

NOTES ON THE ETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNALS

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1. Confidentiality: Names were changed such that individuals and local places (villages, trading centers) could not be identified. To preserve a sense of realism, for individual names we selected our pseudonyms from lists by gender of MDICP survey respondents. For example, for a woman who appears in the ethnographies with both names, we selected from the list of women's names the first name of one survey respondent with the last name of another. Since there are few villages and local schools, these are given arbitrary initials, e.g. P____ Primary School.

2. The ethnographic journals have been edited by Watkins where they would otherwise be very difficult to read (almost all of the editing was done by Watkins). The difficulties have several sources:

1) The journals were written in English by secondary school graduates whose mother tongue was either ChiYao or ChiChewa but who learned English in school. Thus, there are sometimes errors in grammar (by U.S. standards). For example, tenses may be wrong (in the sense that something that from the context clearly was said in the past is written in the present tense). In particular, in ChiYao and ChiChewa gender pronouns are not as distinct as they are in U.S. English: for example, a participant in the conversation may have a woman's name and be referred to as a wife, but the journalist might use a male pronoun.

2) The journals were written by hand, often hastily: the journalists sometimes note that they wrote the journal late at night or early in the morning so that she/he would not forget who said what. Thus, sometimes words were omitted.

3) Some words or phrases are commonly used by English speakers in Malawi, but are not commonly used in the U.S.

The extent to which I have edited the journals has changed over the years. Initially (i.e. the journals from 1999, 2000) were edited for smooth reading, and to reflect what we believed was the fluency of the journalists had they been able to write in their mother tongue rather than a school language. As time went on, however, we decided to preserve local turns of phrase, editing only when we felt that readers would have to spend too much time trying to figure out what was said. In the journals from 2001 onward, most of the changes are in the gender of pronouns, although there are some that replace a local word with one more familiar to U.S. English speakers: for example, we replaced the local term “chart” with “chat”. When words were omitted or the handwriting illegible, the editor’s best guess is in square brackets (sometimes journalists included an explanation, these were sometimes in parentheses, sometimes in < >).

The following list is of words that, like “chart” vs “chat”, are used differently in rural Malawi and in U.S. English. Sometimes these were changed, sometimes not.

In journals / In U.S. English

Other / Some

Yet / Since

Hope / Think or believe

Quite / Quiet

Bored / Irritated

Domination / Denomination (as in religious denomination)

Disintermination / Dissemination

Healthy / Health, (as in Healthy Clinic vs Health Clinic)

Wonderful / Amazing

Shy / Aashamed

Put on / Wearing (e.g. to describe a conversational participant, the ethnographer wrote “he put on black pants, a t shirt, plastic shoes”)

Some of the ethnographers paid little attention to paragraphing, either making each line a separate paragraph or going on for pages without a break. In some of the early journals this was not

changed; in the latter journals, the editors made paragraphs out of single lines or inserted paragraph breaks.