Ohangla performance as a vehicle for transforming gender consciousness among the Luo of Kenya

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Abstract
This paper interrogates the role Ohangla performance has played in transforming the Luo community's gender consciousness. The analytical procedure was informed by the theories of gender, advanced by the concepts of Butler's and de Beauvoir. Their theories played a significant role in the analysis of gender related practices integrated and displayed in the Ohangla performances. Thus the study argued that since gender is performance, it should be seen as a fluid variable which shift and change in relation to the social context. Through ethnographic method of data collection, the study attempted to understand the ways in which culture, on one hand, and the performer of the Ohangla, on the other hand, adjusts to the cultural modification in informing the Luo community about the cultural changes with an aim of transforming the Luo community's gender consciousness. The study sampled respondents among the Luo Ohangla artists and their audience drawn from Siaya County's Bondo and Rarieda sub-counties. Two sets of data were collected for this study; they comprised some Ohangla performances and information about the artists' use of Ohangla performance as a vehicle for transforming social consciousness. Data was collected mainly using participant's observation and in-depth interviews. Recording was done by taking field notes, making comments, and videotaping Ohangla performances. The data was analyzed qualitatively. The study offered insights on the understanding of the contemporary Luo Ohangla performances and the social transformations Ohangla performance had created overtime so as to conform to the current social demands of the Luo society.

Key terms: Ohangla, performance, gender, consciousness.
INTRODUCTION
This paper focuses on the role of Ohangla performances in transforming the contemporary Luo community’s gender consciousness. Musical performance plays a significant role among the Luo community, who inhabited the Western part of Kenya; therefore, it forms part and parcel of the community’s social-cultural practices. The Luo community has a rich tradition of musical production, most notably songs and dances. Ohangla’s musical performance plays a central role in communal life for the Luo community. Omolo-Ongati (2005) describes Ohangla performance among the Luo community as a genre involving songs and dance. It is accompanied by an ensemble of between four and eight drums, distinguished by a long cylindrical drum, the Ohangla. Other instruments that accompany the performance of Ohangla include the Abu (traditional trumpet), the Kinanda (a wind instrument), the Nyatiti (lyre), the Tung’ (horn), the Ongeng’o (tinklets) and the Orutu (fiddle), among others. Traditionally, it was the most widely practised musical art among the Luo. At any given time of the day or night, members of the community will be seen participating in the performance. In the modern Luo nation, Ohangla performances have gained so much popularity in Kenya that many Benga musicians and a few Luo gospel singers, such as Lillian Auma and Elias Princes Jully, have embraced the performance in place of their originally preferred Benga genres. As a result, Ohangla’s popularity has tremendously grown in the country to overtaking Benga music, increasing the number of people listening to it, buying Ohangla records and attending live bands organised by Ohangla artists (Nyanga, 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW
In the contemporary Luo community, Ohangla performances have addressed some of the critical issues that were not in existence before the 21st century. For example, the issues of gender among the Luo community, according to (Magak & Okombo, 2014). They argue that some of the Luo performances, such as Ohangla performances, are inordinately skewed towards the scrutiny of relationships between men and women. In most cases, the artist’s fascination with the subject of feminism, could be partly explained by the centrality of women in the Luo social system. However, some of these Ohangla performances simply celebrate feminist from the patriarchal perspective. It is common within the Luo social system to find elements of tension, contest, resistance and even rebellion between men and women. This resistance, in most cases, results in the subversion of the Luo cultural ideologies, which may not be public but are masked by performances and discourses such as the Ohangla performance, which are currently transforming the mainstream perception of gender relations. Ohangla’s performance, therefore, can be seen as a system of persuasive dialogue in which the audience embraces, as their own, a given set of socially constructed and validated gender roles and attitudes. Thus Ohangla’s performance as dialogue can be employed as a genre for the re-creation and transformation of gender concepts, symbols, meanings and the social structural divisions in raising gender consciousness more effective than any other musical genre among the Luo community in the 21st century.

However, this study assumed that general changes in the overall Luo culture; as a result, emerging issues such as Western education, which has enlightened the Luo community on gender dynamics, would automatically trigger similar changes in the role that the Ohangla genre plays in the current Luo community in relation to the transformation of the community’s gender consciousness. Therefore, it follows that the new form of performance has created new roles that were scanty in Ohangla’s performance in the past. In relation to the foregoing, reviewing some of the studies concerning Ohangla musical performances, many authors have carried out some studies concerning Ohangla performance among the Luo community. In relation to the traditional role of the Ohangla genre, Nyakiti (2011) investigated the functions of the indigenous music prompted by the adoption of Onanda accordion by some Luo musicians, Omollo-Onganda (2005) studied the hybrid nature of Ohangla performances, Akumu (2012) investigated the functions of Ohangla performances in various occasions such as funerals and weddings. In relation to gender, Magak and Okombo (2014) studied the gender dynamics in Ohangla performances among the Luo; Nyanga (2013) focused on the theme of gender and
RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Ohangla Performance and Gender Consciousness
This paper proceeded to interrogate issues related to gender in Ohangla musical performances among the Luo community in the 21st century, and compared the findings with the traditional gender-related themes. These were done to determine whether Ohangla’s performance had played a significant role in the transformations of the Luo community’s gender consciousness. The discussions were guided by the assumption that some of these musical performances, such as Ohangla, were created in the past and are still being re-created since they articulate broad gender values and ideologies. Furthermore, Geertz (1975) argues that such performances contain detailed contexts and a web of social relationships that join individuals being studied to each other with their community’s social context. Thus, considering the foregoing arguments, it is in order to reason out that gender-related issues integrated into the Ohangla performance and transmitted to the Luo community through performance have the ability to transform the Luo society’s social consciousness in relation to gender.

This paper is based on the view of (de Beauvoir, 1989), who points out that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,” in the same breath, we could as well argue that “one is not born, but rather becomes a man.” This section specifically investigated ways in which an individual can become a ‘man,’ a social way of measuring gender equality. We argued that every society has its own socialising agents in which gender ideologies could be transferred. One such agent among the Luo community is Ohangla musical performances, which transform the Luo gender consciousness as revealed in the preceding discussions and analysis of gender-related issues in Ohangla performance. This paper, therefore, interrogated the role Ohangla musical performance played in transforming the Luo community’s gender consciousness.

As mentioned earlier, this paper was based on the view of de Beauvoir (1989) and Butler (1993) view on the dynamic nature of gender in the analysis of the Ohangla performance texts. This is a concept in which gender is interpreted as a fluid variable that can easily...
be shifted and changed within different performance contexts. These ideas were appropriately employed in this paper in the analysis and interpretation of the gender-related issues depicted in Ohangla performance to reveal the role Ohangla performance had played in transforming social consciousness in relation to gender. The study is based on the belief that Ohangla performances in the 21st century should be viewed as an agent of gender transformation. It should act as lenses through which the community can understand the transformation of gender consciousness among the contemporary, especially women within the Luo community.

**Women and Ohangla Performance**

We have noted that among the traditional African communities, most feminists observe women’s roles from the patriarchal perspective. Scholars who had written about gender, such as (Ostergaard, 1992), argued that women are viewed as a group who are disadvantaged in terms of power relations. They are confined within oppressive cultures; therefore, they are exploited particularly in most patriarchal societies as an example Luo. de Beauvoir (1989) argues that women have choices to make, either to be liberated or to struggle to liberate themselves through appropriated means; this is in reference to de Beauvoir famous slogan which states that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”. Among the Luo community and according to this study, such means may include but are not limited to various musical performances such as Ohangla. Therefore, this study interrogated Ohangla performances to reveal thematic concerns integrated into the Ohangla performances that are crucial in transforming gender consciousness among the contemporary Luo community. This paper, therefore, discusses the role that the modern Ohangla performances had played among women in transforming the Luo society’s gender consciousness in the 21st century. This is done by interrogating the role of women artists in the modern Ohangla performance content. In relation to the structure, the Ohangla performance will focus mainly on the gender issues in the parkruok (virtue boasting) during the Ohangla performance.

According to (Ochieng, 1975), the Luo was a patriarchal community; most of its cultural performances were not left behind. Ohangla performances are equally perceived as works of literature associated with the male as the leading performer (Nyakiti, 1998). The women played either active or passive roles during the performance. They could play an active role when they took part in dancing and singing. In most cases, they were portrayed as symbolic objects displayed on the stage to be looked at and admired by men, and it was pleasurable to both of them (the lookers and those being looked at) as depicted by (Foucault, 1977). This was the women’s responsibility during the live performances and was in tandem with society’s cultural expectations (Ochieng, 1975). In other words, they could also play a passive role when they simply become part of the audience listening and enjoying the Ohangla performance. Among the Luo community, being an Ohangla artist was considered so superior that women could not be allowed to perform, and they were not accorded a space, leave alone perform it; touching the Ohangla drum was taboo, according to (Nyakiti, 1998). Thus, male dominance was the primary reason why women were not allowed to perform the Ohangla.

Of paramount importance was the need to interrogate the Ohangla performance texts to determine how gender-related issues are articulated and represented to the audience particular concepts of transformation of the Luo community’s gender consciousness. In the Luo contemporary society, it was noted that the Luo female Ohangla artists were challenging the idea of patriarchy as a result of the introduction of Western education and Christianity, which altered the Luo community’s ways of viewing patriarchy. The current Ohangla artists are transforming in terms of the artists, context and content in the performances so as to conform to the new demands of its listeners and the changing worldview (Okong’o 2011). As a result, such transformation has assigned the Ohangla a new way of transforming gender consciousness among the Luo community.

This study reveals that the population of female Ohangla artists has recently risen among the Luo community. This is because they had acquired a space initially denied by the patriarchal Luo culture. Some of the Luo Ohangla artists whose performances we have
studied and analysed include Grace Nyar Kindu and Benta Nyar Koyugi, popularly known as (Ogwe chalre) translated literally as ‘lizards are alike’ and Late Lady Maurine. The findings above were important in this study in the sense that it focuses on the shift in paradigms in African literal works, especially among the Luo Ohangla performers.

The interest of this section was to investigate whether women through Ohangla performances in any way subverted the Luo community’s gender consciousness in relation to some of the dominant patriarchal ideologies of voices within the Luo society. Thus, the study identified some of the female Ohangla artists, whose major occupation is Ohangla performances. This is evidence to justify the concept of the transformation of the Luo community’s gender consciousness.

Female Artist and Ohangla Performance

In the past, women in Africa, just like the Luo women, were confined within patriarchal cultures, where they lacked space to share their frustrations and pains. On the same note, (Duran, 1995) argued that women all over the world were fearful and subdued by their male counterparts as they could not openly talk about their suffering. In case they were to air their views, it was only done through gossip and when performing domestic duties such as beadwork. Thus, this study argued that the Ohangla performance has provided safe avenues for Luo women to perform and dialogue their challenges through the Ohangla performance openly. This would transform the Luo community’s gender consciousness. This section proceeds to interrogate issues related to the female performers in the contemporary Luo Ohangla performance in the transformation of gender consciousness. As argued earlier by Nyakiti (1998) that traditionally, among the Luo community, women were not allowed to perform Ohangla music. Their role during the performance was mainly to dance as they displayed their bodies to be seen by men. This notion has been disapproved in this study, given the prevailing situations among the Luo in relation to gender consciousness. In contemporary Luo society, women have taken over from men, the art being Ohangla artists. In fact, they perform better music than some male artists going of the number of people attending their performances (Nyanga, 2013).

In fact, women have been struggling to fight for gender equality, in this case, through Luo Ohangla performances.

The discussion in this paper will reveal ambivalence of the discourse of women artists who supposedly speak for themselves, particularly on critical issues affecting society, such as politics and education against patriarchal beliefs. This discourse reveals what Foucault (1990) explains as the complex and unstable process, in that discourse can be an instrument that affects power, and at the same time, it can also be a hindrance and stumbling block. This may result in a point of resistance and a starting point for opposing ideologies, as in the Luo Ohangla performance by the female Ohangla artists. Therefore, in this instance, women projected a new ideology which presented themselves positively and through this process, new ideologies marked in Ohangla performances are imparted to the audience of all ages; hence, transforming cultural consciousness in relation to the cultural belief and traditions such gender imbalance. In fact (de Beauvoir, 1989) argues that the more females continue to challenge traditional dichotomous gender norms, the less “normal” they will become. Thereafter the Luo patriarchal ideologies which are oppressive to women would progressively be rejected altogether by the female gender, in favour of what the women’s choose. They would opt for only those ideas which would make them feel free and equal to (men).

Since women have realised that the past patriarchal conditions were intolerable, this indicates that some gains have been realised in the transformation of gender consciousness, and perhaps it will continue to be made in future.

The song below is an example political song performed by a female artist in favour of Raila Odinga. He is both famous and popular among the Luo and in Kenya as a whole, and because of that, the Luo community refers to him as the top leader. Raila Jakom (Raila the chairman). This performance was done by a woman artist known as the late Lady Maurine; this is a portion of the performance.

**Artist:** The lady Maurine
**Artist:** Raila Jakom: Raila the chairman.
**Songtext:** 1a
Ohangla performance has empowered women, and artists, generally. Although most of the Luo female artists have become popular to the extent that some male politicians could demand their performances during political campaign rallies, the Late Lady Mourine, a woman who had entrenched herself into this male-dominated art as an Ohangla artist, was then the most leading performer among the Luo Ohangla artists (both men and women). As a result, she had a large following and greatly influenced Luo politics. This happened when she composed one of the best song performances in praise of an undisputed Luo leader known as Raila Jakom (Raila, the chairman), refer to the song text, 1a.

In relation to economic empowerment, female Ohangla artists have become more popular, and this has made them attract large crowds during their performances, and participants had to pay an entrance fee. Currently, to attend any organised Ohangla performance, one has to pay for the service, without which one could not be allowed to participate. In most cases, charges could range from five hundred to one thousand Kenya shillings only per person (excluding meals and drinks taken during such entertainments). However, during political rallies and funeral activities, any interested individual was allowed to attend free of charge. Therefore, this female artist could perform in public rallies, social clubs and schools during educational days. During these occasions, the performance fee had to be paid by the host. This empowered these Luo female Ohangla artists such as the late Lady Mourine, Grace Nyakindu and Benta Nyakoyugi. It is true to argue that Ohangla performance can and has empowered women artists economically and socially. In addition, it has created a space for them to air their views freely in a patriarchal-dominated Luo society. This has gender awareness which eventually transforms the Luo community’s gender consciousness, as noted by (Nyanga, 2013).

Virtue Boasting in the Contemporary Luo Ohangla Performance

One of the key features in Ohangla performances is virtue boasting names. It was practised in the traditional Ohangla performances and is still practised in the modern Luo community. However, currently the structure, content and context have changed in response to the changes that Ohangla itself has undergone. It usually occurs at the initial and at the middle of the performance. One of the audiences, traditionally men/women, who were interested in boasting could avail themselves and direct virtue name at the gathering, not an individual. The Luo being patriarchal, women were restricted to boasting only using men’s names, not women’s. Virtue boasting names played a significant role. It acts as an opening formula when the artist uses it to start the performance. It instils discipline among the community members in that only virtues were mentioned, not vices. It also informs the audience that the performance has started. Thus, they need to be alert. Finally, it entertains the Ohangla audience and creates a forum where important people or those who call themselves important in the community could get a space and the audience to assert their authority and let them be known. In that, they could order the Ohangla artist to stop the proceeding performance in the middle of the performance when the audiences are at the peak of the dance to stop as well. This was
done at a cost. Such individuals were to pay the artists a certain amount of prize every time they would feel like boasting. So not everyone could boast since it was a skill which was not for everyone, and it was learned. Hence not most people had it.

In relation to gender and virtue boasting, it is a very important Luo cultural practice that plays an important role in Ohangla performance as far as gender consciousness is concerned. Girls were traditionally depicted to be only owned by men because they could only boast using men’s names, not women’s. However, in contemporary Luo society, virtue boasting in Ohangla performances has created some gender transformations in relation to virtue boasting, which has occurred in the contemporary Luo community. It was noted that women boast using women or their mothers, which was not the case in the past; in fact, it was a taboo. Originally it was argued that Ohangla performances, to some extent, are discursive agencies deployed by culture to subject women to a patriarchal ideology. Below is an extract of the modern virtue boasting text performed by a woman we recorded during the Ohangla live performance in Rarieda Sub-County, Siaya County.

Virtue Boasting was from Linet Auma Ohangla Artist: Otieno Aloka Songtext: 1b

In Nga’? In Nga’? An Auma Simba. “Who are you? Who are you?” “I am Auma the Lion”.
Dhako Opado chure yuak ka nyathi. “A woman has slapped a husband. He is crying like a baby.
Uwi! Uwi! Mayoo! Mayo! Uwi! Uwi! Mayoo! Mayoo!

The above virtue boasting text analysis illustrates a key idea of the power struggle between men and women represented in Ohangla performance according to (Awuor & Anudo, (2016). In this context, the virtue name is Simba (a lion). A lion in African communities, such as Luo, is one of the strongest and the most feared animal. Thus “Auma Simba” is just a representation of the larger Luo women, who are violent and hence expect men to fear them or just intend to create fear for the “other” gender. These women have got a performance space through Ohangla performance, where they could assert their authority by wrestling power from Luo men and finally force them into submission to the females by slapping (beating) them. The artist claims that men, represented by husbands, can easily submit through coercion just like children do. This submission is represented by crying. This argument above is against Luo’s patriarchal beliefs. In the Luo traditional community, women were supposed to be beaten by their husbands just like children. In fact, the culture dictates the husband must beat his wife to show love to the wife (Ogot, 1967). A wife who escaped beating from her husband would soon “grow horns” and become disobedient to other men in the community.

This was because, among the Luo, a wife doesn’t belong to the individual but to the entire Luo clan. Since women were treated as the “other,” they had to be disciplined by their husbands, if not other males related to the husband. The discussion above can be summed up in (Foucault, 1977) conception of power struggle between males and females as mobile, multiple fields of force relations, which will never become stable. He argues that although they appear terminal and fixed, they are temporary and precarious, and it will always create a point of resistance that cuts across the social order and its stratification of power and privileges, thus opening possibilities of resistance. The Luo Ohangla performance through the virtue boasting names depicts this form of dynamic nature of power.

The above discussions revealed ambivalence of the discourse of women artists who supposedly speak for themselves, particularly on critical issues affecting society, such as gender roles. Therefore, in this instance, women project new ideologies which present them positively, and through this process, new ideologies marked in Ohangla performances are imparted to audiences of all ages, hence, transforming cultural consciousness in relation to cultural beliefs and traditions such as gender imbalance. These might have resulted in the loss of gender roles among sexes being observed in contemporary Luo society. In fact, currently, in the Luo community, there is no role allocation to any gender. Instead, there is a gender struggle characterised by competition between men and women in the performance of duties. Hence, regardless of gender, anyone can now perform any duty depending on their interest and as long as they
perform them better. This has been occasioned by the emergence of Western education and Christianity, which has mutilated and transformed the Luo social, and cultural structure, some of which have been transmitted to the community through Ohangla performances. In addition, the elements of Western culture have also penetrated into the Luo Ohangla performances, as indicated by (Okong’o, 2011), and this has resulted in the creation of hybrid cultural practices among the Luo, which is currently transforming the Luo communities’ social consciousness in relation to gender.

Ohangla Performance and Marriage Consciousness

In relation to marriage, for example, in the past, bachelorhood was abhorred among the Luo. A man who had passed marriageable age and had not married was considered incomplete. Similarly, a childless couple was looked down upon. Further, an unmarried woman who continued to remain in her home (birthplace) experienced hostility, hatred and criticism from the villagers, her own brothers and close relatives. This was considered a let down to the family, and such families, main mothers to such ladies, were considered to have failed in administering their role as mothers. Therefore, marriage and the subsequent birth of a child were held in high esteem among the Luo. People celebrated through performances such as Ohangla songs and dances whenever they happened.

These proceeding discussions illustrate the intercultural marriage and gender roles in marriage among the Luo, an important affair cherished and admired by the Luo community (Wilson, 1968). However, intercultural marriage was not allowed since a person from a different culture may transfer undesirable traits to the community and Onyi Papa Jey, a Luo Ohangla artist, contradicts this Luo custom in his Ohangla performance as shown below in song text 1b.

Milly Nyar-Jolang’o (Luo)
Papa wuod Adhiambo kakoro atugo nduma, x2
Jei mawuod Adhiambo, X2
Paro ochanda nyamin Achieng, x2
Alungo oberana Milly Nyar-jolang’o;
Nyakaochjija toti
Adonjo e dala Mili to romona; x2

Nyathi ma rwako nag wen e sama aonge dala ×2
Supa to nyiero anyiera, ×2Kabiro dala to
millie rwaka gi mor, x2
Oting’o millie golo yier e chak x2

Kalenjin daughter (English)
Papa Adhiambo’s son I have started performing, X2
Jei Adhiambo’s son, X2
Am stressed the sister to Achieng, X2
I’m calling my beautiful one; Milly Kalenjin daughter, X2
Daughter of my in-laws, X2
Baby who takes care of my hens when I’m away from home, X2
The beautiful one is ever happy, X2
When I come home Milly welcomes me, X2
I’m carrying milk while Milli removes the hair from the milk, X2

The excerpt above has been extracted from the Ohangla song Nyar Massai (daughter of the Maasai). It is concerned with issues related to the inter-cultural marriages between the Luo and the Lang’o (the Kalenjin community). In his song, the Luo Ohangla artist (Onyi Papa Jey), praises his wife, who is from the Maasai community. The marriages between the Luo and other communities in the past were treated with a lot of suspicions; in fact, according to the Luo community, it was discouraged. However, in case it happened, it was treated with a lot of suspicions.

To put more emphasis on this, there were oral narratives which were fronted by the Luo community to discourage this kind of marriage in future and for future generations from involving in intercultural marriage. For example, the narrative about “Luanda Magere”. However, in this performance, Onyi Papa Jey, an Ohangla artist, transcended the traditional narratives meant to discourage the Luo men who intend to marry wives from other ethnic communities. My Papa Jey describes his Maasai wife as a unique lady who had the desirable character traits expected from the best women in the Luo community.

The artist describes the Maasai girl as being faithful, honest, simple and humble. This performance contradicts the (Ominde, 1952) argument about the Luo cultural belief that the Luo culture doesn’t allow
intercultural marriages. The artist describes his Maasai wife as proud. He states that he lives in peace; they have a child, just like any other family living in the same community. The idea of marriage confinement within the Luo culture territory is challenged in this performance. In this context, the artist deconstructs and subverts the Luo cultural belief concerning intercultural marriages. Thus, the marriage boundary is broken to provide space and freedom for the Luo men or women to exercise their marriage rights. The listener who listens to the song 'Nyar Maasai' (daughter of the Maasai) internalises the information and hence transforms their consciousness in relation to intercultural marriage.

The performance, *Nyar Maasai*, again glorifies monogamy. The artist states that he had seen very many beautiful girls, but he ignored them all. This was because they had committed themselves to the marriage agreement during the marriage ceremony. This argument contradicts Evans-Pritchard (1950), that women were considered to be their husbands’ property, and therefore they were brought up to accept that husbands have a right to entertain extra-marital affairs and have as many wives as possible was a norm.

Finally, the argument above resonates with Butler’s (1993) argument that gender within performance should not be seen as a fixed attribute in a person but should be seen as a fluid variable which shifts and changes in relation to different contexts at different times just the same way gender is reflected in Ohangla performances in creating gender consciousness. As a result of the introduction of Western education, Western religion and the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, many social transformations have taken place in the Luo community. These Western cultural practices had interfered with most of the Luo cultural practices, including Luo cultural marriages and family setups. With Western culture’s direct and indirect penetration into Luo culture, performances such as Ohangla have been affected.

Currently, these practices are changing. For example, marriage has become an individual affair. As indicated in the song *Nyar Maasai* (daughter of the Maasai). In contemporary Luo society, the lady is free to choose any man of her choice without parental input, interference, or a go-between. At the same time, a woman is free to remain single or marry. Besides, a childless woman is never rebuked as it was in the past, and it is treated as normal compared to the past, whereby immediate family members ridicule a woman who was childless. Thus, being single and independent is not something that can worry the parents or the individual ladies themselves in modern society. In the past, the Luo had a procedure for marriage activities; an individual who underwent the Luo customary marriage must undertake this process. When a man reaches a marriageable age, his parents and close relatives identify a go-between (*jagam*) who shouldered the responsibility of searching for the best girl. This person should know the girl and the girl’s family well. The go-between mediated between the two families and their clans until a comprise agreement was reached (Wilson & Gordon, 1968, p. 96). In the contemporary Luo community, these procedures are no longer being followed.

Bride-wealth exchange was a very important activity among the Luo. It was not only about rights and property but also about the people and how social identity was constructed. Among the Luo community, this activity acted as a moment upon which a person’s identity was constructed. Potash (1986) adds that this activity offered an opportunity for a man to confirm his identity in the complex social identity. He further explains that it gave the man rights over woman’s labour; therefore, a man could aspire for social and economic leadership after marriage. This could lead to an interpretation where women are viewed as objects.

The concept of objectifying gender is further captured by Obudho (1985). He argues that giving livestock in the form of bride wealth (*Mwando*) to obtain a wife was actually a whole network of interpersonal relations which expressed gratitude from husbands to the family members of their wives. It was a symbolic gift of gratitude, and among the Luo community, this had an important social, economic and religious importance. In modern society, marriage can take place without the bride wealth as a result of social transformations that the Luo people have undergone as long as the lady and the man have an agreement. Thus, these changes are transmitted through Ohangla.
performed that act as conduits where cultural transformation is transmitted to the next generation in this context of gender.

The Luo believed that sex is only allowed in a marriage relationship, and its main aim is for procreation. However, other uses of sex exist, especially during the performance of rituals and religious functions. Prostitution, commercial sex, fornication, rape, homosexuality, incest and bestiality do exist, but they are considered sexual offences, and in case a person commits any of such, they are heavily punished, secluded or excluded from the community and, in some cases, they are cursed by the elders. In the Luo community, many rituals revolved around sex, as noted earlier. For example, a newly built house must be inaugurated through sexual intercourse between the wife and the husband. Luo believed that committing adultery was a serious offence, which only applies to women. A woman who commits adultery is sent back to her parents to await a delegation from the husband to her home, seeking an amicable warning and punishment before she returns. Incidentally, a man who committed the same offence did not undergo any punishment or even reprimanded. Sex and sexual issues are no longer a secret among the Luo community as they used to be in the past years. There is a lot of freedom for any individual who indulges in any kind of sexual activity without any restriction. Some of the love and sexual connotations embedded in Ohangla performances are sung publicly without any fear. That is why some interviewees claimed that Ohangla performances published issues about sex and sexual intercourse publicly to curb the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS pandemic along the beaches of Lake Victoria.

Sexual Objectification of Luo Males by the Female Ohangla Artists

The increased concern for women’s liberation has prompted to the interrogation of the Luo musical performances such as Ohangla. The main intention was to reveal whether issues related to the subversion of patriarchal structures are available in some of the Ohangla performances. Through the observation and interaction with some of the Luo Ohangla artists, mainly females such as Grace Nyakindu, it was realised that these artists had performed some of the musical performances that have transformed the perception of women in the community. First, as mentioned earlier, she has become an Ohangla artist, a field dominated by men. Secondly, she has emerged as one of the women who objectify the male bodies just as the male artist does to the female bodies. Below is the analysis of the contemporary Ohangla performance by Lady Maurine, a female Ohangla artist, to justify the argument. **Song text 1C**

**Lady Maurine: Olima the son of Kadem**

Awero wuowi ma yom ka budho x 2, (I’m praising a man, whose skin is soft like pumpkin, x2)

Awero wuowi ma ber ka nyako, x2 (I’m praising a beautiful man like a lady, x2)

Awero wuowi makwar ka nyanya, x2 (I’m praising a beautiful man like a lady, x2)

Yom ka budho machuo penjo, x2 (I’m praising a man, whose skin is brown like tomatoes, x2)

ngute yom kabusdomachuo penjo, x2 (Soft like pumpkin those men are as king, x2)

Awero wuowi ma ng’ute ong’olo, x2, (I’m praising a man who has a creased neck, x2)

Scholars such as Magak and Okombo (2014) have researched Ohangla songs that praised the Luo community’s female beauty. In the same context, female bodies have been praised by mostly male artists. However, this study provided a contrary opinion; it demonstrates that some of the female artists have come up with some Ohangla song performances that depict the male body as an object of praise and gratification. However, this can be interpreted differently: women, like their male counterparts, admire the male bodies. Therefore because of the cultural confinement as a result of patriarchy, the women lack a space where they could express their feelings and opinions. Hence, Lady Maurine has found Ohangla performance as the best avenue to pass such information to her audience in general, something which transforms the listener’s consciousness in relation to gender. Olima (the man being praised) is described to be beautiful, like a woman. This shows that according to Lady Maurine’s performance, both genders could be described as being beautiful. This resonates with Ostergaard (1992)
Theoretical argument that gender should not be seen as a fixed variable in a person but is transferable in relation to the context. Again, the artist uses various metaphors to describe Olima; he is described to be brown, like ripe tomatoes.

Among the Luo community, brown is considered superior, just like the color white. Thus, it is common to observe that Luo men do admire brown women. They are considered to be beautiful. The reason is that most Luo people are black-skinned, and those brown-skinned people among the Luo are rare; hence, they are considered to be beautiful simply because of their scarcity. Olima has soft skin like a pumpkin, which is expected of a woman, according to the Luo community. Women are expected to possess soft skin, and Lady Maurine challenges this idea. These ideas influence the listeners' views that all bodies, males and females alike, should be viewed the same. That the female bodies should not be the only ones, but both should be subject to admiration.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

**Conclusion:** This paper concludes that in the past, the Luo community has been struggling to perpetuate culture of patriarchy; this has disadvantaged the female gender and skewed socio-political power towards males and in the process disempowered the female both socially and culturally (Awuor & Anudo, 2016). It is believed that this paper will enable the Luo community to transform their perception in relation to gender equality and that it will enable the Luo community comprehend the need to suppress unconstructive male dominance, thereby supporting the findings and enable the community to facilitate the evolution strategies depicted in this paper through Ohangla performances in transforming the community’s gender consciousness.

**Recommendation:** This paper revealed that among the contemporary Luo community, women have not been passive in relation to the patriarchal structures oppressing them. Since the female struggle is a continuous process, women should continue contesting these oppressive patriarchal structures such as forced marriage and social insubordination. They should also reject the male actions of obstructing the females from making key independent decision in the community. One of the ways in which these can done, is through taking part in Ohangla performances, since Ohangla performance is one of the traditional cultural discourses that have initiated social transformation in relation to the transformation of gender consciousness among the contemporary Luo women.

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