AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS IN SOUTHERN MALAWI

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This ethnographic study of factors influencing the persistence and achievement of girls in comparison to boys at the primary school level in Southern Malawi is limited to one district-- Zomba rural-- where girls' participation rates are among the lowest in Malawi and their drop-out rates the highest. Using a holistic approach which bridges the gap between home and school by providing insights into both environments, the study focused on 80 pupils, 40 at the Standard 5 level (the midpoint in primary school) and 40 at Standard 8, the endpoint. Equal numbers of female and male pupils were randomly selected from each of four primary school communities, two in predominantly Muslim areas north of Zomba town and two in non-Muslim areas to the south of the town.

The methodology for the study included ethnographic observations of classrooms, school environments and the homesteads of the 80 pupils. Headteachers (headmasters), the teachers of all Standards 5 and 8 classes and the pupils were interviewed to ascertain their opinions and attitudes toward educating girls in contrast to boys. Information was collected on educational aspirations, classroom behavior, subject matter choices, career choices and on reasons why girls drop out at two key levels in primary education in Zomba District. In addition, the pupils' parents/guardians were also interviewed about educational choices they make for their children of both sexes, perceptions of academic gender differences and their educational and career aspirations for their children. Also included were questions about the high drop-out rates for girls. Finally, time use studies of after school activities were conducted for 52.5% of the pupils to find out gender differences in the way girls and boys allocated their time, particularly with reference to domestic chores, study and leisure.

The report findings examine economic, sociocultural and psychosocial factors that influence girls' participation and persistence in Zomba rural. The study concludes that economic constraints hinder girls' participation in school where female pupils live in resource-poor households, particularly female-headed households, and that the higher cost of uniforms for girls than boys may contribute to such constraints.

Gender-structuring as a sociocultural process determines the way gender relations are constructed beginning in the home and following the pupil to school where sociocultural attitudes are reinforced by school staff. The report analyses a number of measures of such attitudes; for example, gender-specific choices about who gets educated, the comparative

intelligence of males and females, gender expectations and roles and the attitudes of teachers toward female pupils in particular. The report argues that in order for gender-restructuring to take place, changes in attitudes leading to changes in behavior must be encouraged within the classroom, school and generally in Malawian society.

The study documents the impact of gender-structuring on the lives of eight pupils, four females and four males, using a case study approach. The cases show how pupils at the level of the individual cope with situations at school and at home that influence their perceptions about themselves and shape the decisions they make about school.

The report ends with nine recommendations related to improving school quality, in-service training for teachers that includes a gender component, and improving the image of Malawian females through a national media campaign.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Expanding the educational opportunities of women and eliminating constraints that prevent girls' educational achievement at all levels will make a positive contribution toward advancing Malawi's overall development in the 1990s. Evidence from other Third World countries demonstrates that in the long run increased education for women will assist in lowering infant mortality rates (currently 154/1000 in Malawi), provide for the improvement of family nutrition, and contribute to children's success in school (Kelly 1975; Floro and Wolf 1990). Malawi's population growth rate is one of the highest in the world (3.7% per year) which makes it difficult for the educational system to meet the increased demand for school services. Contributing to this high growth rate is the fertility rate which currently averages 7.7 children for women in their child-bearing years. Although education affects differently population growth rates and fertility rates, by providing increased educational opportunities that include courses related to family health and planning, it is likely that Malawi's population growth rate will begin to decrease. Equally important, Malawian women who currently have few opportunities for wage income, will learn the skills and attitudes required to secure wage employment through increased educational opportunities. The chance to participate in the wage sector means, in turn, that a woman will have an opportunity to increase her income, enhance her socioeconomic status with a resulting improved sense of worth and well being.

Malawi's educational system is pyramidal, with terminal examinations that serve as a gate-keeping mechanism for the next level at the end of primary (Standards 1- 8), junior secondary (Form 2) and senior secondary school (Form 4). As of 1987, out of a total school age population (over 5 years of age) of 6,586,602, 54.8% had little or no education, 41.7% had a primary education and only 3.4% had attained a secondary school education (NSO 1988). Of those in primary school, 44.3 percent were girls, but by Standard 8, they accounted for only 25 percent. Although the Ministry of Education and Culture has had an affirmative action programme to reserve 33 percent of the places at the secondary level for girls since 1972 and nine percent of girls successfully completing the Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC) gained places in secondary schools as compared to 7.4 percent of boys in the last decade, nevertheless a third as many girls enter secondary school as boys. Of the one percent of school age population who enter the tertiary level, females account for 21.3 percent of university enrolments. Similar to other African countries (e.g., see Dall 1989 for Mali; Elwusi 1987 for Ghana; Eshiwani

1983 for Kenya), females lag behind males at all levels of the educational system, and girls experience higher repetition and drop-out rates than boys. In sum, although slightly more girls currently enter the education system at Standard one, their numbers have dropped by nearly 75 percent at Standard 8, and the percentage of females at the upper two levels dwindles from 33 percent in the secondary level to 21.3 percent at the university level.

A number of studies in Malawi are emerging that examine educational opportunities of females and their persistence in the education sector at various levels (e.g., Kamwendo 1984; Kadzombe 1988; Maganga 1988; Malewezi 1990; Kainja and Mkandawire 1990; Grant Lewis, et al. 1990; Powers, forthcoming). This study examines key factors that shape female educational opportunities at the formal entry level; that is, at the level chartered to provide the basic skills, knowledge and attitudes --the educational scaffolding-- necessary for later achievement. It contributes to the growing body of research by examining in depth sociocultural, psychosocial and economic factors from the home to the classroom that affect girls' primary education. The focus of the study is one district in the Southern Region, a region where girls' participation rates are among the lowest and their drop-out rates the highest. The research employed a combination of ethnographic techniques, interviews with school staff, students and their parents or guardians, and a time allocation study of after-school activities to discern the factors that contribute to the constraints and success of girls in comparison to boys at two grade levels-- Standard 5 (the midpoint) and Standard 8 (the endpoint).

The report is organized into five sections. The first section provides an overview of the problems encountered by girls in the pursuit of education, with particular reference to Malawi. The second section describes the setting for the research, and the third, the research design and methodology. The fourth section takes up the findings, beginning with a description of each school site and community, followed by discussions of the economic, sociocultural and psychosocial factors related to girls persistence in education, and ending with an examination of the causes of female drop-outs. The final section offers conclusions and recommendations for improving girls' participation and achievement.

THE PROBLEM OF GIRLS' PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

Since 1975 with the initiation of the United Nations Decade of Women, increasing attention has been given to the education gap that exists worldwide between females and males. Concentrating on the primary level, various explanations have been advanced to explain why girls in contrast to boys do not participate to their fullest potential. Tinker and Bramson (1976) argue that three major factors affect girls' participation: cultural attitudes; lack of relevance of the school curriculum to the local or national economy; and teaching methods. In addition, in a country experiencing the financial constraints resulting from structural adjustment with an average per capital income per year of K330 ($116), economic constraints also impinge on girls' opportunities for education. Each of these factors has a bearing on this study of girls' education in Malawi.

CULTURAL ATTITUDES: THE CENTRALITY OF GENDER-STRUCTURING

Culturally determined ways of defining women and men and their roles in a given society in a particular historical time period shape gender-specific opportunities and constraints. The process by which this takes place may be referred to as gender-structuring (Davison 1988; Jaggar 1983). Gender-structuring is the means by which a society structures relations of production and reproduction between females and males from the household to the nation-state. Cultural attitudes about gender contribute to this process. However, gender-structuring is not a biologically determined phenomenon. It is a social phenomenon that varies across cultural groups, national boundaries and through time. Therefore, it is subject to change, a condition which makes it amenable to policy intervention and innovation.

The behavioral norms and expectations that result from gender structuring begin in the home and community, and are subsequently taught and reinforced in the school setting. Girls learn at an early age that they are expected to limit themselves to activities at home and courses at school that reinforce their roles as domestic producers and reproducers. What Nagat El-Sanabary (1989 p. 9) refers to as the "cult of domesticity" with reference to the Middle East and North Africa, applies equally well to sub-Saharan Africa and, in this instance, to Malawi.

Ngwira (1988) observes of Malawi that "...it is important to point to attitudes--attitudes both of men and women which play a great role in determining the place of women in society. The process by which these attitudes evolved is difficult to say, but girls are traditionally socialized to play their allocated roles in life, that of wife

and mother, which is considered or understood to be inferior to that of husband and father" (1988 p. 13). One way of measuring the impact of gender-structuring is to examine the career aspirations of school age children. Most often the aspirations are congruent with the accepted gender role norms as has been demonstrated in such diverse national settings as Australia (Raby and Walford 1981) and Kenya (Egsmose 1981). In Malawi, Kamwendo (1984) has examined the career preferences of students at the Junior Secondary level with reference to science education. He notes that girls tend to avoid science related careers, except those that utilize biology. Such avoidance reflects the generally held view that boys are better suited than girls (intellectually and vocationally) to the physical sciences and girls are better suited to areas directly related to their domestic activities, including health, nutrition and domestic production.

Within a classroom sociocultural expectations are transmitted through modeling of sex-appropriate behavior, teacher responses to their pupils and the academic support they provide them, and curriculum content (Finn, Reis and Dulberg 1980). Little research has been conducted on teacher-pupil interactions in Malawi, but Felicity Malewezi, a former teacher, observes that teachers treat girls differently from boys, both in terms of academic expectations and gender-specific forms of discipline (1990 p. 2). Because most teachers at the primary school level are male (and in the case of the present research, all teachers in the two grade levels studied were male), the implications for educating female pupils in classrooms largely taught and managed by males requires further study. We shall explore this matter further in the section on Teaching Methods.

Cultural attitudes not only influence the attitudes and persistence of pupils in school, but in Malawi have been identified as a major determinant of high drop-out rates, especially among girls. In a pilot study of primary school drop-outs in Dedza and Lilongwe (Central Region), Maganga (1988) found that cultural beliefs about girls' roles and abilities, and the prevalence of pregnancy and early marriage as a reflection of the cultural imperative that girls should become wives and mothers accounted for 6 percent of the drop-out rate in these areas. Kadzombe's (1988) study of drop-outs involving interviews with teachers, students and parents in rural and urban Zomba District concluded that "For whatever reasons most girls drop out of school because of early pregnancy" (1988 p. 12) Although we are not told the frequency of times this reason was given, the cultural determinants of "early pregnancy" warrant further investigation.

Another ramification of gender-structuring associated with high attrition rates among girls is male bias whereby male children are viewed as more educatable than female

children and are, thus, more often sent to school. Chawanje's (1989) conclusion that "Culturally girls are not a priority where education is concerned and in most rural communities girls have come to accept this state of affairs as the norm" (1989 p. 4) sums up this view. But the extent to which male bias actually exists in Malawi has not been systematically investigated. The present study includes a modest beginning.

Factors determining high female drop-out rates became a focus of interest at a national seminar on the Causes of Primary School Drop-outs held in Zomba in 1988. In addition to isolating early marriage and the preference in large families for educating boys over girls as primary causes, participants identified two other factors: the assumptions of both parents and children that girls are expected to assist in domestic work more than boys, and girls' feelings of psychosocial inferiority. Although both factors may be in operation, to our knowledge little quantifiable data has been collected to validate either hypothesis.

During a recent national seminar on Access of Women and Girls to Education and Training Opportunities (29th July-3rd August 1990), the twin problems of repetition and drop-out rates again emerged. Jessie Ndisale, headmistress of a secondary school, observed that male dominance extends from the home to the classroom where girls feel "suffocated" by their male counterparts (1990 p. 3). It has been demonstrated that in Malawi, as elsewhere, girls often perform better in single sex schools where they do not have to compete with boys (Kamwendo 1984; Chawanje 1989). In fact of the few female pupils who are selected for Chancellor College (University of Malawi), almost all have come from single sex schools (Hiddleston, personal communication). That girls feel "suffocated" in a mixed classroom in large part is the result of a teacher's management of the classroom and his/her teaching methods.

The influence that parents have, directly and indirectly, on their children's educational aspirations and achievement is well documented for Africa (Mbilinyi 1969; Egsmose 1981; Eshiwani 1983). The importance of parents' attitudes as a determinant of Malawian girls' educational aspirations was stressed at the seminars on drop-outs (1988) and girls education and training (1990) discussed earlier. In a recent study of female university students, including factors that led to their persistence in education, Powers found that a positive attitude on the part of at least one parent towards their daughter's education was a key factor in the student's persistence (Powers 1990, personal communication). Likewise, lack of interest in and support of educational achievement on the part of parents or guardians may serve to discourage a student of either sex and was a major reason cited by parents in our study for high drop-out rates among girls between Standards 1 and 2.

TEACHERS AND TEACHING METHODS

In a study of school factors that improve academic achievement in Third World countries, Fuller (1987) draws on over 60 studies from the Third World to demonstrate that among the factors that are highly effective, the number of years of teacher training positively correlates with pupil achievement in 22 of the 31 studies. In Malawi four grades designate the educational level and training of primary school teachers (T4, the lowest, to T1 the highest). In this study of girls' primary education, ten teachers in the four schools were interviewed, and out of the ten, one had a T4 grade -- that is, a PSLC certificate with two years of teacher training. Five teachers had a JCE plus two years of teacher training (T3), three had a MSCE (certificate awarded at end of four years of secondary school) plus two years teacher training (T2), and one had a T1, the promotional grade awarded after accumulated years of experience. Thus the average number of years of training in our small sample was two years.

However, equally important to the number of years is the quality of the teacher training. Minimally, teacher training programs include techniques for teaching specific subjects and classroom management, including discipline. Although a growing literature exists examining the ways that gender-structuring affects girls' performance and persistence in school in the West (Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968; Palardy 1969; Maccoby and Jacklin 1974; Kelly 1982) little attention has been given to how gender is structured in African classrooms until recently. Chawanje's (1989) and Malewezi's (1990) general observations of the way gender-structuring is manifested in Malawian classrooms suggest the need for close studies of classroom interactions to document that such a process exists and the ways it operates. Once documented, it will be easier to design teacher training modules that incorporate sensitivity to gender.

Brophy and Good (1974) have pointed out that teacher expectations of pupils-- that is, the inferences teachers make about their present and future achievement and classroom behavior-- have a substantial impact on a student's academic performance. When a teacher's methods depend upon rote learning and largely voluntary pupil response in a classroom where boys have been socialised from birth to be verbal and assertive and girls to be submissive and quiet, it is more often the case that the boys will dominate. Moreover, as Kelly's (1982) study confirmed, teachers of both sexes tend to talk more with male than with female pupils in a classroom. Our study of girls' primary education in southern Malawi confirms that teachers call upon boys more often than girls to answer questions. In 33 observations of eight subjects taught at the primary level, in all except Chichewa (the national language) and arithmetic classes, more boys than girls were called upon by teachers to answer questions. In

arithmetic it was evenly split between girls and boys, while girls were more often called upon in a Chichewa class. Malewezi's (1990) contention that Malawian teachers treat girls differently than boys is borne out by our study.

In order to alleviate the gender discrepancies in teaching methods and classroom behavior, the National Seminar on Girls' and Women's Education and Training Opportunities recommended that teacher training in Malawi include awareness of gender and sensitivity to gender-structuring. At the same time, more research is needed on the means by which teachers' attitudes and behavior towards girls in contrast to boys influence girls' educational attitudes and achievement.

ENGENDERING THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Although gender-specific curriculum content analysis was not included in the present study, a word needs to be said about the role of curriculum materials in relation to gender-structuring. At the 1988 Seminar on Primary School Drop-outs, it was noted that the ambitious primary school curriculum and long syllabuses prevented subjects from being completed and often defeated pupils. It was recommended that the Ministry of Education and Culture endeavour to steamline the curriculum, an exercise which is currently underway. Included in the curriculum revision is the inclusion of health sciences and home economics topics with other subjects that pertain to the environment. Textbooks are available for only three subjects: English, Chichewa and Arithmetic, but wherever possible, an effort is being made to portray more women and girls in realistic and positive roles in the new editions (Habrowski 1990, personal communication). For example, women are now portrayed as farmers as well as mothers, and the frequency with which females appear in illustrations has increased. Such revisions will make a positive contribution towards improving the image of Malawian women, and the self-image of Malawian girls.

ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS

One of the major arguments advanced by school staffs, pupils and parents for non-participation in formal education is lack of school fees. With constraints of income and decreased returns to agricultural production on a dwindling land base (Chipande 1986; Kaunda 1988; Chisala and Mthindi 1989), the Malawian smallholder, in particular, has little surplus after production to pay for basic needs such as commodities not produced at home (cooking oil, kerosene, clothing) and health care, let alone education. Currently school fees are MK4.50 per pupil through St. 5 and MK7.50 for the last three grades. This means that for each child to be provided with the basic level of education necessary for numeracy and literacy (St. 1-5), MK22.50 (US$8.40) will have

been invested. For a child completing primary school the expenditure per pupil at current rates is MK45.00 (US$16.79).

However, this is only the beginning. In addition to school fees, a pupil needs to provide his/her own exercise books and writing materials, an expenditure of approximately MK12.00 (US$4.48) per year. Additionally, although uniforms are not required for primary school, there is strong pressure (from school staffs and the community) to clothe pupils in uniforms. For boys, the basic requirement is cotton shorts which cost on average MK5.50, although the complete uniform costs approximately MK10.50 (US$3.92). For girls the cost of a uniform which includes a jumper and blouse is between MK15.50-MK22.00 (US$5.80-$8.20). This means that the financial outlay for a girl's uniform is twice that of a boy's.

For families with adequate resources, the expenditure for a girl's uniform is not a problem, but for smallholders with less than a hectare of land living at the subsistence level, this expenditure may be prohibitive. In the case of low income female-headed households (both de jure and de facto), currently between 28 and 35 per cent of Malawian households (Chipande 1986; Peters et al. 1989), the economic strain is even greater. It is often the case that smallholder farmers consider the investment of schooling for their children as including uniforms and writing materials as well as school fees. Equally important, girls provide the major domestic labour (including agricultural tasks, food processing and childcare) associated with household production. When the investment for a girl's education is weighed against the need for a daughter's household labour, the latter is apt to take precedence. It is difficult to separate factors of sociocultural male bias from economic considerations, but the fact that a girl's uniform costs twice that of a boy's uniform and her labour contributes significantly to subsistence production together may determine the gender-specific selection of who goes to school. Thus the combination of higher educational investment costs and domestic labour demands work in tandem with sociocultural attitudes to prevent girls from participating equally with boys in basic education.

Although the United Nations Development Programme in Malawi has implemented a project to provide school fees for over 4,508 primary school pupils, two-thirds of whom must be girls, the criteria for selection is based upon merit rather than need (Grant Lewis, et al. 1990). In order to determine the extent to which lack of funds for school fees determines a child's opportunities for and persistence in education, a focused study of one district where school scholarships are distributed based upon economic need must be undertaken. In our research, we found that lack of school fees was the most frequently cited reason for girls dropping out at the entry level (between Standards 1 and 2), and was a major cause for dropping out at other levels up to Standard 8.

THE RESEARCH SETTING AND DESIGN

ZOMBA DISTRICT: THE PHYSICAL SETTING

The district's name comes from Zomba Mountain which at 1,810 meters high, is the second highest mountain in Malawi (Agnew 1972). Zomba District is one of twenty-four districts and the center of the former colonial and early post-colonial administrations. It also has the second largest inland lake, Lake Chilwa, which lies on the eastern border of the district bordering Mozambique. The two physical features, the mountain and the lake, distinguish Zomba from other districts in the Southern Region. Lying along the Rift Valley floor, most of the district has heavily cultivated alluvial soils where rice, cassava and maize are grown by the predominantly small-scale farmers.

POPULATION

In 1987, the year of Malawi's last census, out of Zomba District's total population of 438,150, 90.2 percent (395,272) lived in Zomba Rural area where the research on girls' education was carried out. Of the total rural population, 52.7% were female and 47.3% were male, giving females an edge over males (NSO 1988). In the intercensal period (1977-1987), the population in Zomba Rural increased by 67,172 (17%).

Zomba is populated by Yao, Lomwe, Nyanja and Mang'anja people with the Yao predominant. These ethnic groups are matrilineal and their residence pattern is matrilocal. The Yao society in particular is centered around the "mbumba"-- a group of sisters residing in a maternal village and whose welfare and protection are vested in the hands of an elder brother or uncle, the "asyene mbumba" (Mitchell 1966). The "asyene mbumba" is expected to provide emotional and economic support to the sorority group-- the "mbumba". The ramifications of this social pattern in Zomba Rural and other areas where matrilineality is practised have far-reaching effects on the status of women. First, the women have a higher degree of security of land tenure than men. Second, there is a large population of female-headed households. The National Sample Survey of Agriculture (NSSA) indicated that of 480 households sampled in Zomba District, 36.9% were headed by women; that is, the woman considers herself to be the head of household (NSO 1982).

The major religions of Zomba Rural's population are Christainty and Islam. Islam is the predominant, though not the exclusive religion of many Yao in the north and east, while Christianity is the major religion of most other groups.

In our selection of the four research sites, we included two school communities in which Muslims account for at least fifty percent of the pupil population.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

The most common economic activity in Zomba is fishing on Lake Chilwa and fishmongering. There is, however, some estate farming of cash-value crops such as tobacco and more recently, coffee. The majority of people in Zomba Rural are engaged in subsistence farming. The main crop grown in the District is maize, both as a staple food and for sale. Cassava and rice are grown in significant quantities as important supplements to maize in well watered alluvial soils bordering Lake Chilwa. The 1980/81 NSSA found that in their Zomba Rural sample, 89.5% of households cultivated maize or maize mixed with pulses (NSO 1982).

SCHOOL ENROLMENT

Zomba Rural, the focus of this study, has low enrolment rates at the primary school level. Between the 1981/82 and 1985/86 academic years, it registered only a 1.54 percent increase in enrolment in comparison with a national increase of 13.25% (Maganga 1988). Total enrolments in 1988 were 23,400 boys and 18,784 girls (Ministry of Education and Culture 1988). In addition, the area had the highest drop-out rate-- 26.24 percent-- in the Southern Region (Maganga 1988 p. 4). Table 1 compares the national drop-out rates with the drop-out rates for Zomba Rural in 1987/88. In some cases the drop-out rate for the latter is nearly double the national average for the same year. Looking at Table 2, the highest drop-out rates for girls occurs between Standards 1 and 2 and between Standards 6 and 7. It is difficult to measure accurately the drop-out rate between Standards 7 and 8 because there is a high percentage of "drop-in" repeaters in the last year when pupils are preparing for the PSLC examinations. This is borne out by a look at Table 3 which examines repeater rates by gender. The greatest number of girls repeat in Standards 1 and 2, while for boys it occurs in Standards 1 and 8. The combination of low enrolment rates, high repetition rates at the lower grade levels, and high drop-out rates at the entry and terminal levels among female pupils in Zomba Rural is cause for concern. If we can separate the various factors that contribute to this phenomenon in one location and suggest remedies, it may contribute to finding solutions in other locations.

There are 107 primary schools in Zomba Rural where this study was carried out, and fifteen primary schools in Zomba Urban (Ministry of Education and Culture 1988). Pupils in all these schools have to complete for secondary school places in

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF DROP-OUT RATES ST.1 - ST.7 FOR SOUTHERN REGION & ZOMBA RURAL

	1 - 2	2 - 3	3 - 4	4 - 5	5 - 6	6 - 7
Zomba Rural	41.0%	20.9%	31.6%	25.5%	17.7%	15.4%
S. Region	30.6%	15.1%	16.0%	7.5%	6.2%	1.9%

Source: Based on Table 25 - Primary Schools: Repetition and Dropout Rates 1977/78 - 1987 - 88 and Table 5 - Primary School: Enrolment by Standard, Sex and District and Number of Assisted and Unassisted Schools 1987/88 Education Statistics, Ministry of Education & Culture, 1988

TABLE 2

DROP-OUT RATES BY GENDER IN ZOMBA RURAL ST.1 - ST. 7

	1 - 2	2 - 3	3 - 4	4 - 5	5 - 6	6 - 7
BOYS	39.8%	22.5%	26.9	31.4%	18.7%	5.6%
GIRLS	42.2%	19.3%	36.2%	19.5%	16.7%	25.2%

Source: Based on Table 5: Enrolment by Standard, Sex and District and Number of Assisted and Unassisted Schools 1987/88 Education Statistics, Ministry of Education & Culture, 1988.

TABLE 3

NUMBER OF REPEATERS BY GENDER AND STANDARDS (GRADE) 1 - 8

ZOMBA RURAL

STANDARD	NO. OF BOYS	%	NO. OF GIRLS	%
1	1,452	21.8	1,516	25
2	817	50.6	797	49.4
3	546	49.4	559	50.6
4	267	53.3	234	46.7
5	225	51.8	209	48.2
6	236	47.7	259	52.3
7	232	52	214	48
8	1,217	70.6	507	29.4
Total No.	4,992		4,295	
Repetition Rate	(53.8%)		(46.2%)	

Source: Based on Table 19: Number of Repeaters by Sex, Standard and District in Assisted and Unassisted Schools 1987/88 Education Statistics, Ministry of Education & Culture, 1988

the five or six secondary schools in the district, two of which are considered "national schools"; that is, students from other districts may be selected for these schools too. The desire to gain entry into secondary schools and the emotional and psychological stress to pass the Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC) examinations cannot be overemphasized.

SELECTION OF THE FOUR SCHOOLS

The four primary schools in this study were randomly selected from the 107 in Zomba Rural to represent the four corners of the District. The smallest school in the study is Namilongo south of Zomba municipality, while the largest is Namiwawa to the southeast. The two schools in the northern part of the District, Nsondole Primary School and Msalabani School, are in predominantly Muslim areas, while Namiwawa and Namilongo are in Christian areas. The sociocultural mix of Muslim and Christian was necessary because it is sometimes assumed that Muslims who are "resistant to western Christian education", are responsible for low enrolment rates. Consequently, a comparative study of largely Muslim with non-Muslim areas will help to ascertain differences in attitudes toward schooling.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

As indicated earlier, the primary intent of this research has been to document qualitatively through in-depth observations of teacher-student interactions in the classroom and school and observations of students in their homes, the behaviors and the material contexts that contribute to or detract from girls' persistence in education. At the same time, collection of quantitative data on the attitudes of school staff, students and parents/guardians toward educating females in comparison to males, career aspirations and opinions on the causes of high drop out rates among girls in primary school contributes to our understanding and alleviation of certain gender-specific problems at school and at home that influence girls' educational choices and opportunities.

Critical to girls' persistence in education, in addition to parental attitudes at home, is the competing demands upon their time for participation in domestic tasks and homework. Observations of after school activities within a specific 60-minute period help to quantify the amount of time spent by female pupils in comparison to male pupils on each task in order to determine whether or not the demands for girls' domestic labour exceeds that of the demand for boys' labour. The results of such a study have implications for the amount of time girls are able to spend on homework and hence may contribute to their lower achievement rates.

Specifically, the research addressed several questions related to girls' education in Southern Malawi outlined below.

1. What are the sociocultural constraints at school and at home that influence girls' participation in education?

2. Are there difference between the attitudes of male and female teachers toward girls' educational performance that have implications for girls' persistence and achievement in school?

3. What are the gender-specific differences between female and male parents/guardians attitudes toward educating girls in contrast to boys and toward career aspirations for their offspring?

4. Are there differences between Muslim and Christian parents' attitudes toward educating females?

5. How are girls' opportunities for education related to parents' education and to socioecultural factors, including marital status and residental patterns?

6. Given that most rural dwellers in Zomba Rural are smallholder farmers, often living at subsistence level, what are the economic constraints on girls' education?

7. What accounts for the high drop-out rates of girls between Standards 1 and 2 and at Standard 8 in Zomba District?

In order to answer the questions outlined, we designed a four months research project (April-July, 1990) that included ethnographic and sample survey techniques. The first month was devoted to developing and testing our research instruments, and to selecting and training eight research assistants, four male/female teams, in each area to assist us in the collection of data. The actual fieldwork was conducted in a three-months period (May-July).

At the beginning of this period, people were cultivating and harvesting crops such as maize, rice and cassava. By the end of the period much of the agricultural work had been completed. During the first week of field work there were heavy rains, but the remainder of the period was dry. During the week of heavy rains there was a marked drop in attendance in all four schools, particularly among the girls in Namilongo School. Climate and the agricultural cycle both affect school participation rates. In a group interview with female teachers in one of the schools, the teachers reported that more girls were absent in the post-harvest period because they were required by their mothers to take grain to the grinding mill for processing.

In addition, the time of year when research is conducted is affected by the school calendar. We conducted our field work in the last trimester of the school year when preparations for end-of-year and Government examinations altered the schedule in the last month. This change affected our classroom observations of Standard 8 in particular.

SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Four female and four male research assistants who lived in or were familiar with the four selected school sites and communities were selected and trained to conduct interviews and make classroom and homestead observations. They became male/female research teams in each of the study areas. In Malawi, as in many African countries, the society is gender-segregated. It was therefore necessary for interviewing and observation to be done by members of the same sex. The female

research assistants were selected to interview and make observations of female pupils and conduct interviews with female pupils and guardians, and male research assistants to observe and interview male pupils and guardians.

The selection of the four teams of research assistants took over five days and four trips to the four study sites. The majority of young men and women within the four school communities---Nsondole, Msalabani, Namiwawa and Namilongo--did not have the minimum educational qualification we set of a secondary school leaving certificate (MSCE). Those that had such a certificate had migrated to urban areas to take advantage of opportunities for wage employment. In particular, this applied to girls in the two northern areas. It was therefore necessary to lower our educational requirement to at least a Junior Certificate (awarded at the end of Form 2 or the second year of secondary school). The assistants were selected not only on the basis of education and written English skills, but on their communication skills with people of varied age groups.

Once the eight assistants were selected, they underwent a week long intensive training session aimed at equipping them with ethnographic observation skills and interviewing techniques as well as how to conduct time allocation schedules. More than half the time during the training program was spent in observations and recording of physical sites and human interaction. The latter included both verbal and non-verbal behavior. These are essential skills for classroom and homestead observations. Generally during the sessions, male research assistants were better at physical description while female research assistants were more perceptive than males to various human interactions. Thus each team had a balance. The training program was also used as an additional testing ground for the suitability of the interview instruments which had been translated into the Malawian national language, Chichewa and then back-translated into English before being tested. The assistants participated in simulated interviews with parents, guardians and pupils. They also practised time allocation exercises to achieve accuracy in recording activities.

The assistant teams began their work with site observations of "their" schools in each area and focused observations of random classrooms, using an observation protocol (see Appendix 1). During the second week they narrowed their observations of classrooms to Standard 5 and Standard 8. In the case of the one school with double streams at both levels, Standard 5-b and Standard 8-b were selected as being more representative of the particular school situation (Namiwawa School).

INTERVIEWS WITH SCHOOL STAFF

The two principal researchers interviewed headteachers (also known as "headmasters") who functioned both as classroom teachers and administrative heads of schools (Appendix 2-a). We also interviewed all Standard 5 and Standard 8 teachers, all of whom turned out to be male teachers. Interviews were conducted in English. The questions were aimed at ascertaining attitudes toward and expectations of girls in comparison to boys in the school generally and particularly in their classes (see Appendix 2-b). The teachers and headteachers also helped us by supplying lists of Standard 5 and Standard 8 students broken down by gender and assisted us with the selection by providing information about a particular student randomly selected from the lists.

SELECTION OF THE PUPIL SAMPLE

The study was centered around twenty randomly selected girls and boys from each of the four schools-- five girls and five boys each from Standard 5 and Standard 8. Care was taken not to include repeaters in the sample. In the schools in the northern part of the district, we included a representative sample of Muslim pupils to reflect the proportion of Muslims enroled in the schools.

As soon as the 80 pupils were selected, their names were given to the research assistants who began focused observations of their behavior in and out of the classroom. Meanwhile the principal researchers, through the headteachers and members of school committees, extended invitations to all parents and guardians of the selected pupils to attend a meeting to explain the purpose of the research, answer questions and get their permission to interview the pupils and visit their homesteads for observations and interviews. The Research Assistants were also introduced at the meeting. This was particularly important as the credibility of the study results depended on parents'/ guardians' cooperation. In all cases permission was granted and in some of the meetings parents acknowledged that a problem existed for educating girls and in one case a lively discussion ensued as to the causes.

The research assistants (RAs) did not begin interviewing the selected pupils until they had established a rapport with each one, the female RAs with the girls and the male RAs with the boys. The interview focused on school participation, attitudes toward education, including academic self-expectation, career aspirations and causes of female drop-outs in Zomba (Appendix 2-c). After the interviews were completed and the pupil was reasonably comfortable with the RA, the RAs accompanied the pupil to his or her home.

HOMESTEAD OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

In a pupil's homestead, the RAs made an assessment of the material socioeconomic environment, including housetype, availability of water, light and educational materials that may have an effect on the pupil's academic work in school (see Appendix 3). They also interviewed the male and female guardians or parents. The questions were aimed at ascertaining the guardians' educational level, number of school-age children by sex and the number of children attending and not attending school, as well as the birth order of the selected pupil. Their attitudes toward the education of girls in comparison to boys, their academic expectations of girls and career aspirations for both sexes were also elicited. In addition, their opinions about the causes of high female drop-out rates and information about their experiences with drop-out pupils in their own families were collected (Appendix 2-d).

TIME ALLOCATION SCHEDULES

During their first of usually two visits to a pupil's homestead, the RAs made gender-specific observations of all the activities they observed students participating in during the after-school period. These were compiled into a generic list for the time allocation study. Time allocation studies were carried out for 52.5 percent of the total pupil sample. Twenty-six girls (65% of total female sample) and 16 boys (40% of the male sample) were observed. The number of minutes and seconds of each activity during a sixty-minute period was carefully recorded in order to ascertain the amount of time spent on studying, social interaction with peers, household tasks, childcare and leisure. The time allocation exercise was carried out by one member of the RA team while the other interviewed the appropriate guardian or made homestead observations.

During the last two months when the RAs were making homestead visits in the afternoon, they continued their classroom observations and focused observations of students in the mornings until the end of the fieldwork period.

COORDINATION OF THE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Primary responsibility for monitoring the research activities of the RAs, conducting classroom observations to check validity of RAs observations and assisting them in their work, particularly in entering homesteads with ease, was in the hands of the two principal researchers. Each RA was required to keep a detailed log of their daily activities with their own comments and questions in the margin. We found

these logs particularly useful in anticipating problems that might be overcome, in revealing classroom and school situations that might have been overlooked, and in assisting the RAs in becoming more effective and efficient in their work. The principal researchers made weekly, and in some cases, twice weekly extended visits to each site, participating in research activities and meeting with the RAs on their progress. We also met with each headteacher to assure that the RAs were properly carrying out their work and that no problems had arisen. In all cases, the headteachers were most cooperative in assisting us with the research.

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

THE CONTEXT

In order to provide a context for the results of the study, it is first necessary to give a brief description of each school site, its physical attributes or constraints and the community in which it is embedded.

Msalabani Full Primary School and Community

Msalabani Primary School is situated to the north of Zomba District on the border with Machinga District. It is three kilometers off the main Zomba-Lilongwe road at the Anglican Diocese Headquarters at Malosa. The school is one of the oldest in the area as it was built by the Anglican mission around 1940. Being in a predominantly Muslim location, it was originally the focal point for converting young Muslims to Christianity. A dilapidated church building on the school premises bears testimony to the early beginnings of the school. The school plant consists of three blocks of classrooms and five teachers' houses. Classrooms are crowded and groups of children, particularly at the early grade levels can be seen clustered in reading or study groups under trees outside on fair weather days. Children in the lower grades to Standard 7 do not have desks nor do most teachers. Standard 7 and 8 classrooms have metal or wooden desks, seating usually two to three pupils to a desk. All classrooms, as elsewhere in Malawi, are gender-segregated with boys on one side and girls on the other.

With a total enrolment of 1,132 pupils and 16 teachers (3 women, 13 men), the school has a teacher/pupil ratio of 1 teacher to 85 pupils (1:85). This ratio exceeds the national average of 1:67 by nearly 20 pupils. Women constitute 18% of the teaching staff. In the two grades that are the focus of this study, Standard 5 has an enrolment of 46 girls and 40 boys, a slight demographic edge for girls, while in Standard 8 the reverse holds with only half as many girls as boys (20 girls to 42 boys). No girls from the school passed the Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC) between 1985 and 1989. During the same period, six boys passed the PSLC. None were selected for secondary school.

Sixty percent of the pupils at Msalabani come from Muslim families, the other 40 percent are Christian. Muslim children characteristically have a double school schedule. In the afternoons, after Msalabani has closed for the day, these Muslim children go to Koranic school for two hours. Small neighborhood mosques are nestled in amongst clusters of homesteads and provide a center for the Muslim children and

their families. There is an expressed attitude on the part of some of the predominantly Christian teachers at Msalabani Full Primary School that the Muslims in the community are more "backward" and less interested in education, an assumption that was not born out by our research in the community.

The major ethnic group are the Yao, most of whom are matrilineal and Muslim. Yao is the predominant language spoken in homes. In 85 percent of the twenty homes sampled, both parents were present and were responsible for their children's education rather than the maternal uncle. In three cases the pupils lived with their maternal grandparents.

Half of the children in the sample came from subsistence level households, where the homes were mud or burnt bricks with thatch or zinc roofs and earthen floors. Only two homes in the sample had fired brick and cement, glass windows and a cement floor. Although three families had tap water in their homesteads and two had wells, the majority depended upon water carried from a well or borehold in the village and in five it was carried from a river. Although most homes had open paraffin lamps with wicks, the only house with electricity in the entire sample of 80 students' homes was in Msalabani. It was in a pupil's home where the father owned and ran a local grocery, and electricity had been extended from the grocery to the home behind it.

A table or chair was the most noticeable place for studying in the majority of the pupils' homes, but in three homes there was little or no furniture and children studied on the earthen floor. Six of the homes had government posters on a wall, only one had a map, one a calendar and one a visible tape measure. Two families had radio cassette players. Among the few books available were the Bible and a hymn book. Only one home had a newspaper. Thus, few reading materials were available to the Msalabani pupils outside of school.

The pupils in our sample walked an average of 2.5 kilometers to get to school, but some lived as far away as nine or ten kilometers. At the school, pupils are asked to contribute to the school's development by bringing from home, grass for thatching teachers' houses or latrines, poles, or tools for construction. If the children do not remember they are punished. In fact, much of the punishment metted out for tardiness was in the form of labour related to construction. For example, girls, in particular, were asked to haul water for mixing with mud, to make bricks, cut down tree stumps or dig refuse pits during periods when classes were in session. This meant that they missed whole lessons.

Similar to other rural schools in Africa, funds do not exist for school maintenance and students are expected to carry out maintenance tasks. From our observations, girls at

Msalabani carried out a major portion of this burden, sweeping classrooms and school yards, hauling water and other labour activities which often interferred with their participation in classes. Several girls expressed discouragement or bitterness over labour exacted from them for small infractions. Some dropped out for the rest of the day rather than perform tasks they felt were unfair. On the whole, the pupils in our Msalabani sample appeared to have more encouragement from home than they did from members of the school staff, who tended to express frustration over having to teach students whose mother tongue was Yao and whom the teachers thought had little chance of academic success.

Nsondole Full Primary School and Community

Similar to Msalabani, Nsondole Full Primary is located in a predominantly Yao, Muslim area. The school is situated 18 kilometers to the northeast of Zomba town toward Lake Chilwa. There are two classroom blocks, eight teachers' houses and a church building within the school premises. The church building, which belongs to the Church of Central African Presbyterian (CCAP), also serves as a classroom for the junior (Standard 1-3) classes. The only classroom with desks is the Standard 8 classroom. Each week students can be seen hauling chairs from home on their heads to school so they will have a place to sit. None of the teachers in any classroom has a desk and few have chairs. Teachers' materials are often balanced on an open window sill and pupils in lower grades sit on raised brick rows, balancing their exercise books on their laps. Yet despite the subsistence level physical surroundings, the school staff appears to be well organized and committed to teaching despite the material handicaps.

The school has a total enrolment of 1,089 and a teaching staff of eleven teachers. The teacher/pupil ratio is 1:99, the highest of the four schools studied. Of the eleven teachers, nine are men and two are women. Of the two classes examined closely, in Standard 5 there are 30 girls and 36 boys enrolled and in Standard 8, 23 girls and 52 boys, a similar gender discrepancy as that found in the Standard 8 class at Msalabani. In the past five years only nine girls passed the PSLC examinations in contrast to 36 boys. Although three of the girls passed the PSLC in 1989, none was selected to secondary school.

Of the 20 pupil homesteads visited in Nsondole, 17 were of basic mud brick with a thatch roof and earthen floor. One had a zinc roof, and two were plastered with cement floors. All but two homesteads had access to neighborhood water taps as the result of a community self-help project funded by the World Bank in which the Bank provided funds for materials and

of the twenty homes had open paraffin lamps w[illegible]cks.

A table, chair or the floor was the most visible place for studying in most homes. In seven homes, only the floor was available. However, educational materials were often visible. Twelve homes had government posters mounted on walls, five had maps, and five had newspapers or magazines as well as books. In addition, two homes had tape measures. Thus there were more materials available for reinforcing reading and literacy skills in the Nsondole homes than in the Msalabani pupils' homes.

In this matrilocal area, fifty percent of the pupils' parents were both present and were responsible for their education, but in 30 percent of the homes, the maternal uncle (the mother's brother) was the one responsible for the children's education. In one case, the maternal aunt and uncle were the guardians and in another an older sister and the uncle were the guardians. Finally, two pupils were being raised by grandparents who were responsible for their education. There were no female-headed households in the Nsondole sample.

Children in the Nsondole sample on average had the longest distance to walk to school. The average was 6.8 kilometers, but one pupil lived a distance of 13 kilometers from the school. The average distance that the pupils in our study had to walk exceeds the official catchment radius of 5 kilometers set by the Ministry of Education and Culture by nearly two kilometers.

Although pupils helped in maintaining the school compound, the labour was less regimented and of less frequency than at Msalabani School. Disciplinary measures were more directly related to infractions than at Msalabani School. For example, tardiness was punished by either being expelled from class or having to remain inside during a school break to study. The general environment of the school was relaxed and pupils were open in talking about their academic futures. Standard 8 pupils of both sexes perceived that they had very little chance of getting a place in a secondary school even if they passed the PSLC examination because they attended a rural school. When asked what they would do as an alternative, the boys said they would enrol in one of the distance education centers, but the girls didn't know what they would do-- perhaps get married.

Namiwawa Full Primary School and Community

East of Zomba town, on a road leading to Jali, a medium size trading center, is the Namiwawa Primary School. It is the largest in the study. One of the most striking features

of the school is a church built by the Churches of Christ mission, which built the original school blocks. There are three large classroom blocks, but nevertheless they are not enough to house all the pupils and several classes meet outside with a large chalkboard propped against a mango tree. Eight teachers' houses complete the physical plant.

The school's total enrolment is 1,509 pupils with two streams at every grade level. There are a total of 21 teachers, nine of whom are women and 12 men. However, the women are concentrated in the lower classes (Standards 1-4). The school has a teacher/pupil ratio of 1:72, less than either Msalabani's or Nsondole's. In the two streams of Standard 5 there are 52 boys and 47 girls. The gap broadens dramatically at Standard 8 where there are 143 boys to 56 girls due, in large part, to the large number of male repeaters at that level. In a Standard 8 class one can also see a broad range of ages-- from boys as young as 12 years of age to men 21 years old. There appears to be less discrepancy among the Standard 8 girls. In the last five years (1985-1989), over three times as many boys (445) passed the PSLC as girls (118). However, two girls and no boys were selected to secondary schools in previous year (1989).

The major ethnic group in Namiwawa is the Lomwe who speak Chichewa and are largely Christian and matrilocal. There are no Muslim children at this school.

Only forty percent of the pupils in the Namiwawa sample are living with both parents. Forty-five percent come from female-headed households, one pupil lives with her grandmother and an uncle, and another with her mother and an older brother. There appears to be a high percentage of households where the father has migrated to work elsewhere or has deserted the family.

Although there are more female-headed households, the two parent families appear to be better off than those in Nsondole or Msalabani. Less than half the families lived in mud brick houses with earthen floors. Two had brick or plastered houses with cement floors and seven had plastered or fired brick and cement houses with zinc roofs, glass windows and cement floors. Nine of the 20 families had a well or borehole in the homestead and nine carried water from a village borehole. In only two homesteads was water carried from a river. In addition, more homes had paraffin glass lanterns than in the other community samples. Whereas there were few cattle in the northern two communities, in Namiwawa, which has a drier climate, many families kept small herds of cattle.

Most of the pupils' homes had chairs, tables, stools and beds as places to study and in only one home was the floor the only place to study. Although none of the homes exhibited government posters, several had magazines and newspapers

available. Also writing materials, paper and exercise books were more in evidence. Another indication of the generally better living conditions of the Namiwawa pupils was the fact that almost all wore uniforms in contrast to the two northern communities and N. milongo. Also the children in the sample lived closer to their school than their northern counterparts. The average distance that these children walked was 1.7 kilometers in contrast to Nsondole where children walked an average 6.8 kilometers.

Namilongo Full Primary School and Community

Located six kilometers south of Zomba town, Namilongo is the smallest school in the study with an enrollment of 563 pupils. It has a teacher/pupil ratio of 1:56, the lowest of the four schools. There are ten teachers, six men and four women. The school appears to be more loosely structured than the other three schools, with major responsibility resting with the headteacher who had recently come to the school.

The school is relatively new with three small classroom blocks, one recently constructed the previous year. This block houses Standard 7 and 8. There are only two teachers' houses, one for the headteacher and the other the deputy headteacher. Similar to the other school sites, a church, in this case CCAP, can be found adjacent to the school compound, but it is not used for school activities. Pupils are expected to contribute to school maintenance and small armies of lower grade pupils can be seen, bush brooms in hands sweeping the compound under the watchful eye of an older class monitor during class breaks. We also observed small girls running back and forth between the school compound and a community well adjacent to the school carrying water in whatever small containers were available to use for cleaning classrooms. Although Namilongo students spent much of their break time in school maintenance, it appears less apt to interrupt their academic classes than at Msalabani School.

In the two grade levels under study, Standard 5 has 22 girls and 25 boys enrolled, and Standard 8 has 15 girls and 18 boys, less of a discrepancy at the terminal level than at the other three schools. Of those who took the PSLC in the last five years, nine times as many boys passed as girls: five girls and 45 boys. None were accepted for secondary school. Absenteeism at the upper grade levels is a problem, especially at Standard 8. During one month when observations were made, only two out of the 15 enrolled girls attended on a regular basis and ten out of 18 boys.

Children in the Namilongo area have less far to walk to get to school than any of the other areas. The average distance in the sample was 1.4 kilometers. The majority of their homes are at the basic subsistence level-- mud brick

with thatch roof, occasionally glass windows, earthen floors. Four families had brick or plastered homes with glass windows and cement floors and a fifth family had one under construction. Only one homestead had a tap. All others depended upon water carried from a well in the neighborhood. Three homes had paraffin glass lanterns but the majority had the open wick lantern and one had no light other than from a cooking fire.

A table and chairs were the basic furniture and in two cases only the floor was available for studying. Nevertheless, there were a surprising number of educational materials visible in these homes. Nine had newspapers, eight had magazines and all had at least one book. Three had maps on the wall and eight had government posters. As well as writing materials and paper, these relatively low income households managed to have other educational materials available.

The majority of the children at Namilongo are Christian, Chichewa-speakers. Thirty-five percent are Muslim. This was reflected in the sample. There is a high incidence of male absenteeism. In only 21.1 percent of the pupils' households were both parents present. Over 63 percent lived in female-headed households with their mothers (7 pupils), an older sister (3 pupils) or in one case with an aunt and in another with a grandmother. One boy lived with his uncle. In the case of a Standard 8 male student, his parents were not living in the home at the time of our research as they were working in an urban area. He was alone in the household with his sister who attended Standard 3.

Of the four communities, then, Namilongo community is the least well off and this appears to be reflected in the lack of materials, chalkboards and furniture in the classrooms. Yet in this poorest of the schools, there existed the only classroom in our study where a teacher had a positive attitude towards the educational potential of girls and where girls, in fact, out-performed the boys, a classroom to which we will return in the discussion of our research findings.

To summarize the schools, all four are led by male headteachers with an average of ten years' teaching experience. The Standards 5 and 8 teachers have an average of two years teacher training experience, and a range of 5 months (two teachers-in-training) to 26 years teaching experience. In all four schools, the proportion of female teachers to male teachers is less, but there is a greater difference in the two northern schools with far fewer female teachers. The scarcity of female teachers in rural schools means that there is a scarcity of role models for girls. Moreover, the attitudes of the predominantly male teachers towards girls' academic potential and achievement has significant ramifications for the female pupils' self esteem

and participation in school. That girls entering primary schools in rural Zomba face an overwhelming task in reaching Standard 8 is borne out by the findings of our study.

The next part of this section is divided into three parts: economic factors that affect the participation and persistence of girls in school; sociocultural factors affecting their educational opportunities; and psychosocial factors that individually determine their attitudes toward and achievement in education.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

The pupils who attend the four rural schools in our study come from families living, on the whole, at the subsistence level. As we learned earlier, the construction of the majority of homes in the pupil sample consisted of mud bricks, thatch or zinc roofs and earthen floors. Forty-six percent of the families carried water from a community well or borehole, while 10.3 percent hauled it from a river or stream. Only 15.4% had wells in their homesteads and none had piped water to their homes. Likewise, 75.6 percent of the homes had only a small open lamp with a paraffin wick and only one had electricity.

Another indicator of the lack of material resources available to these students is the sparseness of educational materials in their homes. A minority of homes had government posters, calendars, magazines or newspapers. A third had a book or two, usually the Bible or a hymnal. Reading materials at home provide a chance for a child to practice literacy skills learned at school. Without such materials, a pupil must struggle twice as hard with materials that must be left at school.

As mentioned earlier, lack of school fees (and uniforms) was the most often mentioned cause of dropping out between Standards 1 and 2 by both pupils and their parents (see Table 4). A quarter of the boys and 35 percent of the girls opinioned that school fees are a major constraint to girls' persistence in education. Similarly, a quarter of the male guardians (24.8%) and 35.1 percent of the female guardians agreed. It appears, however, that female pupils (2.5%) and their female guardians (5.4%) are more concerned about lack of funds for uniforms than are their male counterparts. Even though uniforms are not required for school, nevertheless there is strong social pressure to provide them. Although by the time a female student reaches Standard 8, the factors influencing a girl's decision to drop out may be more socio-cultural than economic (see Table 5), nevertheless lack of school fees remains a major concern. It was the reason most frequently cited by guardians/parents who had children who had dropped out in the sample of pupils' households (Table 6).

TABLE 4: WHY GIRLS DROP OUT BETWEEN STANDARDS 1 & 2 – A COMPARISON OF PUPILS' and GUARDIANS' RESPONSES (Percentages).

REASONS GIVEN	PUPILS (N= 80)		GUARDIANS (N= 131)	
(Ranked by frequency)	Male (N=40)	Female (N=40)	Male (N=57)	Female (N=74)
1. Lack of school fees	25.0	35.0	24.8	35.1
Lack of uniforms	0	2.5	1.8	5.4
2. Parental attitudes, including preference for educating males over females. (Male bias)	12.5 5.0*	2.5 0	38.6 8.8**	27.0 0
3. Laziness or playfulness	10.0	27.5	12.3	21.6
4. Early marriage	15.0	2.5	7.0	0
5. School not important	12.5	5.0	0	0
6. Girls not intelligent	10.0	5.0	0	0
7. Peer pressure	0	5.0	3.5	5.4
8. Hunger	5.0	7.5	0	0
9. Initiation ceremonies	0	5.0	3.5	2.7
10. Prostitution/loose morals	2.5	0	7.0	0
11. All others	2.5	0	0.0	0.0
12. No answer	5.0	2.5	3.5	2.7

* Male bias is 5% of the 12.5% included in parental attitudes

** Male bias is 8.8% of the 38.5% included in parental attitudes.

TABLE 5: WHY GIRLS DROP OUT BY STANDARD 8 – A COMPARISON OF PUPILS' and GUARDIANS' RESPONSES. (Percentages)

REASONS GIVEN (Ranked by frequency)	PUPILS (N = 80)		GUARDIANS (N = 131)	
	Male(N = 40)	Female (N = 40)	Male (N =57)	Female (N = 74)
1. Pregnancy	15.0	30.0	24.6	47.3
2. Early marriage	37.5	25.0	29.8	23.0
3. Get interested in men; cheated by men	15.0	10.0	8.8	10.8
4. Repeating school discourage them	5.0	15.0	1.8	16.2
5. Lack of school fees	5.0	15.0	10.5	6.8
6. Lack of concentration or interest	7.5	7.5	0	1.4
7. By Std.8 they think they're educated enough	5.0	0	3.5	4.1
8. Not selected for secondary school	0	5.0	3.5	2.7
9. Fail exams	0	0	1.8	1.4
10. Girls fail to take parents' advice	0	0	5.3	0
11. Peer pressure	5.0	0	0	0
12. Teachers fail to teach girls	0	0	3.5	0
13. Too much work at home	2.5	0	0	0
14. Parental attitudes	0	0	0	1.4
15. Initiation ceremonies	0	0	0	1.4
16. Laziness	0	0	0	1.4

Note: Does not add up to 100% as some respondents gave more than one answer.

TABLE 6: REASONS GIVEN BY GUARDIANS/PARENTS FOR WHY THEIR CHILDREN DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL (Percentages)

REASONS GIVEN	BOYS (N = 26) % of boys	GIRLS (N = 12) % of girls	TOTAL (N = 38*) % of total
Lack of school fees, uniforms	26.9	16.7	23.7
Lack of motivation or interest (boys only)	26.9	0	18.4
Repeating discourages, not enough places in secondary school	11.5	16.7	13.2
Decided to get married,liked a man (girls only)	0	33.3	10.5
Pregnancy (girls only)	0	16.7	5.2
Poor health	3.8	8.3	5.2
Lack of intelligence (boys only)	7.7	0	5.2
Moved to relatives to help w/domestic work (girls only)	0	16.7	5.2
Peer pressure	7.7	0	5.2
All others reasons	15.4	8.3	8.2
TOTALS:	99.9**	100.0	100.0

* This is the total number of drop-outs in 32 of the 79 pupil households sampled ; ie, only 40.5% of the households had children who had dropped out.

** Rounded.

In the interviews, several pupils mentioned hunger as being a cause for dropping out in the lower grades, a condition which their parents overlook or do not know about as none of them mentioned this as a cause (Table 4). Many smallholders run out of food crops three or four months before the next planting season and are forced to buy food. Often the necessary cash for this expenditure is not available and the result is cyclical hunger. Such hunger affects a student's ability to concentrate. It leads to lethargy and disinterest. Equally important, the physical energy required to walk to school, to contribute labour to its maintenance and to stay awake in class are missing in a hungry child. At this point it may be easier to drop out.

The economic burden of providing school fees and materials particularly affects the resource-poor female-headed households. Our data revealed that of the 32 families who had children who had dropped out, 14 (43.8%) were female-headed households, and in some of these households there were multiple drop-outs. This was particularly true in Namilongo. Although the sample size is small it indicates that female-headed households have an especially difficult task to ensure that their children will be able to enter school and once in school, continue through to completion. The problem of children's education, of either sex, in female-headed households deserves further research.

A school reflects the economic conditions of the community in which it is situated. In the case of the four schools in this study, our overall observations revealed that they had poor facilities and lacked instructional materials. All four schools lacked teachers' desks and sufficient student chairs or desks, except in Standard 8. Even here, students shared whatever desks were available, often three or four crowded into a single desk. It was not uncommon to see children sitting on the floor in all the schools. Teachers' manuals, chalk and visual materials were in constant short supply. Few classrooms had any materials on the walls. The lack of materials was acknowledged by 55 percent of the teachers interviewed as one of the major problems they faced in providing meaningful instruction in their schools. This problem was further reflected in the general condition of the schools. As mentioned earlier, all of them were using student labour, sometimes as punishment, to bring materials and other supplies to the school in order to upgrade the school surroundings or to maintain the school buildings and compound.

Large enrolments in the two northern schools-- Msalabani and Nsondole-- and in Namiwawa were responsible for parental efforts to expand the physical structures in those schools. These efforts included their molding and firing of bricks on a self-help basis. Namilongo School, which began as a self-

help project, particularly suffers from overcrowing and lack of instructional facilities.

Once pupils arrive at school, they are expected to have writing materials and exercise books. In none of the four schools were these materials provided. Our observations revealed that often children were in class but had no pen or pencil. Pupils were forever borrowing pens from one another. Most children had at least one exercise book, but none had textbooks. Textbooks were communal property shared between several pupils.

The economic conditions that act as constraints on the children in our sample and the schools they attend are not limited to one gender alone. Lack of educational resources affects both sexes from our observations. Of the 32 families who had children who had dropped out, over twice as many boys had dropped out as girls (26:12). The major reason given was lack of school fees and uniforms (23.7%). This was the reason given in the cases of 26.9 percent of the male drop-outs and 16.6 percent of the female drop-outs (see Table 6). Contrary to national statistics which show a higher incidence of drop-outs among girls, in our small sample, we found more incidences of male drop-outs.

Yet the initial decision to send a boy or girl to school may be indirectly influenced by economic considerations. A girl's uniform costs twice that of a boy's and she is perceived to be less of an economic investment than a son whose education is perceived to more directly enhance the economic well being of the family. Consequently, such perceptions brings us to the sociocultural factors that directly and indirectly shape a girl's opportunities for education and her perserverance through the educational ladder once she gets there.

SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS

That both home and school are significant transmitters of cultural norms and expectations has long seen recognized (Spindler 1974; Roberts and Akinsanya 1976; Richardson 1982). Gender-structuring is an integral part of this socialization process. It shapes the attitudes that a society has about the capabilities and potentialities of females and males. As noted in an earlier section of this report, in Malawian society the primary role of females is structured for reproduction-- to nurture and support. In contrast, the role of males is structured for production-- to innovate and manage. Particularly in the rural areas, females are viewed as being less intelligent than males, less capable of concentration, and therefore less able to achieve academically. Parents, as the backbone of adult society, tend to reinforce such generally held views. Their gender-specific

attitudes have a profound impact on the educational opportunities and achievement of their female and male children. These attitudes are further reinforced by the gender perspectives of teachers and administrators in the school setting. Finally, they are internalised in the children themselves, so that their self-expectations are circumscribed by the expectations of others.

The gender-structuring process begins in the home. Parents and other adults provide role models for what is expected. Where one parent is missing this may directly or indirectly affect the child's development. The specific educational background of a child's parents has a direct bearing on the child's educational opportunities and aspirations. If one parent has little or no formal education the child's educational opportunities are more often limited. In most cases, the parent with less formal education is the mother. Her attitudes about education, especially for girls, will be transmitted to her daughter. If the mother, or primary female guardian, believes that education will improve her daughter's economic and social opportunities, she is more apt to support her daughter's efforts to pursue education. However, if she believes that her daughter's role as a future wife and mother will be compromised by formal education, she may sabotage her daughter's efforts. Likewise, male parents and guardians have a profound influence on children of either sex. Usually, though not always, it is the male parent or guardian that pays school fees. Just as important, the father is most often the parent that has had some experience in the formal education sector, and is therefore, in a better position to provide academic support through assisting a child with homework, as we found in this study. Moreover, the attitudes that fathers transmit to their daughters become a significant factor in the girls' academic achievement (Mbilinyi 1969). The next section outlines the household composition of the 80 students in the study and the educational attainment levels of their parents, before going on to a discussion of the parents' attitudes toward educating girls in comparison to boys.

Household Composition and Parents' Educational Background

The majority (75%) of the 80 pupils of both sexes in the study live with their mothers, but only 37.5% (15) of female pupils live with their fathers, while 60% (24) of male pupils live with their fathers (see Table 7). Consequently, fewer girls than boys have the economic and psychological support of a male parent.

An equal number of male and female pupils live with an uncle (6:6) and/or aunt (2:2). Two male pupils reside with an older brother and two with an older sister, whereas no female pupils live with older brothers. However, four girls

TABLE 7

RELATIONSHIP OF GUARDIAN/PARENT TO PUPIL BY GENDER

Relationship to Pupil	Male Pupils	Female Pupils
Father	24	15
Mother	30	30
Uncle	6	6
Aunt	2	2
Older Brother	2	0
Older Sister	2	4
Grandfather	2	2
Grandmother	2	2

live with older sisters. Finally, two male pupils and two female pupils stay with grandfathers, and an equal number in both cases with grandmothers. Therefore we can conclude that many pupils depend upon other relatives than parents for their primary support.

Of the 80 pupils, less than half (49.4%) live with both mother and father (see Table 8), whereas 20.2% live only with their mothers. Another 3.8% live with older sisters, two solely with their grandmothers and one lives with an aunt. Of the 22 students living in female-headed households (27.9% of the total 79 households), 17 are females and 5 are males. This means that 42.5% of the female pupils live in female-headed households in contrast to 12.5% of male pupils. However, there is great variation by location. In the most northern community-- Msalabani-- 85% of the pupils live with their parents. In Nsondole the number who live with both parents is half and in Namiwawa it is 40 percent. However, in Namilongo only 21.1% of pupils live with both parents. Consequently, in the two predominantly Muslim communities in the north, more pupils live with their natal parents than in the two southern communities. In contrast, 63.2% of the pupils in Namilongo and half of the pupils in Namiwawa live in female-headed households (FHH). We have already alluded to the gender-specific problems that these FHHs face in terms of available resources. Because there exists a much higher percentage of female (77.3%) than male pupils (22.7%) in these households, the female pupils are more apt to be at risk in terms of the economic constraints that may interfere with their education.

In addition to living with parents, maternal uncles bear a primary responsibility for the well-being of children in the matrilineal areas where our research was carried out. This was particularly true in Nsondole (see Table 8) where the mother and uncle were the principle guardians in 30 percent of the pupils' households. In five percent of households, the mother and grandfather were interviewed as the primary guardians. Grandparents accounted for 6.3 percent of the pupils' guardians and aunts/uncles for 5.2 percent. An older sister was the primary guardian for 15.8% of the pupils in Namilongo, and in Nsondole one pupil lived with her mother and grandfather as did one pupil in Msalabani. Finally, an uncle and sister in Nsondole and an uncle and grandmother in Namiwawa were the responsible guardians for one pupil in each case. We can conclude, then, that household composition varies considerably across the four communities and that where significant numbers of female-headed households exist, as in the southern communities, this will have a bearing on the economic resources available for children's education.

: Pupils' Household Type by Study Site (Percentages[+])

Household Type	Mantabani (N = 20)	Nuondolo (N = 20)	Namiwawa (N = 20)	Namilongo (N = 19*)	% of Total Sample (79
Mother and Father	85.0	50.0	40.0	21.1	49.4
Mother only (FHH)	-	-	45.0	36.8	20.2
Mother and Uncle	-	30.0	-	-	7.6
Grandparents	10.0	5.0	5.0***	5.3***	6.3
Aunt and/or Uncle	-	5.0	-	15.8**	5.2
Older sister only (FHH)	-	-	-	15.8	3.8
Mother and Grandfather	5.0	5.0	-	-	2.5
Sister and Uncle	-	5.0	-	-	1.3
Grandmother and Uncle	-	-	5.0	-	1.3
Mother and Older Brother	-	-	5.0	-	1.3
Both parents absent*	-	-	-	5.0	1.3

+ Rounded to nearest tenth

* A boy in Std.5 and a girl in Std.8 turned out to be siblings. In one stude home there were no parents or guardians.

** In Namilongo one family had aunt & uncle; one uncle only, another aunt only

*** Grandmother only

Educational Level of the Parents/Guardians

If we look at Table 9, we can see that twice as many female guardians as male guardians have no education, while the percentage who have achieved basic literacy and numeracy (Standards 1-5) is nearly equal. The percentage of male guardians completing Standards 6-7 (10.5%) slightly exceeds that of female guardians (9.5%), but then the gender gap widens. The percentage of male guardians who have completed Standard 8 (19.3%) far exceeds that of female guardians (9.5%). The percentage of females who attained the first two years of secondary school is only 1.4 percent in contrast to males (5.3%). None of the female guardians and only 3.5 percent of the male guardians achieved the last two years of secondary school. None of the parents of either sex reached the tertiary level.

We have noted earlier that parental opportunities for education have a bearing on their attitudes toward educating their children. Many of the parents who cited "negative parental attitudes toward educating girls" as a key factor of female drop-out rates in Zomba District were, themselves, not formally educated or, if so, only minimally. Mothers seemed to recognize that perhaps their own attitudes toward education in general, and toward educating girls especially, might negatively impact their daughters' persistence through school. Over eight percent of the fathers or male guardians included male bias towards educating boys as a factor of girls' lack of opportunities and persistence in school (Table 4).

Parents/Guardians' Attitudes Toward Educating Girls

We measured parents' attitudes about educating girls in comparison to boys in several ways. To obtain their opinions of gender-specific intellectual potential, we asked parents who they thought were more intelligent, girls or boys. A little less than a quarter of female guardians (21.6%) and 12.35% of male guardians believe that both are equally intelligent, but 68.4 percent of fathers/male guardians and 70.3 percent of mothers/female guardians stated that boys are more intelligent (see Table 10). Thus among many parents, there exists a perception of an intelligence gender gap that has the potential of adversely affecting what girls perceive to be their intellectual, and hence academic, capabilities.

Another measure of parents' gender attitudes toward education was a question asking them whether they think it more important to educate a boy or a girl. Not surprisingly, the vast majority (93.9%) said both should be educated (see Table 11a). However, 1.4 percent of female guardians and 8.8 percent of male guardians related that they thought it is more

TABLE 9: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF GUARDIANS/PARENTS (Percentages*)

Level of Education	Female Guardians(N=74)	Male Guardians(N=57)	Percentage of Total (N = 131)
None	41.9	22.8	33.6
St. 1-3	24.3	24.6	24.4
St. 4-5	13.5	14.0	13.7
St. 6-7	9.5	10.5	9.9
St. 8	9.5	10.5	10.7
Form 1-2	1.4	5.3	3.1
Form 3-4	0	3.5	1.5
College/University	none	none	0.0
TOTALS	100.1*	100.0	99.9*

*Rounded to nearest tenth.

TABLE 10

Who Is More Intelligent - Girls or Boys?

A Comparison of Guardians & Pupils by Gender (Percentages)

OPINION	GUARDIANS		PUPILS		% of TOTAL (N=211)
	Female (N=74)	Male (N=59)	Female (N=40)	Male (N=40)	
Boys	70.3	68.4	85.0	82.5	76.6
Girls	8.1	19.3	5.0	7.5	10.0
Both	21.6	12.3	10.0	10.0	13.4

TABLE 11a

GUARDIANS' PREFERENCE FOR EDUCATING CHILDREN BY GENDER (Percentages*)

GUARDIANS' OPINIONS	FEMALE GUARDIANS (N = 74)	MALE GUARDIANS (N = 57)	% OF TOTAL SAMPLE (N = 131)
More important to educate boys	1.4	8.8	4.6
More important to educate girls	2.7	-	1.5
Both should be educated	95.9	91.2	93.9
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Rounded to nearest tenth

TABLE 11b

GUARDIANS' PREFERENCE FOR EDUCATING CHILDREN BY GENDER: A COMPARISON OF MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN GUARDIANS

GUARDIANS' OPINIONS	MUSLIM GUARDIANS (N = 53)		CHRISTIAN GUARDIANS (N = 78)	
	Female (N=29)	Male (N=24)	Female (N=45)	Male (N=33)
More important to educate boys	-	4.2%	2.2%	12.2%
More important to educate girls	-	-	4.4	-
Both should be educated	100.0	95.8	93.3	87.9
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	99.9*	100.0

* Rounded

important to educate boys because they are more apt to return the educational investment and are able to concentrate on studies, whereas girls are less "serious" and do not know how to concentrate because they have other things on their mind, presumably getting married and becoming mothers. Although 2.7 percent of mothers (all of them Christian) related that they thought it more important to educate girls because they will get a good job and support their families, no fathers thought it more important to educate girls. In a similar study of parental attitudes toward education in rural Kenya, Davison (1984) found that 10.4% of mothers and no fathers preferred educating girls. Table 11b shows that a higher percentage of Christian guardians of both sexes believes that it is more important to educate boys than Muslim guardians. No Muslim female guardians and only 4.2% of male guardians felt it more important to educate boys. Thus the assumption that Muslim parents prefer educating sons to daughters does not apply for this small sample of 53 Muslim guardians in Zomba rural.

In looking at parental attitudes towards an ideal educational attainment level for boys in comparison to girls (Table 12a), we can see that there are slight differences in the achievement levels prescribed by female and male guardians for girls in contrast to boys. Whereas 5.4 percent of female guardians think Standard 8 is an optimal level of education for girls, only 3.5 percent of fathers agree. Twice as many fathers (8.8%) as mothers (4.1%) think girls should attain a Form 2 education. Roughly an equal number of female (48.7%) and male (47.4%) guardians think that girls should be educated to Form 4. In contrast, a slightly smaller percentage of both sexes (female guardians: 41.9%, male guardians: 40.4%) think girls should attain a university education.

If we look at the figures for educating boys, twice as many female guardians as males think Standard 8 is sufficient, although the percentages are low. For Form 2 the percentages are still low for boys, men: 3.5% and women: 1.4%. Slightly more than a quarter of female guardians (28.4%) and male guardians (26.3%) regard a Form 4 education as sufficent for boys. The majority in each case (females:67.6%, males: 68.4%) think the optimal educational level for boys is university. This contrasts sharply with the guardians' views about the optimal educational level for girls. Only 41.9% of female guardians and 40.4% of male guardians think that girls should have a university education. Hence, not only is there some bias about who should go to school, but there is a difference in the level of education that parents think their sons and daughters should be achieving.

Interestingly, a higher percentage of boys (7.5%) and girls (5.7%) felt that Standard 8 was a sufficient level of educational attainment than their parents/guardians. However, this level of education was limited to Standard 5 pupils (2 girls and 3 boys). None of the Standard 8 pupils viewed

Table 12a

GUARDIANS' EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS FOR THEIR SONS AND DAUGHTERS (Percentages)

Desired Level of Education	FEMALE GUARDIANS (N=74)		MALE GUARDIANS (N=57)	
	Male Pupil	Female Pupil	Male Pupil	Female Pupil
Standard 8	2.7	5.4	1.6	3.5
Form II	1.4	4.1	3.5	8.8
Form IV	28.4	48.7	26.3	47.4
University	67.6	41.9	68.4	40.4

Table 12b

PUPILS' EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS IN STANDARD 5 AND STANDARD 8 (Percentages)

Desired Level of Education	STANDARD 5 (N=40)		STANDARD 8 (N=40)		TOTAL %
	Male Pupil	Female Pupil	Male Pupil	Female Pupil	
Standard 8	15.0	10.0	-	-	6.25
Form II	-	-	5.0	-	1.25
Form IV	25.0	45.0	25.0	50.0	36.25
University	60.0	45.0	70.0	50.0	56.25
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Standard 8 as the end point in their education. There was only one male student in Standard 8 who thought of Form 2 as a terminal point in his education whereas three guardians (2 male and 1 female) thought of it as a terminal point for boys.

Looking at the Form 4 level, although 26.3% of male guardians and 28.4% of female guardians thought of Form 4 as a desirable goal for males, only 25.0% of boys thought of it as a terminal point. The percentage of girls who viewed Form 4 as a terminal point was more roughly equivalent to the percentage of parents/guardians. For girls, the percentage who aspired to a Form 4 education was 47.5% while the percentage of male guardians was 47.4% and female guardians 48.7%.

At the university level, while 67.6% of female guardians and 68.4% of male guardians think of the university as a terminal point for boys, 65.0% of the boys interviewed regard it as their desirable terminal point. The proportion of male guardians (40.4%) and female guardians (41.9%) who see their female children going to university is slightly less than the proportion of girls who see themselves reaching university (47.5%). It is significant that the discrepancy between boys and guardians/parents at the highest level of education attainment is less than the discrepancy between girls and their guardians/parents for this level of education attainment. A higher percentage of girls aspire to a university education than their guardians/parents wish for them. At the moment very few Malawian women attain a university level education but the girls' aspirations indicate that given a chance, a greater proportion of women will enter the university in the future.

Parental Decisions Regarding Education: Male Bias

We have seen that male bias exists among some parents and guardians in their opinions about intelligence and who should go to school. A stronger bias emerges in their opinions about the level of educational attainment that is ideal for males in comparison to females. However, we need to push beyond the realm of opinion to actual behavior in order to evaluate to what extent parents' attitudes are reflected in their choices about who goes to school. We measured this in two ways: by eliciting birth order information from the 80 pupils to see how many female pupils in comparison to male pupils are first born, second born, etc. on the assumption that parents will more often send first-born sons to school than first-born daughters. Second, we elicited information about the number of sons and daughters presently attending school in each of the pupil's families to ascertain gender differences in the number of children attending by location and by religion. The latter was important to verify whether or not in the two areas where

large numbers of Muslims exist, parents do, in fact, send more boys than girls to school as has been assumed.

If we look at Table 13, we can see that out of the 79 households in the sample, 139 boys are enrolled in school and 103 girls. Of the total 242 enrolled in school, 57.4% are male and 42.6% are female, or an average gender rate of 1.8 boys per household and 1.3 girls per household. Thus, in the sample of households nearly 15 percent more boys than girls attend school.

We found earlier that Muslim parents do not express a preference for educating boys (Table 11b). Table 14 demonstrates that out of the 30 Muslim households in the sample, 43.3% of households had one or more boys than girls enrolled in school. In contrast, 56.7% of non-Muslim (largely Christian) households had one or more boys than girls enrolled. Of the households with one or more girls than boys enrolled, 36.7% of Muslim households had more girls attending school in contrast to 28.6% for Christian households. In 20 percent of Muslim households and 14.7 percent of Christian households equal numbers of boys and girls were enrolled in school. In the predominantly Christian community of Namiwawa, male bias was most pronounced with eight cases of significant male bias where two or more boys than girls in the household were attending school and in four of the eight households no girls attended. In the two areas where Muslims accounted for 55% and 60% of the sample households respectively, only three Muslim households in one community and four in the other had significant male bias. If we compare parental attitudes in Table 11b with the school enrolment figures in Table 14, we can conclude, at least for this small sample in Zomba Rural, that male bias in family decisions about education more often exists among Christian families than among Muslim families.

Another way of measuring male bias in family decisions about education is by examining the birth order for an equal number of female and male pupils, in this case, our sample of 80 pupils. Table 15 demonstrates that of the 40 male pupils, 35% are first-born children while only 27.5% of female pupils are first-borns. Nearly twice as many male pupils (22.5%) as female pupils (12.5%) are second-borns. But the percentage reverses with third-borns. Only ten percent of male pupils and 22.5% of female pupils are third-borns. Also there are a greater number of fourth- and fifth-born female than male pupils. Thus it appears that more often first- and second-born sons are educated in comparison to first- and second-born daughters based upon our sample. Nevertheless, girls who are the born third in their families stand a better chance of being educated than boys who are third-borns. Finally, 65.1% of the pupils in our sample were among the first three children born in a family which on average has 6-7 children. This means that children who have a later birth order are less apt to have a chance to go to school.

TABLE 13 : Total Number of Children being Educated by Gender in Household Samp (N = 79)

Gender	Total No.	% of Total Pupils(N=242)	Pupils per Household (N=79)
Boys	139	57.4	1.8
Girls	103	42.6	1.3
TOTALS:	**242**	**100.0**	**3.1**

TABLE 14: A COMPARISON OF MUSLIM and CHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLDS: CHILDREN ENROLLED IN SCHOOL BY GENDER (Percentages)

Proportion of Pupils Enrolled by Gender	Muslim Households (N = 30)	Non Muslim Households (N = 49)	% of Tot
One or more boys than girls	43.3	56.7	48.1
One or more girls than boys	36.7	28.6	31.6
Equal no. of girls & boys	20.0	14.7	20.3
TOTALS:	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

TABLE 15: PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS (N = 80) BY BIRTH ORDER

BIRTH ORDER	MALE PUPILS (N=40)	FEMALE PUPILS (N=40)	% OF TOTAL (N=80*)
First born	35.0	27.5	31.3
Second born	22.5	12.5	17.5
Third born	10.0	22.5	16.3
Fourth born	7.5	12.5	10.0
Fifth born	2.5	7.5	5.0
Sixth born	7.5	10.0	8.8
7th-11 born	15.0	7.5	11.3

Parents' Attitudes Toward Education and Pupils' Use of Time

Once children are enrolled in school, parental attitudes about educating males versus female pupils persist. Mothers/female guardians have a great influence on their daughters, not only in their expressed attitudes toward education and homework, but in the demands they make on their daughters' labour time. In a question related to academic achievement, several female pupils stated that the reason boys are more intelligent than girls is because they have more time to study after school than girls who are burdened by a multitude of domestic tasks. At least one male pupil cited the heavy burden of household work as being a reason for girls' high drop-out rates, and a group of female teachers at one of the schools attributed high absenteeism among the girls at their school to the numerous domestic duties they have to perform, such as going to the grinding mill, food processing and childcare. In fact, during a visit to one school, a Standard 6 girl rather than her Standard 8 brother was requested by her sister to return home to care for younger siblings while their mother took an infant brother to the hospital. Thus the girl lost a day of classes while her brother continued his classes.

Elsewhere in Africa (e.g., Egsmose 1981, for Kenya), it has been observed that pupils are expected by parents to carry a large share of the domestic duties at home. In a study of primary and secondary pupils in Nyeri District, Egsmose (1981) found that in a sample of 224 boys and 266 girls, 65.6% of the boys and 98.5% of the girls were responsible for household duties such as fetching water, minding younger children and processing food. In order to verify whether or not Malawian girls spend more time than boys in domestic tasks and hence have less time for homework, we carried out a time allocation study of 42 of the 80 pupils in the sample (52.5% of the total sample). Of the 42 pupils, 26 were girls and 16 were boys. The number of minutes and seconds of each activity engaged in over a 60-minute period were recorded, and then tabulated by gender and frequency of the activity. Table 16 demonstrates that girls, on average, spend more time on domestic chores (30.5 minutes out of an hour) than boys (11.9 minutes). These tasks include food processing, food preparation, cooking and cleaning up for girls. They also haul water and firewood, and chop the latter. Boys' chores are limited to carrying and loading crops, feeding animals, collecting stones for construction, sweeping the compound and hauling water. Girls spend more time in childcare (7.6 minutes) than boys (4.6 minutes). In Table 17 the domestic and childcare tasks have been lumped together. We can see that 63.5% of girls' time is spent in domestic tasks in comparison to 27.5% of boys' time. Boys spend on average 15.9 minutes of an hour in play and relaxation, girls only 4.9 minutes. Similarly, boys spend

TABLE 16: A COMPARISON OF THE WAY FEMALE AND MALE PUPILS' AFTER SCHOOL TIME IS ALLOCATED (60 - minute period)

Activity	FEMALE PUPILS (N=26) Average No. of min/sec.	% of hour	MALE PUPILS (N=16) Average of of min/sec.	% of hour	Average % of Total 60-min period.
Playing/relaxing	4.7	8.2%	15.9	26.5%	17.4%
Food processing & Preparation	17.0	28.3	0	0	14.2
Childcare	7.6	12.7	4.6	7.7	10.2
Leisure talking	3.1	5.2	8.9	14.8	10.0
Studying	3.1	5.2	6.3	10.5	7.8
Hauling water	6.4	10.7	1.3	2.2	6.4
Carrying/messages	1.5	2.5	3.4	5.7	4.1
Carrying/loading crops	0	0	4.3	7.2	3.6
Eating	3.1	5.3	1.1	1.8	3.5
Going to a shop on an errand	1.2	2.0	2.8	4.7	3.4
Going to Muslim School	3.7	6.2	0	0	3.1
Washing up plates, utensils	3.5	5.8	0	0	2.9
Collecting stones for construction	0	0	3.2	5.3	2.7
Sweeping house/compound	0.8	1.3	1.8	3.0	2.2
Fixing bicycle or tools	0	0	2.4	4.0	2.0
Collecting and cutting up firewood	2.3	3.8	0	0	1.9
Selling items in a grocery store	0	0	1.9	3.2	1.6
Herding/feeding animals	0.5	0.8	1.3	2.2	1.5
Bathing/changing clothes	0.8	1.3	0	0	6
All Others	0.5	0.8	0.8	1.3	1.1
TOTALS:	60.0	100.2*	60.0	100.1*	100.1*

*Rounded to nearest tenth

Table 17: Amount of After-School Time Allocated to Domestic Chores, Leisure, Studying by Gender.

Activities	FEMALE PUPILS (N = 26) Average No. Min/Seconds	% of Hour	MALE PUPILS (N = 16) Average No. Min/Seconds	% of Hour
Domestic Tasks (including childcare & running errands)	40.8	68.0 %	22.7	37.8 %
Playing, relaxing & leisure talking	8.0	13.3	24.8	41.3
Studying*	6.8	11.3	6.3	10.5
Eating and health related activities	3.9	6.5	1.1	1.8
All others (includes fixing bicycle, selling at shop, etc	0.5	0.9	5.1	8.5
TOTALS:	**60.0**	**100.0**	**60.0**	**99.9****

* **Includes two girls going to Muslim School**

** **Rounded.**

8.9 minutes in leisure talking, girls 3.1 minutes. Boys spend more time carrying messages than girls (3.4 minutes to girls' 1.5 minutes). They also have twice as much time for studying. Whereas girls only have on average 3.1 minutes out of an hour to study, boys have 6.3 minutes. One interesting occurrence is that two girls out of the 26 were also attending "Muslim School" (Koranic School). This means that these girls must sandwich in additional classes, which last an hour or two, into their already overburdened after-school schedule.

Even though the sample is small, this study does validate quantitatively that for at least one group of pupils in one area in Malawi, girls do spend more of their time after school in domestic labour than boys, and that they have less time for study. In order to document these findings further, time allocation studies for larger groups of pupils in other parts of Malawi should be carried out. But what the time use study does point to is that the way gender relations of production are structured in Malawi, girls have less time for school-related activities, including homework.

Assistance with Homework

Although pupils have little time for homework, once assigned, what support do they receive from family members? We asked the pupils and their guardians who helps them with their homework. For thirty percent of male pupils nobody helps them; they struggle on their own (see Table 18). Only 17.5% of female pupils get no help with homework. Older siblings, especially older brothers (30% for boys and 22.5% for girls), are the ones who most often assist these pupils. Fathers help 12.5% of their daughters and 10% of their sons, thus fathers provide academic support to more daughters than sons. Older cousins more often assist female pupils (12.5%) than male students (7.5%) and aunts more often help girls, while uncles help boys. Noticeably, very few mothers assist, mainly because many of them may not be formally educated. This means that the greatest encouragement in terms of time spent in assisting homework comes from older siblings who themselves are in the process of schooling or have been to school.

Teachers' Attitudes Toward The Education of Girls

Once in school, students fall under the influence of teachers. The way teachers structure and select the interaction process with pupils shapes girls' and boys' participation and persistence in school. Using classroom observations, we found that of the 8 subjects that were observed in all the schools, only in Arithmetic was there an equal number of boys and girls (35) called upon by teachers to answer questions in class. In English, twice as many boys

TABLE 18: A Gender Comparison of WHO HELPS PUPILS WITH THEIR HOMEWORK (percentage

Helping Relative	Female Pupils (40)	Male Pupils (40)	% of Total* (80)
Older brother	22.5	30.0	26.3
Older sister	12.5	5.0	8.8
Nobody	17.5	30.0	23.8
Father	12.5	10.0	11.3
Cousin	12.5	7.5	10.0
Aunt	12.5	2.5	7.5
Uncle	5.0	10.0	7.5
Mother	5.0	0	2.5
Grand father	2.5	0	1.3
Friend	2.5	0	1.3
TOTALS:	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.3**

*** Rounded to nearest tenth.**

(101) as girls (51) were asked questions by the teacher. Only in Chichewa, generally regarded as an easy subject, were more girls (20) than boys (14) asked to answer questions in class (see Table 19). Although only 33 lessons were observed in all the schools, these initial findings indicate the selective nature of questioning in the classroom.

When general statements about pupils' classroom behavior were read to teachers at the two levels (Standard 5 and 8) and they were asked to associate the behavior with girls or boys, they agreed that girls are unlikely to raise their hands in class and are shy. Although 80% of the teachers believed that girls are better behaved than boys, at the same time an equal percentage thought that boys come to class better prepared. In addition 90 percent felt that boys more often know the answers to questions when called upon. On a more positive note, however, 50 percent of the teachers indicated that girls rather than boys tend to present clean work. Only in one Standard 5 class at Namilongo School were girls characterized positively by their class teacher. He noted that they often raise their hands to answer questions, are polite, well behaved and in most cases know the answers to questions when called upon. He also thought that they present clean work and are generally more intelligent than the boys.

In terms of overall academic achievement, ninety percent of the teachers interviewed thought that boys perform better than girls in class. Among the twelve reasons given for boys' better performance were girls' lack of ambition and spirit of competition, as well as girls' so-called "immorality acts." Sixty percent of the teachers said that girls lack the ambition to work hard because they are lazy. An equal percentage felt that repeating Standard 8 often demoralizes them. Fifty percent of the teachers mentioned teenage pregnancies and the pressure to get married as two reasons why girls do not perform better than boys in school. It was apparent that all the reasons given by teachers for boys' better performance were negative responses about girls rather than positive responses about boys. The teachers' negative attitudes toward the girls' academic ability not only reflects the teachers' biases and stereotypes about girls' performance in class but also act to thwart any academic ambitions they may have. Several of the teachers interviewed believe that their Standard 8 pupils would not pass the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations no matter how hard they tried. There was one case of an ex-pupil who had written to her sister at one of the schools telling her that she did not have a chance of passing her examinations at that school. Unfortunately, the letter was intercepted by the headmaster who went ahead and punished both sisters for telling the truth about the school.

Teachers' biases are also reflected in their ideas concerning the most important subjects for boys and girls to

TABLE 19

TOTAL NUMBER OF TIMES MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS WERE CALLED UPON TO ANSWER QUESTIONS IN CLASS IN THE 4 SCHOOLS

SUBJECT	MALE STUDENTS	FEMALE STUDENTS
English	101	51
Agriculture	50	33
Arithmetic	35	35
Chichewa	14	20
Geography	33	21
Science	52	33
History	18	16
Health Education	3	0

In all, 33 lessons were observed in the 4 schools

take in school. Seventy percent of the ten teachers interviewed mentioned Needlecraft, Home Economics and Health Education as the three most important subjects for girls. Forty percent of the teachers mentioned English as an important subject for girls and only 20 percent mentioned Arithmetic. For boys, English and Arithmetic were mentioned by 70 percent of the teachers while only 20 percent mentioned Agriculture as an important subject for boys. Obviously, teachers regard girls only as capable of pursuing "traditional" subjects which will make them efficient mothers and care givers. Compared with teachers, 35 percent of the girls in our sample saw English as the most important subject for girls while 55 percent of the boys thought Health Education and Home Economics are the two most important subjects for girls. The boys, like the male teachers, do not see the importance for girls of learning English as a language of communication in the commercial sphere (see Table 20). It is important to note that girls themselves do not regard Home Economics and Health Education as important as English for them to learn in school. Male pupils are the ones who think that Home Economics and Health Education are the most appropriate subjects for girls to learn.

Unlike male pupils and their teachers, male and female guardians regard English as one of the most important subjects for girls as well as boys to learn (Table 20). While 17.5% of male guardians and eight percent of female guardians thought that Arithmetic is an important subject for girls, 29.8% of male guardians and 20.3% of female guardians thought it second most important subject for boys to take (Table 21). Thus there is still the perception that girls are not as capable as boys in Arithmetic. The third most important set of subjects were Home Economics and Health Education for girls, and History and Agriculture for boys. Whereas male teachers view Needlecraft, Health Education and Home Economics as most important for girls, the male and female guardians, similar to the female pupils, view English as the most important subject for girls to take. Only 40% of teachers thought English important for girls.

Table 21 also shows that 35.0 percent of male guardians, 39.2 percent of female guardians and 30.0 percent of female pupils think that English is the most important subject for boys to take in school. While 17.5 percent of female pupils thought that Science was important for boys, no male and no female guardians thought of it as an important subject for boys. Similarly, male and female guardians did not think that Health Education is an important subject for boys while 7.5 percent of the girls thought it is important for boys. Guardians' lack of knowledge about the content of Science and its usefulness for both boys and girls may be a very important factor in their lack of opinion about it as a subject. They expressed no opinion about the importance of Science for both boys and girls in Tables 20 and 21.

TABLE 20

THE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECT FOR GIRLS TO LEARN - A COMPARISON OF GUARDIANS' AND STUDENTS' RESPONSES. (Percentages)

Subject	STUDENTS (N=80)		GUARDIANS (N=131)	
	Male (N=40)	Female (N=40)	Male (N=57)	Female (N=74)
English	15.0	35.0	33.3	52.7
Health Educ.	30.0	15.0	8.8	-
Home Econ.	25.0	15.0	-	6.8
Arithmetic	7.5	12.5	17.5	8.0
Science	7.5	7.5	-	-
Arts/Crafts	-	5.0	-	-
N/A *	-	-	8.8	9.5
Chicheŵa	7.5	-	-	-

* No answer provided

TABLE 21

THE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECT FOR BOYS TO LEARN - A COMPARISON OF GUARDIANS' AND STUDENTS' RESPONSES. (Percentages)

Subject	STUDENTS (N=80)		GUARDIANS (N=131)	
	Male (N=40)	Female (N=40)	Male (N=57)	Female (N=74)
English	52.5	30.0	35.0	39.2
Arithmetic	27.5	17.5	29.8	20.3
Science	2.5	17.5	-	-
Agriculture	7.5	10.0	15.8	-
Health Educ.	7.5	7.5	-	-
History	-	5.0	-	10.8
All Subjects	2.5	2.5	-	-
N/A *	-	7.5	7.0	16.2

* No answer provided

Guardians' views about the kind of subjects boys and girls should take, as well as male teachers' biases and male students' biases on gender-specific academic subjects affect girls' attitudes toward school.

Pupils' Attitudes Toward School

Asked about the things they liked and did not like about school, most girls (87.5%) and boys (97.5%) mentioned that they like the lessons and the reading and writing sessions (Table 22). When asked what they liked least about school, nearly a quarter of the girls (22.5%) stated they did not like "troublesome" boys who engaged in fights or who beat them up for no apparent reason. A noticeable percentage (12.5%) did not like school-related punishments that do not serve any purpose in the learning process. A similar proportion of boys (17.5%) agreed with the girls. As mentioned earlier in the report, we observed that some of the punishments inflicted on pupils seem to be aimed at using the students' as cheap labour in the schools' development projects. Kuthemba Mwale (1988 p.2) in his study of school drop-outs, observes that among the school-related causes of drop-outs are school policies that adversely affect tardy pupils, other offenders and minority groups. Many of the pupils in our study expressed the opinion that they did more punishments in the school than actual learning.

Other punishments inflicted on the pupils are particularly severe for female students. In one school, two girls were told to make twenty bricks each for being late. In the same school, three female pupils were told to make a total of 300 bricks for a similar infraction of the rules. Other female pupils were told to make bricks for making noise in class. The inconsistencies in the punishments that are given to the pupils are clear. The pupils are keenly aware of these inconsistencies but have very little opportunity for changing the situation. In the same school, one female pupil was not allowed to sit for her end-of-term Arithmetic test because she came to school with recently pierced ears with threads in them. The teacher told her to pull them out or stay out of the classroom. She had no choice but to miss the test.

Corporal punishment is also widely used in the four schools as one of the punishments for tardiness or unruly behaviour in class. In all schools boys were whipped on buttocks and girls were beaten on the palms for lateness. In one incident, one of the girls who was being beaten by her teacher for rudeness snatched the stick from the teacher's hand and threw it away. This action earned her more punishment. One of the teachers whipped nine male pupils for not tucking in their shirts.

TABLE 22

PUPILS OPINIONS ABOUT SCHOOL (Percentages)

	MALE PUPILS	FEMALE PUPILS
Most Liked		
Learning in class including reading and writing	97.5	87.5
Music	-	7.5
Least Liked		
Punishments	15.0	12.5
Playing in class	10.0	17.5
Fights/Troublesome boys	15.0	22.5
When teachers are absent during class	15.0	5.0
Not learning anything in class	5.0	-
Chatting, idle talk	5.0	5.0

Fifteen percent of the boys and five percent of the girls stated that they did not like it when teachers are absent during a class period. On several occasions, we observed that there was no teacher during a regularly scheduled class, and in one case of a Standard 8 class, a knowledgeable student took over the teaching of a sc[illegible] class in the absence of the teacher. Staff meet[illegible]s [illegible]rkshops appear to take precedence over regular t[illegible]g. [illegible]ne school, a teachers' meeting was held durin[illegible]ne first period and in another school, a teacher decided to go to town when he should have been teaching a Standard 5 class. During a whole week in one of the southern schools when the headteacher and two other teachers were away attending a workshop there were only four teachers in the school holding things together. The result was that many Standard 8 students deserted their classes and some did not even bother to come to school. These cases suggest that there is a need for rethinking the scheduling of activities that take teachers away from their regular teaching duties.

In addition to excessive punishments and absenteeism on the part of teachers, one girl said that the thing she liked least about school was Arithmetic. This dislike for the subject may have been influenced by the negative attitudes of both the male teachers and male pupils towards girls' abilities in mathematics. An increasing number of careers require a working knowledge of Mathematics and unless girls as well as boys are encouraged to achieve in Arithmetic, the chances for gaining a foothold in careers that require mathematics will have been reduced.

Pupils' Career Aspirations

We have observed in an earlier section the relationship between academic goals and career choices. Among the 80 pupils in the study, a large proportion of female pupils, for various reasons, wanted to become teachers and nurses (Table 23). The nursing profession was the most attractive because of the nurses' uniform and the desire to help others. The teaching profession was chosen for the long holidays which teachers seem to enjoy. Although female teachers were underrepresented in all the schools, the girls wanted to join the teaching profession. The few female teachers who teach in the junior classes may act as positive role models for these girls in spite of the negative attitudes of their class teachers. A group interview with nine female teachers at one of the schools confirmed that these teachers realize that they have a responsibility to act as positive role models, and when asked if they saw their role as female teachers any different than that of the male teachers, they responded that because they are mothers, they are more attuned to the health of their

Table 23

A COMPARISON OF GUARDIANS' CAREER ASPIRATIONS FOR THEIR CHILDREN AND PUPILS' CAREER ASPIRATIONS (Percentages)

CAREER CHOICE	GUARDIANS (N=131)				PUPILS (N=80)	
	MALE GUARDIAN		FEMALE GUARDIAN		MALE PUPIL	FEMALE PUPIL
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Nurse	-	43.0	-	48.6	-	45.0
Teacher	12.3	17.6	16.2	20.3	7.5	25.0
Clerk/Officer	19.3	12.3	20.3	4.1	17.5	10.0
Medical Doctor	5.3	10.5	5.4	2.8	2.5	2.5
Driver	-	-	-	4.1	15.0	-
Mechanic	19.3	-	8.1	-	5.0	-
Engineer	7.0	-	5.4	-	7.5	-
Pilot	5.3	-	1.4	-	7.5	-

[illegible] and women as health care providers [illegible] in informal [illegible].

It is interesting to note that both female and male guardians also ranked teaching and nursing as the two most desirable professions for their daughters, and clerk and mechanic as the two desirable professions for their sons. Table 20 shows that 10% of male guardians and 40.8% of female guardians wanted their daughters to be nurses. But 2.8% of female guardians and 10.5% of male guardians wanted their daughters to become doctors. An equal percentage of female and male guardians wanted their sons to become doctors. It appears, then, that male guardians more so than female guardians associate medical professions other than nursing with women. This may be because the latter have a narrower view of the career possibilities for girls. In fact, the range of career choices for girls cited by both guardians and pupils was much narrower than for boys, indicating that gender-structuring mechanisms and societal attitudes at this point in time in Malawi continue to place women in sectors of employment that are synchronous with their perceived social roles as caretakers. For example, the desirability of teaching and nursing for girls follows cultural conceptions of which careers are suitable for girls in contrast to boys.

Male pupils and male teachers, as well as male and female guardians, are intimately linked to the career choices that female pupils make and, therefore, perpetuate the process of gender-structuring. In their social interactions with girls in and outside the classroom they send verbal and non-verbal messages to girls that consciously and unconsciously provide limited scope for the kinds of career choices which they may make. The teachers who are in contact with a pupil at a time when she is most impressionable, have the potential for creating a lasting impression about what girls can and cannot do in later life.

The psychosocial factors that influence a girl's interest and persistence in school determine her later career choices. The next section focuses on individual pupils among the eighty that we observed over the three-months period as a means of providing an understanding of some of the psychosocial factors that influence a girl's decision to remain in school.

PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS

It is 7:15 a.m. and Amina Ndula[1] has just arrived at school. She is fourteen years of age and in Standard 5. She has walked two kilometers from home and is about ten minutes late for the opening of school. She enters the

[1] All the names of pupils in the case studies are fictitious to protect the anonymity of the pupils.

classroom quietly, noting that her girlfriends are already busy sweeping the veranda outside the Standard 6 and 7 classrooms. Mr. Ntoka, the Standard 5 teacher, is displeased. He confronts Amina with her tardiness and tells her to hold out her hands, palms up. She does as she is directed with her head lowered, eyes on the floor. She tries not to wince as the teacher beats her outstretched palms with a ruler. Then he tells her to go and sweep out the girls' toilet (pit latrine) as further punishment. Amina walks slowly off to the latrine with a sad expression on her face while the rest of her classmates hurry to the morning assembly.

Amina comes from a Yao Muslim family. Her mother has had no formal education and her father dropped out at Standard one. She has an older brother, aged 21, who dropped out of school after Standard six because he was "more interested in playing", according to Amina's father. His parents tried to persuade him to remain in school because even though they were uneducated, they wanted their children to become educated. But their son did not take their advice. Amina, however, would like to complete Form 4 and become a teacher. She knows that it is more difficult for girls to do well in school because they have too many household chores after school. She, herself, has to help take care of nephews and nieces, and help with grinding maize and preparing the evening meal.

Although girls drop out in the early grades because of peer pressure, she has seen girls drop out of Standard 8 because they are pregnant. She does not want this to happen to her. What Amina likes best about school are the English lessons and meeting her friends.

Amina's parents are subsistence farmers. They barely have enough cash each year from selling rice to pay for Amina's school fees and exercise books. Amina wears a white dress with green dots to school this day because her parents cannot afford to purchase the materials and pay a tailor to make her a school uniform. This disturbs Amina, especially because she knows that several pupils in another class were chased away by their teacher for not wearing uniforms. She is afraid that she may be sent home too.

At 7:55 a.m. Amina again enters the Standard 5 classroom, this time with her classmates. She sits down on the fifth row form on the girls' side of the aisle. The long mud forms about 8 inches off the floor, serve as benches for four to five pupils each. Six rows of forms are lined up on each side of the center aisle dividing the boys from the girls (a separation required by the Ministry of Education and Culture). Once settled

on her form with three other girls, she takes out a blue ballpoint pen and puts the end in her mouth while she pulls her Arithmetic exercise book out of her plastic "bookbag". She places her exercise book on her lap, similar to the other students, so she can write the exercises. Another girl in class has raised her hand to answer an Arithmetic question asked by the teacher. She stands up to give the answer. It is wrong. Amina and her classmates laugh at the girl's failure. Amina is uncomfortable. She twists in her seat and sticks her right thumb in her mouth. She looks out the paneless window of the classroom. She's not paying attention to the lesson which the teacher is writing on the peeling blackboard painted on the cement wall. She writes a note on a page from her exercise book and covertly passes it to a friend behind her. Then she begins talking in low tones with two friends next to her.

The teacher writes an Arithmetic exercise on the blackboard and directs the class to start working on it. Amina takes a long time to start writing. Instead she is talking with her friends. Mr. Ntoka sees the three girls talking and calls them to him. They come forward and kneel down in front of him. He orders them to go out immediately and to each bring a bundle of grass to the yard in front of the classroom. Amina walks slowly out of the classroom. She has missed another lesson.

Gender Comparisons: Case Studies of Individual Pupils

We have seen from the previous section that gender-structuring most often acts as a constraint to the educational opportunities and career choices that girls as a whole seek. But we have little understanding, at the level of the individual, how these gender-specific attitudes, opinions and behavior influence the choices that female pupils make about education. What are some of problems these pupils, of either sex, face and how do they cope with them or overcome them? What contributes to a girl's ability to persist in her education despite the odds? The case study above, and those that follow later, provide some insights.

Amina comes from a family with little or no formal education. Her older brother decided to drop out before completing primary school. Although he helps Amina with her homework when he is at home, most often he is away. Amina indicates that the domestic tasks that fill a girl's time (and her own) after school also prevent her from devoting as much time as boys do to studying. The lack of time for homework contributes, in Amina's opinion, to girls' overall lack of academic achievement.

It is likely that in the process of helping to prepare the evening meal, Amina's mother will caution her against becoming lazy, telling her that no man wants a lazy wife. Amina will undoubtedly listen respectfully. Similar to most Malawian girls, she wants to get married once she finishes school.

The best part of school, according to Amina, is the English lessons, and seeing her friends. Her goal is to finish secondary school and become a teacher. Amina is gregarious and enjoys talking, but this gets her into trouble in class. She often spends as much time "doing punishments" as she spends in class. Amina is reaching a point when many of her peers will drop out. Will Amina be among them?

George

George Idrisa sits on one end of a large wooden see-saw. He is fourteen and a Standard 5 pupil. His 18-year old friend sits on the other end of the see-saw. George wears a blue uniform shirt and khaki shorts and his Standard 7 friend wears a cream-coloured shirt with khaki shorts. Both are bare-footed. As they lazily push up and down, they discuss classwork on Science.

A group of nine boys approaches the see-saw. They are of the same age (around sixteen) but are in different classes. George is among the youngest in the group and among the smallest. Two of the boys ask George for a turn, but he says nothing and continues sitting. They push him off roughly and chase him away, shouting that he should go and join his own agemates. George moves off from the group a little, looking angry. He leans against the brick wall of the Standard 5 classroom. In a few minutes, he is joined by his older friend. George asks him what the boys have been talking about. The friend tells George that they were talking about a certain girl who had just left school because she is pregnant. George asks the name of the girl but his friend just laughs and tries to enter the empty classroom. George follows him and catches him by the wrist and squeezes, begging for the answer, but his friend just continues laughing and tells George to leave him. George persists and his friend asks him to swear secrecy and then points in the direction of a certain Standard 7 girl in the school yard. George laughs as the bell rings and other pupils begin to enter the classroom.

George sits down on the sixth brick form at the back of the classroom. He shares the form with two other boys. George is quiet. After about five minutes, the teacher enters. The other pupils are talking but George is quietly looking at one friend and another around the

classroom. The teacher organizes his materials on a window sill and after some minutes writes in large letters on the chalkboard in the wall "H/Education" for Health Education. George begins loooking around for his ballpoint pen which he has misplaced. He finds it on the floor at his feet. He puts it in his mouth and observes the teacher at the chalkboard, waiting for him to begin. The teacher begins by asking some questions of the pupils to review the previous lesson. George raises his hand four times for the ten questions asked, but is never selected to answer. He looks sad.

The teacher summarizes the lesson and puts notes on the chalkboard wall to copy. George gets out his exercise book and begins writing with the book open on his lap Once the teacher has completed writing the notes, he leaves the classroom. The pupils begin talking, including George. He talks with a seatmate for a few minutes and then the friend stands up to look out the window frame to see if the teacher is outside. He reports that he isn't. George goes over to a certain 12 year old girl who is slim and black and starts talking with her at the back of the classroom. They appear to be talking about a boy in George's row. The girl nods and smiles and George returns to his seat just before the teacher enters. The teacher tells students to stop writing and that it is time for the break.

George is the youngest of seven children. Two of his brothers and two sisters attend school. George lives with his maternal Muslim grandparents about four kilometers from the school. Neither of them had any formal education. He would like to attend University and become a professor because it is a high status job. He believes that the reason most girls drop out of school after Standard 1 is because of lack of school fees, but at Standard 8 they emulate their friends who dropped out of school. Nobody in George's family has ever dropped out of school.

After school, George has his lunch of "nsima" (hard maize porridge) and stew and goes to a Koranic school which he attends up to about six o'clock in the evening. From the Koranic school, George waits for his evening meal prepared by his sisters. He does not help with the evening chores and he studies for school while his sisters are busy washing up.

Compared with Amina, George's educational and career aspirations are higher. While she is satisfied to complete Form 4 and become a teacher, George aims to become a professor. The chances of George attaining his goal are slim due to the shortage of secondary school places in Zomba District. Although George is eager and willing to participate

in classroom activities as evidenced by his constant raising of his hand to answer a question, he is frustrated by the teacher who often times ignores him. He may lose interest in participating in class since his efforts are not rewarded.

Other than attending Muslim school, George has few domestic chores to perform in comparison to Amina. This lack of domestic chores enables him to do his homework after his evening meal, a luxury which Amina cannot afford.

In the cases of both these pupils, the teacher has the power to encourage or discourage the student in attaining his or her educational goal. However, whereas the teacher merely ignores George, the behavior of the teacher toward Amina has a more negative impact. Instead of disciplining Amina with a punishment directly related to her tardiness, such as being required to work on her studies after school, she is forced to clean toilets, an activity which has no direct learning outcome. For talking in class she and two other female pupils are forced to leave thus losing a whole class period. Amina therefore feels that the school system has conspired to punish her unjustly from the time she arrives at school to the time she leaves. Given Amina's family history of drop-outs and the negative reinforcement she gets at school, the likelihood of her continuing her education to Standard 8 is questionable.

Having presented two case studies of Standard 5 pupils whose primary education is half over, let us turn to the cases of four Standard 8 pupils, two girls and two boys, as a basis for comparing intra- and inter-gender differences that exist in their primary school experiences at the terminal point of primary education.

Charity

Charity Macheso leaves at 6:00 a.m. to walk the three kilometers from her home to the school where she is a Standard 8 pupil. She lives with her mother and two younger sisters in a mud brick house with a roof of iron sheets. Charity, who is fifteen, has not seen her father for about four years. He is a truck driver. She remembers that he used to come back from hauling goods between Malawi and Zimbabwe, tired and irritable at times. One day he left for Zimbabwe and never returned.

Charity's mother is ever busy trying to make ends meet. She is determined to educate her three daughters and raises chickens and sells the eggs locally to earn money for the family's needs, including school fees and uniforms. Three days a week she also goes to Lake Chilwa to purchase fish which she sells in a neighborhood market. On these days, Charity, as the oldest daughter, is responsible for the homestead and looking after the younger sisters. She works hard once she returns home

During the break, Charity makes corrections on the Arithmetic mock examination, then she begins reading her English book. When the teacher sees her still in the classroom, he stops and talks to her. The second period is English and during the 35 minutes, Charity is asked to read. She stands up and takes her turn, reading clearly. English and Arithmetic are her two best subjects.

During the second break, Charity goes with her friend to the small market adjacent to the school. They buy cooked cassava and sugarcane. After eating them, they go to the tap in the school compound and wash their hands, then enter the Standard 8 classroom again.

History is the next subject. This is more difficult for Charity. When the teacher calls on her, she fails to answer the question and lowers her head and covers her face with her hands when she sits down. Charity loses interest soon after and begins talking with a friend.

Faith

Faith Malunga is 15 years old and a Standard 8 pupil. Neither of her parents is living and so she stays with her two older sisters and a brother. The latter, who was educated to Standard 8, works in town and is away much of the time. She is the youngest in a family of eleven children. Faith's home is brick with corrugated iron sheets, glass windows and a cement floor. It is located less than half a kilometer from the school, part way up a hill. A cedar hedge encloses the compound.

Faith's sister believes that boys are more intelligent because they do not get pregnant. Faith believes that boys are more intelligent than girls because they think more. She would like to go to University and become a nurse some day. The thing she likes best about school is netball. The thing she likes least about school is when people "play during a class".

Faith is a lively, sociable girl who moves as if she has springs in her feet. She rarely sits still. On this day she arrives at school at 7:45 am., wearing her school uniform and a red shirt but with her hair uncombed. She enters the Standard 8 class and takes a seat in the second row of desks. There are only 16 out of the usual 38 pupils in class today, 11 girls and five boys.

Once seated, Faith looks around at the other pupils and begins to pare her finger nails with a knife, then

biting them into shape. The headteacher arrives and begins writing an Arithmetic lesson on the chalkboard. Faith looks up and watches him for a few minutes. She has forgotten her Arithmetic exercise book again so she continues with her nails. After about ten minutes, while other pupils are copying notes, Faith gets up and goes over to a friend's desk and sits down to talk with her while continuing to clean her nails. Looking out the window, she sees her boyfriend and her face shows excitement. He enters the classroom for a minute and sees the teacher at the chalkboard and disappears. Faith asks her friend if she can look at the friend's exercise book. They talk together while her friend is writing the Arithmetic exercise. Then Faith turns around and looks at the boys seated in the back row. After a minute, she returns her attention to what her friend is writing. It is now 8:00 am. The friend gives Faith a piece of paper on which she has begun to copy the class notes for Faith. Faith takes a ballpoint pen out of her hair and scratches her nose with it. She begins reading the back of an exercise book, then begins writing the lesson exercise.

At 8:30 am., the teacher calls on Faith and asks her to hand in her exercise book for marking. She tells him that she has not started writing yet. He tells her to begin writing the exercise. She is silent as she continues to copy her friend's notes. Six minutes later, she turns around to a friend in the back row and begins to talk with her, then returns to completing her notes. It has been an hour since Faith entered the class. She sticks her pen in her hair, reading over the exercise she has written. Then she looks out the window. She appears to be bored. She asks her friend if she has a different kind of pen. The friend gives her one. She continues with the notes.

The bell rings at 9:15 am. for the break. Faith goes to another friend's desk and tells her that she is not feeling well and she is going home after the break. During the break she goes out to the football (soccer) field where she meets her boyfriend and they go to buy sugarcane at the small market where women are parked under trees selling vegetables and fruits. Then Faith wanders off with her boyfriend.

The cases of Charity and Faith are illustrative of the variation that exists between girls of the same age and stage of their education: they remind us that just as important as it is to include gender differences in studies of education, we must also include the differences that exist within the same gender.

We know that pupils are a product of their home environments, which includes the economic conditions in which they grow up, the educational backgrounds of their parents and the psychological support they get from their families. Where the parents have little education and there are few materials to stimulate learning or encouragement to achieve academically the pupil is less likely to persist in school. In the case of Charity Machesa, although her father is absent and her mother is fully engaged in strategies for supporting her family, nevertheless Charity's mother's positive attitude toward education and her determination to see her three daughters finish school acts as an incentive for Charity's own academic aspirations. In contrast, Faith Malunga lacks parental support and guidance. Even though she lives with an older sister who has completed Standard 6, her sister does not value schooling in the same way that Charity's mother does. Moreover, Faith's sister is preoccupied with her own young family. Although the economic circumstances of Faith's family appear to be better, the lower value placed on education seems to offset this apparent advantage. In addition, it appears that parental control over Faith's behavior is lacking. In a meeting of parents at the school, Faith's sister commented to one of the researchers that Faith is a "difficult girl", implying that discipline at home is a problem.

Personality differences exist in the two girls that affect their attitudes toward education. Faith is an extrovert who is largely interested in socializing with her peers at this adolescent stage of her life. She is the last born in her family and is used to being taken care of rather than being responsible for others. Charity, on the other hand, is a first-born child and as a result she is accustomed to being given responsibility for younger siblings. She is more serious and conscientious than Faith and these traits are reflected in her attitudes toward school.

Faith and Charity have very different classroom environments, teachers and schools. From our school and classroom observations, it appears that the headteacher who is responsible for the Standard 8 class and the other teachers in Faith's school have less control over the pupils' learning than in Charity's school. Many times there was no teacher in the Standard 8 classroom in Faith's school, although a class exercise was on the chalkboard. Pupils used the absence of the teacher to pursue their own activities or often deserted the classroom. In contrast, the Standard 8 classroom in Charity's school, although crowded, was under the full control of the teacher who ensured that pupils actively participated in classroom learning. The general impression one gets of Faith's school is that the staff is apathetic, and this attitude is transferred to the pupils who, by Standard 8, have lost interest in school. In evaluating the chances for success in education of these two girls, we cannot isolate a single factor. Rather, the combination of home and school

together with individual differences in personality shape the chances of each pupil.

The next two cases concern the situations of two Standard 8 boys each from different locations and family backgrounds that illustrate how the circumstances under which boys learn are similar to girls, and yet distinct because of gender differences.

Cedrick

Cedrick Mponda is 17 years old and taller than anyone in his Standard 8 class. He has a dark complexion, medium length hair and is wearing black shorts and a white short-sleeve shirt and black jacket. His hair is uncombed.

His parents have gone to Balaka to find a new village for the family, leaving Cedrick as the first-born in charge of the homestead and his nine-year old sister who is in Standard 3. Cedrick likes the freedom of having his parents away and being solely responsible.

This Standard 8 pupil believes that boys are more intelligent than girls because they finish school. He'd like to go as far as Form 4, then become a bus driver. He thinks that girls get fed up with school once they have learned to read and write, and in Standard 8 some also get pregnant.

Cedrick goes to the same school as Faith. On this day, he enters the Standard 8 classroom at 7:30 a.m. and starts laughing at someone wearing an old jacket as he sits down at his desk in the third row. The headteacher is at the chalkboard writing out a lesson. Cedrick takes an exercise book out from under the desk and opens it. He begins copying the History exercise on the chalkboard, then whispers for several minutes with the boy at the desk in front of him with his head down so the teacher will not see him. After some minutes, he goes over to a friend who is telling a story about what happened to him over the weekend and Cedrick laughs loudly at the story. The headteacher turns around and catches his eye and Cedrick returns to his seat quietly. He does nothing except look around the class for about five minutes, his chin cupped in his hand. Then he gets up and goes out of the classroom, disappearing for a half hour.

When Cedrick returns to his desk and sits down, he finds that someone standing in front is blocking his view of the chalkboard, so he shouts at him to move, then walks up to the front of the classroom and shoves the boy away. Ten minutes later he gets up again and goes back to a friend and they talk for a few minutes, then shake

hands. Cedrick returns again to his desk. It is 9:15 and time for the morning break.

Outside, Cedrick meets a Standard 7 boy with whom he is friends and they go off to meet their girlfriends who also attend the school. After 30 minutes he runs to the Standard 8 classroom, entering for a moment to put his books under his desk, then disappears again to meet his friends at a pre-arranged place.

Nearly two hours later, Cedrick reappears at the classroom doorway, sees the headteacher is busy writing notes at the board, watches him for a minute, then heads for his desk, sinking carelessly into his seat. He turns around to the empty desk behind him and stretching his arms out on it, falls asleep. At 11:50 he realizes that the teacher has left the classroom again and he gets up slowly and walks to the doorway sleepily. He stares out at the school yard with his hands in his pockets, then looking back into the classroom, he motions his friend to follow him outside.

After socializing here and there for an hour, he and his friend together with their two girlfriends move off away from the school. Cedrick's day at school has come to an end.

Thompson

Thompson Linje is 18 years old and is one of the school's captains given responsibility over his fellow pupils. Although he lives about 5 kilometers away from the school, he is among the first to arrive at the school in the morning. One of his first tasks when he arrives is to supervise the other Standard 8 pupils in sweeping the school compound. He assigns portions to them and although some of them complain about the big portions they have been assigned, Thompson does nothing about it. He simply tells them to continue with their assigned tasks. When the bell rings for the morning assembly, the pupils run to hide their brooms and he walks away to the main courtyard where he joins the other pupils at assembly. When he reaches where the other pupils are standing, he tells them to make their lines straight and to keep quiet until the Headmaster and the other members of staff arrive to make announcements and to sing the National Anthem.

After assembly, Thompson tells the other pupils to walk to their classrooms and not to push one another. He and his fellow captains are the last ones to leave the courtyard for their classrooms. In class, Thompson sits in the front row on a metal stool without a table. He goes out and stands in the doorway to check if the

teacher is on his way to the classroom. After 5 minutes, he sees the teacher and rushes back into the classroom after having seen the teacher coming in the direction of the classroom. When he reaches his stool, Thompson finds some books on his stool. He asks for the owner of the books and gets no answer from his classmates. He places the books on the floor. Another pupil comes with his stool and sits next to him. He is the owner of the books. Thompson greets his friend and takes out an exercise book and starts reading. After 4 minutes, he goes to the back of the classroom to talk to a friend. The headmaster enters the classroom and the pupils rise and greet him in unison. He tells them to sit down. He asks why the classroom has not been swept and tells the girls to sweep the room before he starts teaching them. Thompson leaves the classroom together with his friend, leaving the girls making arrangements to sweep the room.

Thompson wants to go as far as University in his education, but he aspires to an office job as a typist once he finishes school because that is what his older brother does.

The seventh-born in his family, Thompson lives with both parents, an older brother and three sisters. His home is of fired bricks with a thatched roof and earthen floor. It has glass windows, two bedrooms and a sitting room. Thompson's parents, who have never been to school, grow cassava and maize and also raise sheep. His brother who completed Form 2, is the one who helps him with his homework. None of his sisters are in school. Both his mother and father think that boys are more intelligent than girls, but his mother thinks that if given the chance to be educated, girls should go as far as University, while his father thinks that finishing Form 4 is sufficient for girls.

We can see that in the cases of Thompson and Cedrick family background, particularly the role of an older educated sibling in Thompson's case, makes a difference. We have no knowledge of Cedrick's parents' educational background. We know only that they are absent, and therefore not available to provide the support and discipline that Cedrick seems to need. Although Thompson's parents have never been to school it is clear that they support their son's educational aspirations which include University.

In terms of personality, both boys appear to be sociable and each is a leader in his own way. What constrasts them is their experiences in school, and therefore, their attitudes toward education.

The learning environment in Cedrick's school, and more particularly, in the Standard 8 classroom, is detrimental to the pupils' education. Lack of discipline and absenteeism on the part of the teacher breed indifference for education on the part of the pupils. None of the five boys in our sample in this class took education very seriously. They often wandered in and out of class, and while in class, devoted as much time to "socializing" as to studying. It may be that Cedrick had a desire to be educated, but that his experience with education in this instance is so negative that he has lost interest in school. On the other hand, it may be that Cedrick is a child who needs a firm, disciplined teacher who inspires him to work.

Having compared the cases of the two boys, what do they suggest about gender differences when compared with the cases of the Standard 8 girls? While Thompson is given a leadership position in the school, Cedrick takes responsibility for his participation in school by leaving when he thinks he is not learning anything. In the case of Faith, she enters the classroom and, instead of working on the exercise given by the teacher, she starts paring her nails as a coping mechanism. In so doing, she plays into the teacher's conception of girls as passive. By quietly pursuing an activity of her own choosing, even though it is not related to learning, she is able to manage the class time to her advantage. In this way she remains anonymous in the class until the teacher asks for her exercise. At this point she manipulates the situation by pretending that she has been working. As long as the teacher is in the classroom, Faith plays the passive role expected of female pupils.

Given the same classroom situation, Faith and Cedrick react to it in different ways according to the gender expectations of their society. He acts assertively and leaves the classroom at will without much discipline from the teacher. She copes with the situation for awhile, then gives an excuse that is plausible and disappears during the break in an act of passive resistance. We found that the coping strategies of other male and female pupils in this class were similar to Cedrick's and Faith's. There were always more girls than boys in the classroom, even though more boys were enrolled in the class, and we observed that the boys tended to drop in and out, whereas once the girls came to class they were more apt to stick it out until noontime.

The case study of Thompson demonstrates that more often boys are perceived as leaders and this perception is reinforced in their appointment to leadership positions in school. Few girls are given the opportunity to assume leadership positions in mixed schools which means that they seldom have a chance to experience the sense of self-worth and responsibility that goes with the position. Charity has the potential for becoming a leader, but because she goes to

a mixed school where boys and male teachers predominate,(both in terms of numbers and social behaviour) her chances for leadership are negligible.

There is a perception in Malawian society that it is not good for males to be in a position of having to take direction from females. This manifestation of male dominance has a negative impact on females of all ages. It encourages submission and a negative sense of self-worth. The only educational environment where girls are actively encouraged to take leadership positions is in single-sex schools. The vast majority of girls in mixed schools are forced into submissive roles by fellow male pupils and by school staff. The only way for girls to begin developing in leadership positions is to build their self-confidence from the early grades by allowing them to assume small responsibilities in the classroom that draw on leadership skills rather than on domestic capabilities. The capacity of girls to expand their leadership skills will grow with encouragement so that by the time they are in Standard 8 they are equally capable of assuming a "captain's" role as boys.

The last two case studies selected for discussion are of a girl and a boy in a unique Standard 5 classroom; unique because there are more girls than boys, and because the positive attitudes of the teacher toward girls' academic abilities have a profound effect on their learning outcomes. We use the case studies from this classroom as an example of how the Malawian classroom might be restructured to encourage more girls (and boys) to persist in their education and to strive for educational excellence. Although negative aspects of gender-structuring still persist, for example, girls mopping the classroom while boys are exempt, nevertheless the overall outcome is positive and, therefore, has implications for policy intervention.

Mary

Mary Chapita is 16 years old and a Standard 5 pupil. Her mother and father are divorced and she lives with her mother and two sisters in a thatched roof, mud brick house two kilometers from the school. She has an older brother in his late twenties who completed Form 4 and a sister in her thirties who finished Standard 4. Mary's mother had only two years of schooling, but she thinks children of both sexes today should complete University. The reason girls drop out, she observes, is because the parents do not care for their children's education. Mary's educational goal is to complete Form 4.

Arriving at the school at 7:00 a.m., Mary goes to a borehole and collects water in a plastic bucket and hauls it to the Standard 5 classroom. She and two other girls have been assigned to mop the classroom floor.

Once this task is completed, the three girls go to the morning assembly, and then back to the Standard 5 classroom for the first period class.

The Standard 5 classroom is divided into two sections, one for girls and the other for boys, but instead of being split down the middle, with boys on one side and girls on the other, in this classroom the 18 girls sit in front of the class, on the cement floor, and eight out of the eleven boys sit crowded into three long, wood and metal desks at the back of the room. The other three boys sit in a row on the floor right in front of the boys' desks and behind the girls.

The classroom is sparse with no teacher's desk or materials on the walls. A painted chalkboard on the wall is peeling so badly that the teacher must lean down and write heavily for anyone to see what he has written. The corrugated zinc roof leaks during the rains and the pupils have to crowd into the dry spots to keep from getting wet. There are few textbooks to be seen. Yet despite such material handicaps, the learning environment is positive, largely due to the creative efforts of the teacher and his genuine concern for the pupils.

Mary sits down in the second row of girls at the end, putting her plastic bookbag under her to keep the chill of the cement floor from seeping into her body. It is 7:30 a.m. and the teacher has greeted the children and is now announcing a short speed test in Arithmetic. He explains to the pupils that anyone who gets 100% of the problems correct will be awarded 50 tambala (the equivalent to children of getting U.S. pennies). Those getting 90% correct will receive 25 tambala and those receiving a mark of 80% will receive ten tambala. The pupils scramble to get out their exercise books and papers and begin writing the test. Mary props up her knees, using her upper legs as a surface on which to write. She writes up to the end of the period when the teacher collects the tests.

During the break, Mary goes to the small market adjacent to the school and buys a plate of cooked cassava from a woman and shares it with a friend. When they've finished she runs to return the plate to the vendor before heading to the classroom. When she returns she goes to the spot where she has left the plastic bag marking her place in the classroom.

At 9:28 a.m. she gets out her English exercise book in preparation for the lesson and takes off her plastic shoes. Similar to half the girls in the class, she wears an ordinary print dress rather than the school uniform. She begins writing the English exercise the teacher has

written on the chalkboard, and then puts her ballpoint pen in her mouth, resting, as the teacher explains the directions for the exercise. Everyone is attentive. The teacher smiles often at the children as if he enjoys his work. Mary continues writing with the exercise book on her raised legs, but as one leg becomes tired, she stretches it out and shakes it.

At 10:01 a.m. the teacher announces the results of the Arithmetic speed test with ceremony. One of the smaller girls in the front row gets 100% and is awarded 50 tambala. The children clap for her. A boy and a girl get 90% and are given a 50-tambala piece to divide. Two more names -- Mary's and a boy's -- are called and they are awarded ten tambala each for getting 80% on the test. As Mary stands, she nervously smashes her pen against her fingers as the other pupils clap for her and the boy. Then she goes forward and kneels, as is customary for girls, to receive her ten tambala from the teacher.

After this small ceremony, the pupils settle back down to writing the English exercise. When she is finished, Mary covers her English exercise book with another book and passes it over to another girl in her row for exchange marking. For a minute she bites her fingernail, then whispers to a friend and shakes her leg again to relieve the cramping. The girl marking her exercise p sses back her book and Mary opens it to see her mark, then closes it and taking out the plastic bag from underneath her, puts the exercise book in the bag and takes out another exercise book. The English lesson is over and it is time for Chichewa.

The teacher begins by asking questions about Chichewa past tenses. He calls on three girls. The third girl gets a "very good" for answering correctly. The fourth pupil is a boy and the fifth a girl again. Mary watches with interest as the pupils begin to volunteer answers, but she does not raise her hand. She notices that more girls than boys are answering questions and often they are right. This is not unusual for this class. Mary takes her exercise book and looks at it. Then she laughs with a friend and stretches out both legs. The teacher asks her a question. She stands up to respond, covering her mouth with her hand shyly while she gives the answer. The teacher shakes his head and says, "No." Mary sits down covering her face with her hands. She laughs with embarrassment, then continues writing the notes. But then she notices that her ballpoint is beginning to run dry and she shakes it to make it write better.

At 11:10 a.m. the period ends and Mary arranges her books on the floor at her place, then leaves the room

quickly and rushes to the grass fence that hides the girls' latrine. She comes back in five minutes and goes to the mini-market next to the school to buy more cooked cassava with a friend. They share the food while talking and then return to the classroom in giggles.

The teacher introduces the Geography lesson. Because there are no maps on the walls, he has to draw a map of Africa on the chalkboard. He again asks the children questions by way of review. The girls, including Mary this time, know the answers but one boy fails to answer correctly twice. At 1:10 p.m. the teacher excuses the children as school is over. Mary leaves with the others to go home.

Henry

Henry Manda is in the same Standard 5 class as Mary. He is twelve years old and the nineth born. His mother is a widow who completed Standard 5. She wants her children to go farther in their education and, in fact, Henry has an older brother who completed Form 2 and an older sister who completed Form 4. In addition to Henry and a brother, three sisters currently attend school. It is one of his older sisters who helps Henry with his homework.

Similar to his older siblings, Henry would like to complete Form 4 and become an office clerk. He thinks that even though girls start school when they are older (many at about ten years), unless they get married or pregnant they can complete school. He believes that girls and boys are equally intelligent because he sees that the girls answer as many questions as the boys in class and they are usually right.

Henry goes to school this day wearing a blue uniform shirt and shorts. He is the smallest pupil in the Standard 5 class. When he enters the classroom at a little before 8:00 a.m., he puts down a small white cloth book bag on the floor in front of the boys' desks and sits on it next to two other boys. The lesson which has begun is Arithmetic. Henry looks through an Arithmetic textbook being shared by pupils for the page with the exercise the teacher has assigned. He can't find it and instead takes his ballpoint pen and throws it at the back of a girl seated in the front row. She jumps as if something has bitten her and looks back with a displeased expression on her face. He asks her to tell him the page number. She complies and he shakes his head up and down in happiness, then starts to solve the Arithmetic problems.

Ten minutes later Henry stands up and carries his exercise book to the front of the classroom to have the teacher mark the exercise. He leans over and grasps his knees while the teacher is marking it. When the book is returned, he looks and sees that he's got the problems correct and dances back to his place on the floor where he shows his exercise book to the boy next to him.

While the other pupils finish the exercise, Henry becomes bored. He takes his pen, bends up his knees and begins writing something on the upper part of his right leg. After some minutes, he spits on his palm and tries to clean off what he has written. He begins a drawing on his le[illegible]nd motions to a boy in a desk behin[illegible] him to look a[illegible]t he's drawing. The boy ignores him because he's b[illegible] correcting his exercise.

When the teacher begins lecturing, he quietly folds his arms across his chest and stretches out his legs to listen. The teacher, who is moving from row to row, lightly hitting on the head those who fail to answer a question correctly, stops at Henry's row and asks him a question. Henry answers part of the question correctly but then fails to finish and begins laughing. Just as the teacher is about to hit him, he gives the correct answer. The teacher retreats without comment.

During the next lesson, which is English, Henry opens up an English textbook and shows his friend some pictures, whispering a comment to him. The teacher sees him and angrily asks what he is d[illegible]ng. With an open smile, Henry responds slowly that he's been helping his friend to understand the pictures. The teacher returns to the chalkboard and the lesson. Then it is time for break.

Outside during the break, Henry catches his friend by the right hand and they go off to buy food at the mini-market adjacent to the school. Here he takes money out of his pocket and divides it with his friend so they can each buy what they want. There is a cluster of children in front of the two women selling cooked cassava, many of them smaller than Henry. He pushes them aside, except for one small girl. When he grabs her by the shoulder to pull her away, she hits him in the back. He decides to buy local cakes instead and then leaves to return to class.

During the next period, Chichewa is being taught and the teacher asks Henry to read from the textbook. Henry laughs nervously before reading and puts his right hand over his mouth as if feeling shy. Actually he is chewing the last of his cake and is trying to hide it. While Henry is reading, the teacher catches a girl in the third

row writing a letter. He tells her to put it away, and Henry laughs, commenting that the teacher should give her a tough punishment. He stands up and tells the teacher that he knows this girl well because they come from the same village. Then he sits down to read again.

At the 10:00 a.m. break, the teacher assigns Henry and his friend to sweep around the school. Henry goes into the bush to get a collection of brush fashioned into a local broom. He comes back and begins to sweep before anyone else has started. An older boy who is a monitor comes up to Henry and tells him that he's making a lot of dust. Henry stops and angrily drops the broom and starts off for home. The Standard 5 teacher sees him and calls him back, asking him why he's going home before the end of school. Henry doesn't answer but rubs his eyes hard as if he's trying to rub away tears. The teacher comes up to him and takes him by the hand back to the classroom. Henry collapses in his place, folds up his legs and rests his lowered head on his knees.

A few minutes later the teacher calls on Henry to answer a question. It takes Henry five seconds to stand up. His face shows anger and his hands are thrust into his shorts pockets as he unwillingly answers the question. It is correct and the teacher asks the other pupils to clap for Henry. He sits down with a smile coming to his face.

An hour later Henry is happily shooting up his hand and half standing in his enthusiasm to answer the teacher's questions. When he is given a chance to answer he gets it right. Henry sits down looking satisfied.

Mary and Henry's teacher is a young and gregarious teacher-in-training who has five months' experience. His lessons are clear and he demonstrates them with enthusiasm. He has a genuine empathy for the pupils and particularly enjoys teaching the girls whom he thinks are generally brighter as they more often than the boys volunteer to answer questions and are usually right in their answers. The girls in his class respond positively to his attention and his pleasure over their performance. It is obvious from their behaviour that confidence is being built. They participate more often than in any class we observed, and the teacher gives positive reinforcement, usually, to answers which are correct. The boys in this particular class are quieter and tend to answer fewer questions correctly. There are also fewer of them in class.

It is no secret that an enthusiastic, confident teacher who knows his or her subject matter can make a world of difference to a pupil. Many of us remember such a teacher

from our own school experiences. In this particular class the teacher's attitude toward the girls, especially, has a very positive psychosocial effect on the girls' academic and personal development. In contrast to the other male teachers, this teacher viewed girls as academically capable and they responded by performing well. In turn, his positive attitude resulted in increased confidence on the parts of the girls in his class. There is abundant literature that demonstrates that teachers' attitudes toward male and female pupils conditions their own expectations of themselves (Brophy and Good 1974; Eshiwani 1983; Kelly 1982; Palardy 1969; Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968; Sudarkasa 1982). Children who come from intellectually deprived homes may be encouraged to achieve academically if the teacher believes that they will do well despite their handicaps. Contrarily, if a teacher expects a group of students to fail, as in the case of the teachers in one school, they are more apt to fail -- a psychological phenomenon known as "self-fulfilling prophecy."

Elsewhere (for example, Fuller and Kapakasa 1988), factors that contribute to the effectiveness of Malawian primary school teachers have been analyzed, including social class background, classroom conditions and the availability of classroom materials, especially textbooks and teacher's manuals. Having limited ourselves to classroom observations and a few teacher interviews, we concur that lack of materials has a detrimental impact on the ability of the teacher to effectively teach a subject. Lack of classroom furniture also contributes to the lack of comfort most pupils and teachers experience, as seen from the case studies. Yet in the last analysis, it is the teacher's attitudes, in part conditioned by family background and in part by the general expectations of society, that in particular affects the persistence and achievement of girls. These gender-specific attitudes, expectations and behaviour are not limited to male teachers. Kainja and Mkandawire (1990) in a recent study of female primary school drop-outs observe that female as well as male teachers are capable of negatively influencing a girl's confidence and self-worth. Thus we would argue that the place to begin changing the conditions under which girls learn is in the classroom with the teacher, and indirectly with the headteacher who is ultimately responsible for the school's performance.

FEMALE DROP-OUTS IN ZOMBA RURAL

Before concluding this section on psychosocial factors influencing the persistence of girls in education, we need to return to the problem of high attrition rates among girls at the primary level in Zomba Rural to examine to what extent these are the product of psychosocial factors. In order to get a clearer picture of the overall factors that contribute to the high number of female drop-outs, it is first necessary

to disaggregate the data for early level (Standards 1-2) and terminal level (Standard 8) drop-outs, the two high water marks for female attrition at the primary level. In this way we can distinguish differences in causal factors at the two levels.

We collected data from pupils and guardians on reasons for girls' dropping out between Standard 1 and 2 (see Table 4, p.28) and at Standard 8 (Table 5, p.29). We also interviewed the ten teachers and four headteachers on the reasons that contribute to the high drop-out rate among girls in Zomba District. The combined data provides a clear picture of response differences between pupils and guardians of both sexes, and gender differences between the male guardians, male teachers and male pupils, on the one hand, and female pupils and guardians on the other. Finally, we collected data from the 79 pupil households surveyed on their experiences with children who had dropped out: whether they had children who had dropped out, the reasons and what their response had been.

In the cases of both pupils and guardians, the majority in both cases opinioned that the primary reason for dropping out at the early level (between Standard 1 and 2) is economic, that is, lack of funds for school fees and uniforms. The second most frequently stated reason was parental attitudes, particularly the preference for educating boys (male bias). However, a much higher percentage of guardians than pupils mentioned parental attitudes as a reason, but it is noteworthy that five percent of the male pupils mentioned male bias as being a factor. Other sociocultural factors that were mentioned were: 1) the pressure for early marriage (notably no female pupils mentioned this for the early level drop-outs); 2) the attitude among children that school is not important (pupils only); 3) initiation ceremonies (except for male pupils); and 4) "prostitution" and "loose morals" (male pupils and male guardians only). Thus there is a perception among some male pupils and male guardians that school girls are promiscuous, an attitude that is reflected, at times, in their behavior toward school girls. This attitude has an indirect psychological affect on these girls and the way they perceive themselves, and may contribute to the growing incidence of pregnancy among school girls. Such attitudes are also reinforced by the negative attitudes of teachers toward primary school girls. Among the reasons mentioned by teachers for girls' lack of achievement in school and high drop-out rates, pregnancy and the pressure for early marriage were the most frequently mentioned reasons. The next most often mentioned reasons were that girls are not serious about school and do not know how to concentrate. Only one teacher mentioned lack of school fees as being a problem. Thus it appears that male teachers more often share the attitudes of male guardians and male pupils that school girls have problems related to their promiscuity than female guardians and female pupils.

At the early drop-out stage, female pupils and guardians, in particular, suggest that laziness or "playfulness" (which we interpret at this level to mean lack of seriousness about school) to be major reasons for girls dropping out. This suggests that a gender-specific perception of female pupils as "lazy" and not concentrating on their studies persists. Girls (and their mothers) blame "laziness" -- a trait associated negatively with females in African societies -- for lack of persistence in school. In sociocultural terms, it is permissible for males to be perceived as inactive; it is not permissible for females to be viewed as inactive. Rather, it is interpreted as a sign of laziness. Consequently, placing the blame for lack of girls' achievement in school on laziness takes a form of psychosocial self-judgment that is specific to the females we interviewed. A much smaller percentage of males interviewed blamed girls' high rates of attrition on "laziness".

Related to the notion of academic "laziness" is the notion that girls are not intelligent and therefore drop out. Significantly, five percent of female pupils and ten percent of male pupils, but no guardians, view lack of intelligence as a reason for girls dropping out between Standards 1 and 2. Although the numbers are small (two girls and four boys), nonetheless, that girls' lack of intelligence was brought up at all suggests that the perception of females as less intelligent than males still persists in rural areas. The implications of this notion identifying females with lower intelligence than males for girls' persistence and academic achievement in education are obvious. Self perceptions are significantly shaped by peer pressure. If both male and female pupils believe that girls lack intelligence, the female pupils are more apt to view themselves as dull and therefore less capable of academic achievement.

Finally, if we compare the reasons for girls high attrition rates at the two primary school levels, we can see that the reasons for dropping out have shifted. Whereas, school fees, parental attitudes and laziness were primary reasons given for Standard 1-2 drop-outs, by Standard 8, pregnancy and early marriage, followed by relations with men, are the primary reasons cited. Whereas the average age of girls in Standard 1-2 is around nine to ten years, by the time a girl reaches Standard 8, she is somewhere between the ages of thirteen and eighteen; she has become an adolescent with all the attendant social pressures for getting married (the average marriage age for girls in Malawi is 17 years) and motherhood. The psychosocial pressure of the marital imperative at this age-stage comes not only from the girls' parents and other members of society, but it is self-imposed. To be an unmarried adult female in rural Malawian society is currently unthinkable, even for university-educated females. And motherhood is such an integral part of marriage, that it is difficult to separate the two.

Not only were early marriage and pregnancy suggested as major reasons by pupils and guardians for girls dropping out at Standard 8, but of the households that had girls who had dropped out, a third (33.3%) cited early marriage as the reason and 16.7% cited pregnancy. In fact, marriage was the most frequently stated reason for girls, whereas lack of school fees/uniforms and lack of motivation were the two most often cited reasons for boys dropping out (see Table 6, p.30).

We did not find, as has been suggested elsewhere (Kapakasa 1990), that initiation ceremonies were cited as a major reason for girls' dropping out, either between Standards 1 and 2 or at Standard 8. This may be because the ceremonies which take place among the Yao and Chichewa-speaking groups in Zomba rural are held during the long holidays and many of the girls participating are currently school attendees. It appears, from the observations of one of the principal researchers, that even though the normative expenditure for a girls' initiation ceremony is about MK25.00 (US$9.33) for various forms of advice, or counselling, nonetheless, this expenditure does not preclude fees for schooling. In one area where a ceremony was observed, 23 out of 24 girls (aged 6-15) being initiated were in school, and the one not attending was beginning Standard 1 in the subsequent school year.

Finally, before concluding, we observe that a major reason for girls dropping out at Standard 8 has to do with repeating school, and that failing exams and not being selected for secondary school are also contributing factors. Although these reasons are not exclusive to girls-- boys repeat more often than girls in Zomba rural and many fail examinations too -- nevertheless, that girls experience high repetition rates between Standards 5 and 7 and few girls pass the PSLC examination, are contributing factors to high drop-out rates by Standard 8. What concerns us here is the psychological impact that this has on female pupils. Seeing that others like oneself fail and knowing that one's chances for getting into a secondary school, even with a pass on the terminal examination, are slight, mean that a girl must be psychologically very determined to achieve, regardless of the gender-related academic hurdles that stand in her way. For many girls the hurdles are so overwhelming that they give up.

To summarize, the case studies of individual pupils and the discussion of why girls drop out illustrate that in order for a girl to succeed in primary school, she needs a combination of a strong and supportive family, especially parents, a supportive and encouraging school staff that is sensitive to the specific problems that female pupils face, and a strong personal will and determination to overcome the obstacles that confront her along the way. The final section sums up our findings in view of these observations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

In this study we identified economic, sociocultural and psychosocial factors as influencing the participation of girls in basic education in Zomba rural. Primary among these factors are the material economic constraints in the home which act to force parents to make a choice between sending a boy or a girl to school; more often, boys are selected rather than girls. The choice is based on the economic benefits which are thought to accrue to the parents for educating a male rather than their female child. The conceptions of the relative importance of educating boys rather than girls are embedded in the all-pervasive process of gender-structuring. Parents generally expressed the opinion that boys are inherently more intelligent than girls and nearly half the parents/guardians thought that girls need not be educated beyond secondary school. Moreover, this study indicates that over sixty percent of the parents think of university education as a goal for boys while less than half the parents interviewed think of it as a goal for girls. They also think of girls in traditionally care-giving professions such as nursing and teaching. We have noted earlier that the gender-specific ideas of what girls can and cannot do begins in the home and is reinforced in school through attitudes about which subjects are most appropriate for girls and which tasks they ought to be engaged in, for example sweeping and mopping a classroom and hauling water for constructing buildings.

Although the relative economic deprivations of the areas we studied affect both boys and girls, the poorer households, the most impoverished of which are female-headed households, seem to register higher drop-out rates. Moreover, the large majority of pupils in these households are female, indicating that at least for this small sample, girls more often than boys come from female-headed households. From our after-school observations of female children in the households we studied, we found that they are required to perform household chores after school. But from our case study of Charity, it is evident that she takes on the additional responsibility of looking after her siblings as well as the expected household chores in her mother's absence. These responsibilities give Charity very little time or energy to do her homework.

Parental support for the female child's educational endeavors is an important factor that influences the chances of a girl's participation in school. If the parents, older siblings and others are able to help with the pupil's homework, it goes a long way in ensuring the pupils' persistence in school. Charity's and Mary's mother's positive encouragement, support and determination seem to offset the material disadvantages evident in each girl's home. Parental

support also influences the girl's self image. Although there are individual differences, it is clear that where the parents support their female child in her educational efforts, the child seems to like school more. Both case studies lend support to this assertion.

Differential parental expectations of female and male children in the performance of household chores with the female children carrying the larger bulk of the duties suggests that the gender-structuring process is at work. These differential expectations are further reinforced at school where the girls are also expected to perform most of the cleaning duties, as indicated earlier.

Teachers play a pivotal role in influencing the academic chances of their pupils. Their negative or positive expectations of what their pupils can accomplish in class exercises and in the national examinations has a direct impact on pupil performance. From our observations of the interaction between teachers and pupils in all four schools, it is clear that the teachers' attitudes toward and expectations of female pupils is critical in encouraging them to take an active part in class activities. However, only one teacher in our study provided such a positive environment for girls.

Girls' self perception will be improved if they are given a chance by school officials (teachers and headmasters) to assume leadership roles in the school. If they are given these leadership roles they may have more reasons for regularly attending school because they will perceive themselves as important people in the school. The female student leaders will in turn act as role models for other girls in the school. In the absence of such positive role models, girls will continue to perceive themselves as negatively as their teachers and their male colleagues see them.

Having looked at some of the negative factors that influence girls' participation in school, we would like to end by gain referring to the Standard 5 classroom where girls are experiencing a positive outcome. We surmise from this case that some teachers exist who care about girls and who believe that they can perform equally, if not better than the boys in their classes. The class taught by the teacher-in-training bears testimony to this. The encouragement the girls receive from the teacher encourages them to excel with the result that they outperform the boys. That that quest for achievement will be sustained through the remainder of their primary school years depend upon a number of related factors, but certainly the teachers they have in subsequent classrooms will contribute to or hinder their progress, and may even make the difference in their persistence.

To conclude, the factors that influence the opportunities and persistence of girls in primary school education include economic constraints, sociocultural attitudes, norms and behaviour related to gender-structuring and psychosocial factors that stem from social perceptions that affect self perceptions. None of these factors can be taken in isolation: they are often interrelated as illustrated by the individual case studies. Just as important, this study confirms that we cannot examine one environment, for example the school, without at the same time examining the home environment to which the pupil returns each day. Both are equally important. By using a holistic approach to the pupil, we are better able to determine where pressure points exist that cause her to drop out or remain in school. Based upon an assessment of the factors derived from this micro-study of girls' education, we offer the following recommendations which have policy implications for improving girls' chances of succeeding in primary education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We offer the following suggestions acknowledging that others equally concerned about girls' basic education in Malawi may have made similar suggestions.

We recommend that:

1. A study of the implications of abolishing school fees and instituting a scholarship programme based on need to cover the costs of uniforms and exercise books be carried out in one district as a pilot study. The suggestion to abolish school fees to Standard 5 surfaced at the National Seminar on the Causes Primary School Drop-outs in 1988, and was again recommended at the recent NCWID seminar.

2. A programme to actively recruit and train female teachers to teach at the upper primary school level, in particular, be designed and implemented. The need for positive female role models in primary school education cannot be over-emphasized. We concur with the NCWID seminar's recommendation.

3. All teachers be required to take in-service to update their teaching skills and that these in-service programmes incorporate awareness of gender-structuring and its negative impact on female pupils. Included in the training components would be specific techniques for encouraging girls to actively participate in classroom learning and to seek academic excellence.

4. District Education Officers (DEOs), rather than Home Economics Organizers, be responsible for monitoring gender issues at the district level and appointing an education specialist trained in gender analysis and awareness to carry out monitoring tasks and facilitate in-service training for school staff as needed. Based on the findings of this study we believe that school staffs, largely male at this time, are more likely to respond positively to district specialists under the Ministry of Education and Culture who have a broader scope than District Home Economics Organizer.

5. The Ministry of Education and Culture, through the DEOs, monitor the nature of disciplinary measures in primary schools to ensure that they are directly related to the learning process. It is our contention that disciplinary measures not related to the learning process but to gender-specific labour tasks discourage girls in primary school.

6. A programme be designed to reach parents/guardians with information about the disadvantages that girls face in school and the need to provide them with support and encouragement at home. To this end, we further recommend that:

   a. School staffs and the DEO specialist on gender issues hold meetings with parents at least once a year to inform and sensitise parents to the problems girls face and how parents can assist their daughters in overcoming such problems;

   b. Schools encourage more women members of their communities to become actively involved in classroom activities through their involvement as specialists (e.g., food producers, herbalists, micro-entrepreneurs) and role models.

   c. The media, including print and radio, engage in an active campaign to incorporate positive examples of educated women in Malawian society. This is a recommendation of the NCWID seminar that we firmly support.

8. The DEOs investigate the extent to which school staff members are demanding that pupils wear school uniforms in order to participate as this particularly affects female pupils.

9. The Ministry of Education and Culture secure funding for adequate teacher and pupil materials, including textbooks and teacher manuals for classroom use.

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Ethio[illegible] s' Education in Southern Malawi

18th April to 20th October, 1990

Research Assistant: _____

Your research partner: _____

Class: St. 5 ____ St. 8 ____

Teacher's name: _____

Sex of the teacher: male _____ female _____

Observation number: _____

Segment 1 – CLASSROOM MATERIAL AND INPUTS (10 minutes)

1. Scheduled period start time:	:
2. Actual start time:	:
3. Class level:	St. 5 ___ St. 8 ___
4. Subject being taught:	
5. Number of pupils in the classroom:	
6. Number of pupils sharing a desk:	
7. Number of pupils sitting alone at a desk:	
8. Number of pupils sitting on the floor or with no desk:	
9. Are pupils sitting in conventional rows, one behind the other?	No ___ Yes ___
10. Does the teacher have a desk or table on which to work?	No ___ Yes ___
11. How many other tables are in the classroom, excluding the teacher and pupil desks?	
12. If you can see any of the following items, check the appropriate space.	
Pupil or teacher produced posters or materials on the wall	No ___ Yes ___
Commercially produced posters or materials on the wall	No ___ Yes ___
Chalkboard on a wall	No ___ Yes ___
Chalk visible	No ___ Yes ___
Textbooks on shelves	No ___ Yes ___
Other books or reading material on shelves	No ___ Yes ___
Maps or globes visible in classroom	No ___ Yes ___
13. During this first 10-minute segment have pupils used:	
textbooks	No ___ Yes ___
exercise books	No ___ Yes ___
other materials?	No ___ Yes ___
14. Were textbooks passed-out to pupils?	No ___ Yes ___
15. How many pupils have at least one visible textbook (not passed-out?)	
16. How many pupils have at least one exercise book or paper on which to write?	
17. How many pupils have a pencil or pen?	
18. During this first 10-minute segment has the teacher introduced the lesson content or information that he/she will cover during the class period?	No ___ Yes ___
19. How clear is the teacher in summarizing the content or material he/she will be covering during the period?	Not clear ___ Moderately clear ___

Segment 2 — TEACHER AND PUPIL ACTION WITH MATERIALS (15 minutes)

In this segment, you first fill in the teacher checklist over the first 7 minutes. Then rest for 1 minute and identify the cluster of 4 pupils that you will observe. Then turn to the pupil checklist for the remaining 7 minutes. (For the reliability study, be sure the two of you agree on which 4 pupils you are both observing.) For both the teacher checklist and the pupil checklist, simply put a check or "X" in each appropriate box.

Teacher Action

Materials being employed	Chalkboard	Textbook	Supp. book	Teachers Guide	Exercise book	Manipulative	No material employed
20. Teacher is presenting lesson or information							
21. Teacher is organizing lessons (distributing materials indicated)							
22. Teacher requiring entire class to recite set material							
23. Teacher is reading material to entire class							
24. Teacher is writing material as pupils wait passively							
25. Teacher is writing material as pupils copy this material							
26. Teacher directs pupils to write something							
27. Teacher is making assignment for in-class exercises							
28. Teacher is assigning homework							
29. Teacher is saying nothing as pupils work at their seats							
30. Teacher is circulating around classroom monitoring pupils working at their seats							

Pupils (4) Action

Materials being employed	Chalkboard	Textbook	Supp. book	Teachers Guide	Exercise book	Manipulative	No material employed
31. Pupils listening to teacher lecture							
32. Pupils reading silently or out loud							
33. Pupils are writing something							
34. Pupils are waiting passively while another pupil is writing or reading material							
35. Pupils are waiting passively while the teacher writes something							
36. Pupils show the teacher their written exercises or material they have written							
37. Pupils begin to talk to each other							
38. One pupil is clearly inattentive for more than one minute							

Segment 3 - STUDENT-TEACHER INTERACTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

39. Draw a sketch of classroom in space provided, showing position of teacher's desk/table and student desks. Put rectangle for each desk and show B or boy student or G for girl student for each student at a desk.

40. During the period you observe, every time the teacher calls on a boy record a mark beside Boy. Every time the teacher calls on a girl put a mark beside Girl.

	Teacher asks question to student
Boy	
Girl	

41. Every time a boy asks a question make a mark beside Boy and when a girl asks a question beside Girl. If one particular student asks more than one question, make a note of the number of questions and student's name.

	Student asks question to teacher
Boy	
Girl	

42. Teacher's comment after a student has given answer to a question:

	Positive	Negative
Boy		
Girl		

43. Put a mark beside Boy every time the teacher disciplines a boy, and beside Girl when disciplines a girl.

Boy	
Girl	

School_____

Sex: F/M_____
(Circle)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEADMASTERS/HEADMISTRESSES

1. . How many students are enrolled in your school this year?_____

2. a. How many classes of Std.5 are in the school?_____

   b. How many classes of Std.8 are in the school?_____

3. How many boys/girls are enrolled in Std.5?

   Total no. boys_____

   Total no. girls_____

4. How many boys/girls are enrolled in Std.8?

   Total no. boys_____

   Total no. girls_____

5. What is the average teacher to pupil ratio in your school?_____

6. a. What is the achievement rate of boys in the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination in the past 5 years?

   ____ ____ ____ ____ ____
   1985 1986 1987 1988 1989

   b. What is the achievement rate of girls in the PSLC Examination in the past 5 years?

   ____ ____ ____ ____ ____
   1985 1986 1987 1988 1989

7. Give reasons why there are differences in achievement between girls and boys in primary school.

   _____

   _____

8. a. How many girls were selected to secondary school out of the total number passing the PSLC examination? Last year?_____

   b. How many boys were selected to secondary school out of the total number passing the PSCL Exam?_____

9. a. Up to what level of education should boys be educated?_____ Why?_____

   _____

   b. Up to what level should girls be educated? _____. Why?_____

10. How many male/female teachers does your school employ? _____ _____
Male Female

11. a. In primary school, which two subjects are most important for girls to take, in your opinion? _____ _____

b. Up to what level should girls be educated? _____ Why? _____

_____

12. In Zomba rural, a higher proportion of girls than boys drop out of school before they complete Std.8. What factors, do you think, cause this? _____

_____

_____

APPENDIX 2-b

ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS EDUCATION FOR GIRLS IN SOUTHERN MALAWI

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

A. **BACKGROUND**

NAME OF SCHOOL _____ ST. _____

1. SEX: M ___ F ___

2. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL: PSLC ___ J.C. ___ 'O' Level ___
   'A' level ___ Diploma ___ B.A. ___

3. TEACHER TRAINING: None ___ T4 ___ T3 ___ T1 ___

4. Number of years of Teaching _____

5. Teacher/Student Ratio: ____ (Number of students in classroom) St. __

B. **ATTITUDES**

6. (a) In your opinion of overall academic achievement at the primary school level, who performs best in class?

   a) Boys ___ b) Girls ___

   (b) Explain why you think so _____

   _____

   _____

7. Give reasons why there are differences in achievement between girls and boys in the primary school _____

   _____

8. In your classroom observation of your students which of the following characterize the students by sex. Put B (boy) or G (girl)

   (a) Are well prepared _____
   (b) Raise hands often to answer questions _____
   (c) Are polite, well behaved _____
   (d) Know the answers when called on _____
   (e) Lack school materials _____
   (f) Are disruptive at times _____

(h) Tend to be absent more often _____

(i) Present clean work _____

(j) Co-operate with fellow pupils _____

(k) Are shy in class _____

9. (a) Out of the number of girls in your class, how many do you expect to pass the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations? ___ out of? ____. Why? _____

(b) How many girls were selected to secondary school from your School last year? _____

10. (a) Out of the total number of boys in your class, how many do you expect to pass the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations? ____ out of _____. Why? _____

_____

(b) How many boys were selected to secondary school from your School last year? _____.

11. Up to what level of education should boys be schooled? _____

Why? _____

12. Up to what level of education should girls be schooled? _____

Why? _____

13. In the Zomba district a higher proportion of girls than boys drop out of school before they reach Standard 8. What factors do you think cause this? Explain your answer. _____

_____

_____

14. In primary schools, which two subjects are most important for girls to take? _____ _____

15. In primary schools, which two subjects are most important for boys to take? _____ _____

16. How often do you assign homework in a week? _____

17. How do students learn best in your class? _____

_____

_____

18. What is the greatest problem you face as a teacher in the classroom?

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS EDUCATION FOR GIRLS IN SOUTHERN MALAWI

Questionnaire for Students

(English)

Research Asst. _____

Student no. _____

Village: _____

1. What is your present grade level? St.5 ____ St.8 ____

2. Sex: F ____ M ____

3. Is your teacher male or female? M ____ F ____

4. What number child are you in your family from first born (1) to last born? _____

5. (a) How many brothers of yours are attending school? _____

   (b) How many sisters of yours are attending school? _____

6. How far do you hope to go in your education? Std.8 ____ Form II ____ Form IV ____ University ____

7. Who helps you with homework and studying at home?

   (a) Father _____

   (b) Mother _____

   (c) Older sibling M/F _____
   circle one

   (d) Aunt / Uncle (circle one) _____

   (e) Other relative/neighbour _____

8. Is it more important for a boy or a girl to go to school? _____
   Tell why? _____

9. Which of the following subjects do you take in school?

Agriculture	____	Health Education	____
Arithmetic	____	History	____
Arts/Crafts	____	Homecrafts	____
Chichewa	____	Music/Drama	____
English	____	Physical Ed.	____
Geography	____	Religious Ed.	____

10. (a) Which is the most important subject for a boy to take? _____

11. Do you think girls or boys are more intelligent? _____ _____ _____
Girls Boys The Same

Why do you think so? _____

_____

12. In Zomba rural area over half the girls who begin St.1 drop out of school by St.2. Why do you think this is so? _____

_____

13. (a) What do you like best about school? _____

_____

(b) What do you not like about schcol? _____

_____

14. A lot of girls drop out at St.8. Why is this so? _____

_____

15. What job would you like to do when you complete your education?

_____ Why? _____

_____

16. Who has most influenced your choice of your future jobs?

_____

APPENDIX 2-d

ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING GIRL EDUCATION IN SOUTHERN MALAWI

Research Asst._____

Student No. _____

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS/RELATIVES

(English Translation)

1. What is your relationship to the pupil?

   a. grandfather/grandmother _____(circle correct one)

   b. father _____

   c. mother _____

   d. sister/brother _____(circle correct one)

   e. uncle/aunt_____

   f. mother-in-law _____

   g. mother-in-law _____

   h. other relative (Explain)_____

2. Up to what level (Standard/Form, etc.).were you educated?_____

3. a. Do both the father/mother (guardians) live together?
      Yes_____ No. _____

   b. If not, who is not there?_____

4. How many children in the family are of school age level?

   boys _____ girls _____

5. How many are enrolled in school?

   boys _____ girls_____

6. a. Up to what level of education did the first-born go?

   Level?_____ How old is she/he now?_____

   b. Up to what level of education did the first girl go?

   Level _____ Age now _____

7. How far is your homestead from the primary school?_____

8. Is it better for girls or boys to be educated?

   Girls _____ boys_____

   a. Why for girls?_____

   b. Why for boys?_____

9. a. What is the most important subject for girls to take in school?

   _____

   b. What is the most important subject for boys to take in school?

   _____

10. In rural schools in Zomba many girls drop out between Standard 1 and 2. What do you think are the reasons?

_____

_____

_____

11. Who is more intelligent - girls or boys?

boys _____

girls _____

both _____

Why do you think so? _____

12. Who in your family helps the children with their homework?

a. grandfather/grandmother _____

b. father _____

c. mother _____

d. sister/bother _____

e. uncle/aunt _____

f. mother-in-law _____

g. father-in-law _____

h. other relative (Explain the relationship) _____

13. Of the boys and girls who go to primary school, many girls drop out by Standard 8. Why do you think this is?

_____

14. Has any of your children ever dropped out of school?

Yes. _____ No. _____

a. If so, _____ _____
(son) (daughter)

b. If so, why do you think she dropped out?

_____

15.a.What is the best level of education for boys?

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Std.5 Std.8 J.C. M.C.E. college/univesity

Why do you think so?_____

b. What is the best level of education for girls?

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Std.5 Std.8 J.C. M.C.E. college/university

Why do you think so?_____

16.a. What career do you think is best for girls? _____

_____ Why do you think so?_____

_____

17.b. What carrer to do you think is best for boys? _____

_____ Why do you think so?_____

_____

Research Project on Girls' Participation in Education in So. Malawi
Assessment of Student's Home Environment

Research Asst. _____
Location _____
Student number _____
Date _____

A. Make a site plan of the homestead.
B. From your observations, make an assessment of the following:

1. **Location of the homestead** _____
   Distance to school (approximate in Km.) _____

2. **House structure (tick one)**
   a. Mud/brick with thatched roof, earthern floor _____
   b. Mud/brick with corregated zinc roof, earthern floor _____
   c. Brick with thatch roof and cement floor _____
   d. Brick with corregated zinc roof and cement floor _____
   e. Stucco exterior with glass windows, cement floor _____
   f. Fired brick and cement, glass windows, cement floor _____

3. **Approximate number of rooms in the house of student** _____

4. **Water availability (tick one)**
   a. Carried from river or stream _____
   b. Well or borehole in homestead _____
   c. Carried from well/borehold in village _____
   d. Tap water in homestead _____
   e. Piped water inside the house _____

5. **Available light (tick one)**
   a. From a cooking fire _____
   b. Candle _____
   c. Paraffin lantern with glass _____
   d. Open paraffin with wick _____
   e. Electric light _____

6. **Places available for studying in house (may tick more than one)**
   a. Table _____
   b. Chair _____
   c. Stool _____
   d. Bed _____
   e. Floor _____

7. **Educational materials in house: Can you see the following?**
   a. books _____
   b. newspaper _____
   c. magazine _____
   d. exercise book _____
   e. paper/stationary _____
   f. pens/pencils _____
   g. measuring tape or yardstick _____
   h. map _____
   i. government poster _____

8. **How many children are in the household at following levels?**
   a. Pre-school age _____
   b. Primary school age_____ Number attending primary school _____
   c. Secondary sch. age _____ Number attending secondary school _____
   d. University age _____ Number attending university _____

9. **In what order is the student in his/her family (example: first born, second born, last born)** _____

10. **From your observations, what tasks/activities do the primary school attendees perform in the first hour after returning home from school?**

Boys	**Girls**
Childcare _____	Childcare _____
Herd animals _____	Process food _____
Haul water _____	Haul water _____
Cut firewood _____	Collect firewood _____
Play/relax _____	Play/relax _____
Talk with others _____	Prepare food/cook _____
Cultivate _____	Cultivate _____
Go to shop for item _____	Go to shop for item _____
Carry message to neighbor, relative _____	Carry message _____
Study _____	Study _____
Other (name activity) _____	Other (name) _____