



## An assessment of Church Leader's Perceptions on Gay Relationships, and its Acceptability by the Church

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Annie Gitau, An Assessment of Church Leader's Perceptions on Gay Relationships, and its Acceptability by the Church. AJERNET. 2021. Vol. 2(2):145-154. DOI: 10.51867/ajer.v2i2.38

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### ABSTRACT

*The aim of this study was to determine how church leaders felt about gay relationships and whether they were acceptable in the church. The study used Bandura's Social Learning Theory to demonstrate that a person's behavior is a function of the factors that surround them. The research focused on the All Saints Cathedral Anglican Church in Nairobi, and it used a cross-sectional study design. Questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups were used to gather information. Cross tabulations and simple statistical analyses were carried out using descriptive summary statistics. The results reveal that there is a clear link between modeled behavior and behavior acceptance. The view of church leaders affected the recognition of gay relationships in the church. Younger churchgoers, on the other hand, were more likely to change their actions in response to what their age-mates who were also churchgoers did. Furthermore, the results of the focus group discussion reveal that most parents would rather support their children if they came out as gay and continued to attend church than denounce them. Finally, while African culture is hostile to gay relationships in general, the presence of gay church leaders in the community /or complicit church leaders is likely to affect the church community's view of gay relationships and, as a result, their inclusion in society.*

**Keywords:** Church Leaders, Perceptions, Gay Relationships, Acceptability, Church

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Same-sex or homosexual marriages are not accepted or promoted in the Bible. However, more churches have been accepting of openly gay and lesbian couples in recent years.<sup>1</sup> In Genesis 2:24, God refers to a relationship between a man and a woman, not to a relationship between people of the same gender. "As a result, a man will abandon his father and mother and join with his wife, and the two will become one flesh."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the text refers to the marital marriage of a man and a woman, rather than two men or two women. Therefore, mankind cannot misquote God's Word in order to suggest that he intended for homosexual marriages to flourish in the church. Consequently, God does not want a church that observes some of His commandments while disregarding others. He desires a church that adheres to the whole Word.

While there is significant doubt regarding the Christian reinterpretation of many elements of human life, arguably the greatest uncertainty of all is over sex.<sup>3</sup> As a result, most Christians interpret the Word of God in relation to sexual relationships to mirror their misunderstanding of relationships. For example, the church has ordained gay clergy in contravention of God's principles.<sup>4</sup> Yet homosexuality is viewed as immoral, decadent and wickedly depraved. As depicted in the bible, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were demolished by the Lord because they disobeyed Him, practiced depraved sexual acts (men had sex with their fellow men), and denied God's Word, according to Genesis 19.<sup>5</sup> These were an abomination to the Lord, and a violation of His Laws as found in Leviticus 18:23 "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable."<sup>6</sup> In Corinthians 6: 9-10, Paul refers to people who violate the sexual act as

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<sup>1</sup> Masci, 2014 in the "National Congregations Study finds more church acceptance of gays and lesbians."

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 2:24, New International Version Bible.

<sup>3</sup> [www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/2342851.bishops](http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/2342851.bishops)

<sup>4</sup> A case in point is the 'marriage' of Reverend Peter Cowell and the Rev. Dr. David Lord who exchanged vows at St Bartholomew the Great in the City of London, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> New International Version Bible.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

‘abusers of themselves.’<sup>7</sup> He further writes to the Romans and tells them of God’s wrath against mankind because of their godlessness and wickedness.

People are said to be in disobedience when they go against what has been laid down as true, and refuse to comply by insubordination and defiance. For the God’s Word (the Bible), states that ‘whoever fails in one part, is guilty of all of it.’<sup>8</sup> In their disobedience of God’s Word and in many other ways, the Christian gay community clearly repudiates the word’s message that the fulfillment of physical desire is essential to meaningful life. They place the right of sexual expression very high; it is often a value equal to or above Scripture and Christian tradition according to them.

In addition, the hallmark of conformity to gay within the Christian community is their affirmation and support across the societal spectrum. This sense of greater acceptance in society can also be seen in the views of gays and lesbians themselves.<sup>9</sup> According to Atkinson, homosexuality is a pathological alternative to the fears and inhibitions associated with heterosexuality.<sup>10</sup> Rice, on the other hand argues that the culture and the church are to blame, for culture teaches that sex is taboo, and the church teaches that sexual desire is inherently sinful and its role is the transmission of original sin to our offspring.<sup>11</sup> However, in Kenya and most African societies, a majority of people is against the practice, although the practice is silently penetrating into the society.<sup>12</sup> This is because the continent is one of the most religious in the world.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the aim of this study was to learn about church leaders’ perspectives on the gay relationship and it’s acceptance among the Christians in Kenya.

### 1.1 Problem Statement

An article written by Ramsey Colloquim, says:

*“Relationship vices have not by accident appeared at the same historical moment. They have in common, a declared desire for liberation from constraint - especially constraints associated with an allegedly oppressive culture and religious tradition. They also have in common, the presuppositions that the body is little more than an instrument for the fulfillment of desire, and that the fulfillment of desire is the essence of the self.”*<sup>14</sup>

This means that gays have not just come up in our present time, but have been there in past ages as well. They have sought to be recognized even then, but the society’s moral and religious strength, have had the upper hand. They view the body not as something to be guarded and treated with respect, but as a means to fulfill their sexual desires without looking at the consequences of their actions.

In this age, the gay and lesbian movements have not spared their voices to be heard in the streets and courtrooms alone - like Bishop Gene Robinson who went to the California Supreme court to be allowed to practice homosexuality and serve as a Bishop in the Anglican Church - they have brought them to the church and under the guise of God's love and equality of all mankind, they have stood up in the Churches to make a statement: that a person can be gay and be a Christian. These gay ‘Christians’ sit in the pews on Sunday morning with the rest of the congregation, and participate in church activities, and even have commitment ceremonies to mark their 'marriage' to each other. A case in point is the ‘marriage’ of Reverend Peter Cowell and the Rev. Dr. David Lord who exchanged vows at St Bartholomew the Great in the City of London.<sup>15</sup> All the while, those who call themselves Christians - the guardians of God's holy Word, those who represent Christ truly, sit in the pews and say nothing - their silence encouraging contradiction to the very Word of God that is supposed to be followed faithfully.

For the church-going self-proclaimed guardians of God's word, this trend of not reacting to gay relationships in churches is laid-back, compromising and faith shuttering, to say the least. Laid-back in that they do not take it seriously enough to warrant any reaction; compromising in that it puts the Word of God in a category like any other book that does not need to be believed; and faith-shuttering because it waters down ones faith in God and other believers faith in the truth. If the Word they hold true as God's Word can be compromised, then they, in essence, compromise their very faith as well. For one cannot have one without the other: One cannot lack one without lacking the other. The Bible

<sup>7</sup> I Corinthians 6: 9-10, New International Version Bible.

<sup>8</sup> James 2:10

<sup>9</sup> 2013 Pew Research survey of the LGBT community

<sup>10</sup> D. J. Atkinson, *Homosexuals in the Christian Fellowship* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing House Co.), 24.

<sup>11</sup> David Rice, *Shattered Vows* (London: Michael Joseph, 1989), 23.

<sup>12</sup> Paul M. Mbutu, Emil Chandran, Larry Niemeyer Nairobi Youth Survey (Nairobi: Ruaraka Printing Press, 1998), 26.

<sup>13</sup> DW, 2019, Why is homosexuality still taboo in many African countries?

<sup>14</sup> Ramsey Colloquim (group of Christian and Jewish scholars) “First Things,” March 1994.

<sup>15</sup> [www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/2342851.bishops](http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/2342851.bishops)

clearly tells us in the book of James that, ‘as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead’.<sup>16</sup> This means that, if we stay in the church but fail to follow God’s Word, which is the basis for our communion and faith, then, we are gathered just like any other body of people who meet for various reasons.

In speaking to the Church of believers in Laodicea, John also says that,

*I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either one or the other! So because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am going to spit you out of my mouth.*<sup>17</sup>

God does not want a church that follows some of His commandments and turns a blind eye to other commandments. He wants a church that adheres to the whole Word. Further, nowhere in the bible are same-sex or gay relationships tolerated or encouraged. Genesis 2:24, talks of a relationship between a man and a woman, not of members of the same sex. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” Further, the one flesh referred to in the text is the sexual union of the man and woman, and not two men or two women. This in principle means that we cannot quote the Word of God incorrectly in-order to imply that he meant for gay relationships to blossom in the church.

The church has gone further and ordained gay clergy in the name of God who serve in the church as ministers of the very Word that they corrupt, defy and disobey. The Anglican Church in America has ordained bishops who openly practice gay-ism and claim to serve God. In Kenya the Anglican Church distanced itself from its’ mother church in England when this took place. Further, there is a Church community in Lavington in Nairobi, which meets for Church service and has a gay ordained minister. They accept the idea of gay church members and say that one can be gay and serve God. This means then, that the idea of a gay society and gay church members has begun to take root in our community and in our church in Kenya, despite the distance the Anglican Church in Kenya created to curb this. There are also various Churches that have gay members in their congregations whom the clergy and the church community know about, but whom they choose not to confront in this matter.

Ultimately, to truly serve God one must obey Him. What God commands in His Word, is that one must adhere to His teachings – nothing more, nothing less. As the church of God and the guardians of His Word, the researcher seeks to ask what recommendations can be drawn from the reaction of church leaders to gay relationships in the church, and the relevance of this information in seeking to address the situation in the church from a Biblical, moral and scientific perspective. The researcher aims at drawing recommendations from the congregations’ perspective about the church leaders’ reactions towards gay relationships in church, according to the Bible and according Albert Bandura’s Social Learning theory, which may be used to counter the presence of gay relationships in church, in adherence to God’s Word.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Literature on Approaches to the Concern

#### 2.1.1 Misinterpretation of Scripture

Part of the answer to why people will practice homosexual behavior and also claim to be Christians, is a conviction that the Bible's testimony against homosexual behavior applies to all forms of same sex relationships, even committed partnerships.

But, again, why draw a line at this issue? Normally we leave room for persons who interpret the Bible differently from what is literally written. So why not with congregations who believe the Bible leads them to accept gay relationships and bless these relationships of same-sex couples in the church? Could it be a plain misinterpretation of the Word of God? For example, on the issue of women in ministry: if we allow women to minister in church in some congregations, why not allow gay people to minister in church in their own capacities while still subscribing to their preferred sexual orientation?

Denmart describes Christianity in relation to sexual relationships in the following way. He says Christianity is *A religion in which sexual love is regarded as at its best frailty and at its worst damnation’.* He says that *Christians have been conditioned by their religion through personal faith and codified expression by the church that sex is unfathomable and/or dirty. This view has been drummed into Christians by their culture and pattern of civilization to be taboo even to talk about.*<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> James 2:26.

<sup>17</sup> Revelations 3

<sup>18</sup> V.A Denmart, *Christian Ethics* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd. 1963), 10.

Christians therefore, interpret the Word of God in relation to sexual relationships to mirror their misunderstanding or understanding of relationships. Sex is viewed as immoral, decadent and wickedly depraved. This is seen in reference to destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament and the Apostle Paul's letters to Timothy in the New Testament. When quotations in the Word of God put a light on it, it is regarded in a fleeting, hidden, transitory manner seldom talked about. I Corinthians 6: 9-10 refer to people who violate the sexual act as 'abusers of themselves.'<sup>19</sup> In writing to Timothy, the apostle Paul referred to people who violate sexual act as 'those who defile themselves with mankind.'<sup>20</sup> Culture does not help in having a solution to the issue at hand. This is because most cultures regarded the discussion of sex as taboo. In the Gusii culture in Kenya, sex is never openly discussed and a violation of this often led to a fine paid in livestock. When it is actually discussed, it is when something has gone wrong and been exposed for example, rape, sodomy or adultery.

David Mace states that,

*While there is much confusion about the Christian reinterpretation of many aspects of human life, perhaps the greatest confusion of all is about sex, mainly because as long as the management of the church was almost exclusively in the hands of celibate priests and monks, there was no possibility for meaningful ways to express the truth of man's relationship to God.*<sup>21</sup>

While the early church was in the Catholic throngs, celibate church priests never discussed sex. History records show doctrines and dogmas from discussions held on almost any aspect of God and human life apart for sex. The celibate church priests only made loud proclamation on the subject was a resounding abstinence for ordained clergy. Schillebeeckx says that, first in the fourth century came a law that forbade a married priest from having sexual intercourse the night before celebrating the Eucharist. However, when the Western Church began celebrating a daily mass, abstinence became a permanent factor for married priests.<sup>22</sup>

Denmart says that in order to understand sex in relation to God,

*A renewed, creative and fully personal fulfillment of sexuality will only come from people who are aware of the pressure of a debilitated civilization and without contacting out of it, can put down their roots in Christianity - for Christianity's moral demands, are not its main contribution. Underneath those demands is a whole way of life, of deep emotional power bringing its believers in touch with the ultimate mystery of existence, more permanent than the ups and downs of histories and culture. Religion and sex have been closely linked in the history of the human race. Religion provides the kind of security and resources, which men and women are now seeking vainly by an exaltation of sex in order to counter-balance the impoverished influence of an overly sophisticated culture. You can only really live in the world fruitfully, happily and cooperatively if you have resources not given by the world or do not trust worldly resources overmuch or seek solutions in them.*<sup>23</sup>

In looking at the gay Christian community, there is something the researcher sees (and it is not referring to their same-sex behavior), that helps to remove the uncertainty and tentativeness from the interpretation of this passage: Romans 1:26-27. It says that,

**24** God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. **25** They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator - who is forever praised. Amen. **26** Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. **27** In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. **28** Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

This perception increases the certainty that the Bible's condemnation of same-sex intercourse applies to today's same-sex partnerships. It increases my sense that this community will soon be seen as having limited themselves to only

<sup>19</sup> I Corinthians 6: 9-10

<sup>20</sup> I Timothy 1:9-10

<sup>21</sup> David R. Mace, *The Christian Response to Sexual Revolution* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 103.

<sup>22</sup> [www.arthurstreet.com/celibacy1993](http://www.arthurstreet.com/celibacy1993)

<sup>23</sup> V.A Denmant, *Christian Ethics* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 1963), 121-122.

probationary participation in the church. This perception has had a huge impact on the researcher. This perception is that, there is high incidence of promiscuity among gays in general (statistically it approaches 100% in some studies, even among those in long-term relationships.)<sup>24</sup>

Christian heterosexuals do not do much better than non-Christians both are promiscuous to a level (there's not much difference between the rates of divorce, abortion, premarital sex rate for Christians and non-Christians.)<sup>25</sup>

A survey done by Daystar University in 1998 states that,

*The practice of homosexuality in Kenya has come to light in recent years. A majority is against the practice, a fourth of the respondents in favor, a fifth know someone who practices it. This is a divergent view from traditional cultural norms in Kenya and an evidence of the liberal attitudes of the West creeping into this society. The church needs to address homosexuality as sin and state that sin is sin.*<sup>26</sup>

In Genesis 19 homosexuality led God to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Leviticus 18:22 states “do not lie with a man as with a woman.” Leviticus 20:13 states, for a man to have intercourse with a man, is an abomination. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 refers to the ‘abusers of themselves’ who are defined as male prostitutes, homosexual offenders and call boys by Bible historians.<sup>27</sup> These are other forms of sexual depravity and decadence.

### 2.1.2 Disobedience of God’s Word

People are said to be in disobedience when they go against what has been laid down as true, and refuse to comply by insubordination and defiance. In their disobedience of God’s Word and in many other ways, the Christian gay community does not clearly repudiate the world’s message that the fulfillment of physical desire is essential to meaningful life. They place the right of sexual expression very high; it is often a value equal to or above Scripture and Christian tradition according to them.

James Holly simply puts it this way: methods change – principles do not. He says that, “while methods must change with culture, principles do not. The Church may use novel and innovative methods to attract people to hear the message, but it must never use such novelties to attach them to the Church.”<sup>28</sup>

In other words, one can use various ways to capture the attention of people and to bring them to the knowledge of Christ, but one cannot use these methods to keep them in the Church. One can say that God loves all people despite their sexual orientation, but one cannot keep people in the church who openly contradict God’s Word – for God does not tolerate sin in whichever form.

Anything that one does that contradicts God’s Word is disobedience to Him and what He wills for humanity. One cannot follow one part of God’s Word and fail to follow another part and claim to have done God’s will. For the God’s Word (the Bible), states that ‘whoever fails in one part, is guilty of all of it.’ James 2:10.<sup>29</sup>

Norman Geisler puts forward the ethics of love according to Christianity to bring to light what true love entails. He says that,

*There are two basic levels of love. One level; is of infinite value – vertical (in relation to God) and the other is finite in value – horizontal (in relation to other humans. These levels (according to him) are sometimes in conflict, but never in contradiction. Loving humans is subordinate to loving God but not disconnected from Him. The highest expression of concern for another human being is to will for them what God commands for them: that they take their place under God and not take the place of God.*<sup>30</sup>

In short, give to the sinner what God wills for the sinner, not give in to the sinners wishes. The absolute good is the measuring point for all other good as related to that absolute good. In this case, God is the final measuring point (final say) on what is good.

If the church is not honest about the need to obey God’s Word fully, she runs the risk of losing contact with God. Daniel Callahan put it in these words,

*Nothing will be left but a shell, fooling those around us, but which we know to be empty. To pretend that we accept doctrinal formulations which mean nothing to us as individuals is to sustain only our craving for*

<sup>24</sup> Paul M. Mbutu, Emil Chandran, Larry Niemeyer *Nairobi Youth Survey* (Nairobi: Ruaraka Printing Press, 1998), 26.

<sup>25</sup> David R. Mace, *The Christian Response to Sexual Revolution* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 16.

<sup>26</sup> Paul M. Mbutu, Emil Chandran, Larry Niemeyer *Nairobi Youth Survey* (Nairobi: Ruaraka Printing Press, 1998), 26.

<sup>27</sup> David Rice, *Shattered Vows* (London: Michael Joseph, 1989), 19.

<sup>28</sup> James L. Holly. M.D., *Covetousness, Contentment, Complacency* (Texas: Faith Printing Company, 1992), 172.

<sup>29</sup> James 2:10

<sup>30</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *The Christian Ethics of Love* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973) 33.

*acceptance and security. If we do not question our conformity, we will be nothing as Christian individuals. We will be living a life of sham.*<sup>31</sup>

In other words, one is left as a hard casing, and claims untruthfully and exaggeratedly to hold the Word of God in his life and thus conforms to these untruths he subscribes to. If sexual exclusivity is not valued and honored by those who call themselves the gay Christian community and those who tolerate them, then they are clearly distancing themselves from accepted Christian values and ultimately from God's Word. Consequently, it becomes increasingly certain that this community is also precluding themselves from full participation in the true Church of God and living a sham Christian life and a life of shame to God's Word.

### 2.1.3 Support of Other Forms of Sexuality

Another mark of the dark spirit or conformity of this age within the gay Christian community is their affirmation and support of bisexuality. They ask the church to broaden discussions of inclusion to involve persons who are bisexual.

*When sexual intercourse is entered into without guilt or shame, the whole elaborate structure that has associated sex with fear and repression collapses like a house of cards. Pornography, early premature sexual experience, far from pleasant or elevating, taboo, guilt and other factors have changed the sexual standards in our times.*<sup>32</sup>

The above, in turn, have made humans turn to other forms of sexual experience to get out of the rut of routine and the ordinary. With this comes bisexuality, homosexuality, sex with animals, sex with objects and sex with children.

One must try and understand where these people are coming from, in order to be honest in the church and keep good morals.

Daniel Callahan puts it this way,

*What a person like this (homosexual) needs most is an atmosphere in the church that enables him to bring his confusion and uncertain thoughts into the open. The church is a community, not a set of discrete individuals working out their salvation side by side.*<sup>33</sup>

This silence on issues that affect the whole body of Christ may lead people to conclude that what they do even when it is in contradiction to God's Word is right since no one condemns it.

The masthead of the Brethren Mennonite Council Dialogue newsletter, which advocates for gender sexuality awareness and supports gay relationships, says it is published in order "to increase support for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people." Almost by definition bisexuals are not monogamous, and Christians support this! When the gay Christian community works to support bisexuals, they are not being led by concerns of justice -- one cannot say that bisexuals are losing out on a basic human experience if they are denied same-sex intimacies. Their primary concern, rather, is a choice to participate in the culture's fixation on sex and material pleasure.

### 2.1.4 Glorified Sexual and Material Pleasure

This is the desire to acquire more and more worldly things and engage in hyped sexual amusement. This brings us to yet another issue – fixation on sex and material pleasure. Inevitably, this borders on gluttony, promiscuity and abuse of human free will.

Atkinson says that gay people "see the development of homosexuality in a person as a pathological alternative to the fears and inhibitions associated with heterosexuality."<sup>34</sup> While culture teaches that sex is taboo, and our church teaches that sexual desire is inherent sinful and it's role is the transmission of original sin to our offspring<sup>35</sup>, the continued teaching of this as values will lead to withdrawal from the church and/or adopting realistic human-formed values that contradict God's Word. The church must not pretend that our faith is serene, by resolutely refusing to face difficulties festering below the surface of our consciousness - this would be folly.

The Church must acknowledge,

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Callahan, *Honesty in the Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), 162.

<sup>32</sup> David R. Mace, *The Christian Response to Sexual Revolution* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 106.

<sup>33</sup> Daniel Callahan, *Honesty in the Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1965), 158.

<sup>34</sup> D. J. Atkinson, *Homosexuals in the Christian Fellowship* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing House Co.), 24.

<sup>35</sup> David Rice, *Shattered Vows* (London: Michael Joseph, 1989), 23.

*It's confusion about sexual standards in its congregation, stop presenting Christianity as an anti-sexual religion, open up the subject of human sexual behavior as sharing in God's work of creation and teach the deepest most sublime experience of human love – love incarnate.*<sup>36</sup>

The 1995 Autumn issue of Dialogue was devoted to bisexuality and included an article by a lesbian/bisexual entitled "Dancing with Souls." The 1996 Summer issue included this letter to the editor in an article titled 'Dancing with Souls': *One gets the impression that moving from one intimate relationship to another (whether heterosexual or lesbian) is accepted without question. The concept of developing a life-long commitment with one partner (gay or straight) seems strangely absent. Regretfully this only feeds into the impression that many of our church people have come across to the gay community as supporting promiscuity. Should we assume Christian homosexuals do better? That they are faithful to their partner's and do not divorce, commit adultery or criticize other forms of relationships, for that matter?*<sup>37</sup>

Dr. Ed Rowe disagrees with this. He says in his book, 'Homosexual Politics: Road to ruin for America' that, *Sodom's destruction came as an act of judgment from the hand of the One who decides the destinies of nations. Ancient Greece, which reveled in its foul cult of 'boy love' and 'man love', eventually fell under the iron heel of the Roman legions.*<sup>38</sup>

In other words, God punished them for engaging in acts of unnatural human copulation by raining burning sulfur out of the heavens<sup>39</sup>

Atkinson agrees with Rowe. He says that:

*The use of the sexual organs is limited by these two unique creative functions: they are the means by which the 'one flesh' union is established and deepened, and they are the means by which children are conceived. It is not accidental that the same act serves the two ends. It is clear that both functions confine the use of the sexual organs within the bounds of an exclusive and lifelong relationship. That is to say, within the married state as the church has always understood it.*<sup>40</sup>

The above is glorified sexual pleasure.

The Church therefore is not a gathering of promiscuous person or an assembly of a people of other agendas apart from their faith in Christ. Rather, the church is a 'gathering of people who follow the teaching and the rebuke/correction of Christ.'<sup>41</sup> It has no place for those who defy His Word in any way whatsoever. James Hasting goes on to describe the church as those who stand up among the citizen and represent Christ in human form. Any other representation then misses the mark, whether as a gay bishop or as a gay Christian member of a Church congregation.

## 2.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The study used Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory to show that a person's behavior is a result of their conditioning by the factor that surrounds them. This applies to both the gay persons and the clergy in this case. Bandura argued that people could learn new information and behavior by watching other people. Known as Observational Learning (or modeling), this type of learning can be used to explain a wide variety of behavior.<sup>42</sup>

In Bandura's theory, modeling is influenced by three factors: the characteristics of the model, the attributes of the observer and the reward consequences associated with a behavior.<sup>43</sup> This in essence means that people are more likely to be influenced by someone whom they believe is similar to them; people with low self-esteem are prone to follow the structure and style of a model; and people are more likely to emulate a behavior they believe will lead to positive results. As a result, the perspective of the clergy on homosexuality is more likely to influence the congregant's views and ultimately acceptance of the act in a given community.

<sup>36</sup> David R. Mace, *The Christian Response to Sexual Revolution* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 106.

<sup>37</sup> The Gay Community, <http://members.aol.com/gay.html> (accessed May 2, 2008).

<sup>38</sup> Dr. Ed Rowe, *Homosexual politics: Road to ruin for America* (Washington DC: Church League of America, 1984), 35.

<sup>39</sup> Genesis 19:24

<sup>40</sup> D. J. Atkinson, *Homosexuals in the Christian Fellowship*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing House Co.), 24.

<sup>41</sup> James Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963) 160.

<sup>42</sup> <http://psychology.about.com/od/developmentalpsychology>

<sup>43</sup> Babara Engler, *Personality Theories*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003) 249.

### III. METHODOLOGY

Using a cross-sectional study design, the study targeted the Anglican Church, specifically, All Saints Cathedral Church in Nairobi. This was chosen because it was thought to have subjects who are reasonably homogeneous. The design followed Albert Bandura's Observational Learning Theory as put forward in Carver's book 'Perspectives on Personality.'<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the study sought to show the role of reinforcement in Observational learning as concerns homosexual activity by Chronological coding of the information gathered and Sequential development of data. Data was collected using Questionnaires, Interviews and Focus Groups. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents at the church on a Sunday morning after the 2nd church service. Simple statistical analyses were carried out using descriptive summary statistics and cross tabulations were done and computed to test the hypothesis of the study.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 The Role of Modeling in Behavior Change

The findings clearly demonstrate the role of modeling in behavior change among the church members in connection with the gay relationships. The looked at how the clergy could influence the perception of other church leaders as well as church members in acceptance of gay relationships among the church community. As shown in Table 1 below, of the 4 clergy interviewed, 2 would change their behavior based on a model in the church while 9 of the 11 parents interviewed would change their behaviour based on a model in church. Among the youth interviewed, all indicated that they would change their behavior based on a model in church. In total, 24 of the 32 respondents interviewed said they would change behavior (modeling of ideal conduct) if they had a church model. A majority of the respondents who agreed that they would change their behavior based on a church leaders modeling of behavior, agreed with statements like; *"the church leaders know what they are teaching to be true and so I will trust that they are leading me in the right direction"* (65.63%) and *"we must accommodate all God's people in the church: if we are to call them in, we cannot reject them"* (68.75%).

**Table 1**

*Characteristics of the Model in relations to Behaviour*

Characteristics of the Model	Respondents	No. of Respondents Who Would Change	Percentage (%)
Clergy/Church leaders	4	2	8.3
Church members	7	3	12.5
Parents	11	9	37.5
Youth	10	10	41.7
<b>Total number of respondents</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>

The study also found that the younger church members were more likely to change their behavior based on what their fellow age-mates who were also church members did. Their decisions to change behavior and acceptance of gay relationships in church were influenced by their peers, a changing world-view on sexuality, and acceptance of alternate forms of gender preferences and the advocacy of the human rights of individuals.

#### 4.2 Motivation and Retention Processes

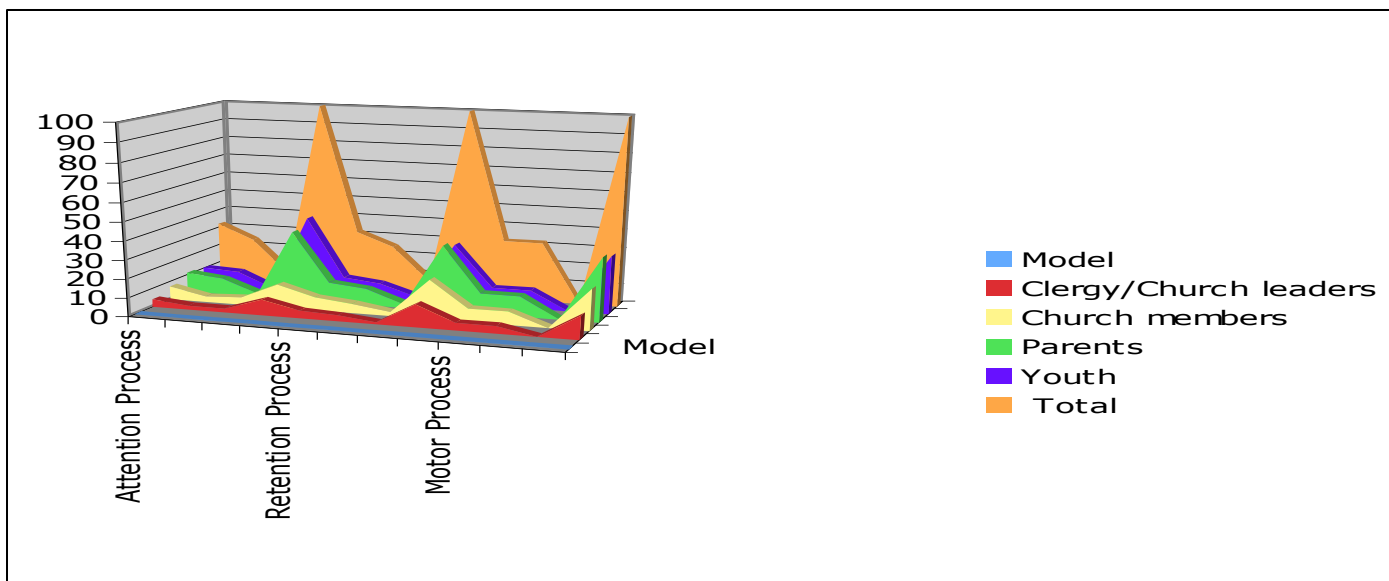
In Bandura's point of view, positive attention processes have to do with the models characteristics (some are more noticeable than others), the nature of the activity (some command more attention) and with the subject itself (behavior) or himself (model). In this study, the correlation between the attention processes and the behavior exhibited by the respondents (church members) was established. It was observed that the number of church going people who would change their behavior based on positive noticeable characteristics depicted by the model were more than 75%. Consequently, the study also found that there was a link between the motor processes and behavior. That is, there is a relation between the means that a person converts the symbolic representation of behavior as a person (age, gender,

<sup>44</sup> Charles Carver and Michael Scheier, *Perspectives on Personality*. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon) 356.



responsibilities, and self-esteem) and the actions they then portray as appropriate actions through a process of trial and error.<sup>45</sup>

In addition the study, established a correlation between the ways a response is represented in order to be able to use it later as a guide (retention process). The findings show that the number of church going people who would change their behavior based on positive words or pictures (both visual and imaginative) as depicted by the model were 78.13% while 100% would change their behavior based on positive motor processes (Figure1).



**Figure 1**  
*Model for Changing Behaviour Based on Positive Words or Pictures*

Furthermore, all the respondents agreed that the Bible cannot be changed thus they would convert the symbolic representation of the Bible into appropriate actions and behavior. Therefore, people are likely to engage in a modeled behavior if it leads to consequences that they value, and are less likely to engage in it if the rewards are punitive. The motivation in this case would be the right to be called children of God and the reward of eternal life in the afterlife.

Finally, several reasons were cited for whether the church members were actually doing anything to curb the acceptance of gay relationships in the church. The focus groups revealed that most parents would rather accept their children if they said they were gay and continued coming to church than try and tell them they disapproved of their sexual orientation and face losing them to the world altogether. They reasoned that the church members (both leaders and congregation) would model the right behavior for them to follow and that they would eventually be drawn to the right behavior by their actions. However, of the total number of parents interviewed 22.2% stated that they would not accept their children who claimed to be gay in the church. They argued that the way to correct the flawed behavior was not to condone it but to discipline the reprobate.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

The implication of this finding is that behavior change can and does occur through observation, even when such observation is incidental, occurring in the context of other activities. As a result this finding demonstrate that while the African society is against gay relationships in general, the presence of gay church leaders in the community /or complicit church leaders are likely to influence the perception of gay relationships among the church community and ultimately their acceptance in the society.

### 5.2 Recommendations

<sup>45</sup> Babara Engler, *Personality Theories* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003): 250.



The issue of gay relationships has continued to pose a challenge to the church in Kenya and especially in Nairobi as an urban city with diverse views and outlooks. The common practice in Kenya has been to denounce the gay person and have nothing to do with them without question. Giving up on such a person basically means they fear coming out in the open and admitting to a lifestyle they believe to be a human right and who they are. This problem seems to stem from a detachment from the issues affecting church members and the relations between a persons' world-view and God's Word.

Incorporating sex education and edification in church settings for the benefit of teaching a God centered view on sex and its function in a relationship would go a long way in changing sexual preference inclinations and how to handle gay people in church. There is therefore need to educate the congregations on the role of sex in relationships in sermons and workshops and how to handle gay people.

Society places a lot of emphasis on acceptance of persons, especially in a church setting. This however should go hand in hand with total spiritual development of the individual according to God's Word. There is little emphasis on the role of an individual in acceptance or rejection of gay relationships in church. A positive sense of obedience to God's Word would help people take a stand in understanding gay people, appreciating who they are as individuals and helping them towards obedience of God's Word without condemning them.

Whereas gay people should never be discriminated against because of their sexual preference, neither should they be ignored. The church should make efforts to bring every person to the knowledge of Christ and to fellowship with other believers. However, the church should not compromise the Word of God in doing this, but must endeavor to teach the Word of God to every being including gay persons. The church must teach the castigatory reprisal of sin, including gayism, but teach it in love, while all the more drawing the person into the true knowledge of God's Word and to its obedience.

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