

**HOKA GATHERING COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS AND THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MATRIX
IN ZIMBABWE: THE CASE OF THE SHANGWE COMMUNITY OF GOKWE**

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ABSTRACT

Culture is seminal in any sustainable development endeavour. There can never be successful sustainable cumulative development if the cultural aspects of a community are neglected. Consequently, this research focuses on *hoka* (work parties) in the Shangwe community as one such important cultural activity. The research makes use of Afrocentricity, Communication and Human Factor Development theories. These theories made it possible for an African cultural activity to be studied with African interests at the centre. The communication theory is also used because *hoka* songs and poems create a platform for communication of Shangwe's common interests and shared goals. Triangulation was used in this research. The researchers posit that *hoka* has mutated and the contemporary version carries traditional as well as contemporary functions. The songs and poems as well as the *munemo* (jeerings) have proved in all essence to be of paramount importance in their role as sustainable community development agents.

Keywords

Shangwe, sustainable development, Culture, Communication, Community Development, Culture marginalisation

INTRODUCTION

This research is in the area of cultural and development studies. It essentially falls under the subfield of culture and sustainable development studies. The history of cultural studies can be traced back to cultural Marxism. Cultural Marxism begets many schools of thought among them the Birmingham school of thought whose chief crafters include Hall. Hall (1972:66) insists that ‘culture must be studied within the social relations and systems through which culture is produced and consumed, and that the study of culture is intimately bound up with the study of society, politics and economics.’ The cultural studies view by Hall (1972) informs this study as it will make specific reference to the Shangwe community of Gokwe to establish how the core values and practices of their culture and philosophy as a marginalised community impact development. Balc (2018) points out how communication is intertwined with aspects of culture and communities. This sentiment implies that culture determines the relationships that people in communities will have but that expression of these relationships is dependent on communication which is shared and mutually understood. Communication enables the spread and reinforcement of culture which in turn paves the way for sustainable development in communities. The study primarily investigates the Shangwe community’s *hoka* gatherings and their impact on sustainable development and how communication plays a huge role in such gatherings.

Hoka in the Shangwe community is a communal gathering where community members come together to help a community member in their fields or any other work. Community members gather and sing as they do the work collectively. Biljana (2011) posits that humans are emotional beings with a variety of ways that they use to communicate their feelings in a way that can benefit them as individuals and also their communities. This sentiment alludes that singing is one of the methods that people use to communicate their feelings. *Hoka* also acts as a public sphere (Habermas 1962) where citizens behave as a public body where they discuss in an unrestricted manner with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express their opinions about issues of general interest. During these gatherings, there is the visual impact of collective power that a vast assembly of subordinates conveys both to its number and to its adversaries. These assemblies provide each participant with a measure of anonymity or disguise, thereby lowering the risk of being identified personally for any action or word that comes from the group. (Scott 1990). There are primarily three stages during these ‘unauthorized gatherings’ (Ibid 1990). The first stage is when people come together as a mixed community and work in the fields since Gokwe is not made up of Shangwe-speaking people only. This stage also includes Shona and Ndebele-speaking people which are the hegemonic groups. After work, the community gathers as a whole for food and beer drinking. The last stage consists of the Shangwe elders coming together to discuss issues affecting their kinsmen mapping the way forward with the exclusion of the Madherukas. This is mostly done after all the Madheruka has dispersed. Such a social platform enables the community elders to communicate with each other and articulate their concerns. This communication platform paves the way for effective sustainable community development through their ability to exchange ideas, concerns and solutions as one people.

The names of the practice vary from region to region in the Shangwe community just like its variation in the Shona community. In the Shona community, it may be termed *nhimbe*, *humwe* and many other names, however for this study *hoka* was made use of although there are various names for the practice such as *chidziko*. *Hoka* was chosen due to its popular use by Shangwe speakers. The study adopts the gatherings as cultural models that can provide a framework for intrinsic contemporary sustainable development initiatives and other development interventions from outside. Positive and/or negative (resistance) attitudes towards development initiatives can be spread through *hoka* thus the need to exploit

such a cultural aspect as a sustainable development launch pad. The study unravels the traditional and contemporary functions of *hoka* gatherings and their potential impact on sustainable development and how that can be harnessed for the community's well-being. Thus the study brings out how communication makes *hoka* gatherings possible and how this impacts sustainable community development. Balc (2018) notes that communication makes the development of culture possible thus *hoka* would not be possible if community members could not communicate their goals and aspirations. The current quest arises against the backdrop of the views of various development scholars such as Nurse (2011) Glennie (2008) and Chigudu (2002), who argue that culture is pivotal in societal development. Similarly, the United Nations (UN) (2010) stresses the critical role culture plays in sustainable development. The research takes a step further and synthesises the marginalised culture and sustainable development binomial in Zimbabwe.

The Shangwe people are found in Gokwe. Gokwe is in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe. The region's original occupants are the Shangwe people. The Shangwe are one of the minority cultural groups in Zimbabwe. Mapedza et al (2000) and Ncube (2004) concur with the idea that before the colonial era, the area now known as Gokwe was occupied by the Shangwe people. During this era, the number of the Shangwe people was estimated to be about 600 (Mapedza et al 2000). It is now difficult to give the actual number of the Shangwe people because they were dispersed during the establishment of the Mapfungautsi forestry and the coming in of immigrant farmers during the 1950s. They are now found in the two political districts of Gokwe north and Gokwe south. The name Shangwe as postulated by Nyambara (2002) was given to these local Gokwe inhabitants by the immigrants who came to Gokwe after the 1930s due to the colonial government's Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the subsequent relocation of the people residing around Gutu, Kwekwe and Kadoma and other areas during the 1950s. The locals also named the immigrants *Madheruka* in retaliation (Worby 1992, Nyambara 2002). These names had connotations. The name Shangwe was used by the immigrants as a way of showing the backwardness of the locals. The immigrants had contact with the whites before the locals and hence the locals were regarded as uncivilised and this culminated in a culture of domination. The advantage of the immigrants who first had contact with the whites was that they were able to communicate and push forward their agenda thus pushing local community interests to the side-line. The Shangwe were disparaged and pushed to the periphery because their way of life was regarded as archaic and lack of communication made it worse. The dominated Shangwe culture became marginalised.

The origin of the name Gokwe is contested; though Mudzimu (2010) asserts that at some stage during the colonial era, the area now known as Gokwe was called Sebangu. He argues that it was named Gokwe on 18 June 1957. Gokwe region is delimited by the Sanyati River to the east. To the south, it is bounded by the Chemagora African Purchase Area and the Nkayi district of Matebeleland North. Kariba and Binga border the region to its western and northern boundaries respectively (ibid 2010). The geographical location of this region makes it difficult to regard the occupants as Shona, Ndebele or Tonga. Mudzimu (2010) argues that the Shangwe people are a Shona-speaking group; however, some scholars view the Shangwe to be of Korekore/Tonga origin (Worby 1992). Ncube (2004) juxtaposed the Shangwe and the Nambya and Tonga. If one is to label Tonga and Nambya languages or cultures it becomes imperative to do the same for the Shangwe group. Thus Shangwe can be referred to as a subculture of the Shona community or a culture with its language, however, Magwa and Magwa (2014) recognised Shangwe as a language and a culture. The viewing of the Shangwe culture as a subculture under the Shona umbrella term makes it almost impossible for researchers and policymakers to research on Shangwe people. The side-lining of the Shangwe culture in research can also be regarded as an attribute to the Shangwe peoples' invisibility in development initiatives in Gokwe. This study takes the view that like other minority groups which

include Hwesa, Shangani, Venda, Chewa and Tonga, Shangwe is a language and a culture. Given the fact that it is a Bantu language, there may be mutual intelligibility between Shangwe and any of the five dialects which make up the Shona Language. There are a lot of scholarly arguments about the actual categorisation and the origin of the culture as shown above. This work argues that just like Ndaou which is regarded as a Shona dialect (Doke 1931) and at the same time recognised as a language in the Zimbabwean constitution the categorisation of many minority languages lies at the mercy of hegemonic scholars.

Nyambara (2002:6) postulates that ‘Colonial notions of Shangwe backwardness can be attributed to the historical circumstances that cast Shangwe on the margins of the colonial administration because of their geographical isolation in the remote northern areas of the country less accessible to colonial administrators and missionaries’. Thus cultural marginalisation is rife in Zimbabwe. To survive, the dominated Shangwe culture developed a resistance which is referred to as retaliation culture in this study. The hybrid resistance culture has an impact on sustainable development in the Shangwe community. Thus this study seeks to highlight the cause and effect of the Shangwe community’s underdevelopment from a cultural point of view.

In Zimbabwe, there is an outcry by marginalised communities on their marginality. They are trying to get the ‘recognition’ they deserve as cultures. Chirimaunga (2014) in his unpublished dissertation points out that Hwesa is a language on its own though it is regarded as part of the Manyika dialect. His argument stipulates that most of the minority groups are not at ease with their languages and cultures being labelled Shona. This is even though they can communicate because of mutual intelligibility by their being similar. The Shangwe community also blame government policies for their marginalised community’s underdevelopment. The abrupt outcry by these groups in Zimbabwe calls for scrutiny. This study consequently focuses on marginalised Shangwe culture in general and the *hoka* cultural activity in particular. The study grapples with the issues around the unravelling of the impact of Shangwe *hoka* as part of the marginalised (resistance) culture on the Shangwe community’s sustainable as well as socio-economic development. This is because *hoka* harbours the Shangwe ideological resistance which is growing while shielded from direct surveillance (Scott 1990). All this is premised on the fact that at the heart of the debate surrounding Africa’s development/underdevelopment is African culture (Njoh 2006). Thus, the quest is to unravel the resistance culture and sustainable development binomial.

Nyambara (2002:5) notes that ‘the coming of *Madheruka* in the 1960s coincided with the introduction of cotton in Gokwe by colonial agricultural officials, and the immigrants readily took to cotton cultivation while the indigenous people were reluctant to cultivate the new crop’. Nyambara (2002:14) also captures the colonial agricultural officer’s sentiments in a statement which shows complete resistance by the locals, ‘the agricultural officer went further to lament that ‘the majority of the people are originals and so disinterested in any form of progress ... I do not think anything will be achieved in this area for the next 5 or 6 years’’. Reluctance in accepting government initiatives by the Shangwe and the subsequent underdevelopment becomes a grey area. Arnold (2000) posits that every culture, the world over has some concept of development and aspires to attain it, thus, the ‘underdevelopment’ of the Shangwe people is not a result of the developmental incompetence of their culture due to the fact that every culture has a concept of development. Kosmin (1977) indicates that Gokwe was home to the Inyoka tobacco industry from the nineteenth century. The Shangwe also paid tribute in tobacco to the Ndebele chiefdom. The discussion above points to the fact that underdevelopment in the Shangwe

community is not a result of intrinsic causes. The culture of domination which arose during the colonial era gave birth to the problem and the neo-colonial policies of the Zimbabwean nationalist government perpetuate the problem.

Work parties or *nhimbe* in Shona have been studied in the past; however, Sithole (2014) noted that scholars like Leedy (2010) and Mararike (1999) did so as a subordinate issue or as a factor to explain phenomena in their focus areas of study. Sithole (2014) reiterated that none of these authors has studied *nhimbe* in detail and therefore his study is the first academic research on the *nhimbe* practice. As a result, *nhimbe* has not been adequately documented leading to an obscure understanding of the practice. This study thus becomes part of the ongoing process of unravelling work parties (*hoka*) in Zimbabwe; however, the focus is on *hoka* in a marginalised community which is different from what has already been done. Sithole (2014) focused on hegemonic cultures which are Shona and Ndebele elucidating on the general traditional economic functions of *nhimbe*, this study becomes significant as it shifts the focus to the marginalised Shangwe community. The focus is on a contemporary cultural practice (*hoka*) that has mutated and changed functions as it is now part of a retaliation culture. In his recommendations on future study Sithole (2014) posits that like the genesis of *nhimbe*, his study was limited in addressing the extent to which communities that practise *nhimbe* could economically and socially benefit from it in the future. For that reason, he recommended that a study be conducted to establish the future potential economic and social benefits of *nhimbe* given the market economy and increasingly modernised Zimbabwe society. This study becomes part of the quest on how *nhimbe* can be used to promote sustainable development. The nucleus of this study however is on the development and culture binomial in marginalised communities. *Hoka* comes in as a model of resistance cultural practices that can help alleviate or perpetuate poverty in marginalised communities. That is since *hoka* is the most elaborate (public sphere) cultural activity in the Shangwe agrarian community.

Ngara and Mangizvo (2013) researched the Shangwe, the same as Nyambara (2001) however both researchers discuss how certain cultural activities are and were used in preserving natural resources and the land question in Gokwe respectively. Though these researches shed light on the Shangwe people they differ from this research in that *hoka* is the focal point of the discussion in a bid to try and understand the complexity of the development process in a marginalised community. It is also vital to note that this study is in the field of cultural studies hence it contributes knowledge to the understanding of the interface between cultural philosophies generated during *hoka* gatherings and sustainable development in Gokwe. After an exposition on the above arguments, this study concludes by unravelling the impact of cultural domination and marginalisation on Shangwe culture and development with specific reference to *hoka* gatherings where effective communication is an important aspect.

Development cannot be discussed without elucidating sustainable development, however, environmental development is just as complex as other forms of development. Sustainable development emerged in the 1970s as people tried to balance economic, social, and environmental development. In 1987, the Brundtland Commission argued that sustainable development must meet current needs without affecting future generations' ability to do the same. The above propositions on environmental development entail that development be measured based on its ecological quality. While the present Shangwe generation works for their satisfaction, the songs during *hoka* focus on the fact that the environment must be left clean for future generations. Thus, organic fertilizers and pesticides like urine are encouraged to obliterate armyworms. This approach however considers the fact that environmental development problems do not affect one generation alone,

but also the generations to come. Thus all people have a common interest in sustainable development (World Bank: Our Common Future, 2010).

Sustainable development has three components: the environment, society and the economy. These three areas are intertwined. No matter how well-developed society is in the other aspects, sustainable development cannot be achieved if one of these areas falls behind. Johnston (2004) asserts that “development must be socially desirable, economically viable, culturally appropriate and ecologically appropriate to be considered sustaining”. Since sustainable development includes the environment, economic and social welfare for the present and the future (Brandthand, 1987) whatever is done during *hoka* is not done for the present generation only but for the next generations also. The environment in any given society is part of tangible heritage. It is inherited from past generations. Future generations must be able to inherit an environmental culture that has not been damaged by the present generation so to speak

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Afrocentricity

Afrocentricity argues Africans to look into their history for solutions to current situations as these situations are a creation of the past (Asante, 1998). This tenet makes Afrocentricity relevant in this study as it helps shift the focal point of the cause of underdevelopment from the contemporary Shangwe people to their history.

Cultural relativism

Cultural relativism is adopted in this study since it recognises that different cultural groups think, feel, and act differently. There are no scientific standards for considering one group as intrinsically superior or inferior to another (Mannheim 2001). Proponents of cultural relativism argue that this thought is directed by what a particular social group expects. Herskovits (2000:23) has it that ‘the values by which [a people] live are relative to the particular kind of cultural learning they have experienced’. The argument by Herskovits rendered cultural relativism relevant to this study given that this study focuses on the impact culture has on how people function in development circles. Since cultural relativism is a broad theory a few selected tenets are used in this study. Many scholars among them Freire (1986), Paul (1955), Herskovits (2000) and Frank (1954) attempt at elucidating cultural relativism; though these scholars contribute immensely to the explanation of cultural relativism as a methodological approach to the social sciences this work focuses on Herskovits (2000). In the study, the arguments by Herskovits (2000) are used as the major tenets. The study, therefore, uses cultural relativism and cultural particularism alongside Afrocentricity due to the fact that cultural relativism, deals with more than just morals, ethics and values; it is also concerned with judgments of time and space and volume, differences in perception and cognition, as well as of conduct (Herskovits 2000). This complements Afro-centric views on cultural studies.

Communication Theory

The communication theory was used to highlight how when people are dancing, singing and talking; they are communicating and creating the meaning of who they are socially and culturally. Rosengren (2000) advances the fact that communication is all about meaning construction be it socially or culturally; all that matters is that the message sent has been received and understood with ambiguity cleared instantly. Littlejohn (1983) says that the communication theory is a grouping of philosophies which explain how the communication process works. The communication theory is used in this study to give an understanding of the importance of how the communication process during *hoka* is entrenched in culture

with singing showing mutual understanding of their common beliefs. Singing and dancing during *hoka* are not merely for entertainment purposes but to communicate cultural meaning through gestures.

Post development and Human Development Theories

Post-development and human development theories are made use of due to their anti-ethnocentric view on development. Sachs (1992) one of the chief crafters of post-development theory, argues that development is just a mental structure. Notions of poverty are very culturally embedded and can differ a lot among cultures. Post-development advocates for the promotion of local grassroots movements, it focuses on local cultures and knowledge. Thus Shangwe development is looked at from an African/Shangwe perspective. Grassroots participation was recommended where necessary. Shangwe culture was not evaluated from a western point of view. Human development theory also focuses on capabilities. What people can do, and be, and their capabilities determine their well-being. To Sen. (1999) development is tantamount to freedom; again this theory enabled the researchers to expound on Shangwe economic activities judging from their capabilities and the level of empowerment and freedom.

Data Collection Techniques

The main instrument that is to be used in this study is face-to-face interviews. Marsh (2013) asserts that ‘an interview is a transitory relationship between an interviewer and an interviewee’, as a result, the researchers travelled to different places to establish such type of relationship with the participants. This was done to get empirical data about *hoka* in the Shangwe culture and its impact on Gokwe’s sustainable community development. Brain and Clarke (2006:90) also observe that an interview is, ‘a method of data collection, information or opinion gathering that specifically involves asking a series of questions.’ Participants were asked questions that were designed by this researcher to gather relevant data. The sample questions were then attached in the appendices section of this study. The researchers observed the behaviour of the interviewees and carry out interviews to come up with a credible body of knowledge on *hoka* as a marginalised communities’ cultural activity. Direct conversations with interviewees are employed in this study and these are done with the help of recorders. The rationale behind the use of conversations is to generate authentic knowledge of the Shangwe contemporary *hoka* and the philosophy behind their establishment. There are many interview techniques, and these include structured, semi-structured, standardized, face-to-face and unstructured (Greer 2008). For this study, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews to gather empirical data from different perspectives. Face-to-face interviews were mainly used with people from the elderly group category. This is because most of them cannot read and write. Semi-structured interviews were used under this category since they allow participants to air their views freely in a guided direction. Thus a semi-structured interview, ‘represents characteristics of both a structured questionnaire and characteristics of an in-depth interview’ (Rossouw, 2003:148). Du Plooy (2009) further notes that the in-depth part of the interview allows the interviewer to understand how an interviewee constructs meanings while the structured part allows the interviewer to ask close-ended questions. The unstructured part of the interview allows the interviewer to create an atmosphere of trust and encouraged the Shangwe people to talk about particular sensitive subjects broadly. This method enables the researchers to gather relevant data. People are guided on what to answer while at the same time, they are free to raise other issues where necessary. Brain and Clarke (2006) has it that an interview involves asking a series of questions in a bid to gather people’s opinion; thus, the structured interview technique helps the researchers to ask all the questions that help unravel the impact of contemporary Shangwe *hoka* on community development.

Questionnaires were employed since they are economical and ensure anonymity (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). Due to the fact that some information is regarded as sacred in the Shangwe community, questionnaires enabled participants to air their views anonymously. Joubish, B et al (2010:3) define the questionnaire as ‘a set of carefully designed questions given in the same form to a group of people to collect data about some topic(s) in which the researchers are interested.’ The researchers as a result designed relevant questions and administered them. Open-ended questionnaires were used mainly on respondents from the under forty category, the academic category and the local government management category. This is mainly because these groups have educated participants who can read and write hence questions were designed and sent to different participants for comments; these reach many people at once saving time and money. Participatory observations were made to obtain certain information that may not be given easily by respondents during interviews and/ or questionnaires. Marsh (2013:16) has it that, ‘participatory observation aims at gaining a close and personal familiarity with a given collection of individuals and their practices through an intense participation with them in their cultural environment’. The researchers participated as part of the crowd during *hoka* gatherings. During these gatherings, the researchers made use of video and audio recorders to gather authentic information. Document analysis was also employed. The researchers analyzed literature with relevant information as well as books on Shangwe culture.

Cultural Marginalization: The Zimbabwe Context

The background to this study has shown the origins and the perpetuation of cultural marginalisation in Zimbabwe. This section is a follow-up to the background, however, it brings to the fore different works by different scholars on marginalisation and how that has given momentum to the current study.

Kaarsholm (2009) argues that in any given society certain cultures are regarded as more ‘developed’ than others. He referred to these cultures that are at the bottom of the cultural strata as marginalised cultures. In the Zimbabwean context, Ndhlovu (2009) identifies Shona and Ndebele as dominant languages. This might also mean that their cultures are dominant. The above scholars discussed the marginalisation of cultures and the various actions that are being taken to address the misnomer. Various initiatives are being carried out to address cultural marginalisation as indicated in the background of this study. This study is then given impetus by the findings by Kaarsholm (2009) that certain cultures are marginalised. Regardless of their marginal status, Nurse (2000) discusses them as being pivotal in sustainable community development. This study, as a result, discusses cultural development activities in the marginalised Shangwe community. The study differs from previous studies in that; the outcome provides an understanding of sustainable development activities in Zimbabwean marginalised communities. Whilst the previous studies advocated for action against culture marginalisation, this study provides information on the impact of the Shangwe marginalised culture’s *hoka* activity on sustainable development since marginal cultures are retaliation cultures as postulated by Agamben (2004).

Agamben (2004) alludes to the notion that the ultimate goal of all totalitarian states is total domination. He argues that modern man’s politics questions even the existence of man as a living being. Agamben’s (2004) argument is that; men in search of power end up not valuing even the life of fellow men. The quest is to dominate. This results in other social classes being dominated by others. The domination is also on cultures. The dominated will be pushed to the periphery and hence become the marginalised cultures. Agamben’s (2004) argument is very vital in this study. The source of cultural marginalisation is therefore identified as the modern political culture of total domination. Human domination results in dominant cultures questioning the ‘human’ aspects of dominated cultures. Man would disqualify other cultures to

perpetuate a culture of dominance. There arises a binary relationship between the 'other' and another (Muhwati 2010). This study however takes a step further and focuses on the impact of such an attitude on the dominated culture (Shangwe). The 'natural' initiatives (retaliations) that arise out of domination and are designed to fight against cultural marginalisation are looked at as well as their impact on community life improvement. This study consequently explores the response by the Shangwe through *hoka* that is aimed at fighting against cultural domination and or marginalisation and the resultant developmental impact.

Cloke (2005) postulates that the construct of rurality not only appears to render the identities of those individual groups (in the rural areas) as 'other' but also acts to marginalise the people concerned. Although Cloke was referring to the American setup, the work has enabled the researchers to detect the aspect in the Gokwe region. The notion of otherness in rural Zimbabwe is rife. Certain groups are considered to be more civilised than others. Nyambara (2001) highlighted the fact that *Madheruka* referred to *Mashangwe* as uncivilised and the 'other'. The 'otherness' of the Shangwe people resulted in them being side-lined concerning Zimbabwean national politics and development. Shangwe community was and is still being pushed to the periphery due to such philosophies. The disparaging of the Shangwe as the other has resulted in many predicaments which range from political, and social to economic. This work as a result interrogates the cultural activity (contemporary *hoka*) that emerged out of cultural otherness.

Hoka/Nhimbe: A cultural practice in Zimbabwe

Nhimbe in Zimbabwe is not an uncommon phenomenon; however, it has received little attention in the past in academic circles. *Hoka/Nhimbe: A cultural practice in Zimbabwe* as a sub-section in this study focuses on the few available sources on *nhimbe*. This section is an exegesis of how the literature has influenced this study.

Mapara (2009) notes that Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) is a movement not only against the vestiges of colonialism but also against neo-colonialism. His paper is an exegesis on IKS; however, his assertion that contemporary forms of IKS are retaliations against domination gave impetus to this study. This study takes the view that in most cases cultural aspects of marginalised communities are a quest for freedom. *Hoka Gathering and Resistance Strategies among the Shangwe Community of Gokwe* is an elucidation of the *hoka* cultural practice of the Shangwe people which has become part of the contemporary public sphere aimed at fostering freedom, exposing its impact on sustainable community development aspects.

Sithole (2014) has it that *nhimbe* is a community internal mechanism people use to assist each other on crisis livelihoods and long-term planning development initiatives. He argues that *nhimbe* is an effective practice which is hinged on social capital found among members of the community particularly inter-household bonds, reciprocity, trust, solidarity and peace. During *nhimbe*, communication through singing is rife. Sithole (2014) discovered that, for the most part, the practice contributes to the social and economic life of the people practising it. In his work, Sithole acknowledged that his study was limited in addressing the extent to which communities that practise *nhimbe* could economically and socially benefit from it in the future. This study was therefore given momentum by the non-existence of literature on the contemporary sustainable developmental importance of *hoka* in Zimbabwe in general and in the Shangwe community in particular.

Hoka in the Shangwe Community

The study focused on a sample of fifty individuals from the Gokwe Shangwe community. Of the fifty participants, forty-five which is ninety per cent of the sample view *hoka* as a community function which has mutated and has taken new roles which it has been designated by the community. Songs and poetry are used as a mode of communication by the community. The songs and poetry done during the gatherings have shifted their focus from the traditional known functions like correcting social ills in the Shangwe community to addressing sustainable community development issues. Salgado (2003) alludes to how singing is communication which finds its grounding in social interaction and conveys the emotions of the singers be it at the individual or community level. The Shangwe community of Gokwe thus view *hoka* as a sphere that may render them a launch pad from which to foster sustainable community development.

During *hoka*, Shangwe people sing against economic, social and environmental development idleness of the people. Ujfalussy (1993) posits that singing is communication which acts as an intermediary of human social relationships and its intention is dependent on the meaning that wants to be conveyed. The songs during *hoka* communicate about their everyday life. New songs have been composed and sung during *hoka*. As they sing they make sure their songs talk about their day-to-day lives and their expectations. One such song is *Kusarima*. This is a song that was sung traditionally in most Zimbabwean communities. However, in the Shangwe community, there has been an additional section where freestyle was added. The leading vocalist may add words that tell a story about the cause of poor farming practices in this community. Those who practice poor farming methods like stream bank cultivation are reprimanded in these songs. Good farming practices that in most cases do not involve modern chemicals are encouraged. The use of human urine to destroy armyworms in their fields is a good example. The above discussion shows how the Shangwe are committed to leaving a clean environment for future generations as they meet contemporary demands on sustainable development. Communication through singing thus becomes central to addressing social issues. Farming as the basic economic activity that brings in the much-needed money for economic development is valued in this community. Money generated from farming activities is channelled towards family and community infrastructural development.

Issues on intracultural marriages to evade extinction and poor crop production are also sung and discussed. The traditional *munemo* (jeering) embedded in *hoka* which enables any community member to comment on social ills and individual behaviour without the possibility of those individuals taking it personally is key in intra-marriage discussions. Communication through *munemo* is meant to ensure that the intended recipients get the message without being addressed directly. In this kind of communication, there is no need for the receiver to send a message back to indicate that the message has been heard and understood. The communication is linear in nature meaning it starts with the sender and ends with the receiver. Community members who marry Madheruka are in most cases scoffed at. This makes the young in the community try their level best to marry from within their cultural circle. The hard work and indigenous knowledge that is believed to be the strength of Shangwe women are cherished during jeerings. Women are valued for their ability to harness the environment for sustainable development which leads to the preservation of resources for future generations. One respondent pointed to the idea that Shangwe women are good at using traditional herbs as a cure for different ailments. This is done using roots and or leaves but the trees are left to grow and be used for other uses such as firewood. He also highlighted the fact that when looking for firewood Shangwe women do not use axes. They use hooking sticks (*gokovonho*) and these allow them only to gather dry wooden sticks. Thus sustainable development is fostered.

The three-tier strata of the gatherings end with the elders sitting together and discussing contemporary issues and it is during these meetings that strategies and the mapping of subtle ways of tackling challenges are discussed. The ability to communicate effectively is crucial in these meetings. Such a skill helps avoid a scenario where one offends the elders which if it happens, can set the meeting agenda back. This is why Reems (2022) points out that in communication be it intentional or not, it is good to be aware of the environment and audience first to ensure that the intended message is decoded correctly. In answering questions on the functions of *hoka* both male and female participants show ownership of the mutation and current state of *hoka* gatherings. The community leaders are thus given the mandate to speak and take community grievances to the next level at these gatherings. Thus at this stage communication is intentional and well thought of. As indicated above the third segment of *hoka* only involves the Shangwe elders discussing their well-being excluding the Shona and Ndebele. This gives them a chance to regroup and strategise for future sustainable community economic endeavours.

Hoka gatherings make it possible for people to help each other work thereby making it possible to produce more. There are different occasions where one may seek assistance by inviting fellow community dwellers for a *hoka*. A positive call for this kind of assistance is based on the ability of the person asking for help to effectively use his or her communication skills to persuade fellow community members to attend a *hoka*. In the contemporary Shangwe community, one may call for assistance in the fields, in processing grain and even for small dam construction. The increased number of participants during a work party makes work easier and takes little time to complete. Small dam construction is rife in this community as each individual tries to harvest water for domestic use as well as farming purposes. *Hoka* thus enables the community to develop infrastructure-wise. Although this is done in a way that shows the resistance of *Madheruka*-induced development, the intrinsic method has yielded dividends.

CONCLUSION

The research has brought out the centrality of *hoka* as a potential cultural model/ public sphere for evolving mechanisms of sustainable community development strategies. It has unravelled the key role *hoka* is playing as a binding activity aimed at the intrinsic generation of community development schemes in Gokwe. The study also unravelled how communication is central to an effective *hoka*. It was discovered that communication around *hoka* is usually intentional and targeted towards the intended receiver. The study concludes by positing that, *hoka* in the Shangwe community of Gokwe has mutated and fused with the contemporary needs of the society by creating a platform where sustainable development issues such as the use and preservation of natural resources are communicated. Over and above the traditional functions it has metamorphosed and to it, the community has added some more contemporary functions which promote social, economic and sustainable development.

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