



**The Changing Dynamics, Trends and Perceptions in
the Bride Price Custom in Uganda and the
Implications- A Feminist Perspective**

**A Case of Banyakitra Ethnic Group in Western
Uganda**

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List of Acronyms

NGO	None Governmental Organisation
MP	Member of Parliament
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MCs	Master of Ceremonies

Abstract

This research paper contributes a vital element to the studies, debates and literature on bride price. While employing a systematic conceptual frame work to ground its analysis of the perceptions, experiences, processes and outcomes of bride price payment, it uses data collected from interviews, focus group discussions and observation to bring out the voices and experiences of the people most affected by bride price, that is, the men and women at the grass root whose voice has been missing in literature and debate.

The study focuses on responses from field data collection in Mbarara, western Uganda to answer the question: How do notions of masculinity/femininity, gender, class and modernisation influences people's experiences and perceptions on bride price?

It uses a conceptual frame work consisting of Gender, Masculinity, class, modernisation and intersectionality to analyse data collected from interviews with different actors and direct observation of the bride price payment functions.

The paper argues that while bride price has overwhelming support among the members of the community, its motivations, processes and outcomes are gendered and bent towards reinforcing masculinities and femininities that do not only create, but also reinforce male dominance and female subordination thus expanding gender inequality, reduced decision making powers for women in the households and sometimes wife abuse. It also argues that with forces of modernisation coupled with the desire for actors to conform to particular class status, the practice has turned too commercialised, lost its original meaning, and makes women appear like purchased commodities. The prohibitive costs have denied several young men and women a chance to marry.

The paper recommends that much as it not necessary to abolish the practice (as demanded by several activists and legislators), serious reforms are required to remove the commodification and financial motives so as to make it affordable by many intending to marry.

Key words: Bride price, gender, masculinities, class, modernisation, perceptions, experiences, commercialisation.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Bride price payment is one of the most highly cherished practices, highly rated not only in Uganda but also in many other African countries. The function is performed to formalize and solemnise the marriage before the partners can be recognized as husband and wife. According to Thiara and Hague (2011) bride price is widely practiced and used as basis to validate customary marriages in African countries. It involves exchange of material gifts like livestock, cash, goats, sheep depending on the particular society, but of recent, due to the influence of modernisation and westernisation, other new and 'modern' gifts like land titles, electronics, furniture, home theatre systems, cars and other items have been introduced into the process to go hand in hand with the so called 'traditional' items. However these new and modern products, and the 'modern' way of paying bride price has in some cases led to bride price being a showy class affair that has resulted into payment of "astronomical" amounts (Moore 2013), which amounts can hardly be afforded by prospective grooms with less income.

Recently in Uganda, the practice of bride price has generated a lot of debate and criticisms from feminists, women's rights activists and some politicians condemning it as an outdated practice that promotes male domination, gender inequality and subjects women to domination and reduced decision making powers in homes. It has also been criticised for being commercialized and commoditised in recent times thus raising affordability problems and equating women to purchasable commodities. This prompted some women's rights activists to petition the constitutional court seeking abolition of the practice but the case was lost. But even as I write this paper, some female members of parliament and NGOs are battling with a bill in parliament that seeks to abolish the practice.

Despite the above debates by feminists and politicians about the subject, the voice of the most important stakeholders has been missing, that is the men and women at the grass root level who are affected more by bride with its positive and negative effects. There are scanty studies that capture the voice of those stakeholders especially in western Uganda, which the activists would otherwise use to focus their debates. This study therefore attempts to fill this gap by analysing the views and experiences of the most affected members of society.

Accordingly, the main objective of this research is to provide a theoretically sound and informed study of people's perceptions and experiences of bride price basing on a set of interrelated conceptions. Thus the study is guided by the following question: How do notions of Masculinity/femininity, Gender, Class and modernisation/modernity shape the experiences and perceptions of people about bride price? This question is based on the assumptions that bride price is some way a gendered practice which reinforces, but also reinforced by the feelings of masculinity and femininity in societies. It is also a class affair that in some aspects conforms to forces of modernisation and modernity but at the same time resisting those forces. All these influence the way people

perceive pride price, with its process, experiences and outcomes on men and women. The paper has was compiled basing on the two months of field study of the Banyakitara ethnic group (particularly Banyankole/Bakiga) in Mbarara district of South western Uganda, coupled with my 5 years working experience on women's rights, popular debates in the media and informal discussions with different people.

Using the conceptualizations of gender, masculinity/femininity, class and modernisation, the paper argues that despite its popular support, bride price payment cements the already existing gender inequalities since after payment, some husbands feel that they have 'bought' the wife into their household, a feeling that creates male dominance and feelings of 'total manhood' reinforcing their hegemonic masculinities. It is again this crave for the feeling 'total manhood' that encourages majority of men to insist on paying even when the bride price is not demanded. It also makes women feel loved and respected in their role women which boosts femininities. However with the increased modernisation, bride price has become a show of class, highly commercialized and commoditized which leading to affordability problems for the poor.

This paper is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research topic, the contextual back ground of the study subject, review of literature, the research problem and question. It also describes the methodology used in the study and the challenges encountered.

Chapter 2 presents an outline of the concepts/theoretical frame works used in the study and their linkage with bride price. The main concepts explored in the chapter include gender, masculinity/femininity, class, modernisation/modernity and class. It ends with a discussion on the elements of intersectionality that seeks to explain how the four concepts interact with each other to shape people's experiences and perceptions on bride price.

Basing on the field interviews, observation, focus group discussions and other methods used to collect data, chapter 3 discusses the research findings with attempts to link them to the theoretical frame work. It argues that the motivations for bride, processes and its outcomes, language and symbols used have a lot of gendered inclinations that fortify masculinities and femininities and create and reinforce the subjective identities especially about women. It also analyses how aspects like ceremonies, type of products exchanged and perceptions are class affair that distinguishes the experiences, feelings and motivations of the rich and the poor about the practice. It also analyses how modernisation has affected the practices and perceptions of the people about bride price. It concludes by looking at the interaction between gender, class and modernisation in influencing the experiences and perceptions about bride price.

Chapter 4 presents an outline of the main conclusions of the study with some recommendations for feminists, practitioners, policy makers and activists and gaps for further research.

Contextual Background

The bride price function is performed to formalize and solemnise the marriage before the spouses can be recognized as husband and wife. According to Thiara and Hague (2011) bride price is used as basis to validate customary marriages in African countries. It is paid by the groom's family to the bride's family and it acts as a contract between the two families. Material gifts exchanged range from livestock and other animals and cash especially in rural areas. In Urban areas where land for grazing livestock may not be available, cash or physical assets like furniture, machinery, electronics and other household items are instead exchanged.

Traditionally, among most communities it is expected that if the marriage later fails, materials or gifts paid are supposed to be refunded to the groom's family irrespective of the length the time the spouses have stayed together.

Bride price is a strongly rooted transaction which many African communities largely approve. However a couple of years back, it has turned out to be too commercial and its original meaning which was just a symbol of appreciation and consensus between the two families (for the bride and groom) seems to be eroded or transformed to include payment of expensive financial and material resources. This has generated obstacles associated with raising such resources and the high prices may curtail wives' (especially poor) negotiating positions or agency in marital relationships. Some young men face hurdles in trying to meet the demands of this practice especially those with inadequate resources, hence try to find alternative ways of raising these amounts like selling off family property or getting bank loans. Although some groups view bride price as a form of protection for women within marriages by providing them respect, status and acknowledgement within society, the process may contribute to women's subordination to husbands which may also lead to wife abuse. On the other hand defaulting men could lose status and respect from wives and society because they were not able to pay bride price (Thiara and Hague 2011, Baluku et al. 2012).

There are increasing concerns about the negative effects of bride price on women in Uganda as it is argued that it turns them into purchasable commodities. This brings negative effects on women, children, family life and general community development. Women activists and scholars have accused it of having a high correlation with domestic violence, degradation of women dignity and violation of human rights. They thus call for its reform (Matembe 2002, Thiara and Hague 2011).

The impact of bride price particularly on women has raised a heated debate among activists and feminists, to the extent that some have called for its abolition though with little success especially due to the 'cultural' and financial aspects associated with it. Despite the ongoing debates, little scholarly studies have been conducted to assess how people perceive it or why it thrives despite its negative publicity from several feminists. These studies are required to generate reliable knowledge and evidence that can be used as a basis for the debates by activists, academicians and policy makers. According to Baluku et al (2012) "Bride price, a historic custom has not been well documented, and is

one of the most crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men¹” (Baluku et al 2012:2).

As observed from the above, bride price has had strong approval in marriage procedures in Uganda, but due to modernism or other reasons associated with globalisation and neoliberal capitalism, the trend has changed to include huge financial sums and making it appear commercial. Nevertheless scanty studies exist to verify this, thus this study endeavours to examine it, by looking perceptions and experiences of different actors.

Although bride price payment is practised and cherished in the whole of Uganda, it tends to be more expensive among the Banyakitara group in western in Uganda particularly among the Banyankore and Bakiga (Byamukama 2011). Therefore this study focused on this group.

The underlying issue explored is the analysis of how different people think and experience the practice basing on the conceptions of masculinity, gender, class, and modernisation and their interrelationship to bride price.

A brief Anthropology of the Banyakitara People

This term Banyakitara in modern times has been re-invented and used to bring together four ethnically and linguistically related groups in Western Uganda namely; Batoro, Banyoro, Banyankore and Bakiga. (Rwagweri 2010) The Banyakitara can be categorized under two categories, the Banyankore/Bakiga and the Banyoro/ Batoro. These two groupings live in the south western and mid western Uganda respectively. Though they have undergone some changes due to the effects of colonialism and modernization, the Banyakitara are traditionally farmers who engage in crop farming and livestock rearing with strong preference for cattle. Though the cattle are kept for economic reasons, one the purposes is for use during settlement of bride price transactions. In addition, the Banyakitara society like most African societies is deeply embedded in patriarchal families/relations with strong element of hegemonic masculinities, women subordination, a strong preference to bride price payment, strong respect for marriage and preference to big number of children. They were historically associated with strong taboos like prohibition of women from eating particular foods like eggs though modernity has changed some of these beliefs.

Women who were hitherto considered to be not fit for education have now greatly benefited from formal education and formal employment. In a similar vein, bride price that was hitherto just a custom to formalize marriages has now changed, and a lot of bargaining and negotiations have to be undertaken before a final ‘price’ can be agreed upon. Thus this study tries to find out people’s experiences and perceptions about this changing practice, using a theoretical basis from a feminist perspective.

¹ Although the patriarchal nature of society is largely to blame for issues of women subordination and domestic violence, and not necessarily bride price, its payment may serve to reinforce or act as contributing factor to men’s power over women.

Statement of the Research Problem

Despite Uganda's current strides towards modernisation and the subsequent decline of several customs and practices, the bride price² custom, an age old practice has instead continued to gain more prominence in terms of attention given to it and the amount of resources exchanged during the practice. Some activists have blamed it for having changed from just a procedure to solemnise marriages to a highly commercialised and expensive transaction. Currently in Uganda, there is extensive debate between women's rights activists and other actors as to whether bride price has genuine positive outcomes or whether it is a dehumanising tool that reduces women to purchasable commodities and thus lowering their position, decision making powers, and other negative outcomes in marital relations. The debate continues with less signs of consensus amidst limited documented facts. Despite the debates and perceptions, a large percentage of the population still support the practice. This study therefore analyses the experiences and perceptions of people about bride price grounding itself on the notions of gender, masculinity, class, modernisation/modernity and their intersectionality.

Research Question and Objective

This study was guided by the main question stated as follows;

How do notions of Masculinity/femininity, Gender, Class and modernisation influence the experiences and perceptions of people about bride price?

Research objective

To produce a deeper understanding and knowledge about bride price and its associated theoretical underpinnings, that will enable me to get a good foundation for further research in gender and for use by feminists, academicians and policy makers in their debates about the practice.

Justification of the Study

Bride price custom has existed for a long time, though with gradual changes and modifications that sometimes brings its relevancy and legitimacy into question. It is a common assumption that once modernisation takes course in society, there would be a corresponding reduction in the level of traditional practices held by society. However, in Uganda the bride price custom has tended to defy this assumption and instead, it is gaining more

² The term bride price in this study refers the property whether financial or otherwise paid by the groom or his family to the family of the bride to solemnize a marriage. It has to be distinguished from dowry where (in some communities' especially in Asia) the family of the bride instead gives the property to the groom.

prominence despite the gains registered in modernisation trends³. However there are little documented studies to provide reasons for these changes and trends in the practice and this study will therefore try to explore the reasons for this so as to cover this knowledge gap. It explores the context that may have given this practice more salience, along with the perceptions.

Secondly, there is a lot of debate in Uganda about the relevancy of the bride price payment, especially by the women's rights activists, legal professionals, religious leaders and other members of civil society having different arguments. However these discussions and debates are held at the top level without the voice of the main actors-women and men at the grassroots level and with limited empirical evidence to substantiate the different claims made by the different groups in the debate. A few studies done about this practice in Uganda only tend to cover Eastern Uganda where there is a prominent women's rights NGO (MIFUMI project) but with no coverage of other areas like western Uganda (with slightly different cultural customs practices) where bride price practice is more on the increase.

This study therefore tests theory to generate evidence based knowledge about the dynamics of bride price payment, and people's perceptions about it. The produced knowledge will contribute to informing academicians, human rights activists, family scholars, legislators and other policy makers on how best to debate or legislate on reforms in domestic relations studies, laws and policies basing on theoretically tested conclusions.

Review of the Existing Literature

According to Kaye et.al (2005) bride price payment is a gender issue which has serious implications on gender relations in different socio-cultural contexts. It is a strongly rooted practice and despite its associated shortcomings, many Ugandans approve the custom. However commercialization has changed the practice over time and its original meaning has been eroded making it a constraining transaction. Since some men find difficulties in raising the funds to pay bride price, and due to the nature of the practice that is perceived by some to belittle women, some men feel that after payment they deserve utmost respect and subordination from women. This may breed a strong ground for wife abuse by partners (Kaye et al 2005). This abuse against wives has several effects like physical injury, death, mental disorders, stress, depression, suicide, low self esteem, limited performance in economic development, and politics (Brown 2003)

However bride price also has some positive benefits that make it popular. According to Thiara and Hague (2011) bride-price allows exchange of wealth between families, it acts as a compensation for parents for the expenses they incurred while upbringing the daughter, it helps women to gain value,

³ Though this is not a new realization, it still remains significant for this study since it will help to understand how modernisation influences the perceptions, and changing nature of carrying out the practice of bride price in the Ugandan context. The objective here won't be to test the efficacy of the theory.

importance and respect which may prevent them from being abused. It helps the husband to be recognized by the in-laws but above all it helps to solemnize customary marriages. In short it is equivalent to a marriage 'certificate'.

Despite the above positives, bride price may lead to gender inequality, giving women little power and possibly turning them into commodities to be passed on from family to family. It is a cause and symptom of male dominance. The love for bride price has implications for girls' education since some parents force them off school to get married so as to get money in form of bride price. The fact that in most communities, bride price can be claimed back in case of marriage failure may compel women to stay in abusive relationships as their parents may not be in position to repay the money (Thiara and Hague 2011).

With the intensification of debates and clashing perceptions about bride price, in 2007 women's rights activists under the MIFUMI project in Uganda challenged the practice in the constitutional court on grounds that it violates the principle of equality of men and women in marriage and that it is discriminatory and reduces the dignity of women contrary to the provisions of the Ugandan constitution. However the petitioners could not secure the ban on bride price and thus lost the case. The presiding judge argued that bride price could not be declared unconstitutional because different ethnic groups practiced it differently and that although some had commercialized it, others still give small affordable marriage gifts, and therefore court could not outlaw the exchange of gifts, nor could court apply a blanked abolition of a practice that is held and perceived differently by different ethnic groups and tribes. He also argued that there is no evidence to link bride price and domestic violence. Maria 2012). This judgment was not only curious to me but also triggered my interest to study these subjects further.

The Sociology of Bride price

It is not easy to determine the origins of bride price but at least there is evidence that it has existed for a long time though it has been changing in trends, practices, and meanings. The nature and amount of resources exchanged has also been changing over time. Whereas some communities have tended to increase the resources exchanged to exorbitant levels, others have altogether done away with it due changes in marriage and familial arrangements. There is also debate on whether bride price and its sister practice of dowry are driven by economic motives rather than social motives and whether the practice is relevant or detrimental to the social lives of women and men. The following discussion explores the above further.

The practice of bride price has come under heavy attack by cultural anthropologists especially from the western world who, while studying African customs condemned and equated bride price to wife purchase in the same way commodities are bought in the market (Pritchard 1931). Accordingly this may be misrepresentation of the African social practices since it only emphasises the economic functions of bride price and ignores other important social purposes, and as such, "it encourages the layman to think that "price" used in this context is synonymous with "purchase " in common English parlance.

Hence we find people believing that wives are bought and sold in Africa in much the same manner as commodities are bought and sold in European markets" (Pritchard 1931: 36, Grey 2009: 34). According to Pritchard (ibid), such a statement is a gross misrepresentation of cultures for people who cherish the practice and harmful since it exaggerates the price issue ignoring other gifts exchanged like pots, cattle, hoes and many others. Pritchard instead proposes the use of the term 'bride wealth' in place of bride 'price' as the term wealth incorporates other non financial but social functions and items inherent in the practice.

However Grey (2009) in his analysis of bride price criticises Pritchards proposal of the term bride wealth arguing that even the term "wealth" is not any better as it represents property which has financial connotations. Thus this portrays marriage as commercial transaction. As long as marriage involves exchanges whether money or property like cattle, hoes or other items as a pre requisite for it occur, then such exchange of properties may be interpreted as wife purchase, and such an exchange may imply that that even the rights of a wife are "bought" after the exchange. For this reason, some anthropologists (western) have erroneously equated African and Asian marriages and bride price payment to the way Europeans buy cows from the markets or even to slavery (Grey 2009). Such scholars also mistake bride price for symbolising women inferiority and payment for the labour that the woman will provide in the husbands household or compensation for the labour lost by the father. They further claim that the 'profits' made by the father from the daughter are used by the sons to marry (Kressel et al 1977).

Although it may not be right to term the proceeds from bride price as 'profits' I don't find it untrue to believe that some families especially in Uganda where substantial amounts are paid, that the resources levied before or after marrying off the daughter are used by the sons to marry.

Bride price is not a static practice and undergoes changes as the societies undergo social and economic changes and with trends in modernisation. For example Kressel (1977) states that in many areas, as young and educated people increase, the practice tends to also lose strong hold, like any other traditional practices, not because it is bad but because of social change, while in other areas, pride price payments increases with time and as the cost of living increases also bride price tends to increase. It also varies with class in that some classes like the middle class look at it as a status symbol associated with expensive payments while others in the same class do away with it altogether. Some families will demand to be paid very expensive resources to prove their superiority and status while others may demand nothing or something small also as a sign of status. Those who fail to raise the amount needed by the bride's family too feel inferior and this may have negative consequences for the bride. For example she may lose respect from her home and among her peers.

In other communities especially Asia, the system has totally changed from bride price to dowry, which is to some extent an inconvenience to women especially from poor families (Rajaraman 1983). However Rajaraman is criticised for arriving on this conclusion using wrong model and failing to define what dowry precisely means, and for making a blanked conclusion without being region or context specific.

As society undergoes change, even the nature of property exchanged as bride price and other marriage gifts have also kept on changing according to different groups. For example in Uganda where bride price is highly practiced, the system, intention and nature of property exchanged have changed. For example among the Baganda, in central Uganda it was local brew, traditional dress for father and mother and meat, while among the Banyankore (Banyakitara), bride price used to be in form of cattle, goats and some rare coins especially if the bride was a virgin. Among the Bagisu in Eastern Uganda it used to be two heads of cattle while among the Bakonzo in western Uganda, it was 12 goats and 12 jerry cans of local brew (Mujungu 2013). However of recent, this practice has changed and the above items are no longer followed. Instead the process now involves haggling for very expensive payments (*ibid*) and this may include expensive items like electronics, many cows, cars, furniture, land titles and cash (Mujungu 2013, Thiara and Hague 2011).

It is partly these exorbitant payments that feminists and human rights activists have challenged claiming that it has negative consequences on women's negotiating and decision making power in marital relations and enhancing gender inequality. But also, apart from the commercialisation, even bride price itself is criticised by feminists since marriage is supposed to base on romantic love and not economic, material or symbolic goods. For example Wendo (2004) claims that bride price payment makes the wife a property of the husband, reducing her capacity to defend and control her body. As such she could be sexually abused by the husband since she has no right to refuse and this has increased the spread of STDs and unwanted pregnancies among women in sub Saharan Africa. However Esen (2004) contests the above claims in a rejoinder to Wendo and instead argues that bride price demonstrates love capability of the groom's maturity and capacity to sustain the family. He further argues that the lack of capacity for some African women to negotiate in marriages is not because of bride price but it is because of lack of power perpetuated by low education. It is therefore recommended that to improve their power and bargaining capacity, women need to be educated other than blaming bride price (*ibid*).

The above discussion and literature reveals gaps and contradictions. Where as one group of scholars condemn the practice as commercially oriented and oppressive to women, some still defend it a necessary practice. Secondly most of the studies that generated the above literature were conducted long ago some being as far as 1929, and sufficient literature covering the practice in current times has not been seen, while most of the available literature though old, bases most of the findings on Asian contexts with Sub-Saharan Africa and Uganda missing. Also missing in the literature are the experiences of people about the custom especially in Uganda where it is still practiced. Therefore this study attempts to generate data that covers some of the above gaps, especially in terms of context and time. It thus focuses on the Banyakitara in Uganda who are highly missing in the literature, and analyses how the dynamics of the practice in the changing Ugandan society.

Methodology

The study employs the conceptions of masculinity/femininity, gender, class, modernity, and intersectionality to analyse data gathered from comprehensive interviews with Banyakitara people in, western Uganda.

Data collection and sample

The field study was conducted in one community of Mbarara district in western Uganda, but where necessary respondents expected to have rich information on the subject were picked from outside this area. This area was selected among other places in Uganda because it is one the areas where bride price is highly practiced and preferred. Among the many communities with a high preference of bride price, for this area, the researcher understands the local language and thus was able to interview respondents directly without relying on interpreters who are expensive or even sometimes distort the information during interpretation.

The people are predominantly farmers growing crops, rearing cattle and some engage in retail and whole business. They have a combination of relatively rich and poor people and the literacy rates are slightly over 70 % which is Uganda average.

The study sample included 20 respondents who were selected using purposive sampling so as to get out respondents with relevant data that could be used to enrich the study. The respondents were selected basing on considerations of gender, class, age, marital status, level of education and position held in society.

The main method of data collection included interviews using interview schedules, and key informant guides. The interviews were conducted by the researcher himself without using assistants so that all responses and non verbal clues could be captured. 4 Focus group discussions were also held, where 2 focus group discussions were held with 8 women each (from the same social strata) and the other two with 8 men each, and the purpose was to collect the data by looking at how they interact or bring out issues in groups and relate with the data collected from other individual interviews or texts. Participants in the focus group discussions were different from those interviewed individually. Observation (non participant) was used to supplement and enable deeper understanding on the information gained from other sources. In addition secondary data was reviewed to get more ideas and relationships that could not be got from the field. The source of this secondary data are previous research papers, journal articles, text books, news papers, government documents and reports, NGO reports and websites.

In addition to the above, 3 non participant observation sessions were also used to collect data through directly observing the bride price payment ceremonies (referred to as *okujuga* or *kwanjula*), where interactions, language used, property exchanged, procedures and rituals involved were keenly observed in order to infer perceptions, discourses, feelings, experiences and interpretation of how issues of gender, masculinity, class played out in actions and discourse.

In addition to formal data collection methods, informal methods like discussions with other people outside the sample were used. These included discussions with family members, fellow students, listening to preaching in church especially on issues concerning marriage and gender, listening to other people's stories as long as their discussions had themes that I considered similar to the study. Through this method some useful insights were captured and incorporated in the main data collected. In some cases these insights prompted me to follow the subject further.

Due to limitations in sample size and the sampling techniques, the goal of the study is not to generalize findings to the whole of Uganda but to generate information, insights and conclusions that can be used to test theory and contribute to the current or future studies, debates and policies.

Data Analysis

Data from secondary sources, individual interviews, focus group discussions and notes from the observation and other informal sources was processed in order to create meaningful patterns of information for use in report writing and drawing conclusions. This involved reading all the generated responses over and over so as to understand them better and correct mistakes or fill the data gaps where necessary and create more clarification. In some cases it included going to re interview a particular respondent where I felt that more information or clarification was needed. Then I recorded down all the notes from various sources, and grouped them according to sex, gender, class, level of education, age in order to get relationships or interaction. .

In addition, the data was grouped according to the occurring topics, or themes and concepts (mapping)/ theories in order to observe the correlations. In this case the themes included but not limited to issues of masculinity, gender, class, modernity and the intersectionality/interrelationship between them. Then these were critically studied to observe whether they conformed and answered the main question. Apart from the recorded responses from interviews and discussions, the notes on non verbal communications, mood, frustrations, joy and gestures from respondents were incorporated and analysed to infer more meanings.

In short, following Zina O'Leary's guidelines, the process involved identifying and locating biases in the responses and secondary data, as I note down impressions, and then reduce or compress this raw data to better understandable groups or codes. Then I searched for patterns and interconnections through mapping and building of themes based on the emerging topics but more importantly basing on the research question and the theories. This enabled me to build theories or compare the data to theories so as to verify or disapprove the theories use. Although the above steps appear a bit linear on paper, in practice the whole process involved going forward and back through primary data and even secondary data to facilitate more clarity and understanding of the themes and interrelationships with the theories (O'Leary 2010).

Limitations and Challenges Encountered

In the study area most of the people/respondents were always working either in formal/informal employment or working on their own farms, and this made them uncomfortable to secure time for me for comprehensive interviews/discussion of over one hour. To solve this, I scheduled interviews in evenings and weekends for those who could not afford time during working hours. In addition, many NGOs and government departments that conduct focus group discussions in the communities have been paying out allowances to participants thus breeding the “allowance syndrome”. Some participants (especially men) in focus group discussions expected me to do the same. However as an experienced community development worker, I used community mobilisation skills to clarify to them before hand during invitations so that they don't expect participation allowance. But I offered light refreshments during the discussions. For women in focus group discussions, I offered exercise books and pens (for their schooling children) since I was advised that they preferred books to refreshments.

Ethical Issues and Personal Involvements

Many respondents' were eager to discuss issues of bride price, masculinity/femininity and gender stereotypes because it gave them chance to air out their views and ideas, pride and also their frustrations about bride price especially currently when it is a heavily debated subject in Uganda. However a few others felt that those are private matters especially issues of bride price and marriage and did not feel comfortable discussing what is regarded as a 'private sphere'. For example some women whose bride price was not paid or men who have failed to pay felt uneasy in the discussions since it is a challenge to their feelings of 'manliness'. This was evident especially during focus group discussions. However great care was taken to ensure that such respondents do not feel embarrassed and respect was accorded to all classes of respondents.

At a personal level, I have participated in debates about gender, marriage, bride price and other associated subjects and sometimes get emotional when I listen to some related stories. Some women would need to tell their long stories full of grievances with a lot of information that was far beyond the coverage of the study. I too went to the field with some biases about the subject. However serious efforts were invested during interactions so that I listen to myself first before speaking/responding to respondents so as to minimise bias.

During field interviews, I recorded the interactions so that we could have lively interactive discussions and listen attentively. At all times, permission would be sought first and those who were not comfortable being recorded; only written notes were taken. Permission was also sought to quote names in report compilation but where permission was not granted or where the statement appeared to be sensitive, pseudo names have been used.

Chapter 2

Conceptual/Theoretical Frame work

The study is guided and involves the analysis of dynamics, perceptions and experiences of people about bride price guided by the concepts of masculinity, gender, modernisation, class and intersectionality as they are the most emerging themes from the literature that was reviewed and the responses got from the field data collection.

Gender and Masculinity/Femininity

Gender is a ‘useful category of analysis’ as it allows us to examine and understand how and why certain perceptions and actions held against men and women are incorporated not only in social but also in political and economic relations of society. It is these socialized relationships, beliefs and roles that are referred to as gender. This results from institutions, beliefs, practices, knowledge, relations or cultures that promote gender as a major basis of identity, that is, a “social category imposed on a sexed body or a social organization of sexual differences” (Scott, 1986: 1054). In other words, social characteristics being mistaken to be natural and biologically determined and translating into roles that are hinged on beliefs of dominant man and subordinate woman- hegemonic masculinities (Butler 1993).

According to Cornell (1999) and Cleaver (2002), gender identity refer to activities, traits, values that are socially, contextually, historically dependent and form a basis for identifying the roles of men and women.

Scott, (1986) concurs that the structure of the economy and the gender relations in production overlap to culminate into historically shaped experiences that frame the social reality about women. Accordingly gender is based on social reality and not biologically determined.

In summary, Scott (1986) presents four elements of gender construction which operate simultaneously to reinforce gender roles, and which have been useful in my analysis. These include; cultural symbols that elicit symbolic and conflicting representations and myths about men and women for example ‘Eve and Mary as symbols of woman’ especially among Christians, goodness, innocence, purity and tenderness while men are symbolised as rough, dark, corrupt and other associated characterisations. The second element relates to the ‘normative concepts’ that tend to reinforce the above representations by defining what is perceived to be an ‘ideal’ male/female and used in social interaction over a period of time. The third element is the composition and structure of social institutions and organisations that are gendered or reproduce processes of gender construction. These include the family/household, labour market, education institutions, the economy and the state. The last element consists of the construction of subjective identities resulting from activities, representations, and collective treatments that lead one to assume a particular identity. All the four elements act upon each other to reinforce gender construction in particular contexts (Scott 1986: 1067-1068).

Gender construction and learning starts at birth with the assignment of a sex category to a baby basing on the genital organs. This results into the identification of the baby as girl or a boy⁴, followed by allocation of names (feminine or masculine names), clothing and other gender markers (Lorber 1995). This translates into treatment and training of the children basing on sex differences, children also respond and behave differently in order to respond and conform to their assigned gender category. The process continues through parenting and by adulthood the children have adopted the particular behaviors considered 'normal' in that specific society. These behaviors are reproduced in how the adults behave, the type of roles they undertake and how they relate with the opposite 'gender'. Scholars have termed as 'doing gender' the process of reinforcing/conditioning or disapproving certain behaviors and gender markers on the basis that they are reserved for males or females (Lorber 1995).

Due to the gendered institutions like the state, the family and religion gender is implicitly and sometimes explicitly a present discourse for purposes of national identity but also as a way to establish and maintain particular forms of social order, status, and recognition and power sustenance (Turmursukh 2001).

With the increase in other forms of family arrangement like same sex couples, single mothers, single fathers, and increased role of women in political and economic spheres, such perceptions and institutional arrangements are bound to get serious attack. Though same sex marriages may exist in Uganda, they are not easy to locate because of the stigma and legal implications attached and for this; this study covers only the heterosexual marriages.

Masculinity:

Masculinity does not exist except in contrast with femininity, thus it involves the socially constructed characteristics of men or what it is expected of men especially in relation to women.

These characteristics are socially constructed and differ from community to community and are not static as they keep on evolving as society undergoes change. In several African societies characterized by patriarchal arrangements, men are expected to be strong, intelligent, and dominant (especially over women) in that those who fall below those standards and behaviors may be labeled as not being 'men enough'. These beliefs influence how society is organized and how different activities and practices are done.

According to Connell (1999) masculinities is a relational concept to gender and though all societies have clear perceptions about gender, some do not necessarily have the concept of masculinities. Notions of masculinities thus determine the type of behavior one is expected to exhibit in society if he is to be considered masculine. Expectations about masculinity include being violent, dominant, high interest in sexual pleasure, interest in sports like foot ball to

⁴ It has to be noted that there is quite a number of people who do not follow under any of this binary classification of boy or girl, or male versus female for example the intersex, transgender and others, thus identifying people basing on that binary classification is itself problematic.

mention but a few. On contrary those who do not exhibit such behaviors or show the opposite are considered to be unmasculine or feminine (Connell 1999).

The above conceptions in most cases benefit men at the expense of women but can at times put the former at a disadvantage. Instances where men benefit include dominance in decision making, control of household finances and other associated privileges both at households and society level. In other words the social structure positions and allocates dividends to men (Cleaver 2002). They may however suffer consequences in a bid to subscribe to such dominant expectations. For example the need to prove their sexual prowess may expose them to HIV or humiliation for those who feel that they are not at the standards required of a man in society.

Due to the effect of modernization and social change, the social structure is evolving in favour of improved role of women in society which continues to challenge the dominant of masculinities. For example women are participating in formal education and attaining higher qualifications, participating in formal paid jobs and earning incomes which are sometimes higher compared to men. The loss of jobs by some men results into forfeiture of breadwinner status, reduced attainment of education of boys compared to girls, increase in female headed households and reduced role of the 'traditional' family. These developments have put the dominant masculinities under threat (Cleaver 2002, Nicholson 1997).

When the notion of masculinities is analysed from the angle of power relations and hierarchies between men and women, and between men and men, we get what scholars have referred to as hegemonic masculinities, weaker forms sometimes referred to as subordinate or marginal masculinities. These reflect power dimensions between gender identities (Cleaver 2002). However it has to be noted that the forms of dominant or subordinate masculinities are socially and culturally constructed and as such differ from culture to culture and are moderated by time, history, class, race, age and economic relations (ibid). Accordingly, the relational issue here becomes critical, since it is advisable to analyse hegemonic masculinities in a hierarchical form in order to understand how it compares issues of masculinity versus femininity and or between men and men (Messerchmidt 2012).

In line with the above contextual and relational formation of masculinities, De Neeve observed that masculinities or perceptions of proper manhood are formed basing on the contextual, social and spatial contexts of work and status in the community, and social relationships and these relationships not only shape but also result from societies expectations of what one should do to reflect these as acceptable expectations of behavior (De Neeve 2004).

The above discussion raises issues about masculinity and the feeling of manhood which are used to analyse the perceptions and dynamics of bride price in this paper. For example it investigates whether how much one pays in bride price determines or is determined by his feelings of "manliness", and if the amount paid increases his dominance over the wife hence contributing to dominant masculinities, whether those who pay little or those staying with

wives without paying any thing feel that their manhood and power are threatened or not, what do their wives think about them? Does the amount paid to the father determine his “manhood” and power in the family or even in the village? This has helped me to analyse how issues / feelings of masculinity shape or are shaped by bride price payment and its support (or critique) especially by men.

As far as bride price is concerned, it is assumed that payment or nonpayment affects who men play out their masculinities in the household and to some extent, how women feel feminine.

Social Class:

Class refers to the different social stratifications of people in society organized in hierarchical order, though in some cases it is difficult to draw a dividing line between two distinct classes. The classes may be categorized into the upper class, middle class and lower class. Class (like gender) is a relational concept which signifies vertical differences or hierarchies among people, groups, individuals, tribes, races, castes and position in the production systems.

Talcott Parsons theorizing under the influence of Weberian ideas investigated the class system and social stratifications and argued that social stratification systems are influenced by the level of wealth, prestige, influence, education and life style (Parsons 1940). However the Marxist approach to class analysis looks at the social relations of production, that is, the relations between the owners of the means of productions (capitalists/employers) and those who sell their labour to the capitalist for a living (the workers). In addition it looks at the class specific form of relations, the differences in class relations and how ones location in a particular class affects her/his political, economic and social stands, views and chances (Wright 1999).

Breen and Rottman (1995) argue that people or groups of people undertake particular actions basing on the level of social power and status, and this implies that individuals in a particular class are faced with similar resources or constraints on their behaviour. These resources or constraints may be held consciously or unconsciously. Thus people under a similar social position or class have a high probability of sharing actions and beliefs on a particular phenomenon, and hence likely to act in the same way. The same was confirmed by Goldthorpe (1996) using what is referred to as the rational action theory.

Theorising on family and class, Goldthorpe (1983) argued that an individual's class is based on the family, thus the family forms the basic unit of stratification and not the individual. Following this line, he argued that the class or the position of the family in the class system will be determined by the position of the male head of the family who is always a bread winner. However, this line of argument by Goldthorpe was challenged by Stanworth (1984) who argued that using the family as the basis for categorizing the class of individuals is questionable as the class experience of wives differs from that of their husbands, ignores the vast inequalities that exist between men and

women or wives and husbands and ignores the fact that some of the inequalities that exist between men and women are caused by the class systems.

Goldthorpe's assumptions also ignore the fact that some arrangements or unions he calls family have changed and thus many individuals do not fall under any form what is referred to as the 'normal' family (Nicholson 1997)

According to Pahl (1993) class and education attainment have a high correlation and the level of education does not only determine life chances like getting employment but also determines values. In the same vein, Wright (2000) suggests that people in the same class category have a high likelihood of deciding or attaching similar values to particular phenomena.

On the subject of bride price, Caplan (1984) while studying perceptions on dowry in urban India observed that there is a high association between class status and dowry and that those in the upper hierarchy have a higher preference for dowry system while those in the lower status prefer bride price. He observed that those with high education attainment and professionals especially Christians belonging to the lower middle class tended to have low preference for bride price and dowry while the poor and those based on the caste system had a preference for both though in small amounts. Therefore, this means that there is a likely relationship between class and preference for bride price including the amount paid, and this helped me to analyse the situation in the Ugandan context.

In their study about marriages and property in Palestine, Moors et al (2009) emphasise the role played by class and social status in determining the perceptions and value attached to marital gifts. They observe that whereas during the first "antifada" less attention was attached dower and gifts and people would just marry even with "no ring, no gold" the situation changed later altogether causing difficulties to poor young men who cannot afford the exorbitant costs. Although in some cases just a symbolic fee like one JD (Jordanian Dinars) is charged especially among upper middle class families or where the families know and trust each other, in many cases expensive marriage gifts make the brides feel a sense of "specialness" and those from the upper class may feel embarrassed or humiliated among family members in case the prospective husbands fail to bring classy and stylish gifts (Johnson et al. 2009:27).

This relates to my study and helps me to analyse how issues of class and social status help to influence the motivations for high, low, or no bride price and why in the Ugandan context My study uses the Weberian (Talcot) approach since most of the class divisions in the study area are based on differences in wealth and education and not necessarily labour relations.

In the study area, the distinguishing characteristics between classes include economic status, level of education and political and to some extent religious power. Thus I considered the rich, the middle income earners and the poor, then the highly educated (professionals above degree level), the moderately educated and the illiterate and also compared the rich but not educated, or the educated but poor. In addition I considered those with political power,

religious leaders and those with traditional power like clan leaders (sometimes referred to as local elders). Issues investigated and analyzed here include how different classes perceive and experience bride price, whether bride price is a class issue, how they have seen it evolve and why and how different classes approach the ceremony and how issues of gender and masculinity interact with class, and modernisation.

Modernisation and Bride Price

One of the ways to understand the changing nature of the bride custom like other cultural practices would be to analyse the modernisation/modernity theories and the impact on current societies. The central point of the modernisation argument is its assumption of the traditional society versus the modern society and the portrayal of the modern society as a progressive one, dynamic and the desired one devoid of traditional (and cultural) practices (Rostow 1960). Early sociologists thus basing on the above assumptions portrayed traditional society as backward, static and limited division of labour while the modern society is characterised with a high drive for progress and change, urbanisation, increased education and increased role of mass media and innovativeness (Eisenstadt 1974: 226)

Another key feature of modernisation that tends to be anti traditional methods and beliefs is the raise of capitalism whose major aim is the drive for profits, thus kicking out some beliefs and practices that are deemed to be anti profit and anti modernity (Hardin 2007). If the theory was to be believed, it would be hoped that one of the social practices that would fall victim to this modernisation drive would be the bride price.

Indeed there is scholarly evidence to link modernisation to the decline in peoples love for some traditional beliefs and practices especially among the young generation. With increased education of girls to higher level which leads to empowerment and the influence of mass media, it is claimed that customs related to marriage and family also start changing or disappearing. For example it leads to preference for monogamous marriages, individual choice of marriage partners other than being decided for by the parents, increased divorce, and reduced role of bride price in marriages (Vandewiele and Hondt 1980, Pillai and Barton 1998). In addition, with the spread of modernisation, other family types or arrangements that do not conform to the so called 'traditional' family that is nuclear oriented, monogamous and co-residence based on marital relationships between partners are gaining strength. But as Nicholson (1997) shows, this was not a natural development. The expansion of the 'nuclear' family was an imposition and it was paired by with a discourse that depicted the working classes, non white, non western as inferior and backward. Instead other 'alternative' family arrangements characterised by cohabiting partners without necessarily being married, single parents who choose not marry, same sex marriages or friends staying together without having marital or sexual relationships have gained ground (Nicholson 1997, Roseneil and Budgeon 2004). Such family and marriage arrangements may not provide conducive environment for bride price payments since they take a different approach altogether.

However, in contrast to the general rhetoric about the relationship between modernisation and bride price, there is evidence to support the opposite. For example Anderson (2003) using studies from India, argues that where as modernisation has led to increased wealth among the people, the caste based societies have largely inflated bride price to greater amounts instead of reducing it as modernisation theorists would believe. Indeed Uganda is not any different and almost in all societies of Uganda, bride price has seen greater increase in amounts and attention in the last decade. This so despite the modernisation that is taking place. It may be due to the economics and, people's greed and profit motives that come with capitalism and modernisation. In short, this is used to analyse how trends in modernisation influence processes, trends perceptions and experiences of bride price. Since modernity sometimes goes hand in hand with class, the two concepts are analysed together in relation to the subject.

In the same line therefore, this theory is used explore/assess how the bride price custom has changed or evolved with the raise of modernization, why it has not been phased out or declined as the modernisation theory predicts, how modernisation has affected the practice for example among the perceptions of the educated, rich, poor and others, are the changing practices especially hiking of property exchanged from items like a few heads of cattle to sophisticated items like land, vehicles and electronics a result of modernisation (associated with preference of western items), commercialization, greed or just normal social change? How do the processes and perceptions and outcomes about practice change for example with the rise in the education of women (and men)?

The above aspects are not treated as independent variables but efforts are made to establish their intersection with other concepts.

Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality has gained popularity especially in feminist scholarship as having potential to analyse peoples' problems and, experiences from a multidimensional point of view which guards against the danger of being monolithic and shallow in inquiry.

It looks at the interaction of multiple and intertwined identities, experiences, of exclusion, subordination or oppression. Other than focusing on gender as a singular entity, it goes further to focus on issues of difference, diversity among women (and also men) while giving clear attention to issues of race, class, power, sexuality, status, financial status, disability, heteronormativity along with gender, depending on the prevailing characteristics people under study (Davis 2008).

Brah and Phoenix (2004) while emphasizing the need for an intersectional approach argue that studies need to analyse how social class and intersections with gender and race or sexuality operate simultaneously to affect ones social positioning and daily experiences, and how analysing their intersections leads

to a more complex understanding of reality than focusing on single characteristic. They emphasize the issue of multiple, intersecting and relational nature of realities and subordinations (Brah and phoenix 2004:77)

Verloo (2006) too argues that while studying gender experiences or formulating gender equality policies or studies, it is advisable to focus on the multiplicity of inequalities than assuming similarity of inequalities at structural level. Thus there is need to focus and compare the specific sets of inequalities or experiences of class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender. This calls for attention to structural and political intersectionality to analyse issues of multiple discrimination, and the dynamics and processes that constitute them. The assumption of 'one size fits all' is thus discouraged (Verloo 2006: 211)

In line with the above argument, Mohanty counsels feminist scholars in their production knowledge about women to avoid generalization and homogenization of women and their experiences as a homogeneous category of analysis, on the assumption that women as 'an always -already constituted group' She instead argues that not all women ('third world') are homogeneous nor do they suffer subordination uniformly because they have diverse and multiple identities. These result from differences but also interactions of race, power, wealth, education level, caste, geographical location, religion and sexuality. Therefore all these and categorizations should be taken into consideration feminist research and analysis (Mohanty 1991: 333- 358)

As the discussion above shows, the concept of intersectionality not only helps me to analyse the data but also to select the respondents. For example it helped me to select respondents basing on gender, sex, class, education level, financial status, and age, position in the family or community and education level. I also endeavour to assess how some of these characteristics and forces overlap in certain individuals and how the responses (perceptions and experiences about bride price) are influenced by or interact with some of those characteristics but most importantly the interrelationships of the concepts of gender, masculinity, class and modernisation in relation to bride price.

Chapter 3:

Discussion of Research Findings and Analysis

These findings respond to the guiding research question which states that;

How do notions of Masculinity, femininity, Gender, Class and modernity shape the experiences and perceptions of people about bride price?

Matters investigated include why people think bride price is good, or problematic, how gender roles and stereotypes play out in the process of bride price payment, why resources/ gifts are given to the father and not the mother, and the outcomes of bride price. My objective was not only to get responses for these questions but also to understand how the responses are influenced by gender. I assess for example whether the social institutions themselves are gendered, the lived experiences of women and men in relation to bride price, the guiding definitions and ideologies about bride price, and about men and women. It further examines how perceptions about bride price and its processes are gender neutral or gender biased elements of inequality plus the role of class and modernisation. The chapter ends with the intersectional analysis of the main themes.

Gender, Masculinity and Femininity

Bride price payment and some of the procedures and experiences involved are heavily influenced by the notion of masculinity, femininity and highly gendered in nature. Lorber looks at gender as constituting “an institution that establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders the social processes of everyday life, is built into the major social organisation of society, such as the economy, ideology, family and politics and is also an entity in and of itself” (Lorber 1995:1) Bride price constitutes situations where men are trying to assert their influence and power over women in order to reinforce their feelings of “total manhood”. It also reveals a process where most of the women are trying to fulfil the gendered roles and expectorations as have been socialized by society over time. The above issues are explored by analyzing the motivations for bride price payment, its consequences on the power of women and men in a marriage, who takes or controls the paid property and why, discourse and symbolic meanings used during the bride price practice and religious issues underlying bride price payment, as revealed during interviews, informal discussions and observations of bride price payment ceremonies (popularly known as *Introduction*) functions.

Motivations for Bride Price

All the 20 respondents directly interviewed save for only one, were in support of bride price payment and exchange of other marriage gifts. Although they differed in age, class and level of education and other social differences, almost all the reasons given in favour of bride price were related, gendered, only that

they complained that these days it has become too commercial to be afforded by the majority.

One of the reasons given was that bride price payment was a natural and 'cultural' practice and that it is the role of every man to pay for the wife he intends to marry. This payment helps the man to assert his role as the controller of the family and the wife as a subordinate partner. That if the payment was not done then the men would not have full legitimacy to control their wives. However it has to be observed that using culture as an excuse to promote certain practices that are sometimes unpopular limits our possibilities of challenging such actions which may perpetuate continuity of some negative practices. Tamale 2006: 17) argues that such an approach promotes a "restrictive frame work through which women in Africa can question male dominance limits our strategic interventions for transforming society". Therefore much as culture was given by almost every respondent, I would argue that it should not be the major basis for sticking to some practices since culture itself not static but evolves. Secondly, naturalising a social practice like bride price as observed at the opening of this paragraph shows the extent to which society tends to naturalise gender stereotypes and women subordination with the related masculinities and femininities which are otherwise socially constructed, that is, mistaking the social for the biological (Scott 1986).

One respondent (Yosia) asserted that;

"man was born with responsibilities and paying bride price is part of the core responsibilities. And even a woman is born with her responsibilities like waving mats, producing children and providing care to the children and the family and for that reason when she married away she should be paid for. In fact in the past a woman was not even supposed to own money since she received all care and support from the husband".

Esther another respondent asserted that a 'real man' must bring property and beer for men to feast if he marries in order to attain 'full' recognition.

The above statements from respondents reveal how perceptions are rooted in beliefs of an all powerful man and a subordinate woman who has to take instructions or almost owned by the husband. It also reveals beliefs in the so called traditional family where male is the head and bread winner and wife relegated to reproductive care work. The implication here is that if the bride or wife is stronger either economically or professionally than the husband, the husband's hegemonic masculinities feel threatened and may feel insecure or resort to weak masculinities, suspicious and in some cases husbands have forced their wives to withdraw from paid work or personal business in order to 'control' them well. Magezi termed this as 'pulling her down' Finally the description of the men and women's role reveal the processes of gender construction and socialization that mistakenly portray a man as more intelligent and superior and woman as submissive who should be paid for. Although it is not the sole reason the process of paying bride price compounds these perceptions.

Other reasons given in support of bride price include increased respect for men and women, and their parents. It was argued that when a woman is paid

for, then everyone in the community will know that somebody's daughter has been officially given away and this gives respect not only to her but also the parents image in the community improves. The same was echoed by Baluku et al in their study of bride and domestic violence in western Uganda, who concluded that bride price payment, makes a "woman feel safe, secure, stable respected and loved" (Baluku et al 2012:2). The one who is cohabiting is regarded as being involved in an illegitimate union, loses respect from both parents and the community and is equated to a prostitute. According to one respondent (Tumukunde) in some families, a man who has not paid bride price cannot claim 'ownership' of children produced under that union, and in case he separates with the partner, he loses control or custody of the children. In communities like Uganda where child preference and the desire to conform to masculinities is high, such reasons of child custody drive men to do whatever they can to pay bride price.

Still in line with the notion of masculinity, bride price payment is used to reinforce those feelings especially in the amount one is able to pay. One of the respondents (Kamatarisi) stated that a grooms' handsomeness is not reflected on his face or physical appearance but it is reflected in his wallet, that is, how much property or cash he is able to pay for the bride. So even if one is so ugly or over aged, he is likely to get a beautiful young bride as long as he has a lot of property to pay. And some parents have gone an extra mile in trying to match their daughters to wealthy men even if it means withdrawing their daughters from school, while some men with less income in trying to prove their handsomeness have resorted to fund raisings, selling land or acquiring bank loans in order to pay hefty amounts and prove their worth. Here, we see society that is mixing economics with bride price and marriage other than romantic love, and a belief that money and wealth belongs to males and not necessarily females. For this reason, where the financial power is in favour of women or bride, men sometimes tend to shy off.

In terms of femininities and bride price, it was observed that girls are socialised right away from child hood to grow up as 'good' girls and become 'good' women/brides so as to attract responsible husbands capable of paying good amounts of bride price and this practice cements girls' femininities. They are taught how to dress well, sit well, respect elders and boys, walk, talk and even how to 'perform well in beds after marriage' and never to annoy the husband even if he wrongs her (Tamale 2009). Among the Banyankore group where this study was based, this role is normally done by paternal aunties locally known as *Shwenkazi*. On the day of bride price payment, this paternal aunt is always at hand to lead and guide the niece so that every step she makes is done 'well'.

It can be observed that such processes and socialisation of the girls and brides into what is referred to as 'behaving well as a woman' tend to reinforce the gender stereotypes of what a 'good/proper' woman should be or behave and it's this socialisation that perpetuates femininities and masculinities. Such stereotypes and views on women have further encouraged societies especially in Africa to develop rigid customary laws and practices that have translated into social structures that promote women subordination (Schmidt 1991, Maama 1996, and Musisi 2002).

In some extreme cases, a woman is perceived as having a weak mind who should always be guided and guarded in her actions, and even owned like any other household possession (Tamusuza 2002) In the two focus group discussions I had with men, that perception featured prominently. Women who take up these 'constructed identities of a woman end up behaving in a way that conforms to the socially allocated feminine roles (ibid). However with the increasing campaigns by feminists and other activists and the incidence of modernisation, such perceptions are changing (This is elaborated further on the section of intersectional analysis)

Outcomes of bride price on Women and Men

Much as the study reveals an overwhelming support for bride price; all the 20 interview respondents reported some problematic outcomes that make bride price a 'sugar coated bitter pill'. They argued that much as it is necessary and helps to solemnize the marriage, the actual payment and the haggling involved makes bride price appear like wife buying, yet there is no known amount of money that is worth buying a human being. In some cases, husbands feel that after paying bride price, they have bought the freedom of the wife which leads to mistreatment and curtailing women's' agency.

Bashai and Grossbard (2008) argue that bride price does not only lead to the purchase of women's' freedom but also translates into husbands' ownership of the wives' sexual rights. In their study of bride price in Uganda, they concluded that women whose bride price was paid are less likely to engage in extra marital relations, although the same does not apply to men (Bishai and Grossbard 2008). The fact that this does not apply to men shows tilted gender relations where society condemns a woman's extra marital relations but treats it be normal for a man to engage in the same. In fact one man Kabagambe (pseudo name) argued that it is a sign of power and strength for a man to have many girl friends/partners (part of masculinities).

Similarly, Thiara et al. (2012) in the study of bride price and domestic violence in Uganda assert that much as bride price has 'an ongoing cultural longevity' it is associated with many negative impacts on women and girls. Some of these negative impacts include physical violence and limited decision making power by women. Many women interviewed believed that much as bride payment is not the major cause of wife mistreatment, it is a big contributing factor to violence against women since after payment; a man feels that 'he is in charge', because 'he has bought the wife into his household' and therefore a wife is bound to follow his instructions without questioning (Kaye et al 2005). This in some way contributes to reduced women's bargaining position for rights and other resources in the household.

Thus bride price payment may be a cause and symptom of gender inequality in households. Such inequalities have to be addressed if sustainable development is to be achieved (Tripp 2013). Musigyi a male respondent argued that if a wife was 'paid for' she will always 'think twice' before she leaves the marriage even when she is beaten, while Enos lamented that a man who has not paid loses a voice in his own home and will always feel insecure that the wife can disappear any time. This leads to weak or subordinate masculinities for such men. It is also argued that since in most communities

bride price is supposed to be refunded in case the couple separates, many women are bound to stay in violent relationships if their parents cannot afford to repay the property they received. Although there are remedies like petitioning court for divorce, it may be a complicated matter especially for less wealthy illiterate women with no money for legal representation or even knowledge of the existence of court. Secondly securing a divorce in Uganda has been almost impossible for women since until 2009 when some sections in the marriage and divorce Act were annulled by the constitutional court, women had to prove both adultery and cruelty while men only needed to prove adultery in order to secure a divorce (Law Advocacy for Women in Uganda V Attorney General (2007), Luyirika 2010). Such laws result from the states and social structures that glorify male dominance while treating women like second class citizens.

The above further reveals that payment of bride price in some way reduces on the options available for the wife (especially the poor) in case the marriage becomes unpleasant. But even where the parents have the capacity to refund bride price, the process of refunding itself creates embarrassment and stigma and this may further compel wives to stay in unpleasant relationships (Strube 1988).

Who controls the bride price property and why?

Notions of masculinity and gender are also revealed when one analyses the control and ownership of bride price items and processes. It is true that due to the social structure that glorifies male dominance, men are in most cases bound to control bride price property in the same way they control other household resources. But looking further, one concludes that there is male dominance even where it ought not to be. For example during the negotiations for the price, mothers and women are not supposed to take part or even come near. It is only the duty of men (Baluku et al 2012). When gifts are delivered, it's men who take charge of the property and mothers remain with less or nothing even when they are the ones who do a lot child upbringing. In one of the focus group discussions, I inquired why women do not have to come closer to the in-laws, one of the answers was that tradition had it that a mother in law might be more beautiful than her daughter (bride) and get sexually attracted to the son in law. Although I did not entirely agree with this, the claim reveals that some people in society are still obsessed with the stereotypical thinking that women are sexual objects who must always look attractive to men and that men are always looking for sexual favours from women.

The situation is tilted in favour of men to the extent that, even when the bride is an orphan with no father but with the mother, they always look for a paternal uncle or any other close relatives on the father's side to receive the bride price. When I inquired why it should be the father or his relatives but not the mother to receive the bride price, the answer given was that the child belongs to the father. When I press further to know why the respondents thought that the child belongs to the father, they could not give a clear answer a part from insisting that it is "natural and that how God created it". Definitely most of these people, having been socialized in a gendered arrangement dominated with assumed male supremacy, have grown to believe that children

belong to the father. One woman lamented that what the women only get for their daughters are pieces of clothes sometimes with even no money to meet the tailoring costs.

The claims of ‘natural’ and use of God reveals two things. One is how society tends to naturalise the social especially on matters of gender construction and secondly, how for a long time, religion and the bible have been used to institutionalise and glory male power over women. This is elaborated further in the next sub section.

During one of the focus group discussions with women, an example was given in the neighbourhood where one cow was paid for the girl that had been born out of wedlock and thus had grown up with the mother alone, but due to patriarchal reasons, male dominance/power and society that ‘naturalises and institutionalises women subordination, the cow was taken by the father and a disagreement ensued there and then with the mother insisting that she should take possession of the cow. But people around supported the father as the legitimate owner of the cow and he took it. On this account, some women suggested that bride price property be divided into two shares, one for the father and one for the mother since in most cases, mothers get a raw deal. This demand by some women indicates that not all society members accept and as ‘natural’ male dominance and are ready to challenge masculinities and male power, and with an increase in modernisation and education and advocacy, males are likely to lose some of the hitherto unquestioned powers.

Discourse used and Symbolic Meanings

Most of the language and actions used by the MCs and other participants in the actual payment of the bride price are geared towards imploring a woman to be submissive and respectful to her husband. The music, dance, songs, poems and preaching at introduction ceremonies all reinforce gendered connotations. For example in one of the ceremonies where I attended as non participant observer, the traditional dance group that had been hired to perform had a lot to reveal. The girls danced waving their hands in the air, and curving them over their heads in cow’s horn style. I was later made to understand it means every girl should grow and get married and bring cow’s home, so having daughters indirectly means having cows in the home that will come in form of bride price. In another dance, men carried spears dancing in a protective way around the girls who danced with signs of trying to grind millet on a grind stone. This symbol portrays the gendered roles where men are looked as warriors and defenders while women are supposed to prepare food for the family and reproductive other reproductive activities.

Immediately after all the gifts had been handed in and accepted by the bride’s family, some men jumped up and started reciting poems (*Ekyevugo*), but in most of their words they were asserting how a man gains supremacy after paying bride price, and imploring the wife to be respectful to the husband and to produce “for him” many children.

An interesting case of gendered symbolism came when Florence (the bride) was presented a basket of flowers and fruits by Ivan’s (the gloom) sisters. The basket had among other items white roses which were handed to

Florence and told that the white colour meant purity and cleanliness to which Florence was and should remain so. She was also handed a yellow banana from the basket, and told that the banana is very soft and tender and therefore Florence should remain as soft and tender as a yellow banana to her husband. Speaker after speaker counselled Florence to be respectful and soft to her husband, but surprisingly no speaker told Ivan to be respectful or soft to the wife. Does this mean that men do not need to be soft to their wives? Or they have to be tough, brave and assertive in order to be real men?

The discussion in the above paragraphs reveal the process through language and symbols used in bride price cements the process of creating femininities and gendered perceptions. Using two elements from Joan Scott's levels analysis, I would argue that the discussion reveals and reinforces 'culturally available symbols' and 'subjective identities'. Scott argues that "through language, gendered identity is created, sets the terms of cultural interaction and the imposition of the rules of social interaction is inherently and specifically gendered" (Scott 1986: 12).

Thus words like tender, soft, cleanliness and symbols like flowers, yellow banana and all other symbols discussed above aim at reinforcing the position of a not just a woman, but what the gendered society calls a "good" woman who conforms to the socially constructed feminine roles.

Religion, the bible, Bride price and the position of a Woman

I would like to contend that there are several beliefs and scriptures that are gendered and thus tend to position women in a subordinate position. Since over 98 percent of Ugandans believe in some form of religion, then women are likely to accept their submissive position in order to subscribe to the requirements of the religious teachings. In relation to bride price, one of the religious leaders I interviewed, stated that when a man gets a wife, he has got a precious gift from God, and he has to appreciate by paying something to the wife's parents first and then proceed to church for wedding so that God can bless the union. But before any wedding is conducted the church has to prove that the bride's parents have consented to their daughter's marriage, and this proved by reading the consent letter that the parents write after receiving the bride price.

But the most intriguing statements that counsel women to be submissive were revealed by one priest who preached at one of the *introduction* ceremonies (for Ms. Nuwagaba) I attended as a non participant observer. First he condemned gender equality by explaining that there are many disagreements "these days" arising from the struggle for gender equality which he condemned as misguided understanding and negative modernity. He implored all Christian women to desist from the struggle for gender equality since "man and woman can never be equal." He quoted the Bible, the book of Genesis 2:18 where it stated that God created a woman (Eve) from the rib of a man (Adam) and not the other way around. "God did not give the man a tractor or machine but a helper (woman) to provide for his needs".

I will argue that such biblical teachings that portray a woman as helper have worked to increase women's role as care givers and the provider of

reproductive labour in the family while the men as bread winners and ruler of the family.

The preacher further quoted the book of 1 Corinthians 11:3 where it is emphasized that the head of every woman is her husband and implored all Christian women to respect and submit to their husbands and refrain from challenging them lest God will be unhappy.

A close analysis of the bible and other scriptures reveals many statements undermining the power of women, but I will not delve into them now, but the fact that many people in Uganda are Christians means that many Christian women especially the less educated are likely to relegate themselves to submissive positions without questioning some of the unfair actions from the husbands for fear of annoying God and this complicates the gender inequality gap. Personally, I feel some level of discomfort pointing out what I perceive as weaknesses in the bible since I am a practicing Christian, and it is written that whoever attempts to challenge Bible attracts the wrath of God. But it has to be noted that the Bible is used selectively when it comes to matters concerning women power. For example where as the Bible condemns working on Sabbath, and prescribes heavy punishments for this, Jesus adjusted this and advised that when need arises one can work on Sabbath, meaning that some aspects of the bible can be modified. But on matters of gender relations, the Bible is portrayed as that something can never be adjusted or interpreted out of context. This is partly due to the fact even the religious institutions were designed with male domination, and they have to fight to maintain the status quo.

It has to be observed here that much as this society is changing in many other social aspects, when it comes to religious and biblical/Koran teachings, there tends to be stiff resistance to change. This can be partly attributed to the 'modernisation' forces from evangelical movements especially from the USA who intensified their activities in Uganda in the past 2 decades with heavy funding and conservative teachings especially on matters of women subordination and sexuality.

Such gendered scriptures and teachings that promote unequal gender relations have done a great deal in discouraging women from challenging religious teachings that promote woman subordination. "Religious fundamentalist groups have forcibly linked their practice to restoration of a woman's supposedly more authentic 'traditional' role when in fact there is little historical precedent for the unquestioned performance of such a role" (Scott 1986: 17).

Bride Price, a Class Affair at Play?

The major practices, experiences and perceptions pertaining bride price reveal some class dynamics at play. The support for bride price, property exchanged, the type of ceremonies, language used, the food eaten, dressing, speeches have a lot of class connotations. Much as almost all respondents supported the relevancy of the practice, it was also discovered that there are some differences between the poor and the rich. For example among the poor, attention to the

practice is slowly reducing with parents getting contented with whatever little they get as bride price, sometimes exchanging the property or money in privacy without involving the general public or organizing parties. However this may be attributed to economic reasons with the need to minimize expenditure amidst declining incomes. However for the rich especially those with higher education professionals (females), the practice is gaining a lot of support with many young professional women taking long to get married because there are no adequate men who are equally ready or able to meet the hefty bride price property and the classy parties involved (this is not the only reason). As such some young men and women prefer staying single cohabiting than take little property as bride price which is “embarrassing and humiliating among the peers” (as stated by the respondent Kabatongole). The above is in line with the findings of Henry Korson who in his study of dowery also found that the practice had popular support among the upper class and dwindling support among the lower class with the middle class following in between (Korson 1967)

Let the poor marry their fellow Poor

Diana, a middle aged university student stated that the business of “Love me the way I am” (*njagala ga bwendi*⁵) no longer applies. A man who is ready to marry me must be rich enough to pay a handsome price because I am also expensive. In any case love can never be eaten”. Such sentiments make it difficult for men with less income to marry because of fearing the costs involved. A relatively similar case of class affair was given by Regina (with a daughter at University pursuing medicine) in a focus group discussion who asserted that;

“The amount paid depends on how parents have spent on their daughters e.g you educate your daughter up to university pursuing medicine , a man who comes for her must be equally heavy and ready to pay heavily not just bringing a goat (laughter). If you are a man, you have to assess the status of the woman you are going for. If you are taking my daughter, you have to bring 10 cows and a truck full of property because you have married a whole hospital into your home. A woman at the level of medical doctor and other professionals should be paid for very expensively”

Such class differentiations have proved to be prohibitive especially on the side of men with less income to fail to marry or to go for girls from richer families even when they truly love each other. One man (Dolibondo) interviewed said that when he married, he had to go to offer labour in the city so as to raise money for bride price, but he could only raise slightly less money than he had been charged. When he went back to the father in-law to plead for leniency, the father in law informed him that the poor man has no business in marrying and chased him away. The wife was later withdrawn from him.

However, there are some exceptions to the above as not all rich families necessarily prefer charging bride price. Some parents request just for a small

⁵ A local slang used by girls to ridicule broke men who think that loving a girl is enough to win her heart without caring for her financial needs.

token to solemnize the marriage, while others just tell the groom to bring what he thinks he can afford without necessarily setting and bargaining for items. However even in cases where one is told to bring what is in his means, he tends to take lots of property sometimes beyond his means as way of showing that his a “top class man and heavy” among his peers who accompany him and to his in-laws. At the other extreme end, some parents from rich families, instead of demanding bride price, instead give a lot of property to the young couple to go and develop themselves. But it was also revealed that some men do not favour getting property from the parents of their wives since it somehow empowers the wife and puts man’s power (masculinity under threat).

As discussed in the previous sections, men with whose masculinities feel threatened due to the economic power of their wives may tend to develop weak masculinities and feelings of insecurity but in some cases tend to treat their wives with over protectiveness, suspicion or at times become violent as a way of covering the economic and class gap (As observed by Julius, one of the respondents).

Modernisation, Change of Practice, or Commercialisation?

A review of the current bride price practices and other actions there in reveals that that with modernisation and modernity setting in, even the bride price practices have dramatically changed to the extent that the original meaning, which was just to solemnize the marriage has changed to something that is hard to explain even by the elders and the young ones. Definitely it is expected that once society modernizes, even traditional practices change, including bride price practices. But the problematic issue with this change in bride price is that it has turned to a showy affair, full of extravagant and expensive elements that have scared many young men off marriage. It has got riddled with capitalistic tendencies that put financial gain at the fore front especially among the educated and the rich middle class. Most respondents interviewed contended that much as they supported the practice, it has become too commercial and changed meaning to an expensive merry making affair. It is this element of the ‘show of modernity’ that has made it very attractive among the young middle class generation. Probably we can call this trend ‘applied modernisation’, a locally innovated one that is not a replica of the western modernisation model claimed by proponents of the modernisation theory.

From Local Products to ‘Modern’ Gifts

A discussion with the elders in the community revealed that in the past, bride price involved exchanging small symbolic products/gifts for the sake bonding the two families. Even just wrist ring would be exchanged together with local brew and the function would be complete. However in some communities especially among the Banyankore in Western Uganda, many cows were exchanged which is still the case today, in addition to so many other gifts exchanged. But it was not common to find families exchanging cash as bride price.

But currently the nature and amount of gifts have drastically increased. In addition to hefty amounts of cash and cows, other items like refrigerators, solar panels, flowers, water tanks, land titles, home theatre systems, cars, chairs are exchanged. Instead it is the local beer that has been reduced or totally done away with. Those so called modern items have made the practice expensive and hard for the less wealthy to afford. And because of the copying effect and peer pressure, many couples would love to organize or deliver property that is similar to what their colleagues paid. Those who feel that they cannot afford what their peers paid opt to ignore bride price and marriage altogether till when they can raise a lot of property.

An example was given where a young man (Davis) was planning a marriage and introduction ceremony, but two weeks to their planned event, his colleague introduced, and paid a brand new car as bride price with other expensive items. The function was also recorded and relayed on the Local television. This unsettled Davis because he felt his small introduction would be dwarfed and it would make him embarrassed in front of his workmates and relatives. He postponed the marriage indefinitely till when he can raise substantial property, but unfortunately by the time this study was conducted, he had not conducted the ceremony.

'Modern' Bride price ceremonies and Experiences

In the past, bride price ceremonies were a small function attended by only close family members from both sides. No mega parties used to be organized. But presently, the ceremony involves a fully fledged mega party either conducted at home or in hotels, involving modern items, modern activities, modern dressing, and even food. All the ceremonies I attended as an observer testify to this trend. For example in Florence's introduction ceremony, there were 12 tents full of guests, the grooms team consisted of 56 members unlike in the past where they never used to be more than 10, and there was heavy public address system, hired MC, and hired musicians and a traditional dance group. All these make the ceremony expensive, even if you leave alone the actual property exchanged.

As a procedure, before the bride comes out to be unveiled to the guests, groups of ladies first come out in groups of four or five, and in most cases these are like 5 or six groups. These ladies come out dressed uniformly in expensive dresses and before they go back to the house they have to be given money ('transport'). Even when the bride has been unveiled, the groups of ladies keep coming back and every time they come with new sets of dresses and shoes, and new hair designs. A standby hair dresser has to be hired to keep working on them. All these actions are new in the practice and are showy but they are what the young generation refers to be modern and die for.

On Florence's introduction ceremony, the table cloths, the handkerchiefs used, and the bottled drinking water, all had words written on "Florence introduces Ivan" plus their pictures on. Such practices confirms the claim that bride price is increasingly becoming a commercialised undertaking and in some situations being taken as a business with a status symbol that has sometimes scared off men with less income (Baluku et al 2012)

It has to be noted that at face value all the above modifications and items in the ceremonies have no problem and they make the function colourful and attractive which increases happiness for the couple and friends. But without corresponding incomes to cater for those items, many people who cannot afford those expenses have shied away from the practice and are forced to stay in cohabiting relationships or postpone marriage instead of paying little and embarrassing property or organizing small ceremonies that may make them feel ashamed. And almost every one interviewed agreed that this has become problematic in current times. In summary, the forces of modernisation have influenced the perceptions and procedures of bride price payment (as expected), but this influence has been affected it in the way the ceremonies are organised with preference for expensive ones, and the 'smuggling' of the economic motives in a practice that was hitherto non commercial. Like some other 'traditional' practices, it has resisted the forces of the western modernisation, and instead taken on an innovative (but expensive) form of modernisation.

An Intersectional Analysis

Notions of gender, masculinities, social class and modernisation do influence the people's experiences and perceptions about bride price, each notion not in isolation, but instead all interact at some level to create multiple levels of perceptions, experiences, outcomes and even masculine or feminine identities.

While studying phenomena such as those that are gendered, it is imperative to analyse the multiplicity of cases or inequalities, than assuming similarity at all levels. This calls for comparison of the specific sets of experiences of class, race, ethnicity and gender while attending to the intersectionality of processes and dynamics that influence or constitute them (Verloo 2006).

As far as bride price payment is concerned and its gendered practices and perceptions, different aspects as discussed in the theoretical chapter and the issues analysed in this chapter shape those experiences especially in modern times. For example as far as bride price and the construction of femininities and masculinities are concerned, it was observed from the study that with increased modernisation, femininities and hegemonic masculinities have tended to reduce especially among the urban middle class to a large extent but also among the rural lower class to some extent. One lady Fatuma whom I shared with informally about the subject observed that;

"these days things have changed, and women are no longer the women we used to be. We never used to eat chicken, eggs, grass hoppers and we showed a lot of unquestionable respect to our husbands. But nowadays women have become more financially independent, accomplish multiple tasks and do even contribute to the payment of their own bride price. Such women especially the educated ones are not depending on their husbands and cannot be dominated just because bride price was paid. They do not conform to the popular femininities that we were used to in the traditional era".

Middle class women but also some from the lower class are attempting to demand and negotiate the terms of the relationships including control over sex, a thing that was rare in the past / traditional era (Tamale 2009)

The above analysis reveals that when modernisation interfaces with social class especially the middle educated class, masculinities, femininities and gender roles associated with bride price payment tend to dwindle gradually, though the price itself may be increasing in amount. While comparing masculinities, modernisation and bride price, Kaye observes that with modernisation, 'men seem to have lost identity', power, weakening gender gaps and roles and has somehow led to gender antagonism regarding the hitherto perceived gender roles (Kaye 2002, Silberschnidt 1991).

In addition middle class women who want to appear 'modern' have contributed to the commercialisation of bride price by introducing in modern and expensive items in the practice to the extent of sometimes outsourcing the services of the paternal aunties (*sengas*) at a fee so as to conform to the socially expected feminine conduct. It has also led to bride price functions going to the public realm, when it was regarded before as private matter witnessed by only close family members (Tamale 2009)

In short, with modernisation, bride price tends to slightly shift from an exercise that was performed to conform to the feelings and requirements of masculinities and femininities, but to a class affair that has been commercialised especially among the middle class, but at the same time losing some ground among the poor. This has been attributed to the increased education and income among the middle class women which has affected and changed gender roles, plus the increasing poverty levels among the lower class poor.

Chapter 4

Conclusions

This study started by asking the question, how do notions of masculinity, femininity, gender, class and modernity influence people's experiences and perceptions about bride price? In an attempt to answer this question, field study was conducted in Mbarara, western Uganda using various tools including interviews, observations and focus group discussions, plus informal methods like listening to stories, and discussions. Though the study was conducted among the Banyankole/Bakiga group, the findings reveal several similarities with the rest of the parts of Uganda especially on matters of gender, masculinities, and class, despite the fact the practice may be conducted differently across different ethnic groups. In addition, some examples and insights and literature were got from other places outside Uganda especially in Asia where bride price and its related practice dowry are practiced.

However, the aim of this study is not to create generalisations for the whole of Uganda or even to the whole study population since the sample and study time were limited, but the main objective is to provide a theoretically grounded dynamic relationship between bride price and the notions of gender (including masculinities and femininities), class and modernisation and how these notions influence people's perception, motivations, processes, experiences, trends and outcomes of bride price on men and women.

From the discussion, it can be noted that bride price has overwhelming support among the population for reasons associated with recognising the marriage and as a form of appreciation. The financial incentive to the parents also makes it popular. But most importantly, it helps men to fulfil their need for the feelings of manhood and reinforcing their hegemonic masculinities, since payment in some way gives them more power over women. Majority of women have been socialised to believe that payment adds them respect among peers and parents so non payment would deprive them certain advantages. As noted, issues ranging from who controls property, the discourse used in ceremonies, the symbolic meanings all work to reinforce the gender roles and stereotypes.

Bride price is also a class affair as some people especially the educated middle class always want it in order to reinforce and conform to their class expectations and peer influence while for the poor, there is some evidence that attention to it is less compared to the rich, partly due to affordability problems.

With modernisation and modernity gradually setting in, even bride price has undergone modifications to conform to the needs and practice of modern life, but this has made it so expensive to the extent that many accuse it of having gone commercial at the expense of the 'original' social meanings, that is, solemnising the marriage without economic incentives. In addition like any other family matters, bride price that was hitherto regarded as a private sphere has come out to be a public affair as modernisation trends set in. This public exposure is partly responsible for the current debates as in the past; it was hardly a debatable subject.

One of the emerging question but not adequately answered in this paper is why despite the overwhelming support for bride price it is heavily criticised especially by the media, women activists and politicians (especially female MPs) in Uganda. It was observed in chapter 1 that the critiques went to the extent of a constitutional petition challenging it and currently there is a bill in parliament seeking to abolish it. This raises the question of who is speaking for whom? Are the activists and politicians presenting their personal views that are not owned by the people they represent? Are the feminists who in most cases are in the middle class championing their own opinions but not those of the lower class women who happen to be the majority in a society like Uganda?. With the male dominated parliament and patriarchal state structures, will bride price and other related gender equity reforms being proposed parliament succeed? All these are questions that will require further study.

It is therefore recommended that since the practice has popular support among the community members it should not be abolished as demanded by some politicians and activists, but there is need to modify it, so that it is made less expensive and affordable by the less wealthy. This will enable young people to marry especially those who have failed due to the hefty expenses involved. Showy behaviour and unnecessary expenses should be done away with especially the expensive items, and expensive parties. For example, instead of leaving the price open without any ceiling, community elders in conjunction with the state should institute ceiling either in form of cash or an item like cow or goat or any symbolic gifts which if exchanged, a marriage is solemnised. This item must be affordable by even the poor to allow them marry. This will also minimise some negative effects of bride price on women(Thiara et al 2012). But above all, marriage should be guided by the motive of love and intimacy not commercial priorities.

There is also need to empower women to ensure that they benefit equally from the proceeds of bride price as opposed to the current situation where almost everything is taken by men. However this needs great activism on the side of leaders, feminists and other stakeholders.

Finally, basing on some identified negative effects of bride price on women; the practice can be readjusted to conform to the requirements of the constitution of Uganda which under article 36(3) states that “laws, cultures, customs and traditions which are against the dignity, welfare or interest of women or which undermine their status are prohibited by this constitution” (Constitution of Uganda 1995, Tamale 2006). Despite the support, practices like bride price that have evidence of promoting male dominance over women and promoting gender inequality have to be critically re examined if sustainable development is to be achieved. Sustainable development requires among other factors, that men and women benefit from any undertaking equally (Tripp 2013).

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