Field Theory as a Conceptual
Framework for Divorce Study

by

Eddie C.Y. Kuo

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More then a dozen conceptual frameworks have been
indentified or suggested for family study since Hill and
Hansen published their classic paper in 1960. (See Hill
and Hansen, 1960; Nye and Berardo, 1966; Broderick, 1971.)
Of all the frameworks, only three (the interactional, the
structural-functional, and the developmental) have proved
·to be actively generating more studies and theoretical
contributions over the years (Klein et al., 1969; Broderick,
1971). However, as suggested by Hill (1966), crucial issues
in the family theory field remain to be

> building better conceptual frames of reference
> appropriate for family study: the identifying
> of viable frameworks, the tidying up of these
> frameworks by discovering and/or coining new
> concepts, the building of bridging concepts to
> permit linking of the family and other systems,
> and the interdefining of concepts to reduce
> redundancy and to move toward better conceptual
> integration. (1966: 11)

The ultimate goal is to develop an "all-purpose general
family framework". (1966: 23)

In a review article on the development of family
theory, Broderick (1971: 153) suggests, as one of his new
strategies for theory development, that different conceptual
frameworks may be identified around "more narrowly defined
particular social processes such as courtship or marital
decision-making." According to Broderick, "To the extent
that conceptual frameworks chosen are based in reality,
each should point toward some valid aspects of the phenomenon
under consideration." (1971: 153) He calls this "the
strategy of multiple perspectives."

It is with the above considerations in mind that the current article is presented. Aiming for a more modest goal, only one conceptual framework, that of field theory, is applied to analyze a "narrowly defined family phenomenon -- divorce. It is hoped that the utility and application of the field perspective may fill in some gaps and suggest some insights into divorce study, and, eventually, may be joined by other perspectives in order to formulate an integrated general model for divorce study.

## A FIELD APPROACH TO THE BEHAVIOR SCIENCE

"Field theory" as initiated by Lewin in the behavior science emphasizes that there are forces operating in the psychological or social field that account for human behavior. Thus, according to Lewin, events and behaviors are determined by forces acting on them in an immediate field. Starting from the basic assumption, field theory perhaps may best be seen as a method of theory building or "metatheory". In Lewin's own words,

> Field theory ... can hardly be called correct or incorrect in the same way as a theory in the usual sense of the term. _Field theory is probably best characterized as a method: namely, a method of analyzing causal relations and of building scientific constructs._ This method of analyzing causal relations can be expressed in the form of certain general statements about the "nature" of the conditions of change. (1951: 45; italics original.)

In other words, "field theory" is not exactly a theory in Zetterberg's sense (1965). It is rather a guide to inquiry and explanation and thus is close to a "conceptual framework" which contains a number of interrelated concepts and basic assumptions and serves as a tool for empirical investigation and analysis. Thus, in the following discussion, though we retain the customary use of the term "field theory", more often, and interchangeably, we

will call it "field conceptual framework", "field approach", or "field perspective".

The term "field", according to Lewin (1951: 240), refers to "the totality of coexisting facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent." Such a definition implies two basic components of the field: one is the _person_, the other is the _environment_ that consists of the "facts". Here Lewin introduced his famous formula of $B = F(P,E)$, or, behavior is a function of the person and of his environment. Lewin further indicated that:

> In this equation the person (P) and his environment (E) have to be viewed as variables which are mutually dependent upon each other. In other words, to understand or to predict behavior, the person and his environment have to be considered as _one_ constellation of interdependent factors. We _call_ the totality of these factors the life space (LSp) of that individual, and write $B = F(P,E) = F(LSp)$. The life space, therefore, includes both the person and his psychological environment. (1951: 239-240; italics original)

What Lewin meant was that the environment provides the person with raw materials which become part of his psychological field (life-space) only after they are _perceived_ by the individual. The objective existence of certain objects in the environment may not mean anything until they enter the person's psychological field, except that these objects may "limit the variety of possible life spaces - probably as _boundary_ conditions ... of the psychological field." (Lewin, 1951: 240; italics original.) From the above statements, it is obvious that, after all, Lewin was basically (or "officially", as he called himself,) a psychologist.

Interesting enough, it took a sociologist to make a renewed effort for the integration of social and psychological forces in explaining human behavior. In his book _Toward a Field Theory of Behavior_, Yinger (1965) tries to inject more sociologist spirit into field theory by moving

the focus one step backward. Instead of looking at the stage of psychological perception, Yinger strives to inquire what causes the perception. He points out that it is the external situational factors and the internal psychological tendencies that determine perception and behavior jointly. The process of perception, which is the major concern of Lewin, is implied but omitted in Yinger's discussion. Apparently influenced by the tradition of the "Chicago School", he stresses the interaction of the individual and the situation. More specifically, Yinger points out four areas of factors that cause the happening of a certain behavior. Making use of Lewin's favorate formula, we may perhaps reproduce Yinger's notion as: Behavior = F(B.P.G.C), or, behavior is a function of biological propensity, personal tendency, group influence and culture. Sometimes Yinger combines the four groups of factors into two major components and refers them as "individual" and "environmental" (or "situational") forces -- or, perhaps more properly, "bio-psychological" and "socio-cultural". (Yinger, 1965: 282) Here he brings us back to Lewin's B = F(P,E).

From the above discussion, we can see that the shift of the focus from Lewin to Yinger is a shift from "psychological field" to "interaction of individual and situation" or more specifically, to "interaction of inner quality and environment." This is only a change of emphasis rather than change of contents.

## BASIC CONCEPTS AND ASSUMPTIONS IN FIELD THEORY

Field theory employs a number of significant concepts in its analysis of human behavior and human groups. Some of these concepts have proliferated into the general language of the behavioral sciences, while some have been found to be quite amenable to interdisciplinary research. In order to give a clear view of field theory and to facilitate

our following discussion, we list in this section a number of concepts basic to field theory. Although no explicit attempt is made to form these concepts into a conceptual framework, this is implicit in the relationships among the basic concepts below and the general assumptions that follow:

Field (or Life-space): "The totality of coexisting facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent," (Lewin, 1951: 240), which determines the behavior of an individual at a given time. (Lippitt, 1968)

Force: The element or factor in the field that "characterizes, for a given point of the life space, the direction and strength of the tendency to change." (Lewin, 1951: 256) The field force can further be classified into:

A. Driving Force: "The forces toward a positive, or away from a negative, valence .... They lead to loco-motion." (Lewin, 1951: 259)

B. Restraining Force: Physical or social barriers that hinder locomotions. They "do not lead to locomotion, but they do influence the effect of driving forces." (Lewin, 1951: 259)

C. Resultant Force: "The combination of a number of forces acting at the same point at a given time .... Whenever a resultant force (different from zero) exists, there is either a locomotion in the direction of that force or a change in cognitive structure equivalent to this locomotion." (Lewin, 1951: 256)

Valence (Positive or Negative): "A force field in which the forces are all pointing toward /or away from/ a given region of the field (the valent region which is the center of the force field)." (Deutsch, 1968)

Locomotion: Change of the individual's position with reference to the field from one region to another region. (Lewin, 1951: 251)

Behavior: Any change in the field in a given unit of time due to the imbalance of forces in the field. "Most behavior can be conceived of as a change of position — in other words, as a locomotion of the person. (The other cases of behavior are changes of structure)." (Lewin, 1951: 248)

Space of Free Movement: "A topological region encircled by other regions that are not accessible," either due to "the lack of ability" or "social prohibition." (Lewin, 1948: 5)

Conflict Situation: "A situation where forces acting on the person are opposite in direction and about equal in strength." (Lewin, 1951: 260) Three major types of conflict situations are identified: (A) Approach-approach, (B) Avoidance-avoidance, and (C) Approach-avoidance. (Murray, 1968)

Tension: "A state of a region in a given system which tries to change itself in such a way that it becomes equal to the state of surrounding regions ... /involving/ forces at the boundary of the region," (Deutsch, 1968)
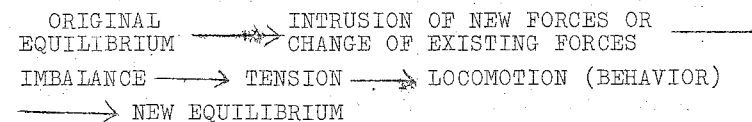
Tendency: An inner disposition that is expressed only under certain conditions, thus implying the necessity for specification of conditions before its relevance for behavior is known. (Yinger, 1965: 40)

Underlying the above concepts are a number of basic assumptions about the nature of man and society. In this connection, we present some assumptions that are considered by the field theorist basic to the explanation of all human behaviors. Consequently, these assumptions or "axioms" are accepted as given and unquestioned. They are implied in all arguments concerning field theoretical discussion, and in fact are already implicit in the above discussion of concepts.

First of all, field theory assumes all behavior, overt or covert, is purposeful and, to some extent,

"rational", in the sense that it aims to remove the tension situation caused by the confrontation of different forces in the field, and to move to maintain a dynamic equilibrium. Using above basic concepts, this assumes human behavior as a locomotion in reaction to the imbalance of field forces within the space of free movement. It should be noted that such assumption rests the explanation of behavior ultimately on psychological considerations.

Connected with the above assumption, field theory also assumes that living organisms tend to maintain a dynamic equilibrium in relation to their environments. According to Lewin (1951: 199ff.) the status quo in social life is not a static affair, but a dynamic process which is kept at a "quasi-stationary equilibrium" by fields of forces that prevent rise or fall. The process of restoration of equilibrium can be shown as:

ORIGINAL ——⟶ INTRUSION OF NEW FORCES OR ——⟶
EQUILIBRIUM ——⟶ CHANGE OF EXISTING FORCES ——⟶
IMBALANCE ——⟶ TENSION ——⟶ LOCOMOTION (BEHAVIOR)
——⟶ NEW EQUILIBRIUM

Thirdly, as has been pointed out before, field approach sees all behavior as a function of the field "which consists of the person and the environment viewed as one constellation of interdependent factors." (Deutsch, 1968) Therefore, it is meaningless to explain behavior without reference to both the person and his environment. This is strongly emphasized throughout Yinger's book (1965), and is made explicit in his formulation of the "principle of multiple possibilities". According to Yinger, the principle of multiple possibilities holds that:

A person has many tendencies to behave: some conscious, others unconscious; some strong, others weak. Which one will be acted upon cannot be predicted by knowledge of the individual alone, because each requires a facilitating environment. Behavior is never in an environmental vacuum. /This/ applies equally to situations. Their

meaning for behavior cannot be defined independently of the individuals who experience them, for the same cue or the same force will affect persons with different tendencies differently. (1965: 45)

Consequently, both the situation and the individual are "unknown", and each can be defined only when the other is also defined.

## THE FIELD APPROACH TO FAMILY SOCIOLOGY

Can the field conceptual framework be utilized in family study? After introducing the major concepts and assumptions of the field approach, it seems a proper time to probe into this question.

Interestingly, the first application of the field concepts to family study was done by none other than Lewin himself in an article titled "The Background of Conflict in Marriage" (1940, reprinted in 1948: 84-102). In this article, Lewin points out that the marriage group is characterized by "small size", involvement with "central regions of the person", and "intimate relation between members". As a result, marriage group is,

> one of the most closely integrated social units. That means, on the one hand, a high degree of so-called identification with the group and a readiness to stand together; on the other hand, great sensitivity to shortcomings of the partner or oneself. (Lewin, 1948: 89)

Furthermore, because of such close interdependence and the all-inclusive nature of love, the "space of free movement" in the life-space of a married person is rather limited. Thus "the securing of an adequate private sphere within this group is especially difficult." (Lewin, 1948: 90) Consequently, both "fulfillment of the individual's needs" in marriage and "the adaptation to the group" are jeopardized. This explains the tendency and frequency of tension and conflict in marriage.

The above article apparently has not attracted much attention among the family sociologists. Similarly, the field approach as a conceptual framework has also been neglected in family sociology. One explanation for such apparent oversight is that some other conceptual frameworks with similar assumptions have already been discussed but failed to show much promise as working frameworks in the family field. One such case is the "psychological habitat" perspective, which is part of the "situational-psychological habitat approach" suggested by Hill et al. (1957). According to Hill and Hansen (1960: 305), the psychological habitat perspective "centers attention on the individual's psychological milieu, emphasizing the uniqueness of each individual's habitat and perception of appropriate behavior." This is very much a Lewinian statement.

However, this psychological habitat approach was discarded later "because it does not cope with the family as an entity or with its possible subgroupings." (Hill and Hansen, 1960: 305n.) It thus might be expected that Hill and his colleagues would have made the same conclusion concerning the field approach had they taken it into consideration. This is especially so because the field approach has traditionally been a psychological approach and is considered not suitable for studying sociological phenomenon such as those relating to the family.

The above position however may be challenged on two counts. Firstly, as has been indicated above, the field theorists believe that field theory may be applied not only to the psychological field but also to the social field. It is then possible to view the family as the basic unit and analyze the different forces within and outside of the family as a field region (cf. Lewin, 1940). As Cartwright states:

> One may speak of the field in which a group or institution exists with precisely the same meaning as one speaks of the individual life space in

individual psychology. The life space of a group, therefore, consists of the group and its environment as it exists for the group. (1951: xi)

This however is not our concern in this paper, although it is hoped some fruitful results may be worked out in this direction.

Secondly, if we accept field theory as a valid approach to analyzing human behavior, we must admit that, family activity being part of human behavior, some pertinent aspects of family phenomena can be studied by using field approach as a frame of reference. In other words, the fact that field approach deals with aspects of the family indicates that it is a conceptual framework that deserves some discussion.

More specifically, what we are suggesting here is not to take the field approach as a conceptual framework that possesses "the concepts necessary for the study of the family as a group or institutional phenomenon." (Hill, 1966: 12) Rather, we take the family phenomenon as a type of interpersonal relationship that can be explained by a general approach toward human behavior such as field theory.

The emphasis on the interplay between organism and environment in field theory resembles two other working conceptual frameworks in family sociology. Firstly, it is very close to the "social-psychological conceptual framework" (Brown, 1966), which also takes the individual and the group as interdependent variables rather than either as independent variable. Referring to the social-psychological conceptual framework, Brown indicates that:

The consensus within the field is that the individual cannot be separated from his environment if we are seeking to understand and analyze his behavior, because both the individual and the environment are interdependent. For the purpose of a given study, the independent and dependent variable /̲sic̲/ might be temporarily isolated

for examination, but in the final analysis, the isolation method must be discarded in order that a meaningful study of the socialization process may result. (1966: 177)

It is rather surprising that Brown completely neglects to refer to Lewin's theory as a component of the social-psychological framework.

Secondly, field approach is also very similar to the "situational framework". The close relationship between "situation" and "field" can best be examplified by the definition of the "situation" by Lungberg as "a field of force -- a segment of life to which the organism reacts as a whole." (1939: 217; italics provided) According to Rallings (1966), the situationalist in family sociology accepts Bossard and Boll's concept of situation (1943) instead of that of Thomas and Mead. The main distinction between them is that the former discards internal stimuli in the explanation of the situation, while the latter includes both internal and external stimuli in the concept of situation or "definition of the situation". It is especially in this latter sense that field theory is in substantial agreement with the situational approach.

According to Rallings (1966: 135), the reasons for accepting Bossard and Boll's definition is that of "attempting to keep the situational approach in the area of sociology." However, by neglecting internal factors, the "family situationalist" has betrayed the tradition initiated by Weber, Cooley, Mead and Thomas. Here, with no intention of re-initiating or solving the long argument between sociologistic and psychologistic schools in sociology, we merely indicate that, as suggested by field theory, an understanding of both internal and external forces, whatever their relationships, is necessary for the explanation of social phenomena such as divorce.

## A FIELD PARADIGM FOR DIVORCE STUDY

In the following discussion, we will take "divorce" as an aspect of family sociology and try to look at it from the point of view of field theory. In other words, we will try to use field theory as a conceptual paradigm (cf. Hill, 1966: 18ff.) to analyze a form of family dissolution. We will especially focus on the different forces working on an individual that lead him or her to the decision of divorce.

The general assumption underlying our discussion is that: Decision to divorce is made when the total driving force toward divorce is greater than the total restraining force against divorce. The decision to divorce is basically a personal decision, and thus the above consideration exists as the individual perceives it. This is a point we agree with Lewin. However, following Yinger, we also give weight to socio-cultural factors such as cultural norms, social attitudes and relations, kinship structure, group affiliation, intra-familial relationship, etc. These are some situational factors that have to be taken into account in determining the perception and decision of the individual.

Before we move on to analyze divorce decision as a result of the operation of forces, we must specify some conditions under which the following discussion can be applied. Firstly, the present discussion assumes that some form of marital dissolution is permitted and institutionalized in practically all societies. Pitts explains in structural-functional terms:

> Every society has structural means for ending a marriage which cannot fulfill its function of procreation, economic collaboration, sexual control, socialization, and tension reduction. (1964: 76)

Secondly, it is assumed that marital relationship, as soon as it is established, is intended to last long,

Thus divorce as a form of marital dissolution is regretted universally, with few exceptions (Murdock, 1950.) The decision to divorce therefore involves at least some conscious, rational and often painful considerations for the individual concerned.

The above two assumptions are both supported by Berelson and Steiner in one of their propositions:

> In virtually every society, preliterate and pre-industrial as well as advanced, there is a recognized procedure for dissolving marriages and releasing the partners (that is, for "divorce"). At the same time, in virtually every society, divorce is subject to some social disapproval. (1964: 310)

Thirdly, our analysis applies to societies where the decision to divorce rests, to some extent at least, on either party of the matrimony, rather than on third persons such as the patriarch. Therefore, our discussion does not apply directly to societies where such decision is totally made and enforced by external authorities.

With the above considerations in mind, our task is to analyze divorce phenomenon from the field perspective. Surprising as it may be, we find one of the leading family sociologists, Goode, who is most often labelled a functiona-list, also applies field concepts in his discussion on divorce:

> The universal nuclear family is to be viewed as one type of boundary-maintaining social unit, under various internal and external pressures toward boundary dissolution and maintenence. Marital unhappiness is only a resultant of various factors that predispose toward marital instability. Among these factors, there are also various mechanisms which 1) prevent the building of tensions or external forces; 2) alleviate or deflect such forces; 3) define various difficulties as bearable; 4) and offer various solutions for changing the structure or direction of these forces even for removing them. (Goode, 1956: 9, italics provided)

An integrative work to synthesize the existing propositions based on the framework of "attractions" and "barriers" is presented by Levinger (1966). Although using different terms, Levinger's work is precisely an application of the field perspective. This is obvious from the following statement from which he starts his analysis:

> Inducements to remain in any group include the attractiveness of the group itself and the strength of the restraints against leaving it; inducements to leave a group include the attractiveness of alternative relationships and the restraints against breaking up such existing relationships. Thus the strength of the marital relationship would be a direct function of the attractions within and barriers around the marriage, and an inverse function of such attractions and barriers from other relationships. (Levinger, 1965: 19)

## DIVORCE AS A SOLUTION TO CONFLICT SITUATION

One contribution of Lewin to the behavioral science is his typology of conflict situations in terms of field perspective (1951: 260ff.) Lewin identifies three major types of conflict situations: (1) Approach-approach: when the individual is midway between two positive valences of approximately equal strength; (2) Avoidance-avoidance: when the individual is situated between two equally negative valences; (3) Approach-avoidance: when the individual is cross-pressed by two opposing forces of one negative and one positive valence. (Murray, 1968)

Generally speaking, the situation leading to divorce decision approximates one of Lewin's sub-types of avoidance avoidance conflict situation, in which an individual is in a region of one negative valence and can leave it only by going through another region of negative valence. (Deutsch, 1968) Thus, the decision of divorce normally encounters a painful dilemma between two clusters of

negative forces. One comes from the tension and unhappiness with the continuation of marital relationship. Another from the restraining forces against dissolution of marital bond. Usually, in the modern urban-industrial society, the former are related to intra-familial and personal factors, and the latter to extra-familial social-cultural factors.

To be more specific, in such a situation, there are at least four types of forces operating in the psychological field of the individual involved, as perceived by the individual. They are:

(1) Restraining forces for marital integration (RI): This is what Levinger (1965) calls "sources of attraction in marriage": companionship, mutual affection, sexual satisfaction, etc.

(2) Driving forces away from marital integration (DI): This includes elements contrary to the above category, those relating to marital conflict and tension.

(3) Driving forces toward divorce (DD): This includes all the alternative attractions outside of marriage, such as the possibility of establishing a more satisfactory marital life or withdrawing back to a glamorous single life.

(4) Restraining forces against divorce (RD): This includes considerations on cultural and religious norms, legal restrictions, moral commitment, etc., as barriers against marital dissolution.

In a "normal" situation for most marital couples in a society, forces in the above RI and RD categories are usually quite strong. These two combined constitute "the total restraining force against divorce." On the other hand, forces in the DI and DD categories are usually low. These two combined constitute "the total driving force toward divorce". Divorce decision is made if and when the individual perceives that the total driving force toward

divorce is greater than the total restraining force against divorce; or, if and when $(DI + DD) > (RI + RD)$.

It becomes obvious that when divorce is considered disruptive in a society, there would probably be some built-in "devices" in its family institution either to increase the total restraining force against divorce (RI and RD), or to reduce the total driving force toward divorce (DI and DD). For instance, the customs of bride price, return of wife's dowry, and payment of alimony, as well as the social stigma for the divorcee, are devices to make RD greater and DD weaker. On the other hand, there are also devices to reduce DI and to increase RI, such as those pointed out by Goode:

> All family systems include some mechanisms for keeping the hostilities between spouses within limits. A primary pattern is, of course, to lower expectations of emotional performance on both sides, so that neither side expects great happiness or love but does expect a minimal set of behavioral performances. A second obvious pattern noted by many is to place the greatest social value on the kin network and to reduce the importance of the husband-wife relation .... Thirdly all groups have patterns of avoiding marital tensions, by suppression, by defining certain types of disagreements as unimportant, and by seeing to it that husbands and wives have similar social backgrounds so that the areas of disagreement will be fewer. (1962: 513)

It should be noted that divorce decision is just one of the alternative "outcomes" as a result of the configuration of the above-mentioned two resultant forces, the total driving force toward divorce and the total restraining force against divorce. The possible "outcomes" are shown in Table 1. (See next page.)

The table shows that when the driving force toward divorce is low and the restraining force is high, the relationship is stable. When both the driving and the restraining forces are low, the relationship is weak and

unstable. In such case, some minor change in the field may push the driving force to become higher than the restraining force and the couple may "drift " into divorce.

Table 1:  "Outcomes" of configuration of Forces Relating to Marital Dissolution

| Total Restraining Force Against Divorce | Total Driving Force Toward Divorce | |
|---|---|---|
| | Low | High |
| Low | unstable:  may "drift" into divorce | decision to divorce |
| High | stable relation; no divorce | other alternatives |

On the other hand, when the driving force toward divorce is high, decision to divorce is made when the restraining force is perceived lower. However, when the latter is also very high -- even higher than the driving force toward divorce - then divorce as a solution is blocked. The suffering spouse is thus forced to resort to other alternatives.

To be more specific, divorce is really just one of the alternative solutions to the conflict situation. When the restraining force is so great that divorce is not perceived as a feasible solution even though the marital tension is approaching the unbearable point, other alternatives will be considered. The alternative chosen depends on configuration of the field forces.

The most frequent alternative is what Goode (1964: 92) calls "empty-shell family" in which "family members continue to dwell together but have little communication or interaction with one another and especially fail to give emotional support to one another."  "Shell" is an appropriate metaphor that vividly shows the situation that the family boundary is "thick" and hard to penetrate.

The "empty-shell family" as an alternative is possible only when the spouses are able to cut off their communications so that the other spouse "ceases" to exist psychologically. In Lewin's terms, the other is kept out of the psychological field. Tension is thus kept within the bearable point. When this is not the case and tension keeps on mounting, other alternatives are resorted to.

Desertion and separation are frequently practised in cultures where divorce is not accepted or rarely accepted. This is evidenced in Goode's observation (1954: 95); "In two-thirds of the new desertion cases in Philadelphia, one or both parties were Catholic, thus suggesting an over-representation of Catholics." The apparent underlying factor is that the Catholic church does not approve divorce.

Less frequently, suicide may be another way "out". Mental disturbance is still another way to escape from the field psychologically. These were not rare incidences in ancient China as last resorts for the suffering wife and daughter-in-law, serving both as a way to "escape" and a final protest.

From the above analysis, we can see that the filing of divorce does not directly reflect the degree of marital happiness or unhappiness for those involved. All it indicates is that in these cases, the forces favoring the legal ending of the marital union are perceived by the individual to be stronger than those against it. Marital happiness is only one of the forces working to keep the marriage intact.

## A FORMULA AND A TYPOLOGY

In the above discussion, we already indicated that it is the balance of the driving and restraining forces in the psychological field of the individual that deter-

mines his or her decision to divorce. A significant question related to the statement is that: What are the factors leading to these forces that can be identified so that we can explain or predict a decision to divorce?

Following Lewin's famous formula, we may propose that

$$D = F(C,S,F,P,),$$

or, divorce decision is a function of cultural norms (C), (extra-familial) social structure (S), family relations (F), and personality characteristics (P). This is an elaboration of Lewin's $B = F(P,E,)$, in which (E) is further specified as (C), (S), and (F). We propose the elaboration because in divorce studies family itself is too significant a factor to be ignored. Also, culture is an important factor that usually determines to some extent the strength of restraining forces against divorce, and therefore deserves specific attention.

Consequently, we have the following four categories of factors:

(C) = Cultural factors: Proscriptive and prescriptive norms and values concerning marriage and the family, religious proscriptions and traditions, legal regulations, customs and social sanctions, etc.

(S) = (Extra-familial) Social factors: Reference groups, social group affiliation, SES, (rural-urban) community background, occupation, alternative sex partner, etc.

(F) = Family factors: Level of mutual love, companionship and sexual satisfaction, homogamous variables (religion, education, age), number of children and their ages, etc.

(P) = Personal factors: Personal needs and satisfaction, feeling of obligation and commitment, early experiences and socialization, attitudes and expectation, physical and mental health, etc.

This list of factors is tentative and far from being exhaustive. It is already obvious that there is difficulty in deciding to which category some factors belong; moreover, some factors may well be assigned to more than one category. It should be clear that all the factors are closely related.

These C, S, F, and P factors may further be distinguished into those external to the family boundary (C and S factors) and those internal (F and P factors). Depending on the source of the forces (external or internal to the family boundary) and their directions (restraining or driving), a typology of divorce may be suggested which may be instrumental to divorce studies.

Firstly, some divorces occur when the driving forces toward divorce stem mainly from within the family (F and P) and are perceived greater than externally induced restraining forces (those relating to C and S factors). In such cases, the total driving force toward divorce is mainly associated with F and P factors, while the total restraining force against divorce is associated with C and S factors. Following Durkheim, this may be called egoistic divorce. This type of divorce is generated by conjugal tensions (cf. Pitts, 1964: 77) and is most common in those societies that emphasize the tension-reduction function of the conjugal family.

However, in certain cases, the total driving force toward divorce is externally induced, associated with C and S factors, while the F and P factors represent restraining forces against divorce. In such situations, divorce occurs under the pressure of C and S factors even though conjugal family relation (F) may be harmonious and the individual needs (P) well satisfied. This happens for instance, "in societies and social classes where the

nuclear family is tightly integrated into the extended family, whether patrilinear or matrilinear. /In this case,/ lineage malintegration is a frequent source of marital instability" (Pitts, 1964: 79). This type of divorce, generated by external tensions, may be called altruistic divorce. Divorce in pre-Meiji rural Japan serves as a good example.

Is there a type of anomic divorce to complete the trio? Probably yes. Those divorce cases that result from the lack of restraining force both within and outside of the family may be put under this category. In an anomic situation, people may thus drift into divorce (cf. Table 1). Further studies are needed to investigate the significance and implications of such a typology and its relationships with certain "social facts". What we present here is only a tentative proposal.

DISCUSSION

This paper represents an exploratory effort to utilize field theory as a conceptual framework for divorce study. It is suggested that such a framework may give us more insights toward the understanding of divorce. Specifically, divorce is analyzed as a solution to the avoidance - avoidance conflict situation, as a result of the imbalance of forces in the psychological field of the individual. Relevant factors and a typology of divorce are also identified based on the field conceptual framework.

It should be noted that, as a conceptual framework, field theory is more heuristic than operational. The constructs such as "psychological field" and "force" are hypothetical and hardly accessible to measurment. Furthermore, the field conceptual framework does not possess "the concepts necessary for the study of the family as a group or institutional phenomenon." (Hill, 1966: 12) The utility of such a conceptual perspective is thus

greatly limited. However, as has been pointed out at the beginning of the paper, our aim is neither to make field theory a _general_ framework for family sociology, nor to apply it as the _only_ paradigm for divorce study. In order to contribute to further development in family theory, two further tasks are suggested.

Firstly, as a conceptual paradigm and as compared with other perspectives, field concepts show both "semantic deficits" and "semantic duplication" (Hill, 1966: 12-13). Consequently, for analyzing divorce behavior, the field approach should be supplemented and integrated with other conceptual perspectives. For instance, divorce phenomenon can also be analyzed through the perspectives of exchange theory, game theory, symbolic-interactionism, and the developmental model. Suggested by Broderick as "the strategy of multiple perspectives" (1971: 153-154), such integration would make evident "the points at which the different frameworks articulate with each other." (p. 153) An integrated model for divorce study with gaps filled and redundancy reduced may hopefully emerge.

Secondly, following the illustration made here, field theoretical framework can also be utilized in the analysis of other family phenomena, especially those involving decision-making. Two such areas are mate-select and fertility behavior. Field concepts would be useful for identification of relevant forces and factors involved in decision-making processes. Similarly such analyses may again be integrated with "multiple perspectives". All such efforts would contribute to the development of family theory. As Broderick puts it:

> Presumably, if the relationships between the several frameworks were tested in a number of substantive areas, the eventual outcome would be a general model for integrating them. (1971: 154)

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