

# Patron–Client Relationships and Low Education among Youth in Kano, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Based on an analysis of original social network data collected from 407 households in an urban community in Northern Nigeria, this article evaluates whether patronage relationships between households have consequences for children’s educational attainment. A “social resources” perspective suggests that patronage ties may serve as a form of social capital that activates upward social mobility for entire families, thereby yielding more than simple transitory returns on social connections. An alternative “social constraints” perspective suggests that patronage ties may have no effects (or negative effects) on the schooling of clients’ children, since patron-clientage reflects prevailing social inequalities and exists for reasons other than the promotion of dynastic mobility among clients and their families. In the case study reported in this article, the latter pattern holds, and the results are interpreted with reference to the historical record, which shows that a latent function of patron-clientage is the preservation of intergenerational status immobility.

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## Introduction

The provision of educational opportunity is one of the oldest development strategies for stimulating economic growth, reducing inequality, and promoting government stability (see Collier & Gunning 1999; Easterly 2001; Schultz 1999; Smelser & Lipset 1966). Nonetheless, in Africa, the expansion of education since 1960 has not generated convincing evidence that education is an autonomous engine of growth, or more recently, that it

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substantially mitigates inequality (see Hannum & Buchmann 2005 for a review of studies such as Bills & Klenow 2000 and Krueger & Lindahl 2001). Accordingly, educational expansion is described less often as a transformative growth strategy and more often as an investment with variable returns that depend on institutional contexts. Basic primary education is now justified most frequently as a universal human right (see the rationale for the Millennium Development Goals in Sachs et al. 2004 and Sachs 2005).

To resolve some of the uncertainty around the prospects of education to promote growth and alleviate poverty, a more comprehensive understanding is needed of the ways that historical patterns of social structure continue to shape inequalities of educational opportunity in developing countries. In this article we offer a case study of early schooling attainment in Northern Nigeria, focusing primarily on the implications of a system of traditional patron-clientage for patterns of educational attainment. Beyond modeling the effects of parental socioeconomic status characteristics on children's educational attainment, we utilize original social network data to estimate the associations between parental placement in a structure of patron-clientage and children's early school attainment in an urban community.

To foreshadow this main theme of our analysis, we offer here two abstract scenarios (which we will make concrete later) for a household head with dependent children who is also a client of a local patron. From a "social resources" perspective, the client may be able to enhance his family's status by utilizing his social connections to his patron. By promising loyalty and service, he may be able to obtain better employment prospects or business opportunities. And in times of need he may be able to request direct assistance from his patron. These returns on his social connections generate additional resources for the family, which then can be used to promote upward mobility. They may be used to pay school fees for his children or to replace their foregone household labor by hiring an apprentice.

From an alternative "social constraints" perspective, any such mobility-enhancing mechanisms would be unexpected. Instead, patron-clientage is best considered a ranking scheme for a prevailing status order that promotes stability amidst considerable inequality. Accordingly, even though patronage provides protection against predation from other elites, it does not enhance substantially the inflow of resources to clients. As a result, patronage operates more frequently as a constraint on mobility, tamping down aspirations and failing to effectively enable clients to educate their children. In some cases, indeed, a client's children may be kept out of school and employed in household labor in order to serve the patron's interests.

In any case study, understanding which of these two scenarios is dominant requires two types of analysis: (1) a historical consideration of patron-clientage that establishes its functional importance and customary contours in different eras, and (2) a contemporary assessment of its role in a particular modern domain that promotes upward mobility, such as the school-

ing of children. In this article we first describe the contemporary setting in Northern Nigeria as well as the specific study site. We then offer a description of the existing three-tiered system of education—apprenticeship, Islamic education, and government-supported secular education—as well as an analysis of the historical origins of patron-clientage in Northern Nigeria. We then refer to some of the broader literature on social capital in order to convert the historical insights into concrete predictions about the role of patron-clientage in the schooling of dependent children. Finally, we present our household-level social network data and offer empirical models of the relationship between patron–client position and school attainment, concluding with a discussion of the findings and their relevance beyond the specific community that we have studied.

## Setting

In spite of its substantial petroleum revenues, Nigeria suffers from a crisis in its education system. Rapid expansion in the 1970s and early 1980s in pursuit of an ambitious program of universal primary education slowed as general economic and political destabilization arose. Recent trends for school enrollment are unclear, but many scholars and Nigerian citizens believe that primary school entry and completion rates have declined slightly in the past decade. Even if such impressions are unfounded, no one claims that Nigeria is near to achieving universal primary education or that rates of progression from primary to secondary schooling have increased substantially in recent years (see Nigerian National Planning Commission 2004).

Northern Nigeria is a diverse region, but it is dominated by two intermarried ethnic groups, the Hausa and the Fulani. An extensive literature explores the historical foundations of and salient fissures within Northern Nigeria, based on a historical record spanning six centuries.<sup>1</sup> We focus in this section on a few features of Hausa and Fulani history and culture that are useful for motivating our subsequent models of educational attainment.

Our study site, Kofar Wambai, is a traditional leather goods ward in the city of Kano. The metropolitan area of Kano has a population in excess of four million and has been the dominant urban area in Northern Nigeria, and perhaps all of the central savannah region of West Africa, since the nineteenth century. Kofar Wambai, which is located east of the central Kano city market, just inside the traditional wall of the old city, has a population of approximately five thousand. Settled by urban Hausa, the community is likely more than five hundred years old with a complex history that predates the Fulani conquest of Kano in the early nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

Variation exists in the extent to which individuals in urban areas identify with their wards (see Smith 1952). Areas such as Kofar Wambai are thought to represent genuine communities that, in the public consciousness, are urban equivalents of large villages. And although many of the

residents of Kofar Wambai work outside of the ward, in a variety of occupations in the civil service or as traders selling goods in the market, Kofar Wambai retains its identity as a supplier of leather goods for local markets. Just south of the city's traditional slaughterhouse, the ward is home to many small-scale tanneries and craft workshops (sometimes in the anterooms of a family's compound), in which handbags and shoes continue to be made for local consumption.

Like other urban and rural areas in Northern Nigeria, daily life in Kofar Wambai is centered in the patrilocal household (*gida*). By tradition, the household head (*maigida*) is the most senior male in residence. In addition to his unmarried sons and daughters, a maigida's married sons and their families live with him until they acquire the means to establish their own separate households. Also by tradition, the Hausa and Fulani practice wife seclusion (*kulle*), according to which married women do not leave the household during daylight hours. Traditional gender relationships are evolving, however, and wife seclusion and male dominance of the household head position are declining.

### Education in Kano

Education in Kano is a three-tiered system, comprising the overlapping components of traditional apprenticeship education, basic and advanced Islamic instruction, and modern secular education (see Adesina 1988; Bray 1981; Morgan & Morgan 2004, Ozigi & Ocho 1981; Tibenderana 2003). The marketplace economy of Kano has supported a centuries-old apprenticeship system, which functions both as a venue for skill acquisition and for deeper inculcation of deference and respect for community elders (*girmama manya*). Young children can still be observed making shoes in the workshops of Kofar Wambai, and apprenticeship remains an important local institution.

Islamic education at the primary level (*makarantar allo*) is nearly universal, because one must learn the Quran in order to perform daily prayers. In Kofar Wambai many teachers (*malamai*) offer instruction in their alley-side schools, where young pupils memorize the Quran by reading from slate tablets on which Quranic verses have been written.

Government-supported primary and secondary schooling is available in blocks of classrooms just outside of the city gate near the Kofar Wambai market. The primary school is in disrepair, like so many others in Kano, but it remains in service.<sup>3</sup> Secondary school is available a short distance away from the city gate. Private schools increase in number every year, and such schools are an option for some of the most financially secure residents of Kofar Wambai.

In addition, many local opportunities are available for instruction in hybrid forms of education, where features of Islamic and secular education are combined. These schools are particularly attractive to families who wish

to educate their daughters in ways that they believe are most consistent with religious devotion. The prominence of these *Islamiyya* schools has grown steadily since the mid-1980s (see Morgan & Armer 1988, 1992), spurred on by the *Izala* movement (see Paden 2005) that formally supports the provision of advanced educational opportunities for women. Even so, additional research is needed to determine whether these schools have begun to encourage gender segregation that ultimately will limit the educational opportunities of young women.<sup>4</sup>

### Patron-Clientage in Kano

The phenomenon of patron-clientage is well documented in the extant historical and anthropological literature on Northern Nigeria, and it remains important in contemporary Hausa and Fulani cultures.<sup>5</sup> Following Smith (1964), we will discuss patron-clientage as a cultural legacy of a deeply textured political history. Yet we will also consider it a flexible present institution that is intertwined with the political economy of development. We offer both perspectives here because of their complementarities and because they encourage a consideration of the relationship between patronage-clientage and educational attainment, a contemporary phenomenon that is connected to patron-clientage in ways currently undocumented.

As the historical record demonstrates, patron-clientage (*barantaka*) in Hausa and Fulani society has both public and private dimensions and is always hierarchical in nature. At one extreme are relations of permanent dependence, in which roles are finely differentiated and impose public obligations on individuals. The most permanent patron–client relationships are those that are built into the structure of titled offices (*sarauta*) in the traditional emirate government. Throughout all levels of the emirate structure, officeholders have subordinates on whom they can depend for service. Although it is generally true that lower-level officials pledge loyalty and obedience to their superiors as a traditional alternative to a modern bureaucracy, enough fluidity has always existed in the hierarchy of these positions such that authority can be created by attracting loyal clients or pledging oneself to an already powerful patron (see Smith 1957, 1960, 1978, 1997).<sup>6</sup> Thus, as Smith (1964:183) documents, since the early nineteenth century there has been “a cumulated drift from substantially theocratic rule . . . towards a government through titled officials recruited by descent, clientage, and slavery, in which the exigencies of rivalry and faction as a condition of political survival increasingly transformed the substance of Islam into clientage and patrimonial institutions.”

Patron–client relations between titled officials and their subordinates represent a structural template of cultural importance.<sup>7</sup> Yet most Hausa and Fulani are neither titled officials nor direct subordinates. Even so, nearly all individuals, in contexts important to them, seek to curry favor with potential patrons and gather clients whose service they can rely upon.

For example, domestic clientage is common, as young men without sufficient economic support from their own families pledge themselves in substitute kinship relations with accepting patrons. The patron takes his client as an adopted son, provides him with immediate work opportunities, and may support his training in one or more of the educational systems. In Kofar Wambai such patronage is the standard mode of filling apprenticeships in the marketplace economy, usually in shoemaking, tanning, or other leather goods manufacturing.<sup>8</sup>

Similar possibilities for constructed dependence exist for women. Relationships of bond-friendship are formed between women of different ages, with the senior woman assuming the status of patron (*yaya*) and the junior woman accepting clientage (*kanwar rana*) (see Baba & Smith 1964). In families throughout the socioeconomic spectrum, nieces often spend substantial periods of time in the households of their uncles and aunts, and the relationships between senior and junior women follow from this cultural template.

Economic relationships are often constructed as patronage relationships as well, thereby establishing networks among business ventures in hierarchical form.<sup>9</sup> Low-level traders recruit producers of goods as clients, passing their merchandise on to traders who are their patrons (and for prices lower than those offered to traders who have the loyalty of one's competitors). Traditionally, landlords in market centers facilitate these relationships by serving as brokers between itinerant traders and settled craft workers (Cohen 1969; Lovejoy 1986). At the same time, traders distribute capital to catalyze entrepreneurial ventures among their clients, thereby solidifying loyalty and the future exchange of goods at favorable rates (Yusuf 1975).

It is important to note briefly how these relationships are initiated and then reinforced. The exchange of appropriate services and gifts marks the initiation of the dependence relationships. However, this exchange is preceded and continuously reinforced through a subtle and practiced art of interpersonal deference. During our fieldwork, for example, the wardhead of Kofar Wambai was assisted by three subordinates who owed their allegiance to him, one of whom was his own son (and likely successor). These assistants retained their positions, and hence their status within the community, by carrying out the wardhead's administrative wishes and, perhaps more significantly, through the demonstration of deference and subordination (see Barkow 1974). The means of demonstrating such deference are complex and include physical acts of *ladabi*, which is the assumption of a respectful posture at all times. Such physical signals communicate status differences to observers and remind the superior that he can depend on his subordinates for continued loyalty (*biyayya*) and services (*aikace-aikace*) in return for favors and protection. This type of status reproduction through routinized interpersonal deference is a central feature of Hausa and Fulani culture, and it is an understudied form of inequality that was of general interest to social theorists in the past (see Shils 1975).

The pervasiveness of patron-clientage in Northern Nigeria generates a broad solidarity network with pronounced but localized hierarchies. Writing on the moral economy of corruption in Africa, the anthropologist Olivier de Sardan (1999:40) contends that general solidarity networks, stitched together through many forms of common affiliation, generate “an almost general obligation of mutual assistance” wherein “one cannot refuse a service, a favour, a bit of string-pulling or compliance to a relative, neighbour, party official or friend.”<sup>10</sup> Patronage ties are thereby the most precious of ties within a solidarity network, as they impel more than general obligations of mutual assistance.<sup>11</sup>

Patronage ties can also create breaches in systems of obligatory mutual assistance. When a solidarity network contains within it particularistic patronage ties, obligations of mutual assistance are conditioned by dependencies in the overlay of patronage. Near status equals must consider the consequences of fulfilling minor dependence obligations to each other if such assistance compromises their pledged loyalties to patrons. And when it is recognized that patrons usually have multiple clients (and some clients have multiple patrons), the consequences for generalized mutual assistance must be regarded as even more complex. Such contingency is a prominent feature of patron-clientage systems. Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984:48–49) note that patronage relations “seem to undermine the horizontal group organisation and solidarity of clients and patrons alike.”

Such complex social environments demand attention and study, although they have received comparatively little in the extant literature on status attainment outcomes. Researchers have developed conjectures about the relationships between primordial patron-clientage and theories of modern corruption, and such work has received substantial attention as scholarship seeks to analyze more completely the contours of Africa’s increasingly predatory states (see reviews in Blundo & Olivier de Sardan 2006 and van de Walle 2007). Our goal, instead, is to understand how these relationships affect patterns of inequality and upward mobility. In this article, we focus on the education of children.

## Two Perspectives on the Role of Patronage Ties in the Schooling of Children

Do patronage relationships between households have consequences for children’s educational attainment? Outside of Africa, there are several literatures that suggest how patrons may provide advantages to client families seeking to educate their children. The “social resources” perspective on social capital that was sketched in the introduction, which is most closely associated with Lin (2001), argues that families use their connections to well-placed members of the community to climb the ladder of social status. The general research agenda laid out by Coleman (1988) in his article “Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital” contains similar predictions that

emphasize the potential for social connections between adults in a community to affect patterns of educational achievement and attainment of their children (see also Durlauf & Fafchamps 2005).<sup>12</sup>

In line with the social resources perspective, we see several mechanisms by which patrons in Kofar Wambai can help client household heads educate their children. First, patrons can provide enhanced employment and business opportunities to clients, which in turn generate increased resource flows that can be used to support the education of children. Second, beyond such indirect economic assistance, patrons can provide direct assistance to clients in need, thereby freeing up a client's other resources to help pay school fees. Third, patrons can lower the opportunity costs of sending a client's children to school by, for example, providing alternative apprentices to work in a client's business. Fourth, as community elites, patrons can provide knowledge and contacts that are useful for successfully navigating the educational system, such as finding an appropriate placement in a private *Islamiyya* school for a client's daughter.

However, based on a consideration of the history of patron-clientage in Northern Nigeria and also our own fieldwork data, we have concluded that the social resources perspective is far too sanguine. Rather, it is equally likely—in line with the “social constraints” perspective also sketched in the introduction—that patron-clientage does *not* promote the upward mobility of clients' families by assisting with the schooling of children. For several centuries, patron-clientage has operated in ways that promote order, loyalty, and protection, and more often than not, these goals serve the interests of patrons more than clients. Patron-clientage may protect against sudden increases in inequality by providing protection against unforeseen misfortune, but there is little evidence to suggest that patrons are interested in bringing clients substantially closer to their own levels of well-being. As a result, patron-clientage is more likely to preserve basic patterns of inequality than to serve as an engine of upward mobility for low-status clients. According to this scenario, patrons do not provide substantial direct or indirect assistance that facilitates the education of a client's children. In some cases, in fact, children may be kept out of school in order to help serve the immediate interests of patrons.

### Survey Data

Our data source is the Kofar Wambai Household Survey (KWHS), collected in the fall of 2003 and winter of 2004.<sup>13</sup> The fieldwork for the KWHS began with a household census conducted by the lead interviewers of the research team, which was completed after the physical layout of the community was mapped by a professional cartographer from the Department of Geography at Bayero University. In this stage, it was determined that 4,996 people lived in Kofar Wambai in August 2003. The census also allowed us to determine the demographic composition of each household according to age, gender,



**Table 1. Low Education for Age among Children, Ages 7 to 18, in Kofar Wambai by Gender**

Gender	Normal Education for Age	Low Education for Age	Total
Male	470 67.2%	229 32.8%	699 100%
Female	412 61.2%	261 38.8%	673 100%
Total	882 64.3%	490 35.7%	1372 100%

*Source:* Kofar Wambai Household Survey

education level, and relationship to the household head for all individuals enumerated.

After conducting the household census, we constructed a list of all household heads and administered a questionnaire to each one in the local language of Hausa, using twelve trained Hausa-speaking interviewers, all of whom were graduate students or administrative staff at Bayero University. The surveys yielded 619 full and complete interviews (with only a few refusals, including a small group of households living in group quarters for the blind as well as some itinerant young men living in rented quarters). The high level of participation was the result of the assistance of the wardhead of Kofar Wambai, and the strong relationship he has with his own community.

In this article, we analyze data from only the 407 of 619 households that had residents between the ages of seven and eighteen (a total of 1,372 youths, excluding a few spouses of household heads who were younger than eighteen years old). Our analysis is meant to analyze patterns of education for the dependents of the household heads, including biological children, nieces, nephews, and other fostered children living with the household head.

Table 1 presents the levels of education of these 1,372 youths, tabulated according to whether or not they had low education for age. We defined low education for age as not having reached the level of education that continuous participation in primary and secondary schooling would yield, such as reaching the age of seven but not having attended any primary school. Because we could not reliably collect grade-of-attendance information, we may underestimate slightly the level of low education for age in Kofar Wambai with this method (although we include dummies for age in our predictive models later, so as to eliminate age-specific error of this measure). Nonetheless, the raw distribution is sensible, and the expected pattern of slightly higher levels of low education for age among girls is evident, at 38.8 percent versus 32.8 percent for boys.

**Table 2. Number of Patrons Nominated by Number of Clients Nominated for Household Heads with Children, Ages 7 to 18, Living in the Household**

Number of Patrons Nominated	Number of Clients Nominated						Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
0	232	30	12	7	1	0	282
1	52	13	5	1	0	1	72
2	22	6	9	1	1	0	39
3	4	6	2	1	0	0	13
4	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	310	55	28	11	2	1	407

*Source:* Kofar Wambai Household Survey

As part of the household survey, we collected information on household characteristics, including labor force participation and earned income of the household head. Most important for this article, we collected extensive information on social network patterns, obtaining explicit nominations of other household heads in Kofar Wambai according to a number of characteristics—starting with the identification of those one is most likely to eat a meal with and progressing to deeply embedded social relationships. These network inquiries culminated in two questions that identified the local patrons and local clients of each household head, based on the individuals he would turn to in order to “seek assistance” and those who “sought assistance” from him.<sup>14</sup> The type of assistance referred to in these questions is broader than the English translation suggests. Beyond simple economic or logistical help, this form of assistance also includes knowledge, guidance, and psychological support.

Table 2 presents a cross-tabulation of the number of patrons and clients nominated by each of the 407 household heads. Among household heads, 43.0 percent (175 out of 407) nominated either a patron or a client currently living in Kofar Wambai. Only a few household heads nominated more than two patrons or clients.

Two qualifications should be noted here, and we will return to them later. First, these patron–client ties refer only to pairs of individuals resident in Kofar Wambai. Nonetheless, some household heads in the survey may also have patrons and clients who live outside of Kofar Wambai. We have limited information on these additional ties because of the standard “boundary specification problem” in network analysis (see Laumann, Marsden, & Prensky 1989). We will discuss the consequences of this limitation for our conclusions later.

Second, the wording of the survey elicited the names of current patrons and clients of substantial importance rather than the names of individuals who may have provided or received help in the past or with whom one wishes to cultivate a tie in the future. In this sense, the ties are durable and important in the current lives of the subjects. At the same time, we did not try to elicit information about only the most hierarchical patron–client relationships, that is, those that follow from an abstract role structure in which the patron is a household head and the client is his servant (sometimes referred to as *ubangida* and *bara* relationships). If we had asked about patron–client ties in ways that allowed for more permissive definitions, we would have obtained more nominations, each of which on average would have been less important to the household heads. In contrast, if we had asked about patron–client ties in their strictest and most hierarchical form, we would have obtained fewer nominations, each of which on average would have referred to patron–client ties of greater status inequality. We chose an intermediate position on this measurement issue, and it would be worthwhile to revisit this decision in future research.

## Results

Table 3 presents our analysis of the relationship between children’s schooling attainment and the patron–client ties of household heads. We estimate two-level logit models for 1,372 children resident in 407 households. Table 3 presents odds ratios for coefficients from four models.<sup>15</sup> For Model 1, we predict whether or not children have low education for age (as defined for the analysis reported earlier in Table 1) from baseline characteristics of children and household heads.

Consistent with the literature on education in sub-Saharan Africa, we found that girls are more likely to have low education for age. The odds ratio for girls is 1.53, net of other variables in the model, indicating that girls are more than one and a half times as likely as boys to have low education for age. In addition, a respondent’s own children are more likely to have low education for age compared to other children living in the household, as the odds ratio for the own-child variable is 1.14. This pattern is consistent with the literature on sub-Saharan Africa, as it is well known that children are often fostered with other families in order to increase their educational training (see Zimmerman 2003 for patterns in South Africa). Such a pattern of selection across households would advantage fostered children relative to household heads’ own children. Furthermore, when considering these two effects together, the gender disadvantage is even stronger among the head’s own children, as indicated by the positive coefficient for the interaction between the variables for female and one’s own child. Thus, in Kofar Wambai, for example, the niece advantage relative to daughters is stronger than the nephew advantage relative to sons.

The baseline characteristics of household heads also predict low educa-

**Table 3. Odds Ratios from a Two-Level Logit Model that Predicts Low Education for Age**

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<b>Child-Level Fixed Effects:</b>				
Female	1.53	1.46	1.50	1.50
Own Child	1.14	1.18	1.13	1.11
Female × Own Child	1.07	1.09	1.08	1.08
<b>Household-Head (HH) Level Fixed Effects:</b>				
Education of HH (in years)	.90		.90	.79
Age of HH (in years)	1.00		1.00	.98
Log of total weekly income	1.13		1.12	1.20
<b>Residence area dummies:</b>				
Block A	.97		.92	.82
Block B	.93		.90	.92
Block C	2.67		2.44	2.18
Block D	2.23		2.17	1.85
<b>Ties to Patrons:</b>				
Number of ties		1.32	1.31	1.20
Mean education of patrons				1.17
Mean age of patrons				1.01
Mean log income of patrons				1.08
<b>Ties to Clients:</b>				
Number of ties		.73	.76	.76
Mean education of clients				1.02
Mean age of clients				1.01
Mean log income of clients				.85
Number of households	407	407	407	407
Number of children between ages 7 and 18	1,372	1,372	1,372	1,372
<b>Model Fit</b>				
Chi-squared test statistic	55.1	46.3	57.5	64.7
df	21	16	23	29
p-value	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0002

Source: Kofar Wambai Household Survey

*Note:* All models include eleven age dummies for children. These are specified to parameterize variation in the dependent variable that is solely a function of the coarseness generated by age. We do not report standard errors in the table because the models apply to the full community, not a sample drawn at random from the community. Nonetheless, we offer Chi-squared fit statistics, which are comparisons to an intercept-only null model. These indicate that the estimated models account for patterns in the data and hence capture observed patterns in the community. These test statistics can be regarded as evidence that, were these results based only on a sample, the signal in the data would be strong enough to interpret the models as something other than random variation produced by sampling error.

tion for age. The household head's education is a strong predictor, with an odds ratio of .9 for each additional year of education. In addition, net of education and other variables, weekly income is positively associated with low education for age. This effect, too, is sensible, although it may appear somewhat surprising. It indicates that individuals who have relatively high income, net of educational qualifications and other variables in the model, are more likely to have children with low education for age living in their households. We infer, based on our knowledge of the community, that this coefficient is generated by household heads who are the most engaged in the local craft economy as leather goods makers and traders. These household heads are more likely to have children living with them who are engaged in apprenticeships, with the effect that the income level of the household is boosted and the average level of education among its children is lowered. Finally, we include four dummy variables for the five residence "blocks" within Kofar Wambai, which are defined with reference to the roads and major pedestrian walkways through the ward. Blocks C and D are closest to the main road and have lower quality, more compact quarters. As a result, the rate of low education for age is higher in these areas. The block effects are therefore interpretable as consequences of aggregate differences in family resources and well-being across areas within Kofar Wambai.

Are household heads with ties to patrons more likely to have well-educated children? Likewise, are household heads with ties to clients less likely to have well-educated children?

Model 2 retains the child-level variables from Model 1 and adds to them our patron–client variables of primary interest. Model 2 shows that ties to patrons are positively associated with low education for age, whereas ties to clients are negatively associated with low education for age. For each patron nominated, a household head's children are 1.32 times more likely to have low education for age. Likewise, for each client nominated, a household head's children are 1.37 (i.e.,  $1/.73$ ) times less likely to have low education for age. These associations are more consistent with the social constraints perspective on patron-clientage as opposed to the social resources perspective, and accordingly they suggest that patron-clientage does not enable upward mobility of the children of clients.

Yet the social resources perspective may still be consistent with the data. Clients may simply have lower average socioeconomic status, with this disadvantage predisposing them to have children with low education for age. Thus, hypothetically, were it not for their ties to patrons, the odds of having children with low education for age might be even higher.

In an attempt to assess this possibility, Model 3 combines the variables in Models 1 and 2. The effects of patron-clientage position are estimated net of a statistical adjustment across all household heads for differences in education, age, weekly income, and residence area of the household. The coefficients in Model 3 are very similar to their counterparts in Models 1 and 2. Most important, ties to patrons remain positively associated with low

education for age, whereas ties to clients remain negatively associated with low education for age. Similar to Model 2, for each patron nominated, a household head's children are 1.31 times more likely to have low education for age. For each client nominated, a household head's children are 1.32 (i.e.,  $1/.76$ ) times less likely to have low education for age. Thus Model 3 suggests, consistent with the social constraints perspective, that patron-clientage position functions as a dimension of inequality that is separable from basic socioeconomic status.

To reinforce this point, consider its converse. If the associations between patron-clientage and low education for age had reversed direction between Models 2 and 3, this would have been compelling evidence that the social resources perspective has merit. The interpretation would be: Clients have lower average status, but once these status differences are held constant in the statistical model, clientage has benefits for the education of a client's children. The results in Table 3 are inconsistent with this alternative interpretation because the net associations between number of patrons nominated, number of clients nominated, and low education for age are nearly the same in Models 2 and 3. Patron-clientage apparently operates as an additional and mostly separable dimension of inequality that predicts low education for age.

Table 4 presents a complementary (and possibly more intuitive) presentation of the patron-client associations from Model 3. For Table 4 we generated predicted probabilities from Model 3 and smoothed them across patron and client ties with a linear model. As shown in Table 4, the probability of low education is .28 for children living in households with heads who did not nominate any patrons or clients. The predicted probabilities increase with the number of patrons nominated, net of the number of clients nominated, to a value of .43 for those with three patrons but no clients. At the same time, the predicted probabilities decrease with the number of clients nominated, net of the number of patrons nominated, to a value of .07 for those with four clients but no patrons.

Because Table 4 is generated from the fitted values of Model 3, variability in the pattern of low education that is not a function of the variables in the model is purged from the predicted probabilities. Moreover, the associations that patron-client ties have with other variables in the model are attributed to the associations between low education and patron-client ties in Table 4. In this sense, the predicted probabilities in Table 4 are best interpreted as total associations between patron-client ties and patterns of low education. The underlying Model 3 in Table 3 shows that patron-client ties have autonomous predictive power that cannot be attributed to the other variables in the model. As noted by Moffitt (2003) and Morgan and Winship (2007), these types of associations are not warranted causal effects, only plausible causal effects that demand further study.

Toward that end, we return now to Table 3, which presents one additional model. To determine the extent to which the apparent effects of

**Table 4. Probability of Low Education for Children, Ages 7 to 18 by Number of Patrons and Clients by the Household Head**  
(linearly smoothed fitted values from Model 3 in Table 3)

Number of Patrons Nominated	Number of Clients Nominated						
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
0	.28	.23	.18	.13	.07	--	.26
1	.33	.28	.23	.18	--	.07	.30
2	.38	.33	.28	.23	.18	--	.34
3	.43	.38	.33	.28	--	--	.38
4	--	--	--	.33	--	--	.41
5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	.29	.26	.22	.18	.14	.11	

*Source:* Kofar Wambai Household Survey

the number of ties are functions of the characteristics of those to whom household heads are tied, we added to the variables in Model 3 the mean education, age, and income of the patrons and clients that each household head nominated. Although the odds ratio for the number of ties to patrons declined from 1.31 to 1.20, the odds ratio for ties to clients remained at .76. Thus it does not appear that the characteristics of patrons and clients explain the overall associations between patron-clientage and low education for age. Furthermore, the coefficients for the additional variables are quite reasonable. Since there are few expected resource flows from clients to patrons, it would be surprising for a client's level of resources to affect the likelihood that a patron would educate his children. As a result, the odds ratio remains at .76 for both Models 3 and 4 for the association between number of clients nominated and low education for age. On the other hand, the odds ratio for number of patrons declines from 1.31 to 1.20 between these two models, suggesting that among those who have patrons, positive resources that are beneficial for the education of children are more likely to be received from patrons who are highly educated and wealthy. Although sensible, this interpretation should not be taken too far; household heads who have no patrons appear to be even better off than those who have highly educated and wealthy patrons. Thus, in spite of this possible social-resources-related effect, the overall social constraints perspective continues to dominate.

## Discussion

In addition to basic gender differences that disadvantage girls, we find that children living in households whose heads have patrons are more likely to

have low education for age. Simultaneously, we also find that children living in households whose heads have clients are less likely to have low education for age. These findings hold without any further adjustments but also when conditioning on baseline demographic and socioeconomic status differences among household heads. Finally, the characteristics of nominated patrons explain a small portion of the apparent effect of number of patrons on the education of a client's children. The characteristics of nominated clients, however, do not explain the apparent effect of number of clients on the education of a patron's children. In sum, we see no evidence in our analysis that patronage ties activate upward social mobility for entire families by supporting the education of children. Instead, patron-clientage appears to function in this context as an additional dimension of social disadvantage that helps reproduce the structure of inequality across generations. Thus, the results largely support the social constraints perspective on the role of patron-clientage in intergenerational mobility at the expense of the social resources perspective.

Nevertheless, as we discuss below, our chosen network boundary definition may have precluded possible alternative interpretations of our empirical results, and several aspects of patron-clientage that are relevant to our main research questions could not be examined with our data.

### *Consequences of the Network Boundary Definition*

All social network studies must define the boundary of the social network of interest (see Laumann et al. 1989), and conclusions must then be examined in light of the chosen definition. For our study, the patron–client network was defined by the physical boundaries of Kofar Wambai, and household heads were asked to nominate patrons and clients from among those who lived within Kofar Wambai. As a result, the KWHS does not offer information on patterns of out-of-community patron–client ties, and this limitation may have consequences for our conclusions.

For example, it is possible that some of the household heads who did not nominate a patron residing in Kofar Wambai may have had powerful patrons living in more affluent neighborhoods. As a result, our straightforward interpretation could be inaccurate, because it conflates two meaningfully different categories of household heads: (1) those who nominated no patrons in Kofar Wambai and have no patrons elsewhere, and (2) those who nominated no patrons in Kofar Wambai because they have more highly placed patrons elsewhere. It could be that the second group is nontrivial in size and that its members have powerful patrons who help families in ways that lower their odds of having children with low education (e.g., by transferring resources and access on a scale impossible for the patrons in Kofar Wambai to match). As a result, the fitted probability of low education for age in the upper-left portion of Table 4 would be suppressed.<sup>16</sup>



We do not believe, however, that this counternarrative is a substantial threat to our conclusions for two reasons. First, this selection story does not accord with what is known about the history and content of patron-clientage in Northern Nigeria. It is well established that patron-clientage is a reflection of many existing social inequalities, as we noted in the introduction. Although ties to patrons are thought to be a strategic asset, possibilities for the construction of ties are constrained by a prevailing structure of inequality, such that clients cannot skip easily over levels of patrons in a general hierarchy of patronage. We believe that the majority of out-of-community patronage ties are to family members living in other areas, and such patrons are not likely to be sufficiently dissimilar to reverse the associations documented in Tables 3 and 4.

Second, this counternarrative of our findings does not furnish a complementary explanation for the negative effects of clientage on the probability of low education for age. It is unlikely that household heads have clients outside of Kofar Wambai who are substantially different from those in Kofar Wambai. Even if they did, it would be hard to imagine how any such lower status clients would erase or reverse the effect of clientage suggested by our analysis. Thus, since the patronage effect is completely consistent with a clientage effect that is not susceptible to the counternarrative, the clientage effects lend meaningful interpretive support to the patronage effect.

### *Unexamined Aspects of Patron-Clientage*

In this study we focused our empirical models on the patronage networks of household heads in Kofar Wambai. However, in our introductory presentation of the history of patron-clientage in Northern Nigeria, we presented a much broader portrait of patron-clientage in Hausa and Fulani cultures. We seek here to establish (and thereby qualify) the meaning of our results for these broader patterns of patron-clientage.

Because our empirical analysis is focused narrowly on the schooling of dependent children, our results shed no light on the broader utility of patron-clientage in political and economic spheres. It is likely that ties to political and economic elites remain a viable route to political and economic advantage. Relatedly, there is a possibility that the ties that household heads maintain to patrons will benefit their children later in their lives.

It is certainly the case that other forms of local patron-clientage have positive and meaningful effects for children. For example, among adolescents who have difficulty in government schooling, patronage ties may assist in securing favorable apprenticeship placements. And among young adults seeking employment and business opportunities in Kano's marketplace economy, connections to patrons through one's father surely have benefits. We doubt, however, that the advantages obtained by clients' children will

bring them appreciably closer to the statuses of patrons' own children in the long run. The superior levels of modern secular education among the children of patrons will give them a nearly insurmountable advantage in the competition for jobs with the highest skill demands.

### *Relevance of the Results beyond the Study Site*

Case study research allows for in-depth analysis, and in our case we were able to analyze complex whole-community network data that could never be collected for an entire city, much less an entire nation or subcontinent. Yet the widely recognized weakness of case study research is the incapacity of the case study results to warrant conclusions that generalize beyond the study site. To support more expansive conclusions, additional material outside of the case study results must be marshaled.

Through a side analysis of national Afrobarometer data from Nigeria, we examined whether our study site was likely to be unusual on several basic dimensions of interest. We determined that urban Hausa men with the age and education characteristics of the household heads in Kofar Wambai did not differ substantially from Nigerians in general in three ways. First, their views of the government-supported education system were similar to those of Nigerians in general. They saw considerable challenges and many problems, but they did not on average view the education system as among the most important problems facing the country. Second, the rate at which they had contact with government, religious, and other community elites was similar to the average rates for other Nigerians. Third, they were no more prone to predation from government officials; they engage in tributary gift giving and bribery at about the same rate as other Nigerians.

We do not report these results in detail here because they do not enable a fully convincing bridge analysis. The Afrobarometer data have no information on within-community patronage, and Kofar Wambai certainly has distinctive local features. Thus it is possible that because Kofar Wambai is a very old community within a rapidly growing country, our results are more orderly than those that would be generated by newer urban areas. And although we consider Kofar Wambai to be a typical working-class neighborhood in one of the most important cities in West Africa, it is nonetheless true that we offer a case study of only one community with approximately five thousand residents.

Aside from other available data, the extant literature on development outcomes in Africa supports the broad importance of the questions we pose. Outside of the Hausa and Fulani area of Northern Nigeria that we consider, there is existing empirical research on Kanuri schoolchildren by Peshkin (1972) that similarly considers, although in a limited way, the relationships between the clientage status of parents and the education of their children. Beyond related empirical pieces such as this one, the entangled social logics perspective on African development (see Olivier de Sardan

2005) suggests that our results may be widely relevant across West Africa because of the pervasiveness of the cultural logics of gift giving and solidarity networks. This literature maintains that patron-clientage of the form we have examined is pervasive in West Africa.

Finally, our evaluation engages an important and contested literature on the prospects of social capital to enhance development strategies throughout the world. Woolcock and Narayan (2000:226) note that a common prediction in the literature is that “a person’s family, friends, and associates constitute an important asset . . . that can be called on in a crisis, enjoyed for its own sake, and leveraged for material gain.” It is often noted, however, that dense social relationships may become too inward-looking, thereby reinforcing unproductive mutual obligations and reproducing invidious status inequalities within communities.

And herein lies our most relevant piece of guidance for policymakers who seek to use educational institutions to lift families out of persistent poverty. If our findings are correct for our community, and moreover, of relevance to similar communities in West Africa, then oft-heard arguments that within-community social capital is a community resource should be tempered. To the extent that associational ties allow for solidarity and collective action, social capital may be of substantial utility in promoting positive social change. But where those social connections do little more than preserve inequalities of status, as is the case with hierarchical patterns of patron-clientage, their only utility may lie in preserving the status quo and reproducing basic patterns of inequality across generations. Accordingly, the connections that some parents have to high status patrons should be interpreted as constraints from which their children deserve to be liberated.

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## Notes

1. Classic citations on the history of the Hausa and Fulani in Northern Nigeria, especially with a bias toward Kano, include Hogben and Kirk-Greene (1966), Last (1967), Paden (1973), and Smith (1960, 1978, 1997). Many excellent specialized pieces on particular institutions also exist, such as for conflict and colonialism (Fika 1978), gender relations (Baba & Smith 1981; Callaway 1987; Nast 2005), geography and recent ecological change (Mortimore & Adams 1999; Maconachie 2007), Islam (Clarke & Linden 1984; Miles 2000), political lineages and parties (Dudley 1968; Paden 1986, 2005), slavery (Lovejoy & Hogendorn 1993; Stilwell 2004), and trading and the Hausa diaspora (Cohen 1969).
2. Smith (1997), when discussing the vassalage of Kano to the Kanem-Bornu empire in the fifteenth century, suggests that the gate in the wall that gives the community its name has been in use since at least the early fifteenth century. The gate was originally named Kofar Dagaci, after the Bornu prince who lived just outside the city walls while Sarki Dawuda reigned (1421–1438). Sarki Rumfa (1463–1499) then extended the wall from Kofar Dagaci to the south, creating the placement of the wall that has remained ever since. Oral history, as conveyed by the Kofar Wambai wardhead, maintains that the community has been inhabited since the Kofar Wambai gate was established. It is possible, however, that before the nineteenth century Kofar Wambai was an itinerant settlement, given that it is located between the settled core that surrounds the marketplace and what was once a camel park just outside the city wall.
3. The operation of the Kofar Wambai primary school is impressive because of its recent history. It was one of the public buildings taken over by the Maitatsine in 1980 as part of Nigeria's most famous millenarian religious uprising. The religious sect itself took root in the Yan Awaki ward just north of Kofar Wambai, and its elimination by the military resulted in thousands of deaths.
4. Pitin (2002) argues that such forms of schooling may contribute to a remarginalization of women by implicitly supporting a “separate but equal” ideology that, in fact, does not deliver equal opportunities for all. The recent *boko haram* movement, in which secular education was attacked as Western and anti-Islamic, may portend an unraveling of progress on gender disparities, and perhaps the attainment of secular education for Northern Nigerians in general. Until now, the influence of *boko haram* has been quite limited, but it is conceivable that it will inspire similar movements with broader support, especially if the quality of secular education in government-supported schools continues to fall.
5. As we noted earlier, there is a broad literature on patron-clientage as it varies throughout the world (e.g., Eisenstadt & Roniger 1984). Recent treatments of the topic in Africa focus especially on the ways that political processes may transmute patron-clientage systems into forms of political clientelism and corruption (see Blundo & Olivier de Sardan 2006; Smith 2007; van de Walle 2007). One of the earliest pieces to explore these relationships was based on historical research and fieldwork in Northern Nigeria, published as “Historical and Cultural Conditions of Political Corruption Among the Hausa” in 1964 by the eminent anthropologist M. G. Smith.
6. Perhaps most permanent of all is the bond of slavery, a prominent feature of Hausa and Fulani society until the early twentieth century and an integral part of the emirate theocracy (see Lovejoy & Hogendorn 1993). Moreover, because

the overall status of a client in the society at large is a function of the status of the patron, slaves to the highest traditional rulers (e.g., *Sarkin Kano*) were among the most powerful members of nineteenth-century Northern Nigeria, commanding armies, retaining slaves of their own, and collecting taxes on behalf of their patrons (see Stilwell 2004). Although official forms of slavery no longer exist in Nigeria, palace servants in Northern Nigeria still enact the roles of former royal slaves. Our research team experienced this collectively when calling upon Sarkin Kano in January 2005. When approaching the Emir's receiving room, we processed through his retinue of royal servants. When leaving and posing for a picture with the Emir, the royal servants intervened to correct a transgression of tradition committed by the Emir himself in how he at first aligned us for a picture. Thus, by showing deference and obedience, palace servants retain the right to correct violations of tradition, even when the Emir himself exhibited the transgressions. This is very much the "paradox of power" that Stilwell (2004) documents.

7. The process of power accumulation through negotiated patron-clientage is reflected in the important pre-Islamic traditional art of praise-singing. Praise singers offer songs of praise to publicly declaim the position of an individual with high economic, political, or social status in the community. Songs are usually accompanied by instruments appropriate to the status of the targeted individual. And although praise songs are often arranged as set pieces for important ceremonies, praise is also offered outside of the homes of targeted individuals without any advance notice. In return for praise songs, singers receive payment (in cash or in kind) for their performance from the targeted individuals, and this exchange signifies acceptance of the target's status as declaimed by the singer. The specific content of praise songs varies, but one general aspect of the content is particularly noteworthy in this context. Beyond "statements of the individual's ancestry, their notability, his prosperity and influence," Smith (1957:39) notes that "any well-known and important political connexions, such as clientage with a senior official capable of protecting him . . . are alluded to indirectly." Although many characteristics of status are sung openly, praise singers only allude to an individual's patronage ties. And because they are only alluded to, patronage ties acquire special significance as markers of authentic character and true social rank.
8. This type of patronage, however, has become associated in recent years with the exploitation of children. The traditional system of Islamic education through fostering relationships (*almajiri*), wherein boys from rural areas travel to the cities to learn from a teacher in exchange for some form of labor, has been implicated, according to some, in the increase in the number of street children who are sent out to beg on behalf of their patrons.
9. Fafchamps and Minten (2001) study the construction of such networks among agricultural traders in Benin, Madagascar, and Malawi. The results bear a strong resemblance to what one observes throughout Northern Nigeria, which is perhaps unsurprising for Benin (because of the existence of a Hausa trading community in northern Benin, which is also an area that was incorporated into the Sokoto Caliphate in the nineteenth century).
10. Platteau (2007) summarizes a related literature from development economics and political economy research in which the redistributive pressures of kinship-based solidarity networks represent disincentives for wealth accumulation and



entrepreneurship. However, he uses the case of Northern Nigeria to argue that Islamicization can reduce such negative incentives by establishing new forms of relationships that bridge kinship-based cleavages.

11. Fafchamps (1992, esp. 160–62) provides an analysis of patron-clientage in which patron–client relationships exist to bind wealthy individuals to the solidarity network so that it can function as a mutual insurance institution.
12. Also of relevance to the substantive orientation of our research are pieces such as Lloyd and Blanc (1996). Focusing on the role of extended families, Lloyd and Blanc reason that “relatives can provide support in cash or in kind to the household in which a promising child resides (for example, through the provision of other relatives or children to assist at home), thus enabling parents to absorb the monetary and the opportunity costs of that child’s school attendance.” Similarly, Zimmerman (2003) assesses the effects on children’s school enrollment of fostering children with members of extended families in South Africa. We have every reason to expect that similar processes operate in Kano as in these two studies, and the primary question of interest to us is whether or not the negotiated but fictive kinship relations represented by patron-clientage between household heads may have similar effects on children’s educational attainments.
13. Kofar Wambai is one of the twenty-two wards sampled for the Kano Youth Survey, initiated in 1965 (see Armer & Youtz 1971). For publications deriving from the Kano Youth Survey on educational attainment, see Morgan and Armer (1988, 1992) and Morgan and Morgan (1998, 2004).
14. The patron nomination question was “Idan kana bukatar taimako wajen wa ka kan je a nan Kofar Wambai?” The client nomination question was “Wadanne mutane kan zo wajen ka domin neman taimako?”
15. We do not report standard errors or confidence intervals for the odds ratios in Table 3, as our models apply to the entire community. In other words, our data were not generated as a sample from a target population. Thus there is no basis for inferring from our results what the pattern in a population would be because we are modeling the full population (see Berk 2004 for a discussion of similar situations).
16. This is a form of selection bias, in which a positive direct effect of Kofar-Wambai-based patronage is overwhelmed by a negative backdoor path. In this case, non-Kofar-Wambai-based patronage also has a large positive effect but is inversely related to the number of within-Kofar-Wambai patronage ties.