

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

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 (Sidibe et al, 2006), Unwanted pregnancies, inability to use contraceptives, vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS (Odimegwu, 2000; 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 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. 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.

The Tiv ethnic group had Cowries and Cattles for exchange of goods and services within the communal economy, but never used them for marriage purpose (Akiga, 1939). The praxis was that a woman is a human being and must be exchanged with other woman, services, mutual sharing of risk between the families in exchange, and not material objects (**Yamishe**). A man needed a sister either from within his nuclear or the extended family to exchange for a wife. Women were highly valued because they were needed for the continuity of the family and community through marriage and procreation. Though the lineage identity and inheritance system was patrilineal, women

had a special place in the social order. With the abolition of *Yamishe* marriage arrangement and introduction of *Kem* (pride price) by the colonial administration in 1929, the value of women waned and could be likened to objects obtained by wealth (Rubingh, 1969). Cowries and Cattles were now used as pride price. The predominantly monogamous ethnic group became polygamous especially for those who could afford it. There was general crisis within the family. Men now maltreated women, and women who could refund the pride price paid on them divorced the men. 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.

Methods: The authors collected published and unpublished 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. Line of Argument Analysis ((LOA), Britten et al, 2002; Akin et al, 2008) was used to synthesize these findings into a holistic understanding of marriage arrangements, associated cost and partner violence. The product of this effort is the theory we are proposing. We have defined concepts and identify variables for research interest.

Results: 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. These propositions would be relevant for examining mutual combat/ partner violence in different cultures and settings.

Conclusion: We believe that this theory will stimulate scholars to examine mutual combat/partner violence. The findings will extend the frontiers of knowledge on domestic violence and provide knowledge for informed social policy decisions. The method used in this study will draw the attention of demographers to the possibility of synthesizing the vast related literature on demographic events from anthropological studies. This will provide greater insight and explanation to relationships between variables observed through quantitative techniques.

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