Education and the Emancipation of Hausa Muslim Women in Nigeria

by

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Abstract

This paper is about the introduction in 1976 of Universal Primary education in Nigeria. The effect of sending Hausa Muslim girls to school on 1) popular perceptions of women's proper role in an Islamic society, and 2) the girls' perceptions of themselves and their own life prospects are the central themes explored.

About the author

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EDUCATION AND THE EMANCIPATION OF HAUSA MUSLIM WOMEN IN NIGERIA

Kano is an ancient city of some five million people in northern Nigeria, Africa's largest country. Its people are Hausa-speaking and belong to Nigeria's largest subnational ethnic group. This population is 98% Muslim, and the city has long been considered a center of Islamic learning as well as the most important industrial and commercial center in that part of the country. Although a well-established system of Islamic education has long existed in Kano, until recently Western education has been very limited and virtually unavailable to women.[1] This situation changed dramatically in 1974 when the Head of State, General Yakubu Gowan, announced a scheme of Universal Primary Education (UPE) to be launched in 1976 in Nigeria. By 1982, 356,000 girls were in primary school (grades 1-2 in the American system). A mistrust of Western education and the values associated will certainly circumscribe the potentially liberating effects of the increasing numbers of girls in school, but school attendance on the part of large numbers of Hausa female children in Kano is a dramatic development, the full impact of which cannot yet be evaluated.

In Kano, in spite of a real push for education, the average age for marriage for girls is still twelve. After marriage, most girls live in seclusion (kulle in the Hausa language) and do not leave their houses unless accompanied and then usually only at night and for sanctioned purposes. Because the Islamic context is so central to an understanding of the possibilities offered by education, this paper will briefly touch upon Islamic beliefs about women and the nature of Islamic education, and then look at the impact of secular education as a force for women's emancipation.[2] Data has been collected from female secondary school students, secondary school principals and teachers, and university students concerning education and appropriate roles for women in Islamic society.[3] The dissonance created by expanding educational levels, on the one hand, and the strong cultural and religious norms of female subservience to men, on the other hand, is a central theme of this paper.

Islam and Women

Islam differs from other major world religions in the explicit emphasis it places on the status of women and the protections it provides for them. Matters affecting women's status are set forth either in the *Qur'an* itself or in Islamic law (Sharia) derived from interpretations of the *Qur'an* and sayings of the Prophet.

The *Qur'an* is regarded as God's final word and, as such, gives complete instructions for living good and Godly lives. The *Qur'an* and laws that flow from it cannot be altered. The Prophet Mohammad revealed that Allah had ordained distinct but complementary roles for men and women with the overall injuction that, in essence, the "strong" should protect the "weak." Through the centuries, as scholars and judges further interpreted the words of the Prophet, they continued to reflect the patriarchal customs and attitudes of their time and place. Therefore, in contemporary times, Islamic women are

frozen into the expectations of an earlier reality and remain today essentially limited by divine edict to the roles of wife and mother. Marriage and child-bearing are believed to be religious duties. These beliefs are serious constraints on the possibilities for the emancipation of Hausa or any Islamic women through education.

Although Islam is widespread and exists in many cultural contexts (Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific), all Islamic cultures share basic understandings about women and their proper role and place in society. The revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Mohammad and the articulation of the Sharia through the ages by Islamic scholars are the basis of this understanding and unanimity. Muslim scholars maintain that the Qur'an explicitly demands the same standard for men and women and, thus, they are equal before God. "And whosoever does a righteous deed, be they male or female, and is a believer, we shall assuredly give them a goodly life to live; and we shall certainly reward them according to the best of what they did" (Qur'an 16:97).

Under Islamic law, women are given explicit rights and protections, particularly in regard to inheritance, marriage, and support, but the general thrust of references to women in the Qur'an is that women are dependent on men and are fulfilled only though subordination to them. Although roles of wives and husbands are viewed as complementary rather than "unequal," it is quite clear that relationships within the family are hierarchal and patriarchal. The role of women may be complementary to that of men, but it is not equal. While "women have the same [rights in relation to their husbands] as is expected in all decency from them, men stand a step above them. God is mighty and wise" (Qur'an 2:228). Men's rights and responsibilities are greater than women's because the Qur'an (4:34) instructs men to support women.

Islamic Education in Kano

Education in Kano has been heavily influenced by Islam and, until the last decade, Western education has been distrusted, if not feared. Recent advances in providing Western education for children in Kano are closely watched by Islamic leaders, and the concern for reinforcement of Islamic values is shared by religious leaders and educators alike.

Islamic education had its beginnings in Nigeria with the establishment of the Muslim dynasty in Bornu in 1085 A.D. Islam was firmly rooted in Kano by the late fifteenth century, when traders journeying across the Sahara helped forge small centers of Islamic literacy. A school of higher Islamic learning (*madrasa*) was established in Kano by the early seventeenth century and eventually offered Islamic law, theology, philosophy, and Qur'anic exegesis. The arrival of the British in Kano in 1903 saw the establishment of a new official elite, the kadis (*qudis*), who were recognized as scholars of Islamic law.

Today, most children in Kano, both male and female, attend traditional Qur'anic schools as well as Western or Islamiyya schools. All education

presupposes an Islamic foundation and is greatly influenced by Islamic beliefs. Islamic schools emphasize the importance of maintaining the Islamic traditions as a way of life. As others have observed, there has been little change in the content or methods of Islamic teaching since the sixteenth century. Islamic education emphasizes spiritual and literary authority rather than intellectual curiosity. In Kano, children enter Qur'anic school between the ages of four and six and immediately set about learning the _Qur'an_, beginning with the first chapter and proceeding straight through the Book. Learning is by memory and rote rather than discussion and understanding. Fixed sections of the _Qur'an_ are recited by the teacher and repeated by the students as the texts are learned by heart. Students squat on the ground in a semi-circle, memorizing the _Qur'an_ by "reading" their verses in a sing-song fashion and swaying their bodies back and forth. Students learn to write the Arabic alphabet as well as to chant large portions of the _Qur'an_. The letters of the alphabet are written on a large slate and children practice copying them in the sand; hence, the designation "makarantum allo" or "board schools" is used to distinguish such schools from the "makarantum boko" or "book schools" that characterize Western education. Boys attend classes for approximately two hours a day for several years, while girls usually attend classes for one hour a day and for fewer years.

For Muslim leaders, the function of education is to transmit Islamic doctrine, not to inspire inquiry or new interpretations; education consists in relating religious knowledge for the good of society. Education in the Western sense of teaching ways of thinking and pushing back the frontiers of knowledge is alien and threatening. Muslim leaders fear that the introduction of Western education fosters an attempt to establish control over the minds of the people.

In "higher" Islamic education, theology and law are the basic disciplines, and preserving the delicate balance of truth resting on divine revelation and interpretation is the predominant concern. Islamic education is noncompetitive, and examinations are considered a foreign invention; there are neither entry nor exit requirements. The student's educational status is determined by the reputation of the teacher he studies with, not by his own performance (Hiskett 1975:97; Hassan 1975:124; and Gibb and Bowen 1957 [Vol. 1, Part 2]:139-161).

During most of the colonial era (1908-1960), education, other than Islamic, was limited in the north because Christian mission work was prohibited there. In 1947 the British attempted to combine the Western tradition of learning with the Islamic tradition of memorizing by establishing the School for Arabic Studies and Higher Islamic Learning (SAS) in Kano in 1947. SAS was the first secondary school in Kano and was for boys only. The first such school for Kano girls, the Women's Arabic Teacher's College, was not opened until 1978. These schools were established, in part, to begin to train teachers who could introduce Arabic and English literacy to the Qur'anic schools, thus redressing an enormous imbalance in education between northern and southern Nigeria, which continued to exist well after independence in 1960. By 1956, the British

administrators in Kano were themselves apologizing for the general lack of educational attainment on the part of Kano citizens. "In fairness to Northern schools . . . it should be recognized that education in Kano Province is in a class of its own" (Nigeria 1953:17). As late as 1954, there was only one boy from Kano in a post-primary institution (the Junior Secondary School) (Bray 1981:45). As independence approached, northern leaders became more consciously concerned about the educational imbalances, not only between the north and south, but within the north itself (see Tables I and II). Mallam Aminu Kano, the most important nationalist politician in Kano from 1952, when he entered politics, until his death in 1983, made educational reform a cornerstone of his quest for political leadership. Mallam Aminu expressed particular concern for both the education of girls and the aversion of Muslims to Western education. It was in part to convince some of the religious leaders in Kano of the benefits of Western education that he founded a school for five- and six-year-old boys in his home. Here he sought to demonstrate that, by learning according to Western methods, a child could recite the Qur'an better and learn more Arabic in one year than he could attending Qur'anic school for five years (Feinstein 1973:142). The school opened in 1950 with thirty boys; enrollment doubled in the next year. In that year instruction in the English language, elementary arithmetic and the English alphabet were introduced. The school was considered a great success, but because Mallam Aminu Kano's politics were controversial, the school closed after a few years (Feinstein 1973:143; Hassan 1975:178-180). A school for girls, founded in 1952, survived until Mallam's death in 1983 -- partly because it did not attempt to introduce Western education but focused on crafts, nutrition, and health care.

The 1960s witnessed a renewl of interest in schools such as Mallan Aminu Kano's school for boys; these came to be referred to as Islamiyya schools. The Premier of the North, Sir Ahmadu Bello (the Sardauna of Sokoto), appointed a special ministerial committee to study appropriate educational reform in the Northern Region and, more especially, to examine once again ways to build upon traditional Islamic education. The Committee toured the Sudan, Libya, and the United Arab Emirates and finally recommended, in 1964, that selected Qur'anic schools "should be organized into classes in accordance with age, year of entry and standard of learning and that the curriculum should be diversified to include arithmetic, reading and writing as well as Koranic study" (Adamu 1973:56). It was also recommended that special inspectors oversee the maintenance of standards.

The Islamiyya schools were initially a large component of the UPE system in Kano City. By 1975, 63 such schools were established under a wide range of proprietorship, from philanthropic individuals such as Alhaji Dantata to the Mama'atu Nasril Islam (the Young Muslims' Congress). By 1980, however, 10 had ceased to function, and it is likely, given the downturn in the Nigerian economy, that more will lose their patrons. Those schools that remain are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and coexist today with the government-sponsored primary schools. The Islamiyya schools are particularly important in the education of girls because parents have fewer reservations about them than about the more secular government-sponsored schools.

In 1976, the Kano State Education Review Committee (Galadanci Committee) recommended that one Islamiyya school be established in every quarter of Kano City. Some two years later, the Islamic Education Center was established in the Ministry of Education and given the responsibility for inspecting and registering all Islamiyya schools that met Ministry standards. By 1983, 13 private schools, boasting 203 teachers and 10,277 pupils, were accredited as Islamiyya Primary Schools (Gana 1983:1). Girls constituted over 50 percent of the enrollment in the Islamiyya schools, but all teachers were male. Thirty-six of these teachers were interviewed in 1983, and all believed that Western education "made girls behave immorally" (ibid.: 44). Although some efforts at standardization have been made, no common syllabi have been developed and no attendance records are kept. Like the traditional Qur'anic schools, the Islamiyya schools give no formal certificated examinations, although many pupils do continue their studies at the SAS, the judicial schools (madrasa), or the Arabic Teachers' College by providing testimonials from their teachers. In accordance with the Galadanci Committee recommendations, graduates of these schools may enter the School of General Studies at Bayero University to take the remedial courses necessary for them to pursue university degrees. These students usually take degrees at Bayero in either the Faculty of Education or the Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies, both of which prepare teachers for Islamiyya schools as well as for state secondary schools.

Girls and Education in Kano

The introduction of universal primary education in 1976 created a dramatic increase in the number of girls in school (see Table III). Shortly after installation of his government in early 1980, the Governor of Kano State, Abubakar Rimi, proclaimed that:

> My government is equally aware that no profound change could take place in a society where women are relegated and marginalized from the helms of socio-economic and political life of any society. It follows then that any serious mass education programme should make women its focal point . . . Parents and husbands or guardians are therefore urged to send their wives and daughters to school . . . Critics of women [sic] education should stop deceiving themselves and others by opposing women's education from the religious point of view, because God will in the hereafter question them for distorting his words (Bello 1983:13).

Getting girls into the classrooms was a crucial step, but only a first step. Because of the low level of Western education and the lack of qualified teachers, extraordinarily high failure rates on national examinations are characteristic for Kano State secondary school girls. The problem is compounded by a general lack of concern about high failure rates in Kano State schools in general, but especially in the case of girls, for whom the value of education is still seen as limited, particularly in the rural areas.

A look at the pass rates on the WASC (West African School Certificate) exams in three government secondary schools for girls in Kano City and one rural school in Kano State for the years 1980 and 1981 demonstrates the problem:

School	Year	#Pass	#Fail	%Pass	Year	#Pass	#Fail	%Pass
Dala	1980	14	348	3.8	1981	12	196	5.7
WTC	1980	14	104	11.0	1981	14	114	5.7
GSS	1980	28	513	5.0	1981	0	172	0.0
Kazaure	1980	10	192	4.9	1981	5	201	0.02

(Yuguda 1983:4).

(WTC is the Women's Teachers' College and GSS is the Girls' Secondary School. Dala, WTC and GSS are in Kano City, while Kazaure is a town approximately 50 miles to the north of Kano.)

Two-hundred-seventeen students and eighty-three teachers in three of these four schools (Dala, Women's Teachers College, and Kazaure) were surveyed in regard to the high failure rates (Bello 1983; Yuguda 1983). Their responses reflect the cultural and religious values of the society. Sixty of the 217 students (or 27.6%) were already married and all the others were engaged. All these students and teachers believed that there was no reason to be concerned about the poor performance of girls because their husbands would support them regardless of how well they did in school. Another lack of motivation lies in the fact that 93 percent of the students noted that their parents believed that Islam enjoins females to stay home and live in seclusion or kulle after marriage. A large majority, 190 or 88 percent, indicated that their parents did not encourage them to study and 138 (or 88%) of those girls not married indicated that their parents would not allow them to pursue further studies regardless of how well they did in school. Another observer noted that female students in the secondary schools feel that "it is a waste of time to study hard and strive for good result since they will only end up in their husbands' houses" (Gana 1983:47). Since all students are promoted whether they pass or fail, many girls take their WASC exams without ever having passed a single subject (Ibid.). Two principals interviewed (at Dala and Kazaure) asserted that, although English is the official language of instruction in Kano State, the actual language of instruction in the primary schools is Hausa, as it is in the Islamiyya schools from which many of the rural students come. In the secondary schools, many of the expatriate teachers cannot speak Hausa and the students cannot speak English; hence students cannot learn. In the secondary schools, exams too are in English. Both principals stressed the need to upgrade primary education if girls were to improve their performance at the secondary level (Interviews #53 and #54, Kano, January 5, 1985). But, since both parents and students expect girls to regard marriage and children as their primary interests, there is no particular motivation to

succeed in school. Beliefs, values, and customs of the society all mitigate against girls' taking their studies seriously. Girls who later want to teach can do so regardless of whether they have passed any subjects or succeeded in the WASC exam.

Both Hausa and Islamic culture stress modesty and uncompetiveness, especially for girls and women. This, together with the emphasis on early marriage and the overall importance of marriage for women, greatly affects girls and their attitudes toward education.

A survey of girls in both urban and rural secondary schools suggests that, in cultural matters, there is no discernable difference between girls in urban and girls in rural schools. Their is, however, a pronounced difference in the mental and emotional health of the students in the two settings. Overall, students in the two urban schools (Dala and WTC) appeared more future-oriented and achievement-oriented than their rural counterparts at Kazaure, although their more "modern" aspirations toward careers generally were tinged by the contradictory desire for a traditional marriage as well. Their ambivalence suggests the influence of the large numbers of expatriate teachers and NYSC (Nigerian Youth Service Corps) teachers from other parts of Nigeria serving in Kano urban schools; it is perhaps also significant that the very existence of these aspirations contradicts the values of Hausa culture, which stress complete submission to the will of Allah and the acceptance of fate. In contrast, the rural students adhered to the belief that whatever happened must be accepted and did not believe they had any control over their fates -- as in fact, for the most part, they did not. Hence, rural girls were more inclined to believe that nothing depended on their own effort.

In the rural school, a large proportion of the teachers were Hausa. In the urban school, where teachers were predominantly non-Hausa, adjustment to the school situation and its contradictory was very difficult for most students; the principal likened the reactions of her urban students to those of soldiers in combat who give evidence of nervous irritability, overreaction to the merest provocation, and a loss of identity and self-esteem. (Interview #55, Kano, January 5, 1985). She felt that, in the rural setting, the threat of failing or of being expelled from school did not affect the girls. For the most part, they did not want to be there in the first place and saw education as irrelevant to their future roles as wives and mothers. The urban girls, she emphasized, felt both ambivalent and confused about such matters.

In another study, an urban girls' secondary school principal commented that "the Hausa girls . . . sit almost motionless on their beds doing nothing, showing general apathy with little interest in their surroundings . . . often become mute, talking to no one and will not answer questions" (Abdullahi 1980:99). This principal noted that bedwetting is frequent among the younger urban students, but is nearly nonexistent for rural students, thus suggesting greater psychological stress among the urban students. She also noted that, on several occasions in the late 1970s, the urban students

became "quite hysterical" and claimed to have seen "spirits of the dead" during the night. They were clearly affected by the great change in environment and by being removed from the protective walls of their mothers' compounds. The principal also commented, "there were five suicide attempts while I was principal, all involving an overdose of drugs which were brought from home." During this time, fifteen girls a day requested to go to the hospital. The girls in one dormitory set fire to their mattresses, burning the dorm to the ground (Ibid:105). In the principal's view, the girls suffered from feelings of alienation, helplessness and failure (Ibid:114). In short, torn between two sets of norms, they succumbed to stress. In rural areas where there were fewer non-Hausa, the teachers described their students as much less traumatized by the experience of living away from home. There were few instances of unacceptable behavior and the girls themselves seemed happy to be away from home for a few years before marrying.[4]

In the urban school, the students tried to speak English because so many of their teachers could not speak Hausa. In the rural school, in contrast, the teachers tended both to speak and teach in Hausa, even though the official language of instruction in all secondary schools in Kano State (as in Nigeria as a whole) was English. The importance of this in relation to the high failure rates in Kano State is clear when the scores of girls in the St. Louis Secondary School for Girls are contrasted with those of the government schools discussed above. St. Louis was founded in 1951 for the daughters of non-Hausa parents resident in Kano. In 1976, all 67 girls at St. Louis who took the WASC exam passed; in 1977 and 1978, when 56 and 66 girls were examined, 95 percent passed. The scores began to come down in 1980 after the Kano State Government decreed that 80 percent of St. Louis students must, henceforth, be indigenous to Kano State. That year the pass rate fell to 85 percent and, by 1981, it had fallen to 68 percent. (Umar 1982:5). The better prepared students were the 20 percent non-Hausa girls admitted under the quota system. It is reasonable to attribute at least part of the gap between Hausa and non-Hausa girls to ability in the use of the English language. Of the 235 students taking the WASC exams at the end of the fifth form in 1981 (roughly the equivalent of an American high school education), all but two of the 25 non-Hausa students passed the exams, whereas only five of the 210 Hausa girls taking the exam passed.

When the author visited Kazaure in 1982, the rural students appeared to be at ease and easily engaged in animated conversation in Hausa, much in contrast to students in classes visited at the Dala Girls Secondary School in Kano City. Classes seemed to be free-floating, with the teachers giving little guidance and placing little pressure on the girls to settle down to their lessons. Clearly, school as an academic institution had little relevance for the lives of these girls. And, indeed, no candidate for the WASC examinations in this school obtained a passing score in 1982. For most of them, according to the principal, school was a "waste of time and a good social center where they can meet their friends and do interesting things together before going to live in their husbands houses" (Interview #55, January 5, 1985).

By their senior year (1982), 50 percent of the Hausa students at St. Louis had dropped out, 80 percent of these for academic reasons. Ninety percent of those who remained passed the WASC, but in recognition of its "disadvantaged" status, the passing score for indigenines of Kano State was only 25 percent. In Kazaure, 90 percent of the students remained to complete their Fifth Form, but less than 10 percent passed the state examination that would allow them into a post-secondary institution or the Bayero University School of General Studies, a kind of remedial program that attempts to prepare graduates of Kano State schools for university work.

At home, girls are too busy with domestic chores to study, even were the atmosphere conducive to it. However, the lack of privacy, the lack of encouragement from adults, and the constant stream of people in and out of compounds make it virtually impossible for a girl to pursue school work at home even were she so inclined. This is a problem in Hausa society in general. Of 319 female secondary school students surveyed, 88 percent indicated that their parents did not encourage them to read and 87 percent claimed that their parents did not encourage them to study (Bello 1983, Yuguda 1983). Of 144 students at Dala Government Girls Secondary School in Kano, 40 (27.8%) were married and all the others were bethrothed. Of those not married, 89 percent said their parents or husbands-to-be would not allow them to continue their education, no matter how well they did in school. A large majority of the 83 secondary school teachers (78%) related the high failure rates of girls to the fact that they would never have to work, as their husbands would provide for them; education was more of a social interlude before marriage than an experience related to any practical application (Yuguda 1983).

The failure rates and the lack of concern about them suggest that, while education is now viewed as an asset for girls before marriage, it does not offer them options in addition to marriage. The indications of stress among urban students suggest that education alone will not change for the cultural factors inhibiting women's emancipation in Kano. The expansion of education levels for women is, indeed, a sensitive indicator of change in women's lives, but it is not so much an engine of social change as a precondition. In terms of numbers affected, educational developments have been rapid and far-reaching in Kano State in the past decade. Their impact on the lives of women is just beginning to be felt; the long-term effects on women's perceptions about themselves and their life prospects will interact with deeply ingrained cultural prescriptions to determine what changes, if any, will affect women's emancipation from the confines of domestic life to public roles, both economic and political. At present, education may expand horizons, but the practical realities of girls lives, as dictated by the culture and the marriage system, have not changed. Girls themselves do not take their studies seriously, partly because they either are or soon will be married, and they do not expect the nature of marriage to change.

Educated Women and Change

At the university level, there is some evidence of divergence in attitudes and expectations between men and women, perhaps because it is

truly exceptional for a Hausa woman in Kano to attend a university and these women represent the elite classes. In the author's survey of 572 male and 114 female university students at Bayero University in Kano, 81 (71.1%) of the women thought life would be easier for their daughters than for them. When asked whom they wanted their daughters to marry, "A good man whom she likes" was the most frequent response of female students (78%); in contrast, most male students (75%) thought wealth or position were most important to young women and their families. No students conceived of life outside marriage as a desirable option.

These interviews solicited the views of university students on the expansion of female education, the situation of educated women, the impact of education on marriage, the participation of women in the work force, and on women's participation in politics. Students have acquired expectations about marriage and family life through observation and personal experience, and they have also acquired attitudes and expectations regarding what is appropriate and inappropriate for husbands and wives in different domestic situations. They are interested in the process of social change and the effects of education on social life. They make it possible to make a preliminary assessment of the effects of an independent variable (education) on the direction of social change.

Female students at Bayero were from better-educated and more well-to-do families than were male students. Forty-three percent of the 92 Muslim girls had gone to school in the western rather than the northern region of Nigeria, particularly in Kwara State, and spoke Yoruba as a first or second language; 50 percent came from the lower north rather than from Kano State. Twenty percent (23) of the female students were Christian and had attended Christian schools. One third of the Muslim girls had also attended Christian schools, again reflecting both the rather high percentage of Muslim Yoruba girls among the female students and the requirement that St. Louis Secondary School for Girls reserve 80 percent of its seats for Kano State girls. In contrast, 93 percent of the male students were from Kano State and were graduates of government secondary schools or teacher training colleges in the state. In terms of the population of Kano state, Hausa girls were underrepresented, as were Muslim girls who had not attended a Christian secondary school. Thus, the very poor performance of Hausa Muslim girls in Kano State secondary schools is reflected in the university enrollment figures.

Since 1976, when the concerted campaign for girls' education was begun, Muslim families have appeared somewhat less opposed to Western education or education for girls; most girls claimed that their families were supportive of their educations.[6] The greatest obstacle to Muslim girls' education remains the fear among parents that it will "spoil" them; thus, while opposition to education _per se_ is unusual, an insistence on early marriage remains. Ninety percent of the Muslim female students rank "pressure to marry young" as the primary obstacle to girls pursuing their education, whereas only 50 percent of Christian girls cited this as an obstacle. These Christian girls are, apparently, not referring to themselves, but to girls in general, and especially those in the north where the survey was taken.

For Christian girls, financial obstacles seem to be equally important. Only one student, a Christian female, cited religion as the main obstacle to girls' education (see Table IV).

Education, more than any other factor, postpones the age of marriage for girls whose families have allowed them to continue in school. Even so, at the University level, a majority of female students are married (four of the 22 Christian girls in the survey, and 82 of the 92 Muslim girls). Cultural differences underscored by religion are evident in the fact that the Muslim girls believed that progressive fathers were the most important factor in furthering their education, whereas Christian girls credited their mothers' interest as the decisive factor. Christian girls also cited their mothers as important financial contributors to their education, whereas for Muslim girls, fathers and husbands are virtually the only means of support. Muslim girls also believed that having educated sisters is important -- perhaps because it suggests a family strongly supportive of female education, even though sisters do not often contribute financial support (Table V).

Also indicative of strong cultural prescriptions about relations between the sexes is the fact that fifty percent of the Muslim girls preferred single-sex schools at the primary school level and 75 percent of them believed single-sex institutions were essential at the secondary level so that girls would not develop "moral" problems. Both Muslim and Christian girls overwhelmingly stated that they expected that their daughters would attend university. Male students were even more strongly in favor of single-sex education and much less committed to university education for their daughters (Table VI).

Muslim male students overwhelmingly felt that women were not "exploited." Interestingly -- and perhaps reflecting the post 1976 concerted emphasis of Islamic leaders on the importance of education for girls -- they felt that no preference should be given to boys in education. On the other hand, 87 percent of the Muslim girls stated that it was important to change the status of women in Nigeria, particularly in the north, where women are especially disadvantaged. Both groups thought that educated women were happier than uneducated women because they had more freedom and could attain a greater degree of personal fulfillment. But, a significant subgroup of Christian girls (31%) thought that traditional women were happier because there is too much conflict in modern life (Table VI).

Male students tend to represent the entire range of Nigerian society, from poor peasant to ruling elite, whereas only 2 percent of the Hausa Muslim girls come from homes that would be considered less than middle-class[7] (See Table VII). This may partially explain why all the female students, but only 56 percent of the Muslim male students, in the university survey expected their own daughters to be educated beyond primary school (Table VI). This unanimity of opinion among female students indicates that change is beginning to occur in the aspirations of upper-class girls, if not in their actual life styles and choices. The percentage of girls continuing their education beyond primary school is much less than that for boys, but the proportion is steadily increasing and this

is in itself important. As the number of educated women rises, so does the possibility that a few women will seek personal fulfillment through careers.

In spite of changing views on the importance of education, then, traditional attitudes are still a predominant component of the value system. Rising levels of education suggest a more articulate and informed society in Kano in the years to come, but patterns of interaction between men and women may not be challenged. Women will be more enlightened concerning their daily lives, more articulate about their problems, and more effective in securing public policies which address these problems -- so long as they do not overtly challenge the structure of the relationship between the sexes.

To supplement the student survey, several men of traditional status were interviewed. These men emphasized that they were not opposed to a high level of education for women _per se_, but only to the corruption of character and resulting social instability promoted by Western education. Interviews with a leading Islamic educator in Kano highlighted concerns that girls' education beyond the primary school level would interfere with the widespread custom that girls are married shortly after the onset of puberty. (Interview #15, Kano, June 21, 1982). His views were echoed by both students and parents. The Grand Kadi of Kano also expressed deep admiration for knowledge; while he believed that girls should be educated, he feared that educated girls would not give full attention to "their proper roles as wives and mother." "Women's place is in the home training children to be obedient Muslim citizens" (Interview #15, Kano, June 21, 1982).

According to the Madaki of Kano (one of the four highest traditional title holders), the status of women fell once men became concerned with the establishment of their own power rather than with religion. The Madaki stressed that education for women was important, but asserted that the best way for most women to become educated beyond primary school is to marry scholars and learn privately from them (Interview #51, Kano, July 7, 1983).

In this vein, a man generally perceived as very progressive on religious matters, the former Grand Kadi of Sokoto, Abubakar Gummi, once remarked that men should see that women are educated

> according to their own natures. Some may prefer science and the law to domestic subjects and we should encourage their minds to grow by studying them. This does not mean that they should practice these subjects professionally when they are adults because they should marry, and then their first responsibility will be to safeguard the peace and piety of the home and develop their children's sensitivity and moral character. But we have a duty to see that their own minds and personalities develop too, or their contribution will be less (Trevor 1975:255).

Hence, while traditional leaders now stress the importance of education for girls, they continue to believe that such education should consist of literacy and domestic science. The culture continues to discourage

individuality and competitiveness among girls. Islamic leaders concur in stating that girls should marry young so that they will not know much of the world (although divorce rates for young girls in first marriages are very high).

While there is little enthusiasm for Western education under any circumstances, less concern is aroused when boys rather than girls are the focus. The Grand Kadi explained that "men are bred to lead, therefore they need Western skills." During the colonial period, sons of hereditary leaders were given special attention for this very reason, and traditional leaders concurred with the British on this point. Thus, men may adapt to cultural change, but women, as the preservers of culture, must reflect tradition and continuity.

It is, thus, hardly surprising that in Kano, at Bayero University as elsewhere, sex stereotyping of occupations is beginning to occur; very few women enter such "male" fields as science, law, and technology. During 1975-76, 16 percent of the university student population was female (Kisekka 1980:39). At Bayero, 62 of the 98 women (63%) matriculating for the 1982/83 term entered the faculties of Arts and Islamic Studies or Education, eight women (8.27%) entered the Faculty of Science, three women (3.1%) entered the Faculty of Law, and no women entered the Faculty of Technology. The other twenty-five (25.5%) women were in the social and management sciences (Bayero University Official Bulletin #331, 1983). It is interesting to note, however, that in other Nigerian universities approximately half of female students were not pursuing stereotypical courses, which suggests a correlation between Islam and sex stereotyping (Pitten 1980:890).

It has been asserted that higher education is the most potent force stimulating a reassessment of women's roles (Dodd 1973). Secondary and university education are credited with expanding women's horizons, thus encouraging them to look for fulfillment not only in the home but outside it, equipping them with the skills and inclination for employment, and reducing childbearing and lessening its burdens. This may describe the impact of education on middle- and upper-class urban Hausa women, but, even more, it describes attitudes and practices widely regarded as Western and unacceptable, particularly by religious leaders and by both men and women in rural areas.

Indeed, educated women in Kano are as religious as uneducated women. They may be less fatalistic, feel more responsibility for their actions, and feel they have more ultimate control over their lives, but they do not challenge their religion and its prescriptions to marry, obey, and seek greater knowledge of Allah. Nevertheless, their attitudes towards their children often diverge from the traditional. Among the dozen or so educated women married to university lecturers, only one is practicing traditional <u>kunya</u> ("first-child avoidance," or giving the first-born child to relatives and avoiding all interaction with it). While several have given care of their first children to sisters or mothers-in-law, they keep in touch with them, talk with them, and are keenly interested in how they are being raised and educated. These women help their children learn to think and to expect

and respond to change; they value the greater self-determination they feel they have as educated women. They often make conscious choices against traditional practices such as kulle (seclusion) and kunya while continuing to function traditionally in regard to marriages, naming ceremonies and the like. Educated women who have lived abroad with their husbands are appalled at the loneliness and isolation of women in the West and want to avoid any such development in their own culture. While educated women and some men support higher levels of education for women, uneducated men and women still fear it as a challenge to social norms and particularly to the authority of men (Interview #56, Kano, December 26, 1984).

Some research suggests that even uneducated men and women admire different qualities in women. When uneducated men were asked to rank women in terms of respect, they placed the wives of high traditional rulers first and primary school teachers and midwives last. On the other hand, uneducated women ranked primary school teachers on top and the Emir's wives at the bottom, "because they are shut in and have no power to do anything positive, only grumble" (Trevor 1975:260; Callaway 1986:309).

Men generally do not regard women with careers as "successful." In fact, the Hausa term for "modern women," "matan zamani" is an euphemism for prostitute. The few career women who do not marry, or who divorce and support themselves, are regarded as a disgrace to their families, having challenged religious and social mores. In addition, shame is often associated with female employment, for it indicates to the common people that the husband cannot support his family or is unwilling to do so.

Women, on the other hand, tend to rate other women with some independence highly, and those few women who are able to support themselves and to live outside of marriage (and not in kurawanci, loosely defined as prostitution) are admired and envied. There are a few women teachers who work outside their homes, leaving their children with their co-wives, and are respected. These women are not against kulle (seclusion) for themselves or their daughters, however, because it provides security, companionship, and household help. There are few incentives for women to work outside their homes unless they are internally motivated to do so since their economic well-being is assured within the kinship structure, few personal freedoms are gained by outside employment, and working may present difficulties in negotiating a marriage.

At present, the financial contributions of educated women to their families are small. But, women in public roles are providing models that were not available when these women themselves were growing up; thus they are creating a new experience in socialization for the coming generation.[8] The author's survey of secondary school students indicates that their motivations and aspirations are broader than their mothers'. Educated women influence the direction of social change by influencing those in their households just as the Islamic scholars assert women should. Indeed, it may well be that the main contribution of educated women is to educate the young.

Education and Emancipation

Secondary and university education in and of itself cannot change the life prospects or the public and domestic roles of secluded Hausa Muslim women. Underemployment and unemployment are severe problems in Nigeria; in Kano, even university graduates are beginning to have difficulty in finding appropriate positions. Most educated women will have no choice but to marry and pursue their domestic responsibilities more or less in seclusion (kullen zucci rather than kullen tsari),[9] but essentially, women's lives continue to be almost wholly focused on their families and compounds rather than the public sphere. Their life decisions are still made by husbands and male relatives. To change the extent of female subservience, women will need more than education -- they will need a market for their skills and the social standing to participate in nondomestic activities.

Another primary consideration in opening opportunities and expanding life choices for women is the extent to which men's fundamental belief in female seclusion and submission will produce resistance to women's involvement in nondomestic employment, even without the added stress of competition for jobs between the sexes. To date there is little data on this sensitive question; what can be said is that many men appear more willing to see changes for their daughters than for their wives.

It is also important to note that, while research on other Islamic societies has emphasized that Islamic women are in many ways more independent of men than are Western women who have not experienced seclusion or life in a female world (Del Vecchio Good 1978:485; Fallers 1982:225; and Papanek 1973:312), observation in Kano suggests that when secluded women do step into public roles, they remain deferential to men; they retain a sense of independence from men, but are unable to assert their own interests in the face of male opposition. Nonetheless, as teachers, midwives, or bureaucrats, they interact with a wide variety of people, and their influence among women is considerable. At home, young professional women interact with co-wives, relatives temporarily in town from rural areas, women of all ranks from extended families, and others who may be in their compounds for a variety of reasons. Women's reticence at work is not reflected in their lively interaction with other women. In their own world, women's views and perceptions are changing. What effect this changing consciousness will have is dependent, in large measure, on changing men's attitudes -- a much more problematic matter.

While levels of education for girls and women are rising dramatically in Kano, attitudes toward marriage and family and appropriate behavior for women do not seem to be changing. Therefore, women seek "female appropriate" employment, that is, work of which husbands and fathers approve. Because of a great and increasing need for female teachers to teach girls and female physicians to treat female patients and because these two fields can be juggled around family needs, teaching and medicine are considered appropriate careers for women.

Islamic writing on the subject of sex roles often stresses "complementarity"; in reality, this means that women obey and serve men and,

more specifically, that men will not cook or concern themselves with domestic tasks. Thus, working Hausa Muslim women in Kano are finding themselves concerned with the same problems as Western women -- child-care arrangements and the pressure of the double day. The difference in Kano is that women do not feel that confrontation with men or discussions about a different allocation of responsibilities are likely to be fruitful; in fact, they do not see such reallocation as legitimate within an Islamic culture.

Nonetheless, there is change, however slow. Choices are expanding, even if most women are not yet taking conscious advantage of them. Women increasingly do have access to higher education; employment opportunities do exist for some women; women can vote; and, should there be a return to civilian rule, they can run for office.

To predict that change engendered by education will be slow is not to deny that pressure for such change exists. The interplay between these pressures and entrenched cultural norms will often be contradictory and unpredictable. Women's education, although it is having some impact and effect, is working against a dominant culture in which female subordination is central. Hausa mores, Islamic teachings, men's attitudes, and the association of women's liberation with Westernization circumscribe the dimensions of possible change. All indications are that women will rationalize their subordination in the dominant culture while nurturing their own evaluations of the merits of that culture in their own private domain; that is, their perceptions of themselves and their own abilities and values may change without challenging the public order.

Notes

1 The term "Western" here refers to a type of education and includes both government-sponsored non-Islamic and Christian mission schools. In Kano, "Western" schools are those providing conventional classes with classrooms, desks, certificated teachers, and blackboards, as well as textbooks and examinations in contrast to Qur'anic and Islamiyya schools.

2 In this context, emancipation is envisioned as freeing women from the restraints that limit their life options to early marriage, long years of childbearing, life in seclusion, and no role in public decision-making.

3. Data for this study were collected in Kano, where the author was a Fulbright Professor of Political Science at Bayero University, during the period of 1981-1983, and on a short visit in 1985. Fifty-six unstructured interviews were conducted with both men and women recognized as prominent in Kano society. In the context of this culture, the information sought was very sensitive; thus, most of those interviewed wished to remain unnamed, and most interviews are cited only by date and place. Structured interviews were conducted with 88 women living in two wards of Kano City. Finally, a survey questionnaire was administered to 686 university students and 144 female secondary school students. In addition, the data base was extended by third-year undergraduate students at Bayero University who surveyed 183 teachers in rural and urban girls' secondary schools, 275 students in these schools, 138 illiterate mothers with daughters in school and 292 illiterate men with daughters in school as a part of their own research requirements for their undergraduate honors theses.

4 Secondary schools in Nigeria have traditionally been boarding schools. In 1983 the Government of Nigeria "deboarded" students in such schools as an economy measure. All girls' secondary schools in Kano State were boarding schools during 1981-1983.

5 The 1960 Nigerian Constitution delegated the question of female suffrage to the States. During the First Republic women voted in the southern states, but not in the northern. Islamic women in the north voted for the first time in the 1979 elections.

6 Noted Islamic leaders began stressing the importance of education for girls as well as for boys during the 1970s. They emphasized that the Prophet Mohammed had educated one of his wives, and that one of his daughters was herself a scholar of some note. Hence education for girls could be supported within the Islamic tradition.

7 Although things are changing rapidly, historically Kano is a genuine class society. The transition from precolonial feudalism to colonial administration involved no transfer of privilege or prestige from the traditional ruling class to the depressed class of commoners (see Smith

1960 and Whitaker 1970). Government service was dominated by the sons of noble families and by members of families bound to them in customary service, or dependent upon them as "faithful retainers." The introduction of democratic forms of representation and mass education did not alter the fact that high traditional elite class standing was normally an unstated but understood prerequisite for a position of social standing in the society. In Kano today the emphasis of traditional Hausa culture remains on inherited family status, stratification of classes, ascription of roles, and continuity of institutions.

8 A self-proclaimed radical party was elected to power in Kano State in 1979 and reelected in 1983. It was the only Nigerian party to address the question of the public standing of women. Through political activity (recruiting women to active party politics, encouraging them to vote, and appointing them to public positions) and educational reform, the People's Redemption Party (PRP) hoped to begin to move women from the seclusion of the household into legitimate participation in the public domain. The efforts were cut short by a military coup d'etat in December 1983.

9 In Kano, three types of *kulle* are acknowledged. *Kullen dinga* involves complete seclusion -- a wife never goes out. In *kullen tsari*, a wife may go out occasionally, with permission and accompanied by others, to attend ceremonies and seek medical care. The most modern form of *kulle*, an option limited in practice to the wives of a few educated elite families, is *kullen zuci*. In *kullen zuci*, the emphasis is not on physical seclusion, but on good judgement, modesty, and proper behavior.

TABLE I

Comparative Educational Development
Northern and Southern Nigeria

Year	Primary Schools		Primary Enrollments		Secondary Schools		Secondary Enrollments	
	North	South	North	South	North	South	North	South
1906	1	126	n.a.	11,872	0	1	0	20
1912	34	150	954	35,716	0	10	0	67
1926	125	3,828	5,210	138,249	0	18	0	518
1937	549	3,533	20,269	218,610	1	26	65	4,285
1947	1,110	4,984	70,962	538,391	3	43	251	9,657
1957	1,080	13,473	185,484	2,343,317	18	176	3,643	28,208
1965	2,743	12,234	492,829	2,419,913	77	1,305	15,276	180,906
1972	4,225	10,313	854,466	3,536,731	255	964	63,515	337,288

n.a. = not available
Sources: Adamu 1973:51; Federal Republic of Nigeria 1976:151-2.

Primary School Enrollment Ratios (1972) (percentages)

Kano State	7.7%	Western State	45.4%
North-Eastern State	9.4%	South-Eastern State	46.7%
North-Western State	9.8%	Rivers State	69.3%
North-Central State	16.3%	Mid-Western State	82.5%
Benue-Plateau State	22.0%	Lagos State	86.1%
Kwara State	27.3%	East-Central State	86.4%

Source: Calculated from Federal Republic of Nigeria 1976:151; and Kano State 1976:9.

TABLE II

Educational Enrollments in the Northern Provinces, 1937

Province	I Nonadult pop. 1931	II Islamic Schools	III Islamic Pupils	IV III as % of I	V Elementary Pupils*	VI V as % of I	VII Middle pupils*	VIII VII as % of I
Adamawa	191,889	1,535	5,875	3.06	450	0.23	82	0.04
Bauchi	362,719	4,225	21,772	6.00	998	0.28	91	0.03
Benue	389,405	643	5,186	1.33	296	0.08	84	0.02
Bornu	389,583	4,231	29,832	7.66	903	0.23	151	0.04
Ilorin	202,919	1,116	15,639	7.71	568	0.28	120	0.06
Kabba	173,304	284	4,526	2.61	283	0.16	70	0.04
Kano	672,345	10,421	49,123	7.31	1,178	0.17	131	0.02
Niger	137,963	1,124	5,905	4.28	538	0.39	98	0.07
Plateau	178,144	250	2,787	1.56	203	0.11	41	0.02
Sokoto	676,138	7,168	38,170	5.65	2,098	0.31	123	0.02
Zaria	662,812	5,841	31,470	4.75	1,101	0.17	219	0.03
Total	4,037,221	36,838	210,285	5.21	8,616	0.21	1,210	0.03

*Government schools only

Note: Daura and Katsina Emirates, formerly in Kano and Zaria Provinces, were combined to form a separate province in 1934. Figures here are adjusted to include both with Zaria.

Source: Bray 1981:44.

Table III

Student Enrollments by Type of Institution
for the Years 1978/79-1982/83

Primary Schools Enrollments:

Years	Male	Female	Total
1978/79	469,570	190,358	659,928
1979/80	601,219	253,420	854,639
1980/81	726,753	299,677	1,026,430
1981/82	843,514	356,828	1,200,342

Secondary (Grammar) School Enrollments:

Years	Male	Female	Total
1978/79	13,453	2,227	15,680
1979/80	15,713	2,515	18,228
1980/81	24,133	3,441	27,574
1981/82	27,941	4,330	32,271
1982/83	57,781	6,983	64,756

Teachers College Enrollments:

Years	Male	Female	Total
1978/79	15,395	1,524	16,919
1979/80	15,008	1,727	16,735
1980/81	24,133	3,441	27,574
1981/82	20,226	2,422	22,648
1982/83	22,930	3,793	26,723

Technical/Vocational Centre Enrollments:

Years	Male	Female	Total
1978/79	1,439		1,439
1979/80	1,790		1,790
1980/81	3,897		3,897
1981/82	4,298		4,298
1982/83	5,230		5,230

Commercial School Enrollment:

Years	Male	Female	Total
1978/79	951	326	1,277
1979/80	1,231	309	1,540
1980/81	2,338	384	2,722
1981/82	2,449	395	2,844
1982/83	3,404	422	3,825

Source: Ministry of Education, Kano State Government, April 14, 1983.

TABLE IV

University Students' Opinions of Main Obstacle to Girls' Education

	Female Students (114)		Male Students (572)		Totals (686)
	Christian (22)	Muslim (92)	Christian (34)	Muslim (538)	
Belief It Will "Spoil Girls"	0	7	13	81	101
Cost	11	0	13	180	204
Conservatism	0	1	4	96	101
Pressure to marry young	10	83	2	115	210
Need for girls to to "tala"	0	1	0	49	50
Religion	1	0	0	0	1
Men's jealousy	0	0	0	0	0
Fear	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	2	17	19
Totals	22	92	34	538	686

TABLE V

Educational Support for Female Students

Who Supported (Paid for) Your Education?

	Female Students (N=114)	
	Christian	Muslim
Father	2	61
Mother	14	0
Brothers	2	0
Husband	0	30
Sisters	1	0
Uncles	1	1
Government	0	0
Mission	2	0

Who Encouraged You Most in Your Education?

	Female Students (N=114)	
	Christian	Muslim
Educated Sisters	0	10
Educated Brothers	0	0
Mother	18	0
Father	4	75
Husband	0	7

TABLE VI

Opinions of University Students on Females and Education

A. Do You Support Coeducation in Primary School?

	Yes		No	
Christian Female Students (22)	20	(91%)	2	(9%)
Muslim Female Students (92)	41	(50%)	41	(50%)
Christian Male Students (34)	23	(68%)	4	(12%)
Muslim Male Studnets (538)	435	(81%)	86	(16%)
(No Answer = 34)				

B. Do You Support Coeducation in Secondary School?

	Yes		No	
Christian Female Students (22)	18	(82%)	4	(18%)
Muslim Female Students (92)	23	(25%)	69	(75%)
Christian Male Students (34)	21	(62%)	11	(34%)
Muslim Male Students (538)	101	(19%)	435	(81%)
(No Answer = 4)				

C. To What Level Will You Educate Your Daughter?

	Female Students (114)				Male Students (572)			
	Christian (22)		Muslim (92)		Christian (34)		Muslim (538)	
Primary School	0		0		0		230	(43%)
Secondary School	0		15	(16%)	7	(21%)	221	(41%)
University	22	(100%)	77	(83%)	27	(79%)	80	(15%)
(No Answer = 7)								

TABLE VI (Continued)

D. Women Are Exploited and Disadvantaged in Northern Nigerian and Their Status Should Be Improved

	Agree		Disagree		No Opinion	
Muslim Male Students (n=538)	103	(19%)	435	(81%)		
Christian Male Students (n=34)	20	(59%)	10	(29%)	4	(12%)
Muslim Female Students (n=92)	80	(87%)	12	(13%)		
Christian Female Students (n=22)	20	(91%)	1	(4%)	1	(4%)

E. Educational Preference Should Be Given to Boys Over Girls

	Agree		Disagree		No Opinion	
Muslim Male Students (n=538)	80	(15%)	451	(84%)	7	(1%)
Christian Male Students (n=34)	20	(59%)	14	(41%)		
Muslim Female Students (n=92)	40	(43%)	52	(57%)		
Christian Female Students (n=22)	5	(23%)	17	(77%)		

F. Which Women Are the Happiest?

	Christian Female Students (n=22)		Muslim Female Students (n=92)	
Urban Educated Women	15	(69%)	40	(43%)
Rural Educated Women	0		10	(11%)
Urban Uneducated Women	0		5	(38%)
Rural Uneducated Women	7	(31%)	7	(8%)

TABLE VII

Education/Occupation of University Students' Parents

A. Fathers' Highest Level of Education

	*Islamic School	Primary School	Post-Primary School	Post-Secondary School
Muslim Male (538)	510 (95%)	25 (4%)	3 (.05%)	0
Christian Male (34)	0	21 (62%)	10 (29%)	3 (8%)
Muslim Female (92)	5 (5%)	28 (30%)	58 (63%)	1 (1%)
Christian Female (22)	0	2 (9%)	5 (23%)	15 (68%)

(Levels indicate attendance, not completion)
*Includes attendance at Islamiyya School or Quar'anic School

B. Mothers' Highest Level of Education

	Islamic School	Primary School	Post-Primary School	Post-Secondary School
Muslim Male (538)	538 (100%)	0	0	0
Christian Male (34)	0	12 (35%)	17 (50%)	5 (15%)
Muslim Female (92)	92 (100%)	0	0	0
Christian Female (22)	0	10 (45%)	11 (50%)	1 (5%)

C. Occupation of Students' Fathers

	Farmer	Trader	Civil Servant	Traditional Authority	Teacher Doctor Lawyer Banker	Laborer
Muslim Male (539)	120 (22%)	70 (13%)	78 (14%)	190 (35%)	55 (10%)	25 (5%)
Christian Male (34)	0	9 (36%)	15 (44%)	0	10 (29%)	0
Muslim Female (92)	2 (2%)	5 (5%)	50 (54%)	20 (22%)	15 (16%)	0
Christian Female (22)	0	0	7 (32%)	0	15 (68%)	0

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