

ADVANCES IN FIELD THEORY

edited by
Susan A. Wheelan
Emmy A. Pepitone
Vicki Abt

ADVANCES
IN FIELD
THEORY

ADVANCES IN FIELD THEORY

edited by

Susan A. Wheelan

Emmy A. Pepitone

Vicki Abt



SAGE PUBLICATIONS
The International Professional Publishers
Newbury Park London New Delhi

Copyright © 1990 by Sage Publications, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

For information address:



SAGE Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Newbury Park, California 91320

SAGE Publications Ltd.
6 Bonhill Street
London EC2A 4PU
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
M-32 Market
Greater Kailash I
New Delhi 110 048 India

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Main entry under title:

Advances in field theory / edited by Susan A. Wheelan, Emmy A. Pepitone, and Vicki Abt.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN (invalid) 0-8039-3979-5

1. Field theory (Social psychology) I. Wheelan, Susan A.
II. Pepitone, Emmy Angelica Berger, 1924- III. Abt, Vicki,
1942- .

HM251.A37 1990

302—dc20

90-8756
CIP

FIRST PRINTING, 1990

Sage Production Editor: Astrid Virding

This book is dedicated to the following individuals,
who contributed so much to the advancement of field theory:

Leon Festinger
Anitra Karsten
Ronald Lippitt
John Thibaut
Bluma Zeigarnik

Contents

Acknowledgments	11
Introduction: Advancing Field Theory	13
Part I. Theoretical Advances: The Beginnings	
<i>Field Theory in Social Science: What Made It Creative?</i>	15
1. The Study of Everyday Life <i>Anitra Karsten</i>	17
2. Democracy in the Research Team <i>Ralph White</i>	19
3. Enthusiasm for the Work <i>Morton Deutsch</i>	23
4. Woe unto You That Are a Grandchild <i>Kurt W. Back</i>	27
5. Kurt Lewin's Films and Their Role in the Development of Field Theory <i>Mel van Elteren and Helmut E. Lück</i>	38
Part II. Theoretical Advances: Present Constructions	
<i>World Fields</i>	63
6. Two "Field Theories" <i>Martin Gold</i>	67
7. Field Theory and the Construction of Social Problems: A Relational Perspective <i>Susan A. Wheelan and Vicki Abt</i>	80

8	Kurt Lewin in China <i>Shen Heyong</i>	90
9.	On the Nature of the Next Generation of Issues <i>Fred Emery</i>	96
	<i>Social Processes</i>	109
10.	The Family as a Special Group: Boundaries and Dynamics <i>Kurt W. Back</i>	111
11.	Topological Psychology of Abnormal Syndromes: Lewin on Unreality <i>Matthew Maibaum</i>	122
12.	Two Paradigms in Developmental Studies of Language: An Old Controversy in New Clothes <i>Ana Marjanovic-Shane</i>	135
13.	Cooperation, Conflict, and Justice <i>Morton Deutsch</i>	149
14.	Social Comparison, Relative Deprivation, and Pupil Interaction: Homogeneous Versus Heterogeneous Classrooms <i>Emmy A. Pepitone</i>	165
15.	Interpersonal and Intergroup Methods of Managing Social Conflict <i>Murray Horwitz and Norman H. Berkowitz</i>	177
Part III. Advances in Applications		
	<i>World Fields</i>	195
16.	Group Dynamics, Action Research, and Intergroup Relations <i>Susan A. Wheelan and Eugene H. Stivers</i>	197
17.	Strategies for Arab-Jewish Conflict Management Workshops <i>David Bargal and Haviva Bar</i>	210
18.	Social Psychiatric Field Studies in Oslo: Some Preliminary Results <i>Odd Steffen Dalgard, Trine Anstorp, Kirsten Benum, Tom Sørensen, and Torbjørn Moum</i>	230

19. Level of Aspiration Theory and Quality of Life in Cross-Cultural Research	
<i>Robert J. Kleiner and Barnabas Okeke</i>	244
<i>Social Processes</i>	263
20. Action Research in the Voluntary Sector: A Case Study of Scholar-Activist Roles in Self-Help Groups	
<i>Mark A. Chesler</i>	265
21. The Social Agency as a Field of Forces: A Program Evaluation Strategy	
<i>Willard C. Richan and Robert J. Kleiner</i>	281
22. The Etiology of Academic Sex Discrimination: Research in Progress	
<i>Ethel D. Kahn and Frank B. W. Hawkinshire V</i>	294
23. Lewin's Paradigm of Planned Change: Theory and Application	
<i>Frank B. W. Hawkinshire V and William A. Liggett, Jr.</i>	312
About the Authors	334

Acknowledgments

We wish to thank the Society for the Advancement of Field Theory for its generous support in the development of this book. We are also appreciative of the Society's efforts to aid communication among field theorists throughout the world.

—*Susan A. Wheelan*
Emmy A. Pepitone
Vicki Abt

Introduction: Advancing Field Theory

In 1977, Henle remarked that we are in the process of advancing to where Lewin was 60 years ago. Miriam Lewin, in 1986, noted that the Lewinian message is only dimly heard within psychology in general. Kurt Back, in this volume, describes how field theory languished for many years. Only recently has interest in Lewin and field theory been revitalized. On the other hand, Lewin was second only to Freud in terms of influencing the thinking of modern-day psychologists in a recent APA survey. While many would argue that Lewin is to the social sciences what Einstein is to the physical sciences, clearly, Lewin and the field of psychology have a rather ambivalent relationship.

Despite this ambivalence, the Lewinian perspective has guided the thinking and research of generations of scholars. Over the years, dedicated groups of social scientists have continued the exploration of Lewinian constructs as these can be applied to individuals, groups, organizations, nations, and international relations. Some of their theoretical and experimental work will be described in this volume. They have also managed to instill in younger scholars their excitement and curiosity. Thus this volume represents the work of various generations of field theorists and attests to the durability and utility of Lewin's work.

As editors, we have reviewed these manuscripts for quite some time. In the end, we have come to a number of conclusions. First, field theory continues to make significant contributions to an understanding of our social world. A second, and perhaps more

important, conclusion is that the passion that Lewin had for justice, democracy, equality, interdependence, and peace is apparent in the work of present-day Lewinians.

While the word *passion* may seem a strong descriptor for scholarly writing, it is undoubtedly accurate. Each contributor to this volume writes about the improvement of the quality of human life in some way. Topics range from the reduction of intrapsychic pain to the reduction of international tensions. The authors speak of facilitating the development of cooperative individuals and cooperative contexts supportive of human and social development.

Each person must find his or her own way of contributing to the betterment of human life and the amelioration of social conflict. Some choose the arts. Others choose political action. Still others find their own unique ways to contribute to the public good. The individuals in this volume, represented by their work, have chosen to study individual and social processes in an effort to apply these understandings to the resolution of social problems.

One hundred years after his birth and 43 years after his death, Lewin's work and values continue to inspire a quest for human rights and dignity. In a world that has been described as alienated and individualistic, his work and the work it generates foster hope for community and concern for others. There is no ambivalence in the minds of these scholars about advancing field theory and the values it contains. There is also no ambivalence, in our minds, about the importance of their contributions.

PART I

Theoretical Advances: The Beginnings

Field Theory in Social Science: What Made It Creative?

Historians frequently remind us that if we are to advance or progress in any area of human endeavor, we would be wise to understand the past. In this section, four noted scholars offer insights into their experience with Lewin and the beginnings of field theory. Each was asked to describe from his or her personal perspective the qualities that made field theory creative. Each author also represents a particular generation of Lewin's students.

Anitra Karsten, representing the first generation of students who worked with Lewin in Berlin, describes the excitement of that period. She attributes this excitement and creativity to the novelty of studying everyday life and to the energy generated through group discussion and cooperation among the researchers. Anitra Karsten died recently. The worldwide community of social psychologists will miss her lively contributions.

The second generation of Lewinians is represented by Ralph White. He writes of the democratic approach to research that inspired collegiality and creativity in faculty and students alike. Morton Deutsch, of the third generation, attributes the creativity of field theory to the enthusiasm for research and theory building of Lewin, his colleagues, and his students during that period. Kurt Back describes what happened after Lewin's death. He addresses

the difficulty in continuing Lewin's work and urges revitalization and renewal.

This historical section ends with a chapter by Mel van Elteren and Helmut Luck, who trace the role of Lewin's films in the development of field theory. They provide us not only with a picture of the utility of film for the dissemination of information but also with a unique view of the social times in which field theory and Lewin became influential.