personal relationships, work groups, organizations, social/political entities, and any form of elements and constituents that have the potential to achieve ‘common appreciation’.

Conclusion

The core concepts of Ubuntu: ‘I am because you are’, and ‘the self’ cannot be validated without other ‘selves’, seems to fit Kurt Lewin’s Field Theory and within a larger context of Lewin’s practical social science (Coghlan, 2024) in this issue. We postulate that Ubuntu and Kurt Lewin’s Field Theory, through the practice of OD, facilitate the manifestation of the human spirit and humanistic principles and values. Thus, we conclude that Ubuntu and Lewin’s Field Theory and Life Space are one and the same—indivisible in concept and in ‘being’. This gives the philosophies and values of Ubuntu its validity as an OD fundamental, and most important, Ubuntu is the common thread throughout most of the African continent. We also conclude that ‘Ubuntu’ is the foundation and cornerstone of African OD.

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