

## Anthroponyms of Albinos among the Shona People of Zimbabwe

**Maxwell Kadenge**

Linguistics Department, University of the Witwatersrand  
Email: maxwell.kadenge@wits.ac.za

**Patricia Ruramisai Mabugu**

Linguistics Department, University of Zimbabwe  
Email: trishiamabugu@gmail.com

**Esther Chivero**

Linguistics Department, University of Zimbabwe  
Email: estherchivero@yahoo.com

**Rejoice Chiwara**

Linguistics Department, University of Zimbabwe  
Email: rejoicechiwara@gmail.com

Doi:10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n27p1230

### Abstract

*Naming of newly born children constitutes an important rite of passage in most societies across the world. In African societies personal names are laden with meaning and may well identify the sociocultural, political, professional and religious background of the namers and the named. This article investigates personal names given to Shona-speaking children born with albinism. We specifically focus on the socio-cultural meanings of these names and the social factors motivating the choice of such names. Our data constitutes a hundred personal names collected from the Albino Charity Organization of Zimbabwe (hereafter ALCOZ). Follow up focus group interviews were held with the parents of these children. We put these names into four categories, namely, theophoric names, names of disillusionment or setback, proverbial names and insinuating names. Our findings reveal that Shona anthroponyms of albinos, like ordinary personal names, are not just arbitrary labels but are socio-cultural tags that function as communicative tools. We argue that derisive personal names of albinos are best understood in the sociocultural and religious context of the society in which they are born. The Shona practice of naming children living with albinism largely constructs, maintains and legitimizes societal imbalances in which albinos are viewed as 'the other' and are looked down upon. This research is therefore intended as an empirical contribution to the growing field of anthroponomastics.*

**Keywords:** albino; albinism, Shona; names; socio-cultural meaning

### 1. Introduction

There is a substantial body of literature on personal naming practices, in particular on the social and cultural significance of African names (see, for example, Kimenyi 1978; Akinnaso 1980; Maturana 1988; Koopman 1992; Mignola 2001; Tatira 2004; Ageykum 2006; Adéniyi 2008; Makondo 2009, 2011, 2013; Pfukwa 2003, 2007, among many others). Most of the previous studies have focused on the naming of places (toponyms), people (anthroponyms), domestic animals, ethnic and religious groups (ethnonyms) and beer halls (Makondo 2011), among many other subjects. Very little is known about the naming of albinos in African societies. In indigenous African societies, names are laden with meaning. Chitando (2001), for example, notes,

*in the traditional Shona culture of Zimbabwe, parents gave names that reflected their socio-cultural content. First names provided an opportunity to thank the spiritual world, make requests, complain, look to the future, address opponents, and numerous other functions. The vicissitudes of polygamous life, hostile neighbors and parental rebuke could all be encapsulated in a terse name'.*



drawn from English but may not be used as names from a native English speaker perspective. As Lund (2001:6) notes, albinos especially those of school going age, 'are treated as if they are out of the ordinary...the distinctive appearance has a powerful impact on the lives of those with albinism from birth until death', hence the thinking that albinism is a curse for life. Ibitola Adesuyi (2013) furthermore notes that, as a result of this physical difference, albinos are often isolated, discriminated against, and rejected by the society. They are often treated as outcasts or misfits. Name calling, ridiculing, bullying, antagonism and avoidance is not uncommon among schoolchildren (Lund 1997). McNeil (1997) notes that as 'white-skinned people in a black society, they are shunned and feared as the products of witchcraft, taunted by children and drunks as 'peeled potatoes,' 'monkeys' and 'ghosts'.'. This partly explains why albinos are viewed as unnatural or even cursed in some societies. Consequently, naming an albino child carries extra semantic load so as to highlight the albinism condition. The linguistic configurations of morphology, semantics and metaphor encoded within the name suggest certain socio-cultural beliefs and attitudes. It is the purpose of this article to examine the sociocultural meanings of these personal names and explore the possible implications of naming albino children. In addition, we uncover the reasons behind the naming differences between a 'normal' child and an albino child. We propose that the personal naming system of children with albinism is an example of the way traditional Shona society uses language to legitimize phobia against such people. A critical analysis of the beliefs and attitudes of a society through language, naming in particular, within the Shona albino community is the first step towards showing how language can be used to entrench imbalances in society. We demonstrate that personal names are connotative - revealing the beliefs and values of a society. We assume that the naming of an albino child is not a trivial pursuit but is an activity that is determined by the myths that surround albinism within the Shona community.

## 2. A Brief Literature Survey on Naming

Naming studies focus on different subjects. The majority of studies on names within the Zimbabwean context focus on the war of liberation (see, for example, Pongweni 1983; Pfukwa 1998, 2003, 2007; Makoni *et al.* 2007; Makoni *et al.* 2010). This is significant in the sense that it highlights the nature and distribution of the naming systems during an abnormal situation. The meaning and function of the names given to children or used by adults during this era are significant since they highlight the situation, the ideologies, the aspirations and above all the goals that needed to be achieved during the liberation struggle. Examples of names that were used by liberation war heroes in Zimbabwe include *Mabhunumuchapera* (Boers shall be wiped), *Chazezesachauya* (the feared has arrived) and *Straightshooter*, among many others. The use of these names was important for safety and ideological reasons (Pfukwa 1998, 2003, 2007). Although the naming of freedom fighters and children born during the liberation struggle generally conforms to the principles that guide naming practices during peace times, it is worth noting that these names reflect the tribulations, ideologies and difficulties associated with war (Pfukwa 2003, 2007). All these issues were neatly encapsulated in the names given to the freedom fighters. In a similar vein, it is the aim of this article to show that when albinism occurs in a family, the naming process, though following the typical naming principles, are highlighted so as to encapsulate this medical condition. Names given to African children generally encode meaning but it is our argument that when we have an albinism situation the meaning of the name is heightened in order to capture this condition.

Pongweni's (1983) study on Shona names presents a descriptive analysis of naming practices in Zimbabwe. The study was an analysis of war names, their origins, morphosyntactic structure, function and meanings. According to Mashiri (1999:104),

Pongweni however, limits himself to the former guerrillas' metaphorical personal names. The derived names, pet names and nicknames that were used between the guerrillas and the peasants to refer to each other and those that were used by the guerrillas and the regime to refer to each other were left out completely.

Pfukwa's (1998, 2003, 2007) provides a detailed survey of naming practices of liberation war veterans during the 1966-1980 armed conflict in Zimbabwe. He explains that the names projected the ideologies and aspirations that the war liberators had. Pfukwa further notes that although some of the names remained with a similar meaning in some cases there was some semantic extension. Pfukwa (2003) puts names of war liberators into eight categories based on source and function and concludes that the naming processes and patterns reveal the value of *noms de guerre* as an indicator of multicultural relations<sup>5</sup>. Drawing methodological and analytical insights from Pfukwa's work, we analyze personal names

---

<sup>5</sup> Although some of these names were for the particular era it is noteworthy that some freedom fighters adopted these names and continue to use them way after the war of liberation. A typical example is a Zimbabwean couple of Mr Rex Nhongo and Mrs Teurairopa Nhongo who officially adopted their war names and continued to use them after the liberation struggle. The name Teurairopa 'spill blood' denotes the bloodshed which is inevitable in war. It assumed the aggressiveness and a readiness to sacrifice life' (Pfukwa 2007:241).

in the context of albinism in Zimbabwe. We note that names given to albino children reveal the trials and tribulations of the parents at the time the child is born. Our findings show that these names are semantically extended to reveal the myths, attitudes and cultural values associated with albinism.

Makoni *et al.* (2010) examine the relationship between language from language planning, language ideology and entextualization perspectives. The study focuses on names of the freedom fighters during the liberation struggle and demonstrates that the names highlight the ideologies and practices of naming within African cultures. They are similar to the systems of naming practices during peacetime. In other words, the liberation fighters continued with the practice of naming borrowed from the African system which traditionally meant that names were given considering the social, political, economic and cultural system prevailing at that particular time. The names given to the liberation fighters were designed to reflect a new life experience that the liberation fighters were undergoing and this is reflected by the names that they chose to use during this time. These names were used as a form of documentation to be utilized in telling the history of Zimbabwe. We are of the view that names given to albino children are designed to reflect the views and feelings of the parents at the time of birth. They reveal the attitudes and beliefs of society towards albinism in general. Some of the subjects that are addressed in Shona naming practices reflect socio-economic, socio-political, cultural and religious experiences (Nyota & Mapara 2010). Nyota and Mapara, for example, present a sociolinguistic analysis of Shona anthroponyms and conclude that they are summaries of the namers' and the named's experiences. The study highlights that African names are not just names for naming's sake but are loaded with meaning. Similarly, Makondo (2009) examines factors that influence the African naming practices and shows that African names often retain their meaning-bearing function and are not arbitrary, their meaning generally being transparent and accessible and often recording complex details about their bearers. The connotative nature of names is further highlighted by Pfukwa (2008) who presents an onomastic analysis of Shona description of diurnal time and shows that naming in the Shona community is connotative, and day times were named according to the activity that will be happening in the society or community at that time. These studies directly feed into this study and we show that names given to albinos are connotative; they reveal the parents' experiences, hopes, aspirations and feelings of the namers.

Mashiri *et al.* (2002) pay particular attention to the semantic and ethical foundations of HIV and AIDS vocabulary in Shona. They focus on the names that are given to the disease and the victims of HIV and AIDS. Mashiri (*ibid*) highlight that HIV and AIDS is one of the sensitive and tabooed subjects in Shona society thus names are created to name the disease as a way of avoiding verbalizing it directly; that is saving face against the pandemic. Mashiri (*ibid*) also indicate that names in the Shona society are used as communicative tools, that is, they communicate the culture, beliefs and values of the society. As highlighted earlier, several beliefs surround albinism in the Shona society. Albinism is believed, among other things, to be a curse from God, God's will or choice, a result of witchcraft or a sign that the ancestors are unhappy. We demonstrate in this article that these beliefs are reflected and embedded in albino names. Albino names become communicative tools that reveal the beliefs and values of the Shona society in relation to albinism.

In addition to being communicative tools revealing beliefs and values of a society, Makoni *et al.* (2007) note that naming is a significant activity within African societies as it an identity marker. As such, it is important to analyze how names are discursively constructed as texts. The meaning of a name provides an insight into the name giver's attitude towards a particular event. Names present details on the feelings of the name giver(s) at that particular period of naming and the circumstances surrounding the child's birth (de Klerk & Bosch 1995). Attitudes reflected in the names of individuals are important since they highlight the feelings and impressions of societies on particular issues and matters. Furthermore, McConnell-Ginet (2003:70) notes that in some cultural traditions, given names are generally contentful, and those naming a child try to pick something auspicious. The in the event of having an albino child in a family or community the parents, extended family or the community at large may want to highlight their feelings and impressions on this through the child's name.

As shown in this review, naming studies have generally shown that naming is sensitive to the experiences of a community. Naming practices invariably reflect an important rite of passage as a cultural practice, which is always in sync with each society's ordinary citizens' socio-cultural and historical conditions. Naming by the Shona community is determined by its culture, surroundings, myths and belief systems. Against this backdrop, we analyse albino names in the Shona society. To the best of our knowledge, there are no existing studies on this aspect of Shona anthroponomastics.

### 3. Data

Data for this study was obtained from an albino support group in Chitungwiza known as ALCOZ. ALCOZ has about three hundred albino members and very few non-albino members. Although the founder of the organisation (Mrs Mainato) is not an albino herself, she is a mother of two albinos. We collected seventy personal names from the membership list of

ALCOZ. We had a constructive discussion on issues affecting people living with albinism in Zimbabwe with Mrs Mainato. Kvale (1996) points out that discussions are an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest and highlights the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production. Our interaction with Mrs Mainato eased our task as she gave us important information pertaining to albinism. She also linked us with parents of children living with albinism some of which are official members of this support group.

Most of the interviews were carried out with willing participants because this is a sensitive issue. Those who were willing to be interviewed took this as an opportunity to talk about their grievances and the problems that they face as albinos or as parents of albinos. To them, this was a possible avenue of making their issues known and to seek intervention of some sort from society. They emphasized that the information that they provided should be put to good use and we assured them that it would be used specifically for academic purposes and would be published for scholarly purposes.

Most of the information that we have was elicited from the mothers of the albino children. Mothers were more forthcoming than the fathers and in some households the fathers were absent. Either they had divorced or had just left. Most of the albinos that we interviewed were raised by their grandmothers after their mothers were divorced and remarried. Information elicited ranged from names of the participants, who gave the name, the meaning of the name and why that name was chosen. A digital-tape recorder was used to record the interviews.

We also used the pocket book method to record some of the names that we heard on the streets. Based on our interviews, we could infer what these names might possibly mean based on the patterns that we had discovered in the informal interviews. We adopted this approach after realizing that there was consistency in the issues raised especially by parents on how they came to name their albino children. Comments passed on the street upon the sight of an albino, in banks, in fast food shops, restaurants, departmental stores; markets were all recorded in the pocket books.

The major challenge faced was in trying to talk to mature albino individuals on the street. It was a challenge to get their names since they regarded us as strangers and one would of course understand how difficult it is to just give your name to a stranger and discuss the origins of that name. This was also aggravated by the fact that these individuals are very sensitive because of their genetic condition. So generally approaching an albino individual was intimidating since it was not clear as to how they would take it and some were just reluctant or hesitant to talk about their names. Our purpose of approaching these individuals was to confirm or refute our findings from Chitungwiza. Although it was indeed a real challenge to discuss this matter on the streets, it is important to acknowledge the fact that some of the albinos on the street were quite helpful and really wanted their issues discussed.

In our analysis we put the names into four different categories based on their meaning. While some of the names are used by non-albinos, we note that circumstances surrounding the birth of these children, myths and beliefs about albinos seem to give an extended meaning to their names. The strength of the descriptive framework adopted in this study lies in the fact that it helps in providing refutable and non-refutable generalisations that can trigger further research in this rather neglected area of research. As mentioned earlier, our analysis is based on a sample of hundred names.

#### 4. A Typology of Albino Names among the Shona Speaking People

This section presents a sociolinguistic and ethnopragmatic analysis Shona albino personal names. The names expose the Shona people's myths on and attitudes towards albinism. We demonstrate that names are not just tags but descriptive communication tools of a society's values, sensibilities and beliefs. We establish four distinct categories of these names, namely, theophoric names, names indicating disillusionment or setbacks, proverbial names, and insinuating names.

##### 4.1 Theophoric names

Theophoric names are names derived from religious beliefs; they somehow connote the spiritual being of the self (Agyekum 2006; Chitando 2001). Chitando (2001) is of the view that a lot of creativity has gone into the emergency of Shona Christian names in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The preponderance of names such as *Tadiwa* 'we have been loved', *Tatenda* 'we are grateful', *Tinevimbo* 'we have hope', *Rutendo* 'faith', *Nyasha* 'Grace' and others shows a willingness to have Christianity drink from African wells. These names are professions of faith and demonstrate theological sensitivity (Chitando 2001). Theophoric names collected for this study are given in Table 1 below:

**Table 1:** Theophoric names

Name	Gloss
Chipo	Gift
Anenyasha	God has grace
Simbarashe	Power of God
Kudzaisho	Praise the Lord
Tawananyasha	We have gotten Grace
Tapihwanashe	We have been given by God
Tapiwa	We have been given by God
Kudakwashe	It is the Lord's will
Kunashe	There is God
Chidochashe	God's will
Nashe	With God
Munotidashe	God Loves us
Wiseman	
Mercy	
Godknows	
Believe	

All the names in Table 1 depict deep spiritual values and make an allusion to God as the giver of life and the Omnipotent; one who is beyond human understanding. While there are non-albino children with the name *Chipo*, the name has an extended meaning when it is given to an albino child. The overtones that are imbued in this name are that even though the child is 'abnormal', he or she is still a gift from God.

Compound names like *Simbarashe* 'power of God', *Tapihwanashe* 'we have been given by God', *Kunashe* 'to God' and *Kudzaisho* 'praise God' have the enclitic *ishe* or *she* which stands for God. This is an acknowledgement of the power of God in child birth. These names are a form of praise to God for providing a child, who is always considered a special gift from God. In addition, these names show that the parents or society feel strongly that it is only God who can explain the occurrence of an abnormal child in the family. This is revealed in names such as *Kudakwashe*, *Chidochashe*, *Godknows*, *Tapiwa* and *Tapihwanashe*. The idea behind giving these names is to profess the belief that when one bears an albino child, it is God's will and no-one has the power to refuse to have such a child.

Of interest to note is the name *Wiseman*. In the Shona culture, some people believe that albino children, because of their 'abnormality', have supernatural characteristics and are believed to be wiser than non-albino children. This belief is embedded in the name *Wiseman* which functions as a source of comfort to the parents. The parents or the community has hope that the child will accomplish great things in life because of the extra intelligence endowed upon him.

#### 4.2 Disillusionment or setbacks

Albinos have suffered severe discrimination for a long time in most African communities. Some parents of children born with albinism expressed feelings of disillusionment; let down by God or by their *Vadzimu* 'ancestors'. Some people think that albinism is a mystery and is a shameful occurrence within a family unit. There is a strong sense of disillusionment or setback in such a family. As a way of dealing with such a situation the parents give names that express the disappointment or disillusionment. Names of this nature highlight the conception of albinism as an abnormality and the disappointment that comes with giving birth to an albino. Examples of such names are presented in Table 2:

**Table 2:** Names of disillusionment/setback

Name	Gloss
Ndomupeyi	What will I give the child'
Tryagain	Re do
Trymore	Try again
Zvidzai	Look down upon
Kumbirayi	Ask for another
Murudo	In love', only love is binding us
Advance	Press forward

Some of the names in Table 2 are indicative of a feeling of failure or disappointment while others express a spirit of pressing forward or not giving up. English names such as *Trymore* and *Tryagain*<sup>6</sup> express the spirit of pressing forward. Loosely translated into Shona the names *Tryagain* and *Trymore* mean *yedzai zvakare*. Perhaps the Shona equivalents of these words are too connotative and derogatory. One gets a feeling that when these children were born the parents felt let down. They resorted to giving their children English names rather than Shona ones to implicitly express their regret. These names are also given to non-albino children, but when used by albinos they carry an extended meaning. The name *Tryagain* implies that one has to surpass the disappointment that comes with giving birth to an albino and 'try again' with the hope of having a child who is not an albino. The use of a compound made up of the terms *try* and *again* the parents accept their situation and give themselves a second chance to *try again* for better results. Because these names are derogatory some individuals drop them later in life and give themselves new names (Chiwara 2013).

The name *Advance* is an indication that the couple will not give up and are determined to have more children – until they have a normal child. This name has war connotations as it urges advancing towards enemies and there might be need for advancing when confronted with a 'war-like' situation such as albinism.

The name *Kumbirayi* 'ask' captures a situation where parents ask God to give them a normal child since the albino one that they have is not normal or is not ideal for them. Equally in naming the child *Murudo* 'in love' the parents are suggesting that despite the odds of having an albino child the couple is kept together by love. According to Mrs Minato, a couple decided to name their albino child *Murudo* because albinism is one of the major causes of strain in marriage and some end up divorcing as it is considered mysterious and a shameful thing to have such a child. Thus, *Murudo* expresses the fact the relationship between the parents is only sustained by love after given birth to an albino child. One single mother had this to say,

*I found the situation an embarrassment, I felt like I was the laughing stock of the community, I was alienated for various reasons based on beliefs-unozvidzwa, hence I named my child Zvidzai 'look down upon'.*

*Ndomupe* 'what shall I give the child' is a rhetorical question intimating towards the challenges of looking after a child living with albinism who normally requires special medical care and living conditions. Albinos have special needs which make it expensive to raise them. The parents in this case are gripped with the fear of the unknown and are indirectly appealing for goodwill and support from their society through the name of their child.

### 4.3 Proverbial names

Proverbial names are derived from proverbs. A proverb is a straightforward and real saying commonly well-known and repeated that expresses a truth based on common wisdom. Proverbial names depict the sorrow and bitterness that the parents endure after giving birth to an albino child. These names portray some of the aspects of life and the conflicts that ensue in human relations (Agyekum 2006). Table 3 gives examples of albino proverbial names.

**Table 3:** Proverbial names

Name	Gloss
Misihaifanane	Days are not the same
Mangere	Bundles of firewood

Shona people, like many other communities, use proverbs to emphasize an issue. Proverbial names express the realities of the situation at hand – either the disappointment or the joy the parents have. For example, the name *misi haifanane* is derived from the Shona proverb which says *misi haifanane* which means days are not the same, implying one is not always lucky. This name is usually given to an albino child who comes after a non-albino one. The proverbial name indirectly emphasizes the difference between the children. Proverbs have a softer option to make the message lighter. The child named *Misi* (a contraction of *misi haifanane*) was born in a family of three. The first two children are non-albinos. In this case, the name suggests that the parents have been having normal children, but because 'days are not

<sup>6</sup> If this is translated to Shona one feels that it is too direct and hence face threatening. Instead the parents of these children assume that the English version will be a softer option and will not intensify the derogatory feelings that they may have towards albinism. Such compounds are literal translations from Shona and the assumption is that the Shona version is too direct. This corroborates Mashiri's (2001) observation that in naming the HIV and AIDS pandemic society resorts to indirect speech and this disguised through the use of English.

the same' they have to accept the reality of having a child who is abnormal. Proverbial names encapsulated the feelings of the parents as indicated by what they said. *Mangere* (which in the Zezuru dialect of Shona is referred to as *Masvinga* bundles of firewood) is derived from the idea of bundles of firewood. Usually when one fetches firewood they mix different kinds of woods from different trees. Since a bundle of firewood can be made from various types of trees the name *Mangere* highlights the difference between a non-albino child and an albino child in the same family (a bundle).

#### 4.4 Insinuating names

Insinuating names show the hostility between the people close to the albino child. These names express the tense relations that can occur in a family after giving birth to an albino child. In naming the child the parents react to what the society has said towards their situation and how they feel about the situation at hand. These names are used by the parents of the albino child to attack the behaviour of family members who they believe might have caused the albinism or have explicitly or implicitly shown that they are not happy to have an albino child in the family. Within this category we find names that reflect human relations. As mentioned earlier, some Shona people believe that albinism is caused by witch craft. Insinuating names expose some of the conflicts that ensue in families and society after the birth of an albino child. Such names are presented in the Table 4 below.

**Table 4:** Insinuating names

Names	Gloss
Taurai	Speak what you want
Wadzanai	Have good relations
Svinurai	Open up your eyes
Sarudzai	Choose between
Gamuchirai	Just receive
Pardon	
Previous	
Nyarai	Be ashamed
Respect	
Chawapiwa	What you are been given
Hamunyari	Are you not ashamed
Sarudzai	Choose what you want

In African societies, particularly the Shona society, if there is conflict in a family, it not expressed openly to each other. Shona speakers detest verbal confrontation because it threatens social harmony. As a result, they use various politeness strategies such as indirectness to 'speak the unspeakable' and to save face. They favor verbal indirectness strategies because of 'high disclaimer of performance' they attract. The speaker can say the 'unspeakable' while maintaining the ability to emphatically deny that he or she has spoken directly to or about a specific person (Obeng 1993). In the context of our study, we found out that if there are conflicts between in-laws and the parents of an albino child, the latter may give their child a name that passes a message to the former; indirectly expressing their bitterness. A name like *Taurai* 'say what you want' is an expression of disappointment and asks people to say whatever they want about the situation. When this name is given to an albino child, the meaning of the name takes shape and is extended. *Taurai* meaning 'speak out' may be referring to the members of the family or the society to tell what has caused the albinism of their child<sup>7</sup>. This is true of names such as *Nyarai* 'be ashamed' and *Hamunyari* 'are you not ashamed'. The idea is to rebuke whoever is believed to have caused the misfortune of having an albino child. In all these cases the mothers interviewed were consistent in saying that they were addressing their in-laws because they knew that they were gossiping a lot about the albino children<sup>8</sup>. After the birth of an albino child, relations can be strained and suspicion may arise among family members and neighbours, hence the rebuke to 'be ashamed'.

A child can also be named *Wadzanai* meaning 'be united' to encourage good relations and unity in a family. This is true for names such as *Sarudzai*, *Gamuchirai* and *Svinurai*. These names encourage society and family members to accept the reality of having an albino child. The names can only be understood fully in the socio-cultural context in which

<sup>7</sup> Some Shona people believe that Albinism is a result of witchcraft maybe from the mother, the society or one of the members of the family.

<sup>8</sup> There is obviously need for further research on this since we would want to know whether this rift is real or imagined.



they are given to children; they are tools in which humans can communicate, attack each other or express love. They act as windows through which one can see the thoughts, feelings and beliefs of the parents and society at large on albinism.

One of our informants charged that these names are given to insult. They can be given to insult the person the parents think he or she has caused them to give birth to an albino child. The insult might be referring to the ancestors as a way of fighting the condition that has befallen their family. For instance a name like *Nyarai* 'be ashamed' is used by non-albino people but when it is used by albino people it has an extended meaning. It denotes a situation where parents rebuke or insult the ancestors for giving them an albino child. In the Shona society people do not usually insult or rebuke elders or respectable people openly and they use names to express disappointment or rebuke. All the names in this category seem to be talking directly all those who have negative feelings towards albinism.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

This article set out to present an analysis of the sociocultural meanings of selected names of children living with albinism among the Shona people of Zimbabwe. We have demonstrated that naming practices expose people's experiences and beliefs, myths and cultural values. It is clear from this article that Shona personal names are functional and connotative. We have argued that albinism naming practices are based on exactly the same naming principles and practices of the Shona culture. However, the name of a child with albinism takes some additional meaning because of the skin colour. Names are thus sociocultural tags with a communicative function and not just arbitrary identity markers. When an albino child is born the discourse that emerges from the naming of the child is a dialogue between the family and God and between the parents, the family and the community at large. Furthermore, albino naming practices give insight into the general sociology of the Shona people in terms of their attitudes towards the condition of albinism. Since little is known about this subject, we recommend further research to gain more insight into motivations of naming and what this might tell us about peoples' attitudes towards albinism in general. A study focusing on rural-urban differences might also help to bring out some of the salient issues associated with naming albino children. It would also be interesting to investigate name changes among albinos as a way of self-empowerment and re-self-identification. An investigation of marginalised communities promises to be a fruitful research area that can shed light on attitudes towards such communities and how they can be redressed.

## References

- Adeniyi, H. R. (2008). The sociolinguistics of Edo personal name constructions. *Iranian Journal of Language Studies* 2, (3): 325-344.
- Agyekum, K. (2006). The sociolinguistic of Akan personal names. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 15, (2): 206-235.
- Akinlase, F.N. (1980). The sociolinguistic basis of Yoruba proper names. *Anthropological Linguistics* 22: 275-304.
- Chitando, E. (2001). Signs and portents? Theophoric names in Zimbabwe. *Word & World* XXI, (2):144-151.
- Chiwaro, R. (2013). Capturing the meanings behind albino personal names: a case study of the Shona community. (Honours Dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, 2013), Harare: University of Zimbabwe.
- De Klerk, V. and Bosch, B. (1995). Naming in two cultures: English and Sotho practices. *Nomina Africana* 9, (1): 8-87.
- Fortune, G. 1980. *Shona grammatical constructions*. Harare: Mercury Press.
- Ibitola Adesuyi, I. (2013). Albinism in Zimbabwe. *Emory Journal of International Affairs in Africa*. Issue, September 20 Southern Africa: Too white to be black-albinism in Zimbabwe.<http://www.hst.org.za/news/southern-africa-too-white-be-black-challenge-albinism>
- Kimenyi, A. (1978) Aspects of naming in Kinyarwanda. *Anthropological Linguistics* 20(6): 258-271.
- Koopman, A. (1992). The socio-cultural aspects of Zulu xx- and dog-names. *Nomina Africana* 6, (1): 1-13.
- Kvale, D. (1996). *Interviews*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Lund, P.M. (2001). *Health and education of children with albinism in Zimbabwe*. *Health Education Research, Theory and Practice* 16, (1): 1-7.
- Lund, P.M. (1996). Distribution of oculocutaneous albinism in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Medical Genetics* 33, (8): 641-644.
- Lund, P.M. (1997). Distribution and education of pupils with albinism in Zimbabwe. *Transactions of the Zimbabwe Scientific Association* 71: 9-13
- McConnell-Ginet, S. (2003). *What's in a name: Social labeling*, In J. Holmes and M. Meyerhoff (eds.), *The Handbook of Language and Gender*, (Chapter 3, 69-97). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- McNeil, D.G. (1997). Black, yet white: A hated color in Zimbabwe. *New York Times* February 9, 1997. <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/02/09/world/black-yet-white-a-hated-color-in-zimbabwe.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>
- Machipisa, L. (2002). *The last minority group to find a voice*. <http://ipsnews.net/interna.asp?idnews>.
- Makondo, L. (2009). *An investigation into anthroponymy of the Shona Society*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Africa). Pretoria: South Africa.
- Makondo, L. (2011). The anthroponym *Nhamo*. *Language Matters* 42(1): 126-141.

- Makondo, L. (2013). Talking nightclubs!: An anomastic onomastic perspective. *South African Journal of African Languages* 33(1):45-50.
- Makoni, S., Smitherman, G., Ball, A.F. and Spears, A.K. (2003), (ed.) Introduction  
Black Linguistics: Language, Society and Politics in Africa and the Americas (pp 1-19) London: Routledge.
- Makoni, B, Makoni S and Mashiri, P. (2007). Naming practices and Language Planning in Zimbabwe. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 8, (3): 437-467.
- Makoni, B, Makoni S, and Pfukwa, C (2010). Language planning, language ideology and entextualization: *War Naming Practices Names*. 58, (4) 197-208
- Mashiri, P. (1999). Terms of address in Shona: A sociolinguistic approach *Zambezia*. XXVI (i), 93-110
- Mashiri, P., Mawome, K. and Tom, P. (2002). Naming the pandemic: semantic and ethical foundations of HIV/AIDS Shona vocabulary. *Zambezia* 29(2): 221-233.
- Maturana, Humberto. R. (1988). Ontology of observing. The biological foundations of self-consciousness and the physical domain of existence. In *Conference Workbook: Texts in Cybernetics*. American Society for Cybernetics Conference, Felton, CA.
- Mignolo, W. (2001). Coloniality of power and the subaltern. *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader*. In I. Rodríguez (ed.) Durham NC: Duke University Press, 224-244.
- Nyota, S. and Mapara, J. (2010). Shona anthroponyms as summaries of the namers and the named's experiences. *Unpublished manuscript*.
- Obeng, S.G. (1993). Speaking the unspeakable. *Working papers in Ghanaian Linguistics*. 1993: 22-36.
- Pfukwa, C. (1998). Their own God parents. *Zimbabwean Review*. 4, (3) 28-30
- Pfukwa, C (2003). Onomastic innovation in Zimbabwean *noms de guerre*. *Language Matters* 34, (1): 13-23.
- Pfukwa, C. (2007). The martial name in the Zimbabwean conflict (1966-1979). *Language Matters* 38(2): 236-254.
- Pfukwa, C. (2008). Shona description of diurnal time: An onomastic perspective. *NAWA Journal of Language and Communication*. 2(1):58-65
- Pongweni, A.J.C. (1983). *What's in a name? A study of Shona nomenclature*. Harare: Mambo Press.
- Tatira, L. (2004). Beyond the dog's name: A silent dialogue among the Shona people. *Journal of Folklore Research* 41,(1): 85-98.