

PERSONHOOD AND THE NEGOTIATION FOR IDENTITY AMONG THE OEGWOROK (KAGORO) COMMUNITY OF SOUTHERN KADUNA

Habila P. Swanta

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the multifaceted and ever-evolving nature of personhood within the Oegworok community, a unique ethnic group residing in Southern Kaduna, Nigeria. It underscores the complexity of this process, highlighting that personhood and individual negotiation for identity are not static concepts but ones that is continually shaped through various factors. These factors can be broadly categorized into internal and external influences. The methodology employed in this study includes qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. The paper discusses the profound implications of personhood and identity negotiations on the Oegworok community's social, political, and economic structures. By examining the interplay between individual personhood and communal identity, the paper sheds light on how these factors collectively shape the Oegworok narrative. This narrative, in turn, influences the community's societal norms, power dynamics, and economic activities, painting a comprehensive picture of how identity construction can significantly impact a community's overall development and functioning as well as a person's image. The findings reveal that the Oegworok community's understanding of personhood is influenced by their cultural beliefs, values, and practices; and that the socio-cultural, historical, and political contexts have shaped the Oegworok's understanding of personhood and identity negotiation, which are continuously negotiated and renegotiated in response to changing societal and environmental conditions.

KEYWORDS: Oegworok Personhood, Identity, Negotiation, and Southern Kaduna

INTRODUCTION

In most African societies, personhood lacks a precise definition; it is conceived as changing, shifting, and even transferable. Meaning that personhood can be acquired or lost (Menkiti, 1984: 171-173). Similarly to Minkati, a modern discussion has also sought to understand the status of personhood in diverse faces of endeavour

with the assertion that personhood is seen as a matter of social identity that determines how an individual or a group of people are treated, or under what condition they are allowed to live in a community (Matthew, 2013:101-104). Thus, a concern for the African communal conception of personhood in the community requires attention.

Personhood, in anthropological terms, refers to the capacity to be recognized as a person possessing rights, duties, and obligations within a given society (Morris, 1994). The multifaceted and ever-evolving nature of personhood within the Oegworok community requires attention. The community is a unique ethnic group residing in Southern Kaduna, Nigeria. It underscores the complexity of this process, highlighting that individual identity is not a static concept but one that is continually shaped and negotiated through various factors. These factors can be broadly categorized into internal and external influences. Internal influences refer to elements that originate from within the community and culture. These include kinship ties, which can significantly impact a person's status and role within the community.

The concept of ancestral lineage is another critical factor, as it links individuals to their past and shapes their sense of belonging and continuity. Ancestral lineage refers to the generations of an individual in the past. Furthermore, participation in rituals and traditions is emphasized, as these communal activities can reinforce shared values and beliefs, thereby contributing to one's identity. External influences, on the other hand, involve interactions with the broader Nigerian society. This can encompass various aspects, such as socio-economic factors, political dynamics, and cultural exchanges. These external influences can challenge or reinforce internal factors, adding another layer of complexity to the negotiation of identity. This study contributes to the broader scholarly discourse on African identities, personhood, and the impact of socio-cultural and environmental factors on identity formation and negotiation.

The study employed qualitative research methods, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation for data collection. The researcher is an indigene of the Oegworok community and has been engaged in various social and cultural activities in the community. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, which allowed for the inclusion of individuals with diverse perspectives and experiences. The data were analysed thematically, using a grounded theory approach, which allowed for the emergence of patterns and themes from the data (Tajfel & Turner, 1997:74-99).

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE OEGWOROK COMMUNITY

The Oegworok people, who are also called “Kagoro” by the Hausa-Fulani, are the inhabitants of the Oebin Oegworok (the Kagoro land), and their ruler is known as Oegwam Oegworok (the Chief of Kagoro). Historically, the Oegworok community migrated from southern Bauchi to their present geographical location in Southern Kaduna. At that early stage of history, there are no records of immigrant presence in the Oegworok land (Yayock, 2002:1-30).

The Oegworok people of Southern Kaduna, Nigeria, are pre-dated back to the Nok culture of about 2000BC – 300AD, which forms the earliest record of human civilization in the region (Hayab, 2017: 5-7). The people are situated in the Kaura Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. They have a domain fronted by a towering rock outlined by a series of lower or smaller stratified hills with associated objects of geomantic earth forces, also interpreted by some as uniquely shaped stones to convey significance according to different shapes and functions which resulted from preternatural factors before the coming of the white men and Christianity. These constitute the main elements of the origin myth of the Oegworok people, which are annually commemorated by a ritual known as the *Bwok Afan* (Afan Festival) that was believed to have been founded by the Oegworok’s ancestor. This festival has been celebrated for years and is still on.

In addition, the Oegworok inhabit a mountainous, rocky terrain region primarily fed by seasonal rivers and rainwater. The community has maintained a strong sense of identity that is evident in their adherence to ancient cultural practices, including annual rituals (Afan Festival), a unique form of kinship, and their unwavering loyalty to their tribal people. The local economy of the Oegworok people relies mainly on production activities such as weaving (baskets and mats), pottery, blacksmithing, agriculture, and domestic animal husbandry. Besides these, some of them survive by vending their local brew wine known as “burkutu” which is concocted from grains (corn, millet, or maize). Leisure activities include various games, dances, and songs that are performed during special village gatherings and other customary rituals (Yayork, 2002:1-30).

The Oegworok people are found in the middle belt region of Nigeria, in a central setting near the Jos Plateau, in a cluster of villages known as Gworok (Kagoro). The Oegworok people are closer to the Atyap, Shiolio, Takad, Bajju, and Fantwam ethnic groups, so they share a common cultural heritage with them.

THE OEGWOROK COSMOLOGY AND THE CONCEPTS OF PERSONHOOD

The Oegworok people, like other African communities, hold a strong belief in the spiritual world and ancestral lineage, which significantly shapes their understanding of personhood and influences their identity and social standing. The Oegworok view their ancestors as intermediaries between the living and the spiritual realm, providing guidance, protection, and blessings (Ekeke & Morakinyo, 2016:1-10). Ancestors in the community are believed to possess the power to influence the lives of their descendants, and their involvement in daily activities is crucial for the well-being and prosperity of the community.

Among the Oegworok community, family lineage also plays a significant role in determining one's identity and social standing in the community. Lineage determines an individual's place within the community and, consequently, the rights, responsibilities, and expectations associated with their role (Adamu, 2006:117-126). In Africa, a person's lineage can be traced back through several generations, with the eldest males serving as the heads of the lineage, responsible for making crucial decisions and mediating disputes between family members (Ekeke & Morakinyo, 2016:1-10). This hierarchical structure reinforces the importance of ancestral lineage in shaping a person's identity and social standing in the African communal orientation.

Similarly, the Oegworok's spiritual beliefs, like other African communities, are deeply intertwined with their ancestral lineage. The spirits of ancestors are believed to reside in the spiritual realm, where they maintain a connection to their living descendants (Adamu, 2006:117-126). Through various rituals, sacrifices, and prayers, the Oegworok people communicate with their ancestors, seeking guidance, protection, and blessings upon their land, as is seen during the Afan Festival. These spiritual practices help to reinforce the importance of ancestral lineage and further shape an individual's identity and social standing.

In addition, the Oegworok people believe that a person's spirit continues to exist after death and can influence the lives of their descendants (Adamu, 2006:117-126). This belief encourages individuals to maintain strong connections with their ancestors and strive to live in a manner that honours their memory. Failure to do so can result in misfortune, illness, or even death, as the ancestors may withdraw their blessings or protection (Ekeke & Morakinyo, 2016: 1-10).

Furthermore, the role of ancestors and spiritual beliefs in shaping Oegworok's understanding of personhood is further reinforced by the concept of reincarnation. The Oegworok believe that individuals can be reincarnated into their descendants,

which is evident in the names given to some children e.g. *Bobai*, *kambai*, and *Bulwan*, etc. (Adamu, 2006:117-126), holds that this belief further emphasizes the importance of maintaining strong connections with one's ancestors in Africa (Adamu, 2006:117-126). This belief serves as a powerful motivator for individuals to live virtuous lives and uphold the values, customs, and traditions of their ancestral lineage.

In essence, the ancestral lineage and spiritual beliefs play a significant role in shaping Oegworok's understanding of personhood. These beliefs influence an individual's identity and social standing by determining their place within the community, their rights, responsibilities, and expectations, and by reinforcing the importance of maintaining strong connections with their ancestors. Through ancestral worship, the Oegworok people seek guidance, protection, and blessings, further emphasizing the significance of their spiritual beliefs in shaping their understanding of personhood.

PERSONHOOD AND GENDER ROLES IN THE NEGOTIATION FOR IDENTITY IN THE COMMUNITY

Gender roles and identities significantly shape the experience of personhood and the negotiation of identity within most African communities. This phenomenon can be examined through various theoretical lenses, including social constructionism, feminist theory, and queer theory.

Social constructionism posits that people learn about gender roles and identities through social interactions and cultural norms (West & Zimmerman, 1987:125-151). According to this perspective, the Oegworok community constructs gender through repeated social and personal interactions; individuals in the community, in turn, internalize these expectations and perform gendered behaviours, which ultimately contribute to their sense of self-worth. As a result, gender shapes the experience of personhood and identity formation, as people negotiate their roles and expectations within the Oegworok community.

Feminist theory further explores how gender roles and identities impact the experience of personhood. Feminist scholars argue that gender is not merely an individual characteristic but is inherently connected to larger systems of power and social structures (MacKinnon, 1989:72-84). By examining how patriarchal power operates in a society in which the Oegworok community is not exceptional, feminist theory illuminates how gender shapes the personal experiences and opportunities of individuals, as well as larger issues of inequality and oppression. The patriarchal

power is a way of affecting the feminist's personhood in Africa, the Oegworok community inclusive.

Queer theory offers a critical perspective on the relationship between gender roles, identities, and the negotiation of self within a community. By challenging traditional notions of gender as a binary construct, queer theorists emphasize the fluidity of gender identities and the importance of understanding social and cultural factors that shape the experiences of people who identify outside the gender binary (Butler, 1990; Sedgwick, 1990). This perspective highlights how dominant narratives of gender and sexuality marginalize and exclude certain individuals and communities, thereby shaping and affecting their experiences of personhood and identity in the community.

Given these, one could assert that gender roles and identities play a significant role in shaping the experience of personhood and the negotiation of identity within a community. Social constructionism, feminist theory, and queer theory offer different yet interrelated ways of understanding the complex relationship between gender, identity, and selfhood. By examining these theoretical frameworks, one can better understand how gender shapes our experiences, opportunities, and sense of self in the community.

PERSONHOOD AND ITS CONTESTATION IN THE AFRICAN COMMUNAL ORIENTATION

The concept of personhood seems to have received substantial treatment by African philosophers. Although significant contributions have been made by way of illuminating the idea of personhood in Africa, its connection to power remains undisputed. This involves a combination of capacity and agency that is conceptually tied to communal responsibility and respect for self and others. This indicates that human capacities do not have an inherent moral worth outside the community. Capacities are instrumentally good, and their worth depends on how they are used to promote the moral good of communal well-being, on which the immigrant's well-being or dignity depends (Ikuenobe, 2017:1-10).

Buttressing this, Bell (2002) has it that the notion of "personhood" or "being a person" is understood in many African languages and societies as an acquired status that is dependent upon people's relationship to their community. The various societies found in traditional Africa routinely accept the fact that personhood is the sort of thing that must be attained and is attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through the discharge of the various obligations as defined by one's station. It is the carrying out of these obligations that transforms

one from the status of early childhood, marked by an absence of moral function, into the person-status of later years, marked by a widened maturity of ethical sense. Interestingly, the dependency of status “as a person” on “one’s station” is relative to the community and its social hierarchy. He furthered that most roles and obligations are established by tradition, and all one needs to do to earn personhood is to follow these obligations. Shearing proper ritual participation in one’s society gives one a “person-status.” Somehow, gaining “person status” carries with it “ethical maturity” (Bell, 2002:61-65).

The idea of "personhood" invokes a set of rights and responsibilities that are acquired developmentally by participating in communal life and social recognition. In Menkiti's view, the developmental process of acquiring personhood represents a hierarchy that involves different normative levels. A person may progress developmentally from the status of an "it" as a child to acquiring full personhood as an adult, to "elderhood," and subsequently, to "ancesthood." Interestingly, after birth, the individual goes through the different rites of incorporation, including those of initiation at puberty, before becoming a full person in the eyes of the community. And then, of course, there is procreation, old age, death, and entry into the community of departed ancestral spirits, a community viewed as continuous with the community of living men and women, and with which it is conceived as being in constant interaction. Recognition of a person comes at different levels, both when one achieves the benchmarks of success (as outlined by society in a conformist sense), and for some, when they excel in an individualist way, for example as heroes or healers, in what is described as the transition from 'person' to 'whole person' (Menkiti, 1984:174-176). The idea that personhood is socially based on the basic assumption that personhood, whatever it is, cannot be abstracted from social or communal facts. In other words, personhood cannot be conceived as separable from certain facts about how the social world of immigrants is constituted. It will be good to examine some of these social facts that are held to be person-determining to point out their direct link to social power. This is taken as an alternative way of establishing the link between the relevant notion of personhood and power; it will require examining closely the content of that conception as it relates to the immigrant community.

Taking Mbiti's claim as his starting point, Menkiti distinguishes between African and Western conceptions of personhood, broadly labelling the latter as minimal and the former as maximal. The terminologies he employs in articulating the distinction are quite appropriate given what he has to say about the two approaches to personhood. Western conceptions are minimal precisely because they identify personhood with some static and isolated characteristic of which the human

being is in possession. Personhood in Western thought is a metaphysical given, and the idea of its later acquisition makes little or no sense. It appears that Menkiti takes this possession criterion for determining personhood to be minimal because it sets the bar for personhood rather low by giving short shrift to the role community plays in shaping personal identity. By contrast, Menkiti (1984:176) believes that the African conception of personhood offers a maximal criterion insofar as it does not merely assert that personhood is something that is metaphysically given but instead locates the criterion for full personhood in the active role the community plays in evolving individuals into persons.

Furthermore, the African judgment that a human being is “not a person,” but is made a “person” based on communal consistent moral conduct, which implies that the pursuit or practice of moral virtue is intrinsic to the conception of a person held in African thought; the concern is, how does this also apply to the immigrants? The position here is, thus, that for any immigrant to be seen as a person, that immigrant ought to display in his conduct the norms and ideals of personhood as designed by the community. This goes a long way in facilitating the integration of the immigrants into the host community. For this reason, when a human being fails to conform his behaviour to the acceptable moral principles or exhibits the expected moral virtues in his conduct of the community, he is said to be “not a person.” The evaluative statement opposite to this is, “he is a person,” which means, ‘he has good character,’ ‘he is peaceful, not troublesome,’ ‘he is kind,’ ‘he has respect for others,’ ‘he is humble.’ “The statement ‘he is a person,’ then, is a moral statement. It is a profound appreciation of the high standards of the morality of an immigrant’s conduct that would draw the judgment “he is truly a person”. The identity of one’s life is always embedded in the identity of the communities from which one lives in, for the value of the immigrants’ personhood in Africa seems not to only depend on the mere possession of some moral characteristic; the basis of personhood is ultimately located in of the quality of relationships the immigrants maintain with others in the community (Bell, 2002:61-65).

Thus, communal interpersonal relationships and moral values, however loosely conceived, play an important and indispensable role in the development of personhood among its members and immigrants. Now, to understand the values of personhood among the immigrants from a platform where the priority of personhood has been the societal norm, and consider what values are of benefit to the whole community as well as the immigrant community. Since personhood is not dependent on the mere possession of one’s ethnic identity and the capacity for thought but is a function of maintaining vital relationships with others in the community, the immigrant, according to Mbiti, must say ‘I am because we are and since we are

therefore, I am' (Mbiti, 1970:109). In addition, personhood is acquired in the community through knowledge that is required by the community, hence knowledge is power as the popular saying goes, in the sense of being, then any immigrant who has the required knowledge in the community, occupies a position of power relative to personhood, which is dependent on acquiring social power to enjoy a higher degree of personhood in the community, since personhood on this view is socially determined by the society via moral value. Yet, if a 'person' or an immigrant decides to be irresponsible, without having or doing anything that will be of benefit to the entire community, that crates ultimate bearer of moral value for the individual, such a distinction in degrees of personhood which applies to the immigrants and the host community, particularly from a moral point of view (Bell, 2002:61-65).

Similarly, in a well-ordered society, its "basic structure, that is, its main political and social institutions, particularly how they fit together as one system of cooperation, is concerned, to satisfy the basic needs of humanity. Institutions of membership and personhood are basic to the structures of communal orientation, which reproduces the old common law doctrine of "perpetual allegiance" to one's sovereign at nativity: persons are members of society simply because they were born members, and they cannot choose to be anything else. As a result, the immigrant's community defines his personhood (Smith, 2014:136-137). However, in the modern-day communal orientation and social identity, personhood should be able to explain why it is the case that one intuitively believes that all persons are morally equal, being native or immigrant. Among immigrants, it seems true that morally one can assert a basic equality of personhood among them. If personhood is socially determined, then it runs the risk of employing the 'person' as a blanket term that is applicable to all occupants in the community, either host or immigrants (Oyowe, 2019:203-228).

Furthermore, other criteria about one's relationship to those in the community beyond one's immediate family include being an active and unstinted participant in community projects (such as building bridges, constructing roads, and cleaning public spaces, as well as attending to the death, burial, and mourning of a deceased member of the community). While there is no limit to how high one can rise on the scale that indicates degrees of personhood achieved in the community, there is a limit to how far one can fall as an indigene in the community. An adult in the community who 'does little' of these things might descend to the level of simply a human with only the basic dignity and the unconditional rights inherent in that status. The fall ends there because all indigenes possess a birthright which sets lower bounds on how far they may descend on the scale of personhood. In this sense, all

indigenes in the community have a moral social value that quarantines their basic dignity and unconditional rights, whether they have attained personhood or not.

Since there is a merit component to personhood, it is relevant to talk of the distribution of the opportunity to achieve personhood to secure respect over and above the threshold respect that is due to human beings in virtue of their status as human beings. Good and honourable positions of prestige are conferred to members of the community who have achieved personhood through humanitarian services or involvement in communal works, the same opportunity should be given to everyone in the community either indigene or immigrant, and no one should be denied from the outset the chance to secure the status of personhood. However, there seems to be tension on how to acquire personhood by the physically challenged, for what does the society do to those who are born handicapped or crippled in such a way that they are not in the position to achieve personhood in ways that able-bodied people can? What happened to children born in a family of thieves and in a neighbourhood full of burglars? Surely, children did not choose to be born in that family, much less in the neighbourhood, and this may affect their ability to achieve personhood. In other words, how does one account for equality in unequal circumstances?

That personhood in the community should be socially determined and must take the idea to its logical conclusion by explicitly affirming that not only the host members of the community have a higher degree of personhood than the immigrant members of the community. Furthermore, all the members of the community, whether male or female, can reach highly recognized social ranks in the community despite the virtue of their gender and social position in the community. But if this is not done, then personhood would have a hard time explaining what it is about persons that makes them morally equal. One intuition is that equality of persons is a moral ideal that cannot be fully explained by a theory of personhood that appeals to contingencies about communal status; the ideology of host or immigrant members of the community should be dependent on human value and interpersonal relationships (Bell, 2002:68)

PERSONHOOD AND IDENTITY NEGOTIATION AMONG THE OEGWOROK COMMUNITY

Personhood, as a concept, is a complex and multifaceted construct that varies across cultures and societies. In the context of the Oegworok community, personhood is not simply a matter of biological existence, but rather a socially constructed reality that is shaped by cultural norms, values, and practices. This perspective aligns with the broader anthropological understanding of personhood as

a cultural construct that is shaped by social interactions and relationships (Miller, 2011:110-115). The Oegworok people's understanding of personhood is deeply intertwined with their cultural practices and beliefs. Respect is a central tenet of the Oegworok culture, and it plays a significant role in shaping personhood. For instance, a person is known to be a person through his respect for the elderly ones, and humanity at large, as well as his contribution to the community, and the way he conducts himself around. This is consistent with the view that personhood is often tied to social status, which is conferred based on an individual's adherence to cultural norms and values (Miller, 2011:110-115). Given these, the negotiation of identity among the Oegworok community is indeed a dynamic process shaped by a multitude of cultural practices and norms. This process is aptly described by Clifford Geertz's (1973) concept of culture as a "web of significance" that humans themselves have spun and within which they find themselves. It is through this web of cultural symbols, rituals, and practices that the Oegworok community gains personhood and negotiates its identity.

The Oegworok community, like many African societies, places a high value on communal living and collective identity (Eriksen, 2001:419-438). Individual identities are often subsumed within the larger group identity, and personal narratives are deeply intertwined with the collective history and experiences of the community. However, this does not preclude the existence of individual personhood; rather, it is through the negotiation of this collective identity that individuals within the Oegworok community assert their personhood. The concept of personhood in African societies, including the Oegworok community, is often tied to social relationships and responsibilities. According to Menkiti (1984:171-181), the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the more individualistic tendencies of the solitary man. In this context, personhood is not an inherent quality of the individual but is achieved through social interaction and the fulfillment of societal expectations.

Among the Oegworok community, this negotiation of identity and personhood is evident in various cultural practices and rituals. For instance, the rites of passage, such as the initiation into the Traditional Religious Worship (Oeboi), serve as a platform for individuals to assert their personhood while also reaffirming their commitment to the community. Personhood as well as the negotiation of identity among the Oegworok community is a dynamic and complex process that is shaped by cultural practices, social relationships, and broader societal changes. It is through this process that individuals within the community assert their personhood and contribute to the ongoing narrative of the Oegworok community.

Many people in the community share the opinion that the Oegworok community's concept of personhood is something that is attained in direct proportion to one's moral worth and one's relationship with his or her surrounding community. Meaning that personhood is something that is acquired as one's moral responsibility grows. The culture of the Oegworok people Like other long-established cultures of the world have developed a rich conceptual system complete with metaphysical, moral, and epistemological aspects of persons, a conception that informs a variety of social institutions, practices, and judgments about personal identity, moral responsibility, and the proper relationship both among individuals and between individuals and community.

The criteria for achieving personhood among the Oegworok communal orientation are based on two kinds of considerations. The first is the natural fact that one tends to care for his or her kin and feel responsible for those with whom one is in close reciprocal relationships. The second is the ability to encourage and support members' feelings of empathy for those beyond their families. If an individual takes responsibility for the upbringing of distant relatives or shoulders the burden of rearing non-relatives and allows his household to become a magnet for relatives and extended family, then such an individual will score very high in personhood in the community. An important condition for achieving personhood is that the agent can act based on rational reflection. Immigrants failing to meet these standards attract opprobrium. Other members of the Oegworok community will point to them and say *Oebang-Oelang-Ngwan* ("he is not a real person, or he is not responsible"). As a literal rendition from the Oegworok language, this expression could simply mean that the person is not doing his part as it is expected of him to be known and recognized as a person.

However, when the individual fails in his strivings to become a person, in the Oegworok community, that individual be it an indigene or an immigrant, may consequently be considered as a "useless person" (*Oebang Ooelang-Ngwan*), an opprobrium term. Gyekye (1997:111-113) employs criteria of personhood that are quite independent of individual aims and actions. He maintains that, while persons may differ with respect to how they are treated in a community, this difference is a matter of the social status accorded each, not facts about their status as persons in the community. Personhood should not only be defined in terms of social achievement, but personal relationships also serve to establish those networks conducive to creating the flow of information and obligation necessary for the promotion of communal trust.

For the Oegworok community, personhood is the reward for contributing to the community, and the basis of the individual's moral worth is in an independent

source—a common humanity. So conceived, the Oegworok notion of personhood helps to support social cooperation and provides a framework superbly suited to resolving collective action problems.

CONCLUSION

This paper has provided an examination of the concept of personhood and the negotiation for identity among the Oegworok community of Southern Kaduna, Nigeria. The Oegworok community's understanding of personhood is a complex interplay of cultural beliefs, values, and practices that are deeply embedded in their way of life. This understanding is closely tied to the notion of respect, which is demonstrated through various social and cultural practices such as greetings, social services, and communal living. As such, the Oegworok concept of personhood provides a unique lens through which to understand African cultural perspectives on the nature of humanity and social relations that give rise to personhood.

The concept of personhood among the Oegworok community is holistic and is a communal construct that emphasizes the individual's role within the community and their relationship with the spiritual world. This understanding of personhood is shaped by the community's belief in ancestral spirits and their role in the community's life, as well as their social structure and cultural practices.

The negotiation of identity and the concept of personhood are central to the understanding of the Oegworok culture. The acquisition of personhood is a gradual process that involves socialization, initiation, and participation in communal activities. The Oegworok people develop a sense of belonging and identity that is deeply rooted in their cultural heritage. This study has shown that the concept of personhood and the negotiation for identity among the Oegworok community are intricately linked and are shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, social, and environmental factors. The findings reveal that the Oegworok community's understanding of personhood is deeply rooted in their cultural beliefs, values, and practices. The Oegworok community's strong sense of community and communal living play a significant role in shaping their personhood and identity. Through collective decision-making processes and social gatherings, the Oegworok people reinforce their shared values, beliefs, and practices through identity negotiation. These cultural elements are continuously negotiated and renegotiated in response to the changing societal and environmental conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Support Local Researchers:** There should deliberate and conscious effort to encourage and support Oegworok scholars (students, academics, and community members) to research this topic, potentially through grants, mentorship, or access to resources.
2. **Community Forums & Workshops:** The Oegworok community should organize forums where community members can share their experiences and perspectives on personhood and identity, and how these are negotiated in the face of changing social dynamics. These can inform research questions and provide valuable qualitative data.
3. **Oral History Projects:** The Oegworok community members should encourage and support the collection and preservation of oral histories that document how the Oegworok concept of personhood and identity have evolved, highlighting the factors that have shaped it (e.g., traditions, interactions with other groups, historical events).
4. **Promoting Cultural Tourism:** The Oegworok community should develop sustainable cultural tourism initiatives that showcase Kagoro culture to the world while also providing economic opportunities for the community. Ensure that tourism is managed in a way that respects cultural values and avoids exploitation.

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