

Theorizing Cost of Marriage and Mutual Combat/Partner Violence: Meta-ethnographic Synthesis of Findings on Types of Marriage Praxis, Associated Cost and Partners' Value amongst the Tiv People of Central Nigeria

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Abstract

Despite the growing awareness of mutual partner violence in intimate relationship (Straus et al 1980; Straus 1993; Cleary, 2002), theories providing explanation to this phenomenon are dearth. This does not only hamper research endeavor in examining mutual intimate partner violence but also forestall holistic understanding of the issue. Meta-ethnographic analysis (Atkin et al.2008; Barnett-Page and Thomas 2009; Britten et al.2002; Campbell et al 2003; Noblit &Hare 1988) was used to synthesize findings on types of marriage praxis among the Tiv People into a holistic understanding of marriage arrangements, associated cost and partner violence. There are clues that the cost of marriage influences intimate partner violence. It depends on whether it is the man or the women that bears the burden or is mutually shared between them; it is likely that the type of violence experienced by either partner may differ. This theory will stimulate scholars to examine mutual combat/partner violence using the cost of contracting and maintaining the union. The findings will extend the frontiers of knowledge on domestic violence and provide knowledge for informed social policy decisions to reduce partner or mutual partner violence, and improve reproductive health amongst unions.

Keywords: Theory; Cost of marriage; Marriage praxis; Mutual Partner violence; Tivland

1.1 Introduction

Generally, scholars who have examined the determinants of reproductive health outcomes have agreed that intimate partner violence is a predictor. It contributes to fetal loss (Alio, 2009), poor utilization of reproductive health care services such as ante natal care (Diop-Sidibe et al, 2006), Unwanted pregnancies, inability to use contraceptives, vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS (Diop-Sidibe, 2001;Gazmararian et al, 2000; Maman, 2002; Martin et al, 1999; Parsons et al, 2000; Rickert et al, 2002; Jejeebhoy, 1998). Similarly, scholars have also observed that men can be battered by their wives (Johnson, 1995; Mignon,1998;Evenson et al, 1999; Straus et al, 1980). Almost all the research addressing issues of intimate partner violence are driven implicitly or explicitly by a theory or theories. The psychopathology theory (Buzawa & Buzawa, 1990), the family dysfunction theory (Mignon, 1998) and the feminist theories (Dobash &Dobash,1998; Walby, 1990; Williams, 1989) have provided explanations of intimate partner violence tilted towards men as offenders and women as victims. The social structures have enabled and permitted men to oppress women.

Despite the growing awareness of mutual partner violence in heterosexual intimate relationship (Straus et al 1980; Straus, 1993; Cleary, 2002), same sex sexual relationship (Alexaner 2002; Gunther &Jennings 1999; Pitt 2000; Wallace 1996), theories providing explanation to this phenomenon are dearth. This does not only hamper research endeavor in examining mutual intimate partner violence but also forestall holistic understanding of the issue. This paper attempts to theorize cost of marriage and mutual combat/partner violence using Meta-ethnography to synthesize findings on types of marriage praxis, associated cost and partners' value amongst the Tiv people.

2.1 Previous Studies

Broadly, the theories used for the explanation of intimate partner violence are the family dysfunction; psychopathology; the structural or feminist; and biological theories. The individual psychopathology model explores the characteristics of both the victims and offenders. It postulates that the victims possesses characteristics that trigger domestic violence; however, this view has been criticized as focusing on inappropriate point which constitute blaming the victim (Kaufman et al 1998).

Generally, this model implicates a number of factors such as individual stressors created by poverty and/or unemployment; immaturity, depression, schizophrenia, patterns of poor self-control and low self-disorder; and severe character disorders (Buzawa & Buzuwa 1990). Bergman and Brissmar (1992), and Flanzer (1993) have identified the use of illegal drugs or excessive alcohol to influence perpetration of violence. The explanation of domestic violence with the individual as the cause negates the effect of socialization and other community issues and pressure (Mignon 1998).

The family dysfunction model stresses the sustainability of violence through learned behavior. Abusers are seen as individuals who witnessed or were abused themselves during childhood period (Mignon 1998). Children who are brought up in an environment laden with abuse model the behavior of the parents (Kantor & Jasinki 1998; Valladare 2005). Critique of the family dysfunction model points out that many adults who experienced violence during their childhood period do not necessarily become perpetrators of violence (Kaufman & Zigler 1993) and factors identified in individual psychopathology model are also present in the family dysfunction model. It can be concluded that family dysfunction model provides marginal explanation of domestic violence (Smith 1989).

The structural or feminist model of violence focuses on the subordination of women in patriarchal societies as precursor of violence. The structural organization of the society condone and sustains the subordination of women (Jackson & Oates 1998) and gives right to forcefully discipline the women and children (Bazawa & Bazawa 1990). Within the family, the husband plays the role of the bread winner and the head who takes decisions; while women help with domestic services, and support the husband emotionally and psychologically. The tolerance of forceful application of control of women predisposes them to physical and psychological abuse (Kurz 1993). The roles women play in the family forestall their suitability for employment in the market economy, which is the only sure route to financial independence and extreme subordination (Kellecher & O'Connor 1995).

The feminist explanation of violence against women has been punctured by the observations that women do slap their husband and are equally as violent as men in areas where violence is socially approved such as the police, Army, Prison officers, and when in position of power (Segal 1990). The biological explanation of intimate partner violence has postulated that head injury in men could make them violent to family members; while the gene focused explanation indicate that sexual jealousy and male efforts to ensure sexual propriety of partners lead to women abuse (Cunningham et al 1998). The biological explanation of intimate partner violence is of limited use due to its underestimation of social and economic determinants of partner violence.

The literature on partner abuse among same-sex relationship shows that between 15% and 87% of partners are abused. Violence in same sex relationships is as frequent as in heterosexual couples occurring between 25% and 50% among the partners (Pitt 2000; Alexander 2002; Gunther & Jennings 1999; Wallace 1996). The presence of mutual partner violence in heterosexual intimate relationship (Straus et al 1980; Straus, 1993; Cleary, 2002) and same sex sexual relationship (Alexaner 2002; Gunther & Jennings 1999; Pitt 2000; Wallace 1996) have highlighted the limitations of family dysfunction; psychopathology; the structural or feminist; and biological theories in explaining intimate partner violence. These have equally underscore the importance of an alternative theory that would provide explanation for mutual partner violence in heterosexual and same-sex relationships.

2.2 Types of Marriage Praxis and Associated Cost in Tivland

Tivland is found in the Middle Belt of Nigeria. It covers an area of about 30,000 square kilometers and stretches from 6° 30' to 8° 10' north and longitude 8° 10' east. Tiv people are predominantly farmers and are found originally in towns and villages in Benue, Taraba, Nassarawa and Plateau States. They were over 2 million in 1991 (Federal Office of Statistics 1996).

The word Tiv has triple meaning. It is the name of Tiv nationality; it refers to language and it is also the name by which Tiv know their ancestor- father Tiv. Tiv has cultural as well as political significance. Thus the name is bound to live (Wegh 1998). The Tiv are patrilineal, and trace descent unilineally-that is through the male line. The Tiv also practice viri-patrilocality, so that practically every woman at marriage leaves her home and joins her husband in the latter's home.

From ethnographic perspective, Akiga (1939) and Wegh (1998) have identified six types of marriage praxis in Tivland. These are *Yamishe* (exchange marriage), *Iye* (courtship marriage at the time of alliances), *Kem* (bride price marriage), *Ive* (elopement), One man One woman, and One man Many women. The six types of marriage can be subsumed under two categories- *Yamishe* (exchange marriage) and *Kem* (bride price).

2.2.1 *Yamische* and *Iye* (types of exchange marriage).

Yamische means buying by its value. That is fertility for fertility value. The cost of this marriage was necessary a human being, time and good moral behavior. A man needed *Ingyor* (sister) to exchange for a wife. If a man was not born with *Ingyor* (sister), he would postpone marriage until he gets one from his brothers within the immediate or extended family to do so through exchange. The wife introduced into the group took over the place of the daughter for that particular exchange in both families. She bears children and assumes all the responsibilities in the place of the woman in exchange. If one out of the two women in exchange fell to bear children or female child, a replacement was done by taking a female child from the other for another exchange. *Iye* needed a go-between who may be a friend, relation or a man whose mother is from the *tar* (place) of the prospective groom. The groom would be assisted to elope with the bride by the go-between, or in limited situations with the knowledge of the mother-in-law. The elopement was done during courtship while the exchange took place after the birth of a child.

The predominant ideology in exchange marriage was the continuity and equality of the family or lineage. The only sure way for the continuity of the family was through fertility. Thus fertility was not equal to anything (objects); therefore, fertility must be for fertility in exchange. The cost to be incurred in exchange marriage were (a) a woman to exchange for a wife (b) *Isuur* (buffer for the wife) who could be the go-between (c) a hoe and clothes as overture of exchange (d) good moral behavior (e) patience and time. It is important to understand that the Tiv people had *Bashi* (a strip of brass) which was a legal tender but it was not used for marriage purpose. The value of women was exceedingly high. There was mutual respect and endurance between the couples. The family was supported by the buffer and entire community because of the continuity of the family, lineage and community. The family was peaceful and stable.

2.2.2 *Kem* (bride price marriage)

The original meaning of *Kem* is acquiring little by little. For instance, one can *kem* his or her business by adding capital little by little. One could gain the acceptance of his prospective in-laws little by little through overtures. This would later culminate in exchange. Overtures were done by giving a small hoe to the mother of the young woman for *Ruam* (pounded yam) and cloth to her father. The Colonial Administration misconstrued *Kem* for pride; abolished exchange marriage in 1927, and introduced bride wealth. Therefore, the modern meaning of *Kem* is synonymous to bride wealth. *Ive* (elopement) is a type of bride wealth marriage. This requires eloping with the young woman just like *Ive* (name for Alligator in Tiv) disappears as it drops into the water. Bride wealth is later paid to the parents.

The ideology guiding family formation and community social organization was modified. The continuity of the family or lineage still remained paramount but now fertility could be purchased with money. Women were now likened to objects purchased with money. Rubingh (1969 cited in Wegh, 1998) states “ Caseleggio, a missionary with the Reformed Church Mission once lamented that the ‘bride price’ marriage which was looked forward to with such great anticipation, degenerated from its inception into a commerce in human lives because of materialistic disposition of the Tiv”. The costs of marriage in the new marital arrangements were (a) money (b) material objects (c) relatively less good moral behavior. There was relatively less support for the couple from the lineage or community because money was required instead of *Ingyor* (sister) for marriage which the couple could not produce.

The men devoted their farming skills to the production of cash crops for the nascent market economy. Some of them worked for the rail transport system and others for the colonial administration. They made money and established themselves firmly as bosses of their families. Power relation between the man and his wife or wives changed. It tilted favorably to the men’s side. The men now thought that they could get married again using money if the first one did not work. However, women too became less restricted because they could always recompense the man if the need arises. The family became less peaceful and unstable. Another significant dimension of the bride price is its infinite nature and burial of in-laws to be borne by the groom. The bride price is cost in such a way that the groom cannot finish paying during his lifetime. *Kem ngu been ga* (paying for bride wealth does not finish). The groom or his offspring is by obligation to assist with financial and material objects in burying the father-in-law and his family if they die before them. This obligation was shared (mutual responsibility) between the families in exchange during the *Yamische* (exchange) marriage.

3.1 Methods

The author collected published research findings on Tiv people marriage arrangements and reports on intimate partner violence in the land. Some of these reports are ethnographic accounts, anthropological research and personal research conducted by the authors on partner violence in 1999 and 2009. Meta-ethnographic analysis (Atkin et al.2008; Barnett-Page and Thomas 2009; Britten et al.2002; Campbell et al 2003; Noblit &Hare 1988) was used to synthesize these findings into a holistic understanding of marriage arrangements, associated cost and partner violence. In the process of selecting the papers, the guidelines for assessing qualitative research as suggested by Dixon-woods et al (2004), Atkin et al (2008) and Campbell et al 2003 were utilized for selecting them. There are few published qualitative studies on types of marriage praxis in Tivland. The two ethnographic studies selected for this work are books spanning several chapters and are rich source of data for this project. The product of this effort is the theory we are proposing; concepts have been defined and variables identified for the examination of mutual partner violence.

3.2 Data Analysis

From the ethnographic accounts provided on types of marriage praxis in Tivland by Akiga (1939) and Wegh (1998), the concepts of cost of marriage, partner’s value, power and stability were constructed for the explanation of intimate partner violence. Table1 shows the synthesized data.

Table 1. Synthesized Data

Author	Topic of study	Yamishe (exchange marriage)	Kem (bride wealth)
Akiga’s (1939)	Akiga’s Story	Cost: Ingyor (sister); Bride buffer; small hoe and cloth; good moral behavior; patience and time. Partner value: high value of women. Power: equality of power with buffer for women Stability: family stability very high	Cost: money; Material objects; less good moral behavior. Partner value: low value of women but with prospect to revolt if bride wealth can be refunded Power: inequality of power in favor of men but strong buffer for women who can refund bride wealth. Stability: weak family stability
Wegh (1998)	Between continuity & change:Tiv concept of change & continuity	Cost: Ingyor (sister); Bride buffer; small hoe and cloth; good moral behavior; patience and time. Partner value: high value of women. Power: equality of power with buffer for women Stability: family stability very high	Cost: money; Material objects; less good moral behavior. Partner value: low value of women but with prospect to revolt if bride wealth can be refunded Power: inequality of power in favor of men but strong buffer for women who can refund bride wealth. Stability: weak family stability.

3.3 The cost of marriage: It refers to the overall commitment incurred by groom or the bride in the course of union formation and the maintenance of the union or family. In this view the cost of marriage would include financial, material, non-material and human cost. The financial cost refers to any available legal tender in use for exchange. Material cost is any tangible object part with in respect to the union formation and maintenance of it while non-material cost would include services and time. Human cost involves the use of woman for exchange for a wife. Mortgage, health insurance, health bills, training expenditure for the children (if applicable) and other expenditures incurred for maintaining the union or family are all cost of marriage.

3.4 Partner’s value: It refers to the importance attached to a partner with regards to all matters concerning the relationship.

3.5 Power: It refers to the capacity of a partner to take decision on matters bothering him or her without undue interference from the other(s).

3.6 Stability: It refers to the occurrences (violence) that would threaten the continuous existence of the union or relationship.

The constructs are related using the following propositions: (a) there are different types of marital praxis (b) each type of marital praxis accommodates cost to be incurred (c) there is an ideology underlying cost to be incurred for contracting the union or maintaining it

(d) the more a partner bears the cost of the union the higher his or her value (e) the higher the value of a partner in a union the greater the inequality (f) the greater the inequality in the union the greater the power imbalance (g) the greater the power imbalance in the union the more dominant is a partner (h) the more dominant is a partner the more he or she asserts his or her rights (I) the more a partner asserts his or her rights the more he or she would violate the rights of the other (J) the more a partner violates the rights of the other the greater the instability (violence) in the union.

4.1. Limitations

Evidence was sought from ethnographic studies on types of marriage praxis, associated cost, and partner value in Tivland to theorize cost of marriage and mutual partner violence. There are fewer numbers of published works on the subject of interest to this study and after thorough screening of available studies, only two were finally utilized. However, these are published ethnographic accounts on the subject of interest spanning several chapters. The cost of marriage in this study may not be same with other cultures or location. Researchers who may wish to use this theory would operationalize cost of marriage in terms of financial, material, non-material (time and services), human and other cost not mentioned here.

5.1 Conclusion

Each marriage arrangement requires commitment in form of cost to be incurred by those involved. The *Yamisha* (exchange) marriage praxis required necessary a sister, hoe and cloth as overture for exchange, a buffer for the wife, good moral behavior, patience and time. The cost of marriage and maintenance of the union was borne by the families in exchange. The couple was supported by the buffer, the extended family and community because a female child was required from the union for another marriage. Both partners were of high value in the union, there was equity and stability of the union, family and continuity of the community through multiplication.

Kem requires high financial cost, material cost, less good moral behavior, no buffer and less community support because a female child is not required from the union for another marriage. The value of a partner in the union depends on how well he or she bears the cost of the marriage. There is inequality and imbalance of power in the union, and instability due to the abuse of the weaker partner.

The monetized marriage arrangement gives power to either partner that can afford the substantial cost of the marriage. However, men were favored by the social organization but with the increasing number of rich and powerful women, the men too are now receiving their fair share of partner violence. In Tivland, rich women are less likely to be assaulted by their partner than the poor ones indicating that women who can fend for themselves in a union and the family are highly valued by their partners (Timiun 2009). With the increase of mutual partner abuse in heterosexual and same sex unions, the family dysfunction; psychopathology; the structural or feminist; and biological theories cannot adequately explain intimate partner violence. This theory will stimulate scholars to examine mutual combat/partner violence using the cost of contracting and maintaining the union. The findings will extend the frontiers of knowledge on domestic violence and provide knowledge for informed social policy decisions to reduce partner or mutual partner violence, and improve reproductive health amongst unions.

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