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Unraveling the ‘Female Teacher Effect’: The Positioning and Agency of Female Teachers in Girls’ Education Reform

Alyssa Morley

Michigan State University

United States

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Abstract: Concerns about the academic performance of students from marginalized groups underscore calls for students to be taught by teachers of similar racial, ethnic, or gender identities (e.g., Miller, 2018). In sub-Saharan Africa, projects enlist women teachers as role models for girls in an effort to redress persistent gender disparities in education. However, in casting women teachers as inherent role models to girls, these projects run the risk of reinforcing long-standing portrayals of women in the Global South as a monolithic group with heightened responsibility for development (Chant, 2006; Mohanty, 1988). I identify one policy pilot in Malawi as a window for examining this phenomenon, and I pair discourse analysis and ethnographic analysis to investigate how women teachers are constructed in this policy and how these constructions unravel in practice. Drawing on anthropology of policy, I first trace how female teachers are created as particular types of “policy subjects” (Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskins, 2011). Then, I examine how teachers at one school grapple with these narrowly constructed roles. This study’s findings caution against a disproportionate reliance on same-gender teachers for role-modelling, particularly when these teachers also belong to marginalized groups.

Keywords: discourse; anthropology; gender; sub-Saharan Africa

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Desentrañar el “efecto de maestra”: El posicionamiento y la agencia de las maestras en la reforma educativa de las niñas

Resumen: Las inquietudes sobre el rendimiento académico de los estudiantes de grupos marginados subrayan los llamados a que los estudiantes sean enseñados por maestros de identidades raciales, étnicas o de género similares (por ejemplo, Miller, 2018). En África subsahariana, los proyectos reclutan maestras como modelos a seguir para las niñas en un esfuerzo por corregir las persistentes disparidades de género en la educación. Sin embargo, al presentar a las maestras como modelos inherentes a las niñas, estos proyectos corren el riesgo de reforzar las representaciones de mujeres de larga data en el Sur Global como un grupo monolítico con mayor responsabilidad para el desarrollo (Chant, 2006; Mohanty, 1988). Identifico un piloto de políticas en Malawi como una ventana para examinar este fenómeno, y emparejo el análisis del discurso y el análisis etnográfico para investigar cómo se construyen las maestras en esta política y cómo estas construcciones se deshacen en la práctica. Basándome en la antropología de la política, primero trazo cómo se crean las maestras como tipos particulares de “temas de política” (Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011). Luego, examino cómo los maestros en una escuela lidian con estos roles estrechamente construidos. Los hallazgos de este estudio advierten contra una dependencia desproporcionada de maestros del mismo género para el modelado de roles, particularmente cuando estos maestros también pertenecen a grupos marginados.

Palabras-clave: discurso; antropología; género; África sub-sahariana

Examinando o “efeito das professoras”: O posicionamento e a agência das professoras na reforma da educação das meninas

Resumo: As preocupações com o desempenho acadêmico de estudantes de grupos marginalizados sublinham que os alunos devem ser ensinados por professores com identidades raciais, étnicas ou de gênero semelhantes (por exemplo, Miller, 2018). Na África subsaariana, os projetos recrutam professoras como modelos para meninas, em um esforço para corrigir as disparidades persistentes de gênero na educação. No entanto, ao considerar as professoras como modelos inerentes às meninas, esses projetos correm o risco de reforçar retratos de longa data de mulheres no Sul Global como um grupo monolítico com maior responsabilidade pelo desenvolvimento (Chant, 2006; Mohanty, 1988). Identifico um piloto de política no Malawi como uma janela para examinar esse fenômeno e associo análise de discurso e análise etnográfica para investigar como as professoras são construídas nessa política e como essas construções se desenrolam na prática. Com base na antropologia da política, primeiro rastreio como as professoras são criadas como tipos específicos de “sujeitos da política” (Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskins, 2011). Depois, examino como os professores de uma escola lidam com esses papéis de construção restrita. As descobertas deste estudo alertam contra uma dependência desproporcional de professores do mesmo sexo para modelagem de papéis, especialmente quando esses professores também pertencem a grupos marginalizados.

Palavras-chave: discurso; antropologia; gênero; África subsaariana

Introduction

Concerns about the academic performance of students from marginalized groups underscore calls for students to be taught by teachers of similar racial, ethnic, or gender identities (Carrington et al., 2007; Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2017; Miller, 2018). Implicit in these calls is an assumption that teachers are inherent role models to youth of common backgrounds, an assumption which is supported by some empirical studies (e.g., Rawal & Kingdon, 2010) and challenged by others (e.g., Maylor, 2009). In sub-Saharan Africa, one instantiation of this call is the argument that more women teachers are needed in order to support girls' learning and school completion (Haugen et al., 2014). With girls' educational outcomes typically (though not always) lagging behind boys' (Chisamya, DeJaeghere, Kendall, & Khan, 2012), a plethora of both government and international donor activity concentrates on improving girls' education (Monkman & Hoffman, 2013). In many African countries, teaching professions are largely male-dominated (Chudgar & Luschei, 2016). For instance, in Malawi, where this research focuses, men represent 60% of the teaching profession (Steiner-Khamsi & Kunje, 2011). Against this backdrop scholars and practitioners argue for increasing the number of women in the teaching profession in sub-Saharan Africa as a strategy for enhancing girls' success in school (Awasom, 2009; Department for International Development [DFID]-Central, 2011; World Bank, 2004).

However, projects and policies emanating from this strategy run the risk of reinforcing long-standing portrayals of women in the Global South as a monolithic group (Mohanty, 1988). This study takes one donor project (also a national policy pilot¹) as an illustrative case study of the enlistment of female teachers as role models to girls in Malawi: the United Kingdom's Department for International Development "Keeping Girls in School" project which trains female teachers to serve as "better role models to girls" (DFID & Save the Children [Save], 2014, p. 2).

Drawing on anthropology of policy, I first trace the creation of female teachers as particular types of "policy subjects" (Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskins, 2011), a term I am using to signify the way teachers are articulated in policy. Specifically, I conceptualize policy subjects as being predicated on particular logics or theories of action (Ensfeld, 2000), which I tease out through discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003). I then engage a subset of data generated through a nine-month ethnographic study at one school in Malawi to examine how teachers at this school grappled with their roles as female teacher role models. This study reveals that, while the "female teacher"² is produced in texts as a universal and context-free "intervention," the unique contexts and histories of teaching in Malawi enabled individuals to negotiate the demands and contradictions of the female teacher policy subject.

After reviewing relevant literature, I describe the concepts of "policy" and "policy subjects" adopted in this paper. From there, I discuss the methodological approach applied to the textual and ethnographic data. Findings concerning the construction of female teachers, and the unravelling of this construction in practice, set up a discussion of how this policy which enlists female teachers is situated within broader trends in gender and schooling as well as teachers' work.

¹ I am terming this project a "policy pilot" because one outcome of the project is to institutionalize the trainings into professional development activities for female teachers provided through the Malawi Government's Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology. While this donor project followed in this study concentrates on select Malawi district and reaches 21,500 female teachers, the institutionalized policy would apply to all female teachers in Malawi.

² Throughout the paper I will use "female" rather than "woman" in order to mirror the predominant presentation of teachers in this literature base. As a sex rather than gender signifier, "female" also signals that the context around gender construction and expression is not recognized.

Literature Review: Female Role Models within International Development

This paper builds upon and extends literature in three areas: critical feminist theory, teachers in the Global South, and teachers as role-models to marginalized youth. Within international development discourse, girls and women are framed in paradoxical ways: sometimes as “powerless” victims of oppression and, in other cases, as charged with the impact potential to improve the well-being of themselves and others. Critical feminist theory has problematized the use of women in development interventions and the ways in which this use builds upon binary and de-contextualized understandings of gender (e.g., Moeller, 2018; Mohanty, 1988, 2003; Monkman, 2011). Feminist scholar Chandra Mohanty has urged for a critical examination of how the “Third World Woman” trope essentializes women from the Global South, as it is based on a presupposition that all women—across cultures and classes—are homogeneously constituted with identical needs, cares, and constraints (1988). While Mohanty’s (1988) work emphasizes how the Third World Woman is constructed as a victim, subjugated by a universal male patriarchy, more recent scholarship identifies a trend in which women and girls are portrayed as saviors, “disproportionately responsible for ending poverty for themselves and their families, communities, nations, and the world” (Moeller, 2014, p. 577). This recent depiction of women in development invests women with the responsibility for changing their circumstances and empowering themselves and others. Importantly, empowerment is framed in a way that makes “changing power relations the responsibility of individual female actors” (Vavrus, 2002, p. 59).

The notion of responsibility as “feminized” connects to broader trends around women and development and is pertinent to the ways in which female teachers are invoked in this discourse around girls’ education. Chant (2006) drew attention to a phenomenon she called the “feminization of responsibility and obligation” (p. 206), a term which captures the situation of many women who are liable for dealing with poverty (responsibility) and their limited choices other than to do so (obligation). This echoes the “triple roles framework” which draws attention to the mounting demands experienced by women who are expected to be mothers, wage earners, and community development agents (Moser, 1989; Vavrus, 2002). Scholars have cautioned against using women as “cheap labor” for development projects (Kabeer, 1994, p. 276). It is, therefore, crucial to consider female teacher responsibilities within this broader context of women and development, as well as context surrounding teaching in the Global South.

The recognition that teachers are central to student outcomes has spurred heightened attention to their work (Akiba, 2013; Paine & Zeichner, 2012). Despite this, a paucity of research examines the lived experiences of teachers in Africa (Weber, 2007), instead viewing teachers in ways that parallel the “Third World Woman”; Tao (2016) writes that teachers are framed as “as a homogenous group that possesses and acts on identical interests, beliefs, and intentions” (p. 6). Neglecting to understand the nuances of teachers’ work results in policy directives which fail to respond to local pressures and conditions (Tabulawa, 2013; Welmond, 2002). In an analysis of the World Bank’s Education Strategy papers (from 1995, 1999, and 2011), which apply to teachers in many African countries, Ginsburg (2012) highlights how a persistent narrative of teachers’ work defines teachers as a “resource” but ignores that teachers are also learners with unique interests and capabilities who are embedded within their own cultural and societal systems. Critiques like Ginsburg’s can also apply to how teachers are engaged in policy projects, such as the one analyzed here which aims to connect female students with female teacher role models.

A growing body of research around the world supports the idea that students benefit from being taught by teachers of similar ethnic, gender, and race identities (e.g., Dee, 2005; Rawal & Kingdon, 2010). In the United States, researchers have identified that African American boys who

have had one African American teacher are more likely to persist in high school and attend college (Gershenson et al., 2017). This and other studies underscore calls for diversification in the teacher workforce in the United States, a workforce which remains predominantly comprised of white women despite student populations that are increasingly diverse (Miller, 2018). This scholarly and popular discourse gets invoked and transposed in sub-Saharan Africa, where the teaching profession is primarily male (Chudgar & Luschei, 2016). In sub-Saharan African countries like Malawi, arguments largely concentrate on the importance of women teachers to girls' educational achievement (Awason, 2009), with correlations identified between girls' schooling outcomes and the presence of female teachers (Haugen et al., 2014). In an edited book, Stromquist, Klees, and Lin (2017) examine the situated factors that deter women from becoming and remaining teachers in several African countries. While they address important questions of why there are so few women teachers, in this paper I invite a related consideration: what is being asked of the women who are teachers? What responsibilities are ascribed to them simply because of their gender?

Arguments for teacher-student matching have been critiqued for responsabilizing individual (often marginalized) teachers for youth who look like them (Ballard & Parveen, 2008). In a study of Black teachers in London, Maylor (2009) found that not, while many Black teachers want to be supportive of Black (and other) pupils, others resisted being defined by an expectation that they serve as role models specifically for Black (often male) pupils. Additionally, a focus on individual actors can ignore underlying problems such as institutional racism and sexism (Maylor, Dalgety, Leathwood, & Archer, 2002). These critiques are salient in thinking about girls and female teachers in the Global South.

Women teachers are thus situated at the intersections of these discourses, though the nuances of their position have not been well-explored. My examination of the DFID project reveals both the durability of the discourses homogenizing women and teachers, as well as the heterogeneity of teachers' lived experiences. Anthropological conceptualizations of policy underpin this analysis.

Conceptualizing “Policy” and “Policy Subjects”

Before discussing this paper's conceptualization of policy and policy subjects (Ball et al., 2011), it is important to address my use of the term “policy.” The female teacher role-modelling project, and texts related to it, are generally not produced by the Malawian government. Rather, they are authoritative texts produced by donor agencies intending to integrate the programs into the “official” operations of the Malawian government. I consider this a policy pilot since a component of the KGIS's role-modelling activity involves the development of a plan for institutionalizing female teacher role-modelling as on-going professional development through Malawi's Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST). Thus, though the female teacher subject is not yet rooted within the MoEST framework, in the future it likely will be. As other scholars have noted, the Malawian government with regularity incorporates donor directives—in the form of curricula, after-school activities, donor policy priorities—into national policy (Kadzamira & Rose, 2001; Mundy, 2002).

Given the policy orientation of this project, it is appropriate to consider the program texts *de facto* policies (Weaver-Hightower, 2008, p. 157). While they may not strictly be Malawian government produced—one version of policy (Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009)—these *de facto* policies present to teachers as authoritative accounts endorsed by their government. As Levinson and others write, policy “(a) defines reality, (b) orders behavior, and (sometimes) (c) allocates resources accordingly” (2009, p. 770). With such a definition, as well as the plans to institutionalize female teacher role-modelling, I propose that KGIS can be considered “policy.”

Moreover, sociologists and anthropologists argue that “policy” should be conceived of in a manner that privileges how it is experienced (e.g., Shore, Wright, & Però, 2011; Sutton & Levinson, 2001). While normative perspectives of policy give disproportionate weight to authoritative texts as the definition of policy (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012), sociocultural approaches challenge that what people do in the name of policy is an expression of policy more readily seen and felt. Thus, a notion of “policy” can encompass both the text-level discourses (“official policy”) and the actions that associate with these discourses. Conceptualizing policy as “practice” purposefully unsettles the hierarchy and power given to “official” policy, in favor of valuing the policy forms experienced by those who live the policy on a daily basis (Sutton & Levinson, 2011). A notion of “policy practice” (Sutton & Levinson, 2001) allows us to see not only the enactment dimension of policy but also how policy situates in people’s lives, the power it is accorded, and the ways policy organizes and reorganizes realities.

Policy has long been an important subject of anthropological inquiry. In addition to functioning as an instrument of rule, policy advances discourses that inform and produce social categories, such as “teacher,” or in this case, “female teacher.” As Shore and others (2011, p. 8) explain:

The importance of policy as a subject of anthropological analysis arises from the fact that policies are major instruments through which governments, companies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), public agencies, and international bodies classify and regulate spaces and subjects they seek to govern.

Relatedly, Stephen Ball (1993) argues that policies produce particular subjectivities and imaginaries. Ball and colleagues coin the term “policy subjects” to capture this phenomenon, identifying that certain policies “call up” (2011, p. 617) different kinds of teachers and teacherly qualities. In the book, *How Schools Do Policy*, Ball et al. write,

Do teachers simply make sense of policy, re-iterate it, refract it, or implement it? Or does policy also make sense of teachers, make them what and who they are in the school and the classroom, make them up, produce them, articulate them? (2012, pp. 5–6)

This paper examines both how teachers are “made” through policy and how teachers make a policy in practice. After describing the KGIS project—which I examined through policy texts and policy enactments—I discuss the methodological approach applied in this study.

Illustrative Case: The Keeping Girls in School (KGIS) Project in Malawi

This analysis concentrates on DFID’s Keeping Girls in School (KGIS) program in Malawi. This program was being implemented at the school where I conducted an ethnography of teachers’ work, which afforded the opportunity to explore both how the policy was enacted and its official discourses. In addition, its enlistment of female teachers as role models to girls is emblematic of other donor projects in Malawi and other African countries.

KGIS is a £37.5-million girls’ education intervention that aims to achieve gender parity in school enrollment in upper-primary and secondary schools (DFID-Malawi 2013). The Malawi-based project, implemented between 2012 and 2017, derives from DFID’s *Strategic Vision for Women and Girls*, a mission statement guiding DFID’s work in 23 countries. The strategy is organized within four pillars: Delay first pregnancy and support safe childbirth; Get economic assets directly to girls

and women; Get girls through secondary school; Prevent violence against girls and women (DFID-Central, 2011, p. 1).

Under the third pillar, which emphasizes girls' secondary school completion, the authors elaborate that one practical action is to "increase the number of female teachers" (p. 5), setting the stage for the inclusion of female teachers within interventions targeting girls' schooling. In the *Terms of Reference* between Save the Children (Save), a non-governmental organization contracted to implement parts of KGIS, female teachers are described as part of an "essential education package" which also includes cash transfers, construction of girls' latrines, and fees for secondary school (2014).

The KGIS project contains several interwoven components centered on girls' school completion. Save is responsible for implementing the female teacher component of this project. The contract between Save and DFID details the expectations around female teacher role-modelling: The objective is designing and implementing a sustainable role-modelling program for female teachers. Activities built into the contract include: conducting a desk review to consolidate previous role-modelling programs; designing a program that trains female teachers "to be better role models to girls" (p. 2); implementing the female teacher program and monitoring it; and developing a plan for institutionalizing female teacher role-modelling within Malawi's Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) as an in-service professional development activity. Thus, while female teacher role-modelling is currently a donor program, it is intended to be integrated into MoEST activities. This indicates its relevance within Malawi and also the ways that a concept like the "female teacher" can move from an international development project to a policy space.

Method

I first encountered the KGIS project during fieldwork in Malawi in October 2016. It was a project being implemented at the school where I was conducting an ethnographic study of teacher engagements with international development projects. While my analysis of KGIS began in the field, with how it was being taken up by teachers, I broadened the analysis to examine official discourse of the project. With this ethnographic and textual data, I explore both how policies articulate teachers and how teachers articulate policy. In other words, how does a policy narrate who teachers are, what their priorities are, and how they relate to students? At the same time policy is interacting with the parameters of teaching, teachers are navigating these parameters and defining the policy through their engagements with it.

By integrating field-generated data and textual data, in this paper I examine the construction of female teachers as particular "policy subjects" (Ball et al., 2011) and the ways in which this construction limits and enables enactment of a female teacher role-modelling policy. Specifically, I ask, *how are female teacher produced in these policy texts as particular policy subjects? And, what constraints and possibilities does this generate for women teachers in practice?* To address these questions, I apply discourse analysis to policy texts, and I examine policy enactments observed through an ethnographic study of teaching in Malawi. In this section I describe the methods of each analytic strand.

Ethnographic Study of Teaching in Malawi

This article also draws from data generated through an ethnographic study conducted over nine months in 2016 and 2017. This study examined how primary school teachers made meaning of their work and the ways international development projects intersected with their work. The primary research site, in Southern Malawi, is referred to as "Mitambo Primary School." All people and locations are discussed using pseudonyms. Nineteen teachers at Mitambo volunteered to participate in the study, engaging initially in individual interviews and subsequently in focus groups. Two

teachers agreed to be focal teachers, allowing me to shadow them from January through May 2017. Observing and interviewing these two teachers enabled me to bring into focus the particular and situated ways that teachers make meaning of their work (Dyson & Genishi, 2011).

While all Mitambo female teachers were trained through DFID's KGIS project as "Female Teacher Role Models," one of this study's focal teachers, Maggie Nyasulu, led KGIS activities at Mitambo. Because Maggie was the main enactor of KGIS at Mitambo, this paper draws heavily on participant observation and interview data from Maggie, particularly instances when Maggie was involved in or discussing girls' education activities. Supplemental data from the other focal teacher, Linda Macheso, was also incorporated into the paper, but to a lesser extent. A data inventory, developed through reviewing and indexing all data (Galman, 2016), enabled me to select specific fieldnotes and interviews for analysis. I also revisited focus groups and interviews related to KGIS, role-modelling, and other relevant concepts. Codes (such as "role model," "sexual abstinence," and "example,") were formed from transcripts to organize the data and develop assertions (Erickson, 1986). Analytic memos (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011), particularly efforts to link theory and data, were especially useful in building arguments.

Through data analysis, I endeavored to bridge the construct of the female teacher policy subject with the ways in which Maggie and her colleagues enacted their work. I listened to and observed Maggie's enactment of female teacher role-modelling, paying particular attention to how she activated and omitted certain parts of who she is as a teacher. I considered the ways that extant notions of who teachers are offered strategies for "becoming" the female teacher policy subject. The following section offers themes emerging from these topics, exploring first how the policy subject is produced in policy texts, and the ways this constrains and enables actions by female teachers who take up the program.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis offers a concrete set of methods to apply to studying the female teacher policy subject. I identify instances where female teachers are referenced in texts, the language used around these references, and justifications for the argument that female teachers matter for female students. Specifically, I adopt critical discourse analysis (CDA), which allows me to explore the nexus between language and power relations (Fairclough, 2003).

For this discourse analysis, I selected nine policy texts that have contributed to the evolution of KGIS's female teacher role-modelling intervention. These texts, largely produced by DFID, inform or manifest the development of the female teacher policy subject. I also explored texts used to support claims that female teachers matter to girls' education, including in the corpus originating texts, in order to examine the evolution of concepts and claims through time. The nine texts presented in Table 1 comprise the core CDA corpus, and are the most exhaustively analyzed for this paper.

Table 1
Documents in the Critical Discourse Analysis corpus

	Date of Publication	Author	Title (and length)
<i>INTER-NATIONAL DOCUMENTS</i>	2004	The World Bank (Africa Region, Human Development Sector) [Eileen Kane]	Girls' Education in Africa: What Do We Know About Strategies That Work? (176 pages)
	2006	UNESCO Bangkok [Jackie Kirk]	The Impact of Women Teachers on Girls' Education (Advocacy Brief) (20 pages)
	2011	Department for International Development (DFID)-Central	Strategic Vision for Girls and Women (6 pages)
<i>MALAWI-SPECIFIC DOCUMENTS</i>	2012	DFID-Malawi	Business Case for KGIS (40 pages)
	2013	DFID-Malawi	KGIS Annual Review (36 pages)
	2014	DFID-Malawi & Save the Children	Terms of Reference: KGIS School Experience Project (6 pages)
	2014	Save the Children	Call for Consultancy: Desktop Research Study (4 pages)
	2014	Government of Malawi	National Girls' Education Strategy (53 pages)
	2015	Save the Children	Keeping Girls in School (KGIS) in Malawi: Three-day Training for Female Teacher Role Models (80 pages)

Positionality

Informed by critical feminist theory, I approach this research with the understanding that all perspectives are partial. Haraway (2001) calls upon researchers to acknowledge their partial perspectives—what she describes as the “situated and embodied knowledges,” that stand in contrast to “unlocatable, and so irresponsible, knowledge claims” (p. 175). Developing claims responsibly involves locating claims and appreciating the strengths and limitations of one’s perspective, which is what I aim to do in this section.

In participant observation, the researcher is the primary instrument of data generation, and thus who the researcher is greatly matters to the data and the arguments that develop from the data (Buch & Staller, 2007; Creswell, 2012). I am a white U.S. American woman—also a teacher and teacher educator—whose first teaching position was through the Peace Corps in Malawi. Teaching for three years in Malawi piqued my interest in the experiences of Malawian teachers, and also helped me gain skills speaking Chichewa and Chitumbuka (though I am not fluent). While conducting participant observation, my position as a cultural outsider allowed me to notice and ask about “obvious” things (what Spradley, 1979, calls “tacit knowledge”) but likely also created barriers in what research participants felt I could relate to.

Perhaps because of my experience being a woman teacher in both Malawi and the United States, the differences in being a women teacher across these environments has been necessary for me to learn about and navigate. I am thus driven to question how policies take up or ignore these differences, which influenced my analytic process, particularly related to the discourse analysis. These experiences and perspectives shaped my engagement with the textual and ethnographic aspects of this research project, and informed the analysis and arguments that I offer here.

Female Teachers’ Positioning and Agency in the KGIS Project

Across Malawi, 21,500 female teachers were trained as KGIS Female Teacher Role Models (FTRMs). This training began with female teachers’ hearing that they matter to girls’ education. In the training’s first icebreaker, teachers were asked to reflect on and share a time they inspired a girl to remain in school. Then, the facilitator led a discussion on the topic of why female teachers matter to girls’ education. The Facilitator Notes in the KGIS Training Manual read: “The presence of female teachers is important for many reasons. These include: Female teachers have a positive impact on girls’ enrolment, [and] female teachers can have a positive impact on girls’ retention in school” (Save, 2015, p. 12).

This example highlights how claims are forwarded about female teachers within the context of the KGIS project, and how female teachers come into contact with these claims. In the following section, I explore the origins and language of why female teachers are purported to matter to girls’ education, and I trace moments of translation as these claims are reinterpreted across texts. Interested in the ways the policy subject constrains and enables creative action (Certeau, 1984), I then examine female teachers’ enactment at Mitambo Primary School and their negotiation of the nuances and contradictions of their constructed role.

Female Teachers in Policy: Producing the Female Teacher Policy Subject

During open-coding of the nine policy texts, I captured an exhaustive list of responses to the question “Why female teachers?” I categorized the 105 excerpts identified into seven over-arching categories, the five most dominant of which are discussed below. The categories are termed “logics,” as they reveal a particular relationship or assumed causality existing between girls and female teachers. The term “logics” refers to how people and ideas become organized around assumptions and theories of action (e.g., Enfield, 2000); within this paper, “female teacher logic” is used to specifically mean a reasoning around why female teachers matter to girls’ education. On average, across these nine texts on girls’ education, a female teacher logic appears on every fourth page of text (27.6% of pages contain a logic) (Appendix B presents the logics and density).

Access logic. Given the variation in documents and authors, it is striking that one logic is mobilized in every text. This is the logic that female teachers correspond with girls’ access to education. Across these texts, this logic represents 36.2% of overall mentions of female teachers.

Often, an image of a magnet is invoked, as texts describe how female teachers “attract” girls to primary school. For instance, in the World Bank report (2004) *Girls' education in Africa: What do we know about strategies that work?*, the authors write that “evidence from Bangladesh shows that the employment of qualified female teachers attracted girls to primary school” (p. 22). This excerpt, like many others in this sample, does not position the female teacher as an active agent but instead as someone being acted upon (employed). In this example, her properties rather than her actions pull girls to the school.

In other examples, the word “attract” is not utilized, but the same idea—that female teachers pull girls to school and hold them there—is conveyed. In the *Terms of Reference* between Save and DFID-Malawi for the KGIS project, the female teacher is described as an “incentive”: “DFID’s programme will provide an ‘Essential Education Package’ including secondary school bursaries, cash transfers, girls’ latrines, support networks such as Mother Groups and more female teachers, as *incentives to keep girls in school*” (DFID & Save, 2014, p. 6; emphasis added).

The access logic is often supported with studies that establish a correlation between the presence of female teachers and the presence of girls in school, such as DFID-Malawi’s *Business Case for KGIS*:

Both local and international evidence on the impact of female teachers on girls’ education is limited. However, there are correlations between the number of female teachers and girls’ enrolment, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. In countries where there are more or less equal number of male and female primary teachers, there is close to gender parity in student intake. In contrast, in countries where women constitute only 20% of teachers, there are far more boys than girls entering school (2012, pp. 13–14)

That the access logic is often predicated on correlation is important to highlight, as this challenges the grounds on which the logic stands. For instance, the excerpt above references two highly interdependent variables: gender parity in primary school enrollment and the percentage of female teachers in the workforce. With few girls enrolling in school, it is logical that a small pool would exist from which to draw female teachers. Yet, the excerpt instead insinuates that the paucity of female teachers drives low girls’ enrollment, which is specious given the interdependence of these variables. Despite the fragility of the empirical claim being made in the access logic, there is an intuitiveness or “common sense” to it (Gramsci, 1971) that affords sustenance to this and other female teacher logics.

Support logic. In 25 instances, the female teacher is referenced as “support” to girls. There are three main ways this support is mentioned: generally supporting girls in their education; supporting girls in their “critical needs,” a notion which comes up three times with little explication (DFID-Malawi & Save, 2014, p. 2); and specifically supporting girls in achieving school-related outcomes. Here, school-oriented instances of this logic is emphasized. Eight examples of general education support arise in the texts, including for example, “moral support” and encouragement as part of the female teachers’ role in the KGIS project (DFID, 2013).

Most frequently (in 14 cases) the support role of female teachers is tied to outcomes like student retention and achievement. There are thus notable overlaps between the support logic and other female teacher logics. Yet, the support logic is distinct in that it offers a hazy but somewhat visible mechanism for how the female teacher relates to female students. She supports and encourages girls, almost like a school-coach: the female teacher “can support and encourage girls to successfully complete their studies and maybe even continue studying to become teachers themselves” (UNESCO, 2006, p. 8). While the UNESCO text references the idea of specific school-

oriented support, it is within the KGIS program materials that the female teacher as a school-coach becomes concrete. In the context of this program, DFID-Malawi writes that “female teachers provide girls the additional support they need to improve their grades and pass the PSCLE (primary school leaving certificate examination)” (2012, p. 23); female teachers will “raise the aspirations of girls to want to remain in school” (DFID-Malawi & Save, 2014, p. 1). By the time the support logic reaches female teachers in the KGIS training, the female teacher role is constructed as a catalyst for keeping girls in school. The training manual states that, “For the next three days the female teachers will continue together to further explore the roles of female teachers as role models to support girls to stay in school” (Save, 2015, p. 7). This illustrates how this logic—that female teachers support girls to stay in school—materializes in the work of female teachers.

Learning logic. The learning logic relates to the support logic, but contrasts with it by specifically focusing attention on the way female teachers are associated with girls’ education achievement instead of the support offered. In the DFID-Malawi text, *Business Case for KGIS*, the authors state, “In a study of five African countries, 5th grade girls’ knowledge gains were higher when taught by a female teacher” (2012, p. 9). This logic is referenced in seven of the nine texts (except DFID-Malawi, 2013, and DFID-Malawi & Save, 2014). The World Bank report states, “In Botswana, a consistently positive relationships was found to exist between schools with a higher proportion of female teachers and improvements in girls’ achievement levels, without putting boys at a disadvantage” (2004, pp. 125–126). The UNESCO report references similar research and includes a parallel note to assuage readers who might worry about creating male disadvantage: “studies have shown a positive impact from women teachers on girls’ (and boys’) achievement” (2006, p. 8). These examples demonstrate the ways female teachers are justified on the grounds of boosting learning outcomes for girls, and even boys.

Role model logic. In eight mentions, female teachers are constructed as role models or “someone to look up to” for girls (DFID-Malawi, 2012, p. 14). This logic is intertwined with others, for instance in the KGIS training where participants explore “the roles of female teachers as role models to support girls to stay in school” (Save, 2015, p. 7). In other cases, the role model logic is presented independently. For example, when explaining a policy that increases the presence of women in the teaching profession, the Government of Malawi writes, “Female teachers are perceived to be role-models for girl learners especially in rural primary schools” (2014, p. 22). In the KGIS training, female teachers are reminded that part of their responsibility is to “act as a female role model for boys and girls, other teachers, and the wider community” (Save, 2015, p. 74). This imperative to act as a role model could reasonably extend to teachers of all genders, but it is notable that female teachers are accorded this responsibility.

Protection logic. The notion that schools are protective spaces for girls—where girls are insulated from danger—has been developed and problematized in a number of studies (Bajaj, 2009; Stambach, 2000). This protection argument is challenged by evidence of gender-based violence experienced by girls while at school (Queen et al., 2015; Shah, 2015). Because of the risks of gender-based violence at school, female teachers offer a unique protectiveness for girls, as they can shield girls even within school spaces. It is in this way that female teachers are constructed in the texts reviewed in this analysis. In eight instance, female teachers are presented as protecting girls from sexual advances and abuse. The UNESCO report states, “In schools where girls are in the minority, especially, the presence of one or more female teachers may also ensure protection for girls from unwanted attention from boys or male teachers, and even from sexual abuse and exploitation” (2006, p. 8).

In the KGIS training manual, the protection logic comes up five times, indicating that it is a core component of the KGIS program. Here is an explication of how the female teacher, and her partners, are cast as a shield protecting girls from harm:

As a female teacher role model at your school, you will actively work together with senior staff and Mother Groups to ensure girls are protected from harm and can report any experiences of harassment or violence and girls will be listened to compassionately and have action taken to create a safe school environment for all girls and boys. (Save, 2015, pp. 7–8)

In this excerpt, the mechanism for protecting girls is suggested—female teachers enable an environment where girls can report, where girls are listened to, and where students are safe.

Additional logics and cross-cutting themes. While the five above logics arose with the most frequency, I identified two additional yet less-common logics: the change agent logic and the health/hygiene logic. The change agent logic emphasizes that female teachers champion girls' education and challenge gender stereotypes. The health and hygiene logic asserts that female teachers should educate girls about menstruation, puberty, sex, and reproductive health systems.

Across each particular logic forwarded in these texts, a shared emphasis exists on the "utility" of female teachers (Monkman & Hoffman, 2013), or their role producing specific outcomes. In some cases, the female teacher is linked to girls' access to schooling or safety at school; in other cases, to boys' and girls' learning. Each of these logics promote an assumed causality between female teachers and these specific outcomes. However, this assumption of causality may be fragile or misplaced. Before exploring how female teachers at one school resolve the dilemma and contradictions of their constructed role, I examine the establishment of causality around female teacher logics.

Morphing towards causality. In addition to reviewing the construction of female teachers in texts, I traced logics concerning female teachers to their originating sources in order to see how these claims transform and, oftentimes, elevate in importance. Tables 2 and 3 offer two examples of translations of claims about female teachers.

Table 2 illustrates how moments of translation around the access logic manifest in a claim that women teachers correspond with girls' enrollments. In the first iteration, UNESCO (2003) references a figure illustrating a correlation between the proportion of female teachers and primary school student intakes. The authors dissuade the reader's temptation to assume that female teachers cause greater primary school enrollments of girls, given that primary school enrollments of girls also influence the number of women available to work as teachers—"cause and effect here are difficult to disentangle," they write (p. 6). In the UNESCO advocacy brief of 2006, this 2003 UNESCO report is directly referenced. While the 2006 report notes that correlation in the originating text, the first sentence of the 2006 document conjures up a stronger association in stating that increasing women in the teaching profession "relates to the positive impact that doing so has on girls' education" (p. 7).

This term, "positive impact," is picked up when Save cites UNESCO 2006, and the ideas around women teachers and girls' education become more concise and powerful. Instead of being a "correlation" (UNESCO, 2006) or a phenomenon in which "cause and effect...are difficult to disentangle" (UNESCO, 2003, p. 60), women teachers become imbued with impact potential: "Female teachers have a positive impact on girls' enrollment" (Save, 2015, p. 2). In this citation chain, a claim goes from being couched and contextualized to declarative and universalized; instead of referring to women teachers in sub-Saharan Africa and stressing the correlational aspects of the

relationship (as happens in the originating text), these texts increasingly emphasize a powerfully causal relationship between female teachers and girls' enrollment. As the knowledge moves, it also "morphs" (Cowen, 2009).

Table 2

Morphing Towards Causality Example 1: From "potentially important" (UNESCO, 2003) to "positive impact" (Save, 2015)

Text	Description of Female Teachers
UNESCO (2003), EFA Global Monitoring Report	One indicator potentially important for gendered outcomes in schooling is the proportion of primary-school teachers who are female. Girls' enrolments rise relative to boys as the proportion of female teachers rises from low levels. Figure 2.15 indicates that in sub-Saharan Africa those countries with roughly equal proportions of male and female primary teachers also tend to have rough equality in primary intakes between boys and girls. In contrast, where the proportion of female teachers is around 20% of the total, school intakes are much more unequal, with intakes of only seven or eight girls for every ten boys. Cause and effect here are difficult to disentangle: increasing proportions of educated women emerging from the schools will affect the number of women available to work as teachers, as well as household demand for girls' schooling (p. 60).
UNESCO (2006), Advocacy Brief (Jackie Kirk)	One of the most compelling arguments for increasing the number of women teachers in schools relates to the positive impact that doing so has on girls' education. There is evidence to show a correlation between the number of women teachers and girls' enrollment, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. In countries where there are more or less equal numbers of male and female primary teachers, there is close to gender parity in student intake. In contrast, in countries where women constitute only 20% of teachers, there are far more boys than girls entering school (UNESCO, 2003) (p. 7).
Save the Children (2014), Call for Consultancy	A report published by UNESCO entitled "The Impact of Women Teachers on Girls' Education" (Kirk, 2006) notes that the presence of women in the classroom can impact positively on girls' retention in school and on their achievement. (p. 2)
Save the Children (2015), Training Manual for Female Teacher Role Models	The presence of female teachers is important for many reasons. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female teachers have a positive impact on girls' enrollment • Female teachers can have a positive impact on girls' retention in school (p. 12)

A second example, presented on Table 3, further illustrates the decontextualized, amplified, and universalized nature of female teacher "effects." This example comes from an intervention conducted in Balochistan, a rural part of Pakistan, in 1992 and 1993 (Kim, Alderman, & Orazem,

1998; Rugh, 2000). The intervention, called the Community Support Process (CSP) program, required communities to create village education committees, composed of parents of daughters. These village education committees found local women to serve as teachers at newly developed all-girls schools. The community provided a temporary facility to serve as the school, after which the government built a permanent facility (Kim et al., 1998; Rugh, 2000).

Table 3

Morphing Towards Causality Example 2: Proposing that female teachers can reduce barriers to girls' schooling (Kim et al., 1998) to asserting that "female teachers attracted girls to primary school" (GOM, 2014)

Text	Description of Female Teachers
World Bank Working Paper (Kim et al., 1998)	Applying the ex-post matched comparison method (equation 15) the measured CSP (community support process) program effect was to increase girls' primary enrollment by 20.8 percent and to increase boys' primary enrollment by 9.5 percent...Although the reason for success cannot be identified from available data, the use of parental participation and local female teachers are apparently critical to breaking cultural barriers to female schooling (p. 13–14).
Academy for Educational Development Report (Rugh, 2000)	The Society, an NGO formed to implement the Community Support Project, was contracted to establish girls' schools in these conservative regions of Balochistan. Doing so required communities to find local female teachers with at least a minimum eighth grade education who were willing to teach. CSP upgraded the qualification of these local women through intensive training and follow-up support. The presence of female teachers made it possible for many girls to go to school (rates of participation in villages were significantly higher than non-CSP villages) and the teachers served as role models for girls who might not otherwise have seen professional working women (p. 98).
World Bank Report (Kane, 2004)	In both Bangladesh and Balochistan, the recruitment of local female teachers has been important in attracting girls to primary school, while villages in Balochistan with female teachers had higher participation rates for girls than villages that didn't (Khanderk 1996 ³ ; Kim et al., 1998; Rugh, 2000)(p. 8).
Government of Malawi (GOM, 2014)	Evidence from Bangladesh shows that the employment of qualified female teachers attracted girls to primary school, while in Balochistan villages with female teachers had higher participation rates for girls than villages that did not have them (World Bank, 2004) (p. 22).

In the original World Bank Working Paper, Kim et al. statistically compared the CSP treatment to a non-CSP comparison group, finding that overall the program resulted in

³ I attempted to locate this original source, working with the Michigan State University Education Librarian and issuing a call for an inter-library loan, but I was unable to obtain an electronic or hard-copy.

improvements to girls' and boy's enrollments. While the authors proposed that parental participation and local female teachers were important to reducing barriers to girls' schooling, they stressed that "the reason for success cannot be identified from available data" (1998, p. 14). Rugh (2000), meanwhile, intimated that the presence of female teacher "made it possible for many girls to go to school," giving a statistic demonstrating enrollment rates for girls are higher in CSP villages compared to non-CSP villages.

The World Bank (2004) cites both studies when claiming that: "In both Bangladesh and Balochistan the recruitment of local female teachers has been important in attracting girls to primary school, while villages in Balochistan with female teachers had higher participation rates for girls than villages that didn't (Khanderk, 1996; Kim et al., 1998; Rugh, 2000)" (2004, p. 8). Shedding context around the comprehensive intervention, the importance of female teachers as a stand-alone intervention is emphasized.

The most recent reinterpretation of this claim is from the Government of Malawi (GOM) in 2014, which cites and closely mirrors the World Bank (2004) study. GOM writes, "in Balochistan villages with female teachers had higher participation rates for girls than villages that did not have them" (2014, p. 22). However, what is stripped in this claim now is the importance of local female teachers. While the example gains import, it loses context.

Female Teachers in Practice: Revealing and Resolving Contradictions of Their Constructed Role

In the previous section, as claims moved from text to text, the context around them was lost. Yet, as female teachers in Malawi engaged with programs grounded in these logics, the significance of context came sharply into focus. Though the female teacher policy subject emerged in policy texts as "uniform" and "impactful," in practice female teachers differentially engaged with girls' education reform, grappled with how to deliver their purported impacts, and navigated actual positioning in which their "empowerment" was precarious. I present three illustrative vignettes exposing how the limitations and contradictions of the female teacher role model policy subject unfolded in practice.

Vignette 1. "I guess since she's from here, she really wants to help the girls." *One afternoon in February, focal teacher Linda Macheso and I walked from Mitambo Primary School to the bus stop. Unlike other teachers at Mitambo, Linda did not live near Mitambo's campus but instead lived about 10 miles away at a trading center. Though Linda had worked at Mitambo for five years, she has always lived in town and did not strongly identify with Mitambo Village.*

As we walked towards Linda's bus stop, a teenaged girl called out, "Madam Macheso!" Linda smiled, and she and I walked over to greet this girl, named Spive, who is sitting under the tree, with a bucket of corn-bread for sale. Next to her was an older woman—Spive's mother—holding a newborn baby. Spive introduced us to the baby in her mom's arms, her baby, born last week. Linda then told Spive she wants her to come back to school, and the girl smiles and says "OK, OK," then we said goodbye. Linda and I continued on our walk, and Linda told me that she had Spive as a student in standard (grade) 1, but later on her other teachers stopped ensuring she was coming to school. "Now, she's married, doooooown there," Linda said, pointing to the remote villages over the hill. This began a conversation about girls' pregnancy and the difficulty of keeping girls in school. Linda began talking about another Mitambo teacher, Maggie Nyasulu, and how Maggie is really trying to keep girls in school. "Last week," Linda said, "Maggie was counseling the girls, and a girl spoke back to her, 'What's the point? We're just going to get pregnant.'" According to Linda, Maggie was furious that the girl felt this way. Linda explained, "Since Maggie is from the area, she feels like she has to counsel the girls here. I guess since she is from here, she really wants to help the girls."

Though reforms like KGIS assume all female teachers are inherently motivated to support girls, this conversation with Linda revealed her perception that some teachers care more, particularly teachers from the school area. This notion came up in interviews with other Mitambo teachers. In an interview with Maggie Nyasulu, the only teacher at Mitambo originally from Mitambo Village, she explained that since she is from Mitambo, “those girls can look special on me, that I am a teacher from their villages. We stay together in the same villages. When they can look upon those other ladies [born and raised in Mitambo], they’re just staying at home.” In an interview with another teacher, Fatima, Fatima explained that one of her responsibilities outside of teaching is to be a role model to girls in her home area, which is in a different district altogether from Mitambo. In her home area, Fatima explained, few people have completed their education, and so she said that she embraces the responsibility of being a role model to girls (and boys) in her home village. In training all female teachers and creating a uniform female teacher with uniform impacts, the KGIS project fails to capitalize on an important element of localness that shapes how role modelling is taken up.

The above vignette also demonstrates the consequences that marriage and pregnancy may have upon a girl’s completion of school. The notion that school is not a place for a pregnant girl is codified in Malawi’s national policy, where a girl who becomes pregnant is suspended for one year (Van Der Merwe, 2017). While the KGIS program focuses on keeping girls in school, it is enacted in a context where sex and pregnancy are viewed as the main reasons where girl might be kept out of school. The following vignette more explicitly outlines the impacts of these cultural models (Frye, 2017) have on teacher activities and the methods teachers use to encourage student retention.

Vignette 2. Female teachers as enforcers of abstinence. *In December 2016, I attended a Girls Space meeting led by Maggie Nyasulu. Girls Space meetings are part of the KGIS project. Like other Girls Space meetings, Maggie was joined by members of the Mother Group. About 100 girls were sitting on the ground beneath the shade of a few trees, and the adults sat on chairs in a row in front of them. Maggie stood to begin the meeting, “Today, we meet to talk about the school holiday,” Maggie said. “We want you to stay well with no disturbances, such as intercourse.”*

Maggie then handed things over to the chair of the Mother Group, Amayi Uladi (Mama Uladi), who stood up as Maggie sat down. Amayi Uladi encouraged girls to study during the holiday and to help parents in the garden. She said that if she sees any of the girls at the video show, she will give a report to the head teacher or Maggie Nyasulu. Amayi Uladi told the girls to dress conservatively and avoid pregnancy, because they are young and their bodies undeveloped, they may get obstetric fistula, and many girls shudder. “Do we hear each other?” Amayi Uladi asked the girls, who said “Yes” in a chorus. Amayi Uladi then invited Maggie to add some additional thoughts, and Maggie stood up again, telling the girls to be clever and to avoid sex. “Men are scary. They spend money on prostitutes who carry diseases and so you can’t trust them.” For the remainder of the meeting, members of the Mother Group and Maggie stressed the importance of dressing conservatively and avoiding sex during the holiday. Maggie said, “It may seem like you could have a great life with a guy, maybe he has lots of maize, but think of what an education could get you. One day, we’ll see you driving a car!”

In this vignette, we see a glimpse of how Maggie related to the girls at Mitambo, and also how Amayi Uladi positioned Maggie in relation to girls: as a rule-enforcer. Amayi Uladi explained that if girls go to video shows, Maggie or the head teacher will follow up, implying a punishment. Maggie and the Mother Group members were promoting a sexual abstinence that is constructed as key to girls’ success in school and in life; this construction is echoed through popular culture in Malawi and saliently seen in “bright futures” campaigns linking abstinence to good futures (Frye, 2012; Kendall & Silver, 2014). In the last statement by Maggie, it is implied that education stops when a girl decides to spend time with men or boys. The reality of Maggie’s statement gains support

in the example of Spiwe in the first vignette, whose education stopped, or at the least stalled, as a result of pregnancy due to the GOM's suspension policy. I observed similar themes in other Girls Space meetings, often with Maggie and the Mother Group placing more emphasis on the specific modes of dress (e.g., no miniskirts) that they argued would help the girls avoid intercourse. That this group of women chose to emphasize clothing is significant, and perhaps reflective of the limited options they see available to them for keeping girls in school. The absence of boys in this gender equality reform concentrates the responsibility for avoiding pregnancy within girls, which may have limited impact in an environment where many sexual encounters are not consensual (Kendall & Kaunda, 2015).

At Mitambo, the idea of teachers as enforcers reverberated across other aspects of the teacher role, which may also be why it came through in this Girls Space meeting. Rules and punishments established a structure on which the order of schooling at Mitambo hinged, and teachers were enforcers of these rules and administrators of punishment. Maintaining order is a core part of teachers' duties, sometimes involving administering manual work tasks to late-comers, or in other scolding students for not listening. The female teacher role-modelling responsibilities found expression through similar vocabulary, which came through when Maggie likened girls' getting pregnant to breaking the rules of school.

The specific context around sexuality and schooling in Malawi also informs how KGIS and other reforms unfolded. An antinomy between sexuality and schooling (Frye, 2017) has been foundational to the development of education in Malawi. With formal schooling primarily the purview of religious missionaries until the 1940s, schooling was primarily a religious project directed toward teaching Africans of Malawi (then Nyasaland) to read the Bible (Banda, 1982). Schooling was a vehicle for religious conversion, of which character training through moral and religious education was a central component. Because of this, Christian mores and schooling continue to be entangled. Other scholars have observed instances of teachers punishing girls suspected of being in romantic relationships, which can make continuing with schooling fraught for these girls (Frye, 2017; Kendall & Kaunda, 2015).

Charged with the task of keeping girls in school, Maggie and her Mother Group counterparts utilized available cultural understandings, amplifying to girls a message of the importance of maintaining sexual abstinence.

Vignette 3. Precarious empowerment of female teachers. *When I interviewed Maggie one Monday in March, she shared with me that over the weekend she had attended a training with the Mother Group for KGIS. Maggie said that, originally, the head teacher had only told teacher Christopher Mandala about the training. But when the Mother Group arrived and saw that Maggie was not there, they insisted on going to her house and inviting her, which they did. Maggie reported that Amayi Uladi said, "Madam Nyasulu is always assisting us, so Maggie might have that allowance to buy soap." Trainings like this one are typically accompanied by an allowance (per diem) for attending, and as such they become coveted opportunities for teachers, and, perhaps, ways for the head teacher to reward particular teachers. Under the pressure of the Mother Group, the head teacher conceded to allow Maggie to be invited to the training. As Maggie narrated the story, she was at home hand-washing her clothes when the Mother Group arrived, and so she put her washing aside to join them in the training.*

Within the KGIS project, female teachers are imagined as part of an "essential intervention package," but the package neglects the actual ecologies in which teachers are embedded—the actors, relationships, and structures that influence their work (Weaver-Hightower, 2008). Female teachers are assumed within the KGIS framework to be "empowered" by virtue of being a teacher, yet the vulnerabilities inherent to their unique situation are largely ignored. However, these vulnerabilities

play a large role in how and whether female teachers are able to act in the prescribed capacity within the KGIS project.

Related acts of gatekeeping/punishments occurred between the head teacher and Maggie throughout this study; he frequently cut her off during staff meetings, undermined her perspectives in front of other teachers, and assigned her to grade his exam papers. Maggie was an outspoken advocate for her colleague teachers, and often spoke critically with other teachers about the ineffectualness of the head teacher. Yet, her position as a primary school teacher meant that he had substantial power over her work. The complexities of teacher-leader relationships, and the potential gatekeeping that can happen around projects such as KGIS, challenges the notion that the female teacher policy subject is empowered simply because she is a teacher.

The line Maggie used in the vignette—"Maggie might have that allowance to buy soap"—also draws attention to another reality among primary school teachers in Malawi, and that is that their salary is too limited to afford basic necessities. As a consequence, these allowance-bearing trainings became a way to ameliorate the conditions of poverty that Maggie experienced as a primary school teacher. In interviews, Maggie and other teachers described how parents told their children not to become primary school teachers. This overall picture of primary school teachers again contradicts with the KGIS portrait of a woman whose employment empowers her.

Discussion

In this paper, I have paired discourse analysis with ethnographic data to question how female teachers are produced as particular policy subjects and to identify the constraints and possibilities this creates for women in practice. As Ball (1994) writes, "Policies do not normally tell you what to do. They create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed." (p. 19). In the case of the KGIS project, female teachers are narrowly described and fashioned into catalysts for keeping girls in school. The project recognizes no variation in the ways female teachers may desire to be role models to girls and ignores other possibilities for how a female teacher role model may choose to support students. Additionally, in responsabilizing female teachers for girls' education, rather than female and male teachers, the locus for achieving gender equality concentrates in women, furthering a "feminization of responsibility and obligation" (Chant, 2006, p. 206) which neglects broader institutional realities in which women too may be marginalized.

Feminizing responsibility for girls' education also absolves male teachers from participating in gender equality efforts, which is particularly troubling in a context where sexual relationships between male teachers and female students, though prohibited, are not uncommon (Mughogho, 2016). As my and other studies show, sexual relationships are cast as antithetical to schooling (Kendall & Kaunda, 2015; Stambach, 2000) and indeed such relationships could keep girls out of school if a girl becomes pregnant (Van Der Merwe, 2017). This context around sexuality and schooling is imperative for understanding how a project imagined to "keep girls in school" is enacted, and the potential for such a project to reinforce cultural models of success (Frye, 2012) which intertwine abstinence and bright futures.

This study's findings caution against a disproportionate reliance on same-gender teachers for role-modelling, particularly when these teachers also belong to a marginalized group. Instead of emphasizing girls' education and female teachers, I see great possibility in a gender equality program that involves men and women teachers and emphasizes gender *relations*, rather than girls and women alone, given that the livelihoods and girls and women cannot be improved if they alone are responsible for improving them. Moreover, the significance of context revealed in this study—

Maggie for instance, being from the local area, expresses a heightened commitment to girls' education—also reveals possibilities for male teachers from the local area to take a leading role. An over-emphasis on *gender*-matching in role-modelling eclipses these other possibilities which may in fact be quite generative.

More broadly, this study demonstrates how analysis of the lived experiences around policy can identify flaws and contradictions in the logics upon which policies are predicated. Coupling discourse analysis and qualitative data analysis offers a useful methodology for this approach. By comparing the logics of policy with the logics of practice, researchers can identify both challenges in enacting policy as well as new possibilities for practice. Such analyses complicate prevailing discourse but can also reveal more context-appropriate and effective policy responses.

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Appendix A

Description of Included Texts

DFID-Central (2011), *Strategic Vision for Girls and Women*

Overview: DFID's strategic vision for girls and women is intended to cut across the UK's development activities. The education components apply to the 23 countries where DFID gives support to education. This text describes why girls' education is important—"to stop poverty before it starts" (p. 1), and outlines four pillars for "delivering results for girls and women": 1) delay pregnancy and support safe childbirth, 2) get economic assets directly to girls and women, 3) get girls through secondary school, 4) prevent violence against girls and women. For the third pillar, female teachers are specifically mentioned as one of several measures to increase the number of girls in primary and secondary school (other measures include: stipends, vouchers, cash transfers, improving facilities).

DFID-Malawi (2012), *Business Case for KGIS*

Overview: This document describes the KGIS project, intended to occur 2012-2016 and cost 37.5 million pounds. DFID presents the need to be addressed—gender disparities and the "negative knock-on effect" (p. 4)—and how the "Essential Education Package" will address this. The Essential Education Package includes secondary school bursaries, cash transfers, girls' latrines, support networks such as Mother Groups and more female teachers, as incentives to keep girls in school (p. 4). Outputs for the project include more girls completing primary and secondary school, 21,500 in-service female teachers trained to act as better role models to girls, 1,000 new female teachers trained. The document then presents the need for this intervention, the impact and outcome (impact: improved life chances for girls and empowerment of women). There is a section on "evidence base" that presents correlational evidence on links between female teachers and girls' enrollment, acknowledging that recent research from Uganda cautions that women are not necessarily more supportive of girls. The ToC is presented, along with the assumptions embedded within it (p. 15). Then there is a section on feasible options 1-5 for addressing the "needs identified in this strategic case" (p. 15).

DFID-Malawi (2013), *KGIS Annual Review*

Overview: This annual review was undertaken one-year into the project (July 2013, with the project starting in May 2012). It restates much of the information that is relayed in the business case with respect to program objectives and problem context. We get additional information on who the contracted agencies are – CAMFED, UNICEF, Maxwell Stamp, FAWEMA & Open University UK, etc. (p. 2). We learn that the school experience component of KGIS was delayed – "the school experience component was originally planned to be implemented by CARE but after several weak proposal submitted, on the advice of Procurement Group, the team rejected the CARE proposals" (p. 16). The cash transfers and bursaries constitute approximately 53% of the total budget (p. 20). The remainder of the text breaks each project down by parts, examining some of the project assumptions, for instance "integrated approach fails; programme becomes a sum or parts rather than a holistic programme" (p. 18).

DFID-Malawi & Save the Children (2014), *Terms of Reference: KGIS School Experience Project*

Overview: This document is an agreement between Save the Children and DFID Malawi that reflects a shared understanding of the KGIS-School Experience project and the work for which STC is committing. Sections include: introduction, aim and objectives, recipient, scope of the work, methods, deliverables, coordination, timing, expertise and team required, constraints and dependencies, key performance indicators, and duty of care. Scope of work relays the precise components of the Role modelling project, as does the “deliverables” section, and there are paragraphs at the end with the ToC and background.

Government of Malawi (2014), *National Girls' Education Strategy*

Overview: The National Girls' Education Strategy “aims to serve as the operational tool for all ministries and partners working on girls' education programme development, implementation, reporting, monitoring and evaluation” (p. 11). This document's vision is that “all girls in Malawi access, participate in, complete and excel at all levels of education that empowers them to effectively contribute to the country's sustainable social, economic development by 2018” (p. 8), and the goal is that “increased numbers of girls equitably accessing, participating in, excelling and completing primary, secondary and tertiary education through the removal of obstacles to their education” (p. 8). UNICEF provided technical and financial support for the development of this text. Background is given for the scale of the problem for girls' education, with Malawi's being off-track on EFA and MDGs restated several times throughout the text. Female teachers are invoked as a set of strategies (e.g., girls' hostels, re-admission policy) to enhance girls' education.

Save the Children (2015), *Keeping Girls in School (KGIS) in Malawi: Three-day training for female teacher role models, Training Manual*

Overview: This document was developed with financial support from DFID as part of the KGIS program (specifically, the School Experience component). It is described as “the primary resource for a three-day training course for female teacher role models” (p. 3). It is designed to be implemented by a “Master Trainer,” and to follow a two-day KGIS workshop for the whole school. All female teachers at a school are trained in FTRM. The first session is titled, “Female Teachers Matter,” listing some of the reasons why female teachers are important to girls' education. From there, the group discusses creating an enabling environment, positive discipline in the classroom, direct support to girls (listening skills), direct support in terms of mentoring, processes for reporting and referral (in the event, e.g. of rape, that direct support is inadequate), female role models in your lives, peer support for FTRMs (KGIS envisions them forming female teacher networks), and action planning for FTs. The final activity is creating a school-based female teachers' action plan.

Save the Children (2014), *Call for Consultancy: Desktop Research Study*

Overview: I included this text because it shows how the role modelling project is taking shape. We see in the DFID-Malawi & STC (2014) document that a desk-review is required for the role modelling project. This consultancy call asks for “individual(s) or firms as consultant(s) to conduct a study on female teacher role model programmes and practices for integration into project design” (p. 2). In particular, they ask for a review of literature in order to provide practical guidance on best practices for developing a female teacher role-modelling program.

UNESCO (2006), *The Impact of Women Teachers on Girls' Education (Advocacy Brief)*

Overview: This advocacy brief asserts that women teachers are important to girls' enrollment, drawing upon research to support this claim. Specific strategies are suggested for how to increase the representation of women in the teaching profession. The author urges that a broader gender equality perspective is paramount when developing policy and programs for women teachers. The regional focus is Asia-Pacific. Correlations between girls' enrollment and the number of female teachers are presented (interestingly, in SSA). This text notes some of the nuance here, that it is more than a simple cause and effect, and stresses that "increasing the number of women teachers has to be accompanied by other strategies to promote girls' education" (p. 1), echoing what we're hearing across these texts about plural interventions.

World Bank (2004), *Girls' Education in Africa: What Do We Know About Strategies That Work?*

Overview: Presents the benefits associated with girls' education, obstacles to girls' education, evidence for strategies, examples of strategies that appear to have a positive impact, what can be done? (govts, researchers, practitioners). The regional focus is Africa. In the section "What we know and don't know about what works," sub-section, "Improving school quality," female teachers ("expanding the number of female teachers and role models") are one of 10 strategies listed on p. v. Others include student-centered learning, expanding physical facilities, making teaching and materials more relevant, gender education unites, providing single-sex schools, using bilingual education. The author notes examples where such interventions have been successful (Bangladesh, Gambia), stressing that multiple interventions are often key. There is some attention to the benefits of local teachers, with a study in Bangladesh and Balochistan cited. A study in Botswana is referenced where a positive relationship found between proportion of female teachers and girls' achievement (without any disadvantage to boys).

About the Author

Alyssa Morley

Michigan State University

Morleya2@msu.edu

Alyssa Morley, Ph.D., is a Post-Doctoral Research Associate in the College of Education at Michigan State University. Her research examines lived experiences of policy in sub-Saharan Africa and the United States.

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Grosso, Brasil

Rosa Maria Bueno Fischer

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande
do Sul, Brasil

Jefferson Mainardes

Universidade Estadual de Ponta
Grossa, Brasil

Fabiany de Cássia Tavares Silva

Universidade Federal do Mato
Grosso do Sul, Brasil

Alice Casimiro Lopes

Universidade do Estado do Rio de
Janeiro, Brasil

Jader Janer Moreira Lopes

Universidade Federal Fluminense e
Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora,
Brasil

António Teodoro

Universidade Lusófona
Portugal

Suzana Feldens Schwertner

Centro Universitário Univates
Brasil

Debora Nunes

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande
do Norte, Brasil

Lílian do Valle

Universidade do Estado do Rio de
Janeiro, Brasil

Flávia Miller Naethe Motta

Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de
Janeiro, Brasil

Alda Junqueira Marin

Pontifícia Universidade Católica de
São Paulo, Brasil

Alfredo Veiga-Neto

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande
do Sul, Brasil

Dalila Andrade Oliveira

Universidade Federal de Minas
Gerais, Brasil