THE PHENOMENON OF RELIGIOUS SWITCHING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: THE CASE OF NAIROBI AND KENYATTA UNIVERSITIES, KENYA

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Abstract
This paper examines the concept of religious switching or mobility which is one of the characteristics of modernity and post-modernity religious phenomenon. Modernity is characterized by differentiations in an attempt to pin down or explain how things work by distinguishing between essences and finding relevant mechanism of operation. Today, the influence of modernity and, religion has been internally differentiated with notable contrasts existing between traditional authoritative religions based on humanism, prosperity teachings stamped with the marks of utilitarian individualism. In the contemporary world denominations are less exclusivistic than sects and dominate mainstream religious life. This explains why university students move from one denomination to another trying to find the same truth and spirituality at the heart of all religious traditions. In this paper, we ask and attempt to answer the following questions: Does the existence of diverse religious affiliations dilute or strengthen ones faith? Are university students more religiously active? And do new religious experiences affect their original religions? If so, why? and how?

Key words: Modernity, post modernity, conversion, religious switching, religious mobility, differentiation, de-differentiation, traditionalization, de-traditionalization

1.0 Introduction
Our choice of religious mobility especially religious switching is based on the assumption and expectation that a larger population of any University is made up of young adolescents or adults. And, the common belief or suspicion that the waning adolescence and early adulthood are the most religiously unstable and challenging part of life. Most people on the other hand are prone to suspect institutions of higher learning as a breeding ground for secularizing tendencies and possible cognitive dissonance caused by rejection of parental religious norms. Furthermore, those who are not familiar with the University setup may equally think that the University academic programmes facilitate and increase the students' tendency to question and break down the authenticity of religious faith. But, more and above many believe that greater personal freedom affords emerging adults an opportunity to stop activities that are not approved by their peers and instead do things which until then they were curious about but could not do. Such desired activities include engaging in drinking, use of drugs, sexual activities which in the eyes of the people are acts deemed to be at odds with religious traditional teachings.

Accordingly, the common conclusion for most people is that higher education and its freedom promote secularized perspectives most of which are at odds with and in turn may lead some young adults to stop believing in religion of their youth. Our concern is to investigate these allegations or suspicions and to establish the religious behaviour of young adult Kenyans who join and study at the Universities. We shall also consider whether these secular institutions promote their religious faith or facilitate their atheistic tendency, or they simply switch their given religious faiths and preferences but uphold their theistic tradition. The main questions that guide our discussion are: Why do Kenyan University students switch their religious faith within which they were raised to different religious traditions? What factors influence the process of switching?

Many Kenyans indeed, switch religions at one time or another during their lives be they students or young adults at the Universities or those outside the institutions of higher learning, hence the need to examine the main predictors of religious switching. This paper however, addresses the question of religious switching or preference among the students of Nairobi and Kenyatta Universities.

Every academic year these Universities admit students from diverse social, economic, religious and cultural backgrounds. The students have studied and come from both boys' and girls' day and boarding Secondary Schools where they may have been involved in various religious affiliated clubs. This is because, in Kenya, most established Schools have Chaplains and well organized religious organizations that carter for the spiritual needs of the students. The Chaplains at these Schools are hired depending on the Schools' sponsors unlike Chaplains at the Universities who are hired according to their academic qualifications.

At the Universities however, students are recruited into various clubs, some of which are religious affiliated such as the Christian Fellowship Meeting Group, Bible Study Groups, Church Choir, Mass Servers, membership to Parish Council, Christian Union, Young Christian Society and Muslim Students Unions. Apart from meeting their peers, the students are also introduced to Chaplains and Club leaders. The Chaplains introduce them not only to spiritual life, but also to religious affiliation of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. In addition they have to register in different Colleges, Schools/Faculties and Departments for their courses of study to be introduced to academic schedules where they follow both the timetable and individual club schedules.

The first major activity for these new students at the Universities is the Interdenominational Service which is normally arranged and organized by the club leaders but facilitated by the Chaplains. It is at this service that the Chaplains welcome the students to the wider University Community outline various programmes for the whole Semester. Again, the Service provides the first opportunity for these students to meet and worship with fellow students from different backgrounds, religious affiliations and denominations. This is when they get to compare their original religious affiliation and denomination with those at the University. For some, this may be the first time to meet a Preacher of a higher qualification than the one that they might have been previously used to while in high school or home area. Second, from the service the students are reminded about the importance of religious clubs, fellowships and how they are expected to follow the proposed schedules of various activities within the campus.

The third intellectual and introductory challenge is realized in a class situation during lecture hours and from individual consultations with lecturers. Again, generally some of the literature to which they are introduced at this level may question their original religious orthodoxy and conviction if not may lead to new insights towards religion. Such new opportunities result in taking up a new religion-*conversion* or switching- *re-affiliation* into another one, a common characteristic of modernity and postmodernity religious phenomenon. This brief background may prompt us to ask: What is modernity and post modern spirituality and why does it appeal to contemporary adherence?

1.1 Modernity and Post modernity Religions: Meaning and Characteristics

The terms modern, modernity, post-modern and post-modernity are today common expressions in socio-academic corridors. We often hear of modern history, post-modern approach to management, the impact of modernity, post-modern global culture, modern and post-modern religious phenomena! Paul Heelas (1998) rightly points out that modernity is characterized by a number of differentiations. He continues, "… from a more abstract point of view 'modernity' is characterized by the attempt to 'pin down': to establish the determinate; to find order by way of classification, to explain how things work by distinguishing between essences and finding relevant mechanism of operation"**.** Such is a good example of differentiation in which things are seen and interpreted into categories. This is why our author adds, "religion has become more internally differentiated, very considerable contrasts now existing between traditional authoritative religions of the text, liberal teachings with strong dose of humanism, prosperity teachings stamped with the mark of utilitarian individualism and all those alternative spiritualities. … ." Heelas (1998:20). We shall come back to these strongly worded observations later. However, Scott Lash (1990) in his book S*ociology of Postmodernism* points out that post modern unlike modernity is characterized by de-differentiation.

Dedifferentiation on its part is a search for the unitary, a construction of humanity and the acknowledgement that fundamentally all people are the same and that cultural differences are relatively unimportant (Heelas, 1998:3). What this means for post-modern spirituality is that religious exclusivism which started with exclusivistic sects of the 16th century Reformation has given way to religious inclusivism. "Denominations- by definition less exlusivistic than sects- have come to dominate mainstream religious life. Increasing numbers of people are prepared to move from denomination to denomination finding much the same truth behind differences" (Heelas 1998:3). According to our investigation, Seyla Benhabib (1992:16) as quoted by Heelas (1998) seems to have fairly summarized the theme of post-modernism better when he says: " postmodernism presupposes a super liberalism, more pluralistic, more tolerant, more open to the

right of difference and otherness. …" It is these two characteristics of modernity and postmodernism, that is; differentiation and dedifferentiation upon which we are basing our argument for the proneness of contemporary Kenyans to religious switching which extends to students in Kenyan public Universities especially in Nairobi area.

We are nevertheless, not oblivious of the opponents of post modernity's argument against the role played by differentiation and dedifferentiation on religious orthodoxy and tradition. They may, in fact point out and rightly so that the process of differentiation and dedifferentiation is not new. This is true. The two processes started with medieval differences which underscored several contrasts "to do with the division of labour; the division between work (belonging to public life) and the home (the private realm) …"(Heelas, 1998:2). It is common experience that whenever we engage in any account of cultural history, we often involve ourselves in the interplay of processes of traditionalization and detraditionalization, that is, the interplay of various ways which have to do with differentiation and dedifferentiation. Our argument however is to acknowledge and point out the distinction between the differentiation of modernity and differentiation of post modernity. Differentiation of modernity is concerned with legitimation and authentification of cultural formation, whereas differentiation of postmodern operates in terms of freedom and micro narratives. The same distinction can be made that dedifferentiation of modernity does take the form of unifying information. It is something akin to theology of the 19th century which sought a synthesis between faith and culture, where culture was positively appraised and pride was taken in Christianitianizing it (Heelas 1998:8). But dedifferentiation of postmodern is based on the importance of individual choice. It is influenced in one way or the other by crisis theology which is open to culture and acknowledges the importance of each culture in which we are called to faith, granted the faith to which we are called is not simply the culmination of culture, nevertheless we have to learn to provide an authentic witness within it. Therefore, even though these two characteristics; differentiation and dedifferentiation have been there all along, they now operate in a new way or interpreted differently as influenced by post modernity.

The postmodernists are now questioning the authoritative and imperialistic operations of the grand narrative of modernity particularly those which impose uniformity rather than permit for diversity, a characteristic of the contemporary culture. This culture explains the present tendency towards religious switching and preferences which however is not equivalent to religious conversion. This is because, perhaps religious conversion focuses on changes across religions traditions such as changing from Christianity to Islam or Hinduism, whereas religious switching or re-affiliation is a process that implies shifting within religious traditions for example, from the Anglican Church of Kenya to Church of God (cf. Stark and Finke,2000:114). Religious switching is normally realized by taking into account an individual's parent's religious affiliation and comparing it with the religion now claimed by the individual himself or herself. This process assumes one shares the religious affiliation of parents. This observation leads us to the next part of this paper namely theories which justify and explain religious switching and preference.

1.2 Theories that explain Religious Switching in Kenya
In one way or another, the present influence of postmodern religious phenomena is reflected in the present Kenyan Constitution (2010:Art 32:2) which says, " every person has the right, either individually or in community with others, in public or in private, to manifest any religion or belief

through worship, practice, teaching or observance, including observance of a day of worship". Most social scientists and philosophers have had something to say about religion, be it about its origin, its social function or its structures (Moojan, 1999). In this paper, we shall concentrate only on those theories which influence religious switching and which are applicable to the Kenyan situation. Such theories however assume the nature of religion, its meaning and social functions. They include the following;

The Religious identification theory (Bisin, Topa and Verdier, 2004) is the primary starting point of any future religious switching and preference. Most students were either baptized as babies or went through some religious ceremonies to determine their religious faith and identification. If not, they may have been brought up in a religious family where religious rituals like prayers before meals and bed time, not to mention church attendance on Sunday are the norms of practice. In Kenya, despite conversion to Christianity, circumcision is still such an example of ritual of African traditional religious identification. Accordingly, Kenyan students who join the Universities come from many different backgrounds-all varieties of Christians and Moslems, and those with no current religious affiliation. They come open to historical and philosophical questioning and relish the search for answers. It is their questioning and searching that eventually enrich their thinking with religious perspectives. And, the two public Universities being secular institutions give them freedom not to be defensive about faith positions but to discern a new what they already uphold.

When these students join the University however, for the first time, they get involved in new levels of socialization which is expected to correspond to their acquired new social status. This explains why social status is such an influencing theory of religious switching and mobility (Philips and Kelner, 2006; Roof and Mc Kinney, 1987). At the University, students do not only aspire to achieve intellectual status, but even their religious associations must be seen to be of the same expected social status. Subjectively, this is not conversion because it is commonly realized within the same religious convictions. For example, if one was a Christian before switching, they would still remain the same, but their mode of liturgical operation and viewpoints would be different; granted the object of their worship still remains the same – God. Such a belief is common among University students. This is why when they go home for the first time at the end of their first Semester, they often argue and criticize their local Preachers saying: "I cannot go back to that Church, the Preacher is so boring or the leaders are often fighting among themselves for positions and emphasizing on financial contribution".

One of the items in the questionnaires we administered to the students was: "Is the University set up a challenge to one's religious faith"? Out of those who responded to the questions majority of students was in agreement that indeed, University set up may cause challenges to ones original faith or religious conviction. A belief in such disruption which may gradually result in religious switching and mobility is explained by social inertia theory (Lazerwitz, 1995a, Lawton and Bures, 2001; Loveland, 2003; Sherkat, 2004; Smith and Sikkink, 2003). That is, a University community with its academic priority may not simply offer an opportunity for comparative reflection, but opens up for potential switching and acquiring a new status. In the absence of such recognition of the new status mixing and association alone may not be sufficient.

Normally at the beginning of each academic year it is the incoming students who are a minority and as such must make every effort to be accepted by the old group in order to feel at home in the new environment. These new students also come in with their own established religious traditions and influence. When they arrive at the University one of their first priorities is to investigate whether there are identical groups in the campus that they can join without problems or suspicion. When this

is possible, they will feel at home and be a part of such groups. But if it is not, they will have to allow themselves to be consumed as it were by the already existing larger groups at the University. The spontaneous mixing where it is possible is supported by the random social mixing model theory as explained by Tom W. Smith (2009). This theory of the new minority group versus the old larger group is evident each time both Nairobi and Kenyatta Universities admit and register new students. As we have already pointed out already, these students come from various parts of Kenya and the majority of whom are from rural areas. Their presence at the University for the first time can hardly impact on those already there. Hence, it is them to struggle for acceptance to join the already existing community in order to be recognized (vide, Bisin,Topa Verdier,2004).

When these new students have finally found their groupings, depending on the nature of the group, their religious doctrines, rituals and values may be enhanced, challenged or questioned. For example, when members of the Church of God join the University, their priority is to seek for the presence of their fellow Church of God members. This according to Human capital theory (Loveland, 2003; Sherkat, 2001) would enable the groups to be more stable, maintain and increase their religious identity within the campus.

It has been stressed in this paper that religious switching is not identical to conversion, because it operates among "those with similar backgrounds, tastes, values and that cultural homophily leads one to prefer or value those religious attributes that one has been exposed to…" (Tom W. Smith 2009:3). In Kenya preaching is not a monopoly only of those who have gone through theological colleges and taken courses in original Biblical languages, Hebrew and Greek, Exegesis and Homiletics. Some Preachers in fact are self trained individuals who may either be posted to parishes to shepherd people of God or may be founders of Church affiliations. More than often such Preachers may not compare favourably with those at the Universities. Yet their sermons are often captivating. This is mainly because of their method of presentation. Often, their message is simple, charismatic, visionary and apocalyptic. No wonder, before switching students tend to compare between the Chaplains at the Universities and those at their original home areas. If they find that the preaching at the University and those at their homes are almost identical then they would readily continue with their original religious tradition without switching. If however, the preachers at the Universities are more challenging, then they would be prone to switch their original religious preferences to those at the campuses. This concern has been collaborated with one of our questionnaires administered to students which asked: "Can a preacher of a different religious tradition influence other adherents to religious switching?" The expected answer(s) to this question is explained and supported with the theory of adaptive preferences where a faithful continues to recognize his or her religion, "but maximizes access to those religious goods and services" (Tom W. Smith 2009:3) which according to them is not readily obvious in their former Church or religious orthodoxy and tradition.

Finally, in Kenya today, especially in Nairobi, religion seems to have been commercialized. This is evidenced by the casting of televangelists who tend to underscore the need for financial contribution and support for their Ministries. Generally, such support is linked to payment for healing, or to facilitate finding employment for job seekers. In fact, the common practice of mounting posters in various parts of Nairobi, especially in the Eastern part of the city announcing the coming of religious conventions, crusades and conferences are examples of commercially oriented spirituality. The same exercises may also be announced over the radios. All these are in one way or another tied to economic benefits for the leaders or organizers of these conventions. The practice is an example of the market-competition theory of religious switching or preferences which

argues that "religions are like brands competing for consumers and market share. Each religion 'advertises' its product to both current and potential adherents and attempts both to maintain its present consumers and gain new followers. …. (Tom W. Smith, 2009:3-4). But it is also a reminder of the contemporary individualistic characteristic of the post modernity, the concern with a personal gain and survival. Such common tendency in Kenya affects not only the pubic but also the students at the Universities who are still in their early spiritual formative level. It may, in fact, give the impression that religion is now one of the commodities that can be sold in a market for financial benefit. And, that the need and obligation for worshipping God can be replaced with financial contribution. This then leads us to the consideration of factors responsible for religious switching or preferences in Kenyan Public Universities.

1.3 Factors Influencing Religious Switching in Kenyan Public Universities
We already indicated that religious switching is not identical to conversion, because the latter refers to changes across religious tradition such as Christianity to Islam. There must be therefore some predictable factors which may prompt or influence an individual to take such a decision. The explanations of some of these factors may overlap and seem identical with those of the theories discussed above to rationalize the basis of religious switching. The most important and relevant to our topic include the following:
In ordinary life, people rarely act or take decisions without reasons! This may explain why rational choice theory is a logical starting point to introduce our discussion of factors responsible for the switching. For example, why should Mr. Kamau and Anyango both raised up as Catholics switch to Seventh Day Adventist Church the moment they join a University? Researchers nevertheless do not give a uniform explanation in support of rational choice theory as a factor. Mathew T. Loveland (2003) quoting from Stark and Glock (1968) argues that the tendency of religious switchers is explained by the need to move from theologically conservative to theologically liberal denominations in search for the higher social status liberal denominations confer on members. Here in Kenya, a good example would be a young man brought up in Legio Maria who joins the University only to realize that there are no other students or lecturers wearing long pairs of the Rosary beads dressed in long white robes with their hair fairly unkempt. Such a student would definitely for the first time question the basis of his original religious orthodoxy and tradition.
On the other hand however, Mathew T. Loveland (2003:147), makes reference to Kelly (1972) who theorizes that stricter churches better serve their followers' quest for meaning and for this reason would grow while more liberal churches would decline. A common example here in Kenya would be the proneness of indigenous churches which became more common soon after Kenya's independence opposing monogamy against polygamy. The so called mother churches had insisted on one man one wife principle, which was not favourably accepted by Africans. Because for a long time and traditionally Africans have accommodated plurality of marriage for various reasons. We have in mind such denominations like the Church of Christ in Africa started by the late Bishop Ajuoga in Luo Nyanza but later spread to other parts of Africa. This church like other indigenous churches allowed her followers to practice polygamy. Soon however, some of those who joined this denomination later on returned to their original churches believed to be more conservative. This is what we referred to earlier that as a result of post modernity, people are now ready and willing to change their denominations and hope to get the same truth behind the differences. Denominations are no longer exclusivistic as pointed out. On the other hand, the readiness for some Africans to accommodate monogamy is an example of dedifferentiation or detraditionalization- refusing to

accept the exclusivistic traditional practice of those believed to be rich and are able marrying several wives. Whereas those who joined the indigenous churches were involved in traditionalization or differentiation. In the two universities, it is however rare to find a group of students under this name. They all join the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) to take care of their church attendance at the University.

Other factors which influence switching are in context a further elaboration of rational choice theory as a factor. Adaptive factor is such an example which operates within and assumes a social context. Not only students at the Universities but people in general adopt themselves to situations due to teleological reasons. Such reasons may be either for personal benefit and satisfaction or for favourable social interrelationships (vide, Wildarsky1982, 1997). In our discussion of theories above, we pointed out how new students at the University would first find out from among the existing religious clubs or association to adopt and join. But if there is no such a preferred group, then he or she would look for the one which is most suitable for him/ her to adopt and join. Our example above of Legio Maria adherent is applicable here as well. Legio Maria is a schism of the Roman Catholic Church. For religious satisfaction, a student brought up within the Legio Maria can easily adapt and feel at home in a Roman Catholic Church group. As Sherkat and Wilson (1995:998) quoted by Loveland (2003) say: "Individuals come to desire that with which they are familiar. Familiarity comes from proximity to others who also have these preferences and from the occupancy of roles and statuses with which those preferences are associated". Once more, this quotation adequately supports our example of Legio Maria above. The Legio Maria's liturgical function is very close to that of the Catholic Church; at times they may even use the Catholic Missal.

Socialization is a part and parcel factor which describes human beings. And the fact that religion is said to be a cultural phenomenon, the switching and religious preference must be motivated by the need for social interrelationships. As a factor, therefore socialization starts at the family level where parents baptize and socialize their children in their own religious tradition. It is such practice which creates preferences upon which later religious preferences are made. Students at the Universities because of the plurality of religious convictions in the campuses cannot fail to reexamine the faith upon which they were socialized. But such self criticism must be realized within a social context where the individual behavior is either influenced or constrained by the intervening situations or set up. This is why Wildavsky (1994:140) as quoted by Loveland (2003:149) adds that "the interest of the self depends on the cultural context within which the individual is situated". Our quoted author adds that, "actors make sense of their world through their social relations" (Wildavsky (1994:151). The explanation here stresses the fact that in one way or another, socialization as a factor plays a major role in religious switching. Students tend to enjoy emphasizing a social dimension of their religious practice. The interpretation of the liturgy, the set up of the sanctuary, the choir and its uniform, the language ability of the preacher all mean a lot to the sociological aspect of a religious service. A visit to both Nairobi and Kenyatta Universities on Friday evening and Saturday may confirm our explanation.

Students of the Seventh Day Adventist would either be having a choir practice after lectures on Friday or setting up the sanctuary for the Sabbath worship. So also the Christian Union members and those of the Catholic Church would be doing the same on Saturday evening. Each group feels obliged to be associated with a denomination or church affiliation with a visible high social status. This is why the new students are challenged to reflect and compare their original liturgical and religious functions in their home areas with what they find at the campuses. It is not however, only

the social status that motivates religious switching, the doctrinal strictness as we pointed out at the beginning of this discussion are equally important to challenge a believer to switch their religious affiliation. When a preacher tends to use condemnatory approach or what sometimes referred to as "moralists preachers" without effort to contextualize their scriptural texts some students may prefer to move to the next door where their curiosity can easily be satisfied. This concern was vividly realized in the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council had impressed upon the Church the need to be more democratic about the liturgy. For the first time when the young adults noticed that the Church had allowed some of the contemporary musical instruments, instead of the traditional piano, they flocked the Sanctuaries! Once more attitudes towards doctrinal structures can be a source of retention as it may be associated with switching.

Geographical mobility is another common factor for religious switching. This may happen when an individual is not able to find their own church in their new location; or when it is there, the distance may not permit an adherent to reach it and actively participate. Our example of students from the Church of Christ in Africa is a point in context. There are churches of said denomination in some parts of the city of Nairobi, but among the students, we interviewed none of them admitted that during their study periods they look out for these churches.

Marriage and gender perspectives are commonly cited as factors that could explain religious switching and preference. Several authors are quoted by Loveland (2003). Among whom (Roof 1989 and Sherkat 1991) say that marriage is an oft-cited determinant of religious switching. This in fact was one of the questions we asked students of both Nairobi and Kenyatta Universities whether their spouses or future spouses may influence their religious switching. The majority were in agreement that indeed marriage is a motivating factor for religious switching. This is supported by Loveland (2003: 148), who says that "individuals who marry outside their religion of origin are believed to be more likely to switch". From our students we established that despite the often cited belief about the male patriarchal conundrum, men from Christian church are more ready to switch their religious tradition than ladies. Unfortunately, this was not obvious and common among Muslim students. They argued that for them the family would insist that the non Muslim change their religion which according to this paper is conversion and not religious switching. The gender perspective and marriage as factors influencing switching can probably be explained better by doctrinal attitudes we referred to earlier in this part of our discussion. Spouses whose churches have strict and conservative doctrines may not easily allow one of their members to switch. Nevertheless, marriage and gender perspectives still count as important motivating factors for switchers of religious affiliation.

Finally, the role of education and the influence of secularization are such important factors that link our discussion with the opening lines at the beginning of our topic. Students who go to Universities we already said come from diverse ethnic and social status. Those whose parents may not have had adequate education, but are adherents of particular church denomination and or affiliation may question the rationale of the parents to associate them with a given religion; particularly if such a religion is one of the indigenous churches. Such students may use and assume their parents' lack of information about other religious traditions and switch their acquired parental faith to a more appealing and more comparable with their new social status at the University.

As we pointed out earlier in this discussion, education at the university level is often suspected of being critical to religion. Some churches may even be reluctant to support higher education of their members. Most people tend to think that the more one is educated, the little room they may leave for religious faith. Such suspicion is in the main link to the influence of secularization. It is at the

Universities that most students are first introduced to atheistic literature and even perhaps Professors. From an education point of view, the students may probably question particular beliefs and practices in their parental religious affiliation and when they can't get satisfactory explanation they may switch their faith conviction. And the parent would be inclined to blame education for such decision.

Finally, it is somewhat difficult to ignore the impact of secularization in religious switching. In its true sense, secularization may lead to total rejection of religious faith altogether, which is not equivalent to religious switching. Here however, we are concerned with its impact. Take for example, a student who uses the freedom at the University and punctuates his or her church attendance, or stops making personal devotion because they are away from their parental supervision and reads secularistic literature, may start by switching to a religious group which is not so strict and committed, then gradually he/she may reject religion altogether. This is why we mentioned in the opening lines of this paper why people in general tend to associate University education with atheistic practices.

2.0 Data Collection and Discussion

Our data was derived from questionnaires administered on the phenomenon of religious switching among students in both Kenyatta and Nairobi Universities (vide Appendix II). Initially we intended to interview five hundred respondents from both institutions. But because of variations in the university semester schedules, we were only able to reach out to four hundred students. A Random stratified sampling technique was employed to select the respondents to participate in the research. Twenty questionnaires were administered to lecturers, ten for each institution apart from oral interviews with two chaplains respectively. These questionnaires were also distributed to selected undergraduate students from year one to four including some post graduate students. The contents of the questionnaire were both open and closed ended. This gave the respondents the opportunity not only to answer the already determined responses, but also to give their own personal contribution and explanation. The questions were structured in such a way to give the respondents an opportunity to express their own concerns and opinions on a number of issues related to religious switching and preferences. The closed ended questions sought for responses on bio-data which included age, gender and year of study at the University. A total of two hundred and fifty two women against one hundred and seventy men were interviewed. The following items were included in the questionnaire; were you baptized as a baby or you chose your own religious affiliation as an adult? The answers to this question revealed that all those who were interviewed had received Baptism under the supervision of their parents. This may mean that until the time of their entry to the University, most students are followers of their parental religious faith. The next question sought to establish how the students fitted into the Universities religious traditions and social setups. Some students found it easier to fit within the University set up while others found it more challenging and expected orientation both in religious faith and how to cope with socialization within the campuses. Such orientation may lead to questioning one's original faith or enhancing and facilitating of campus life or tradition. It is this exercise of adaptation which leads to questioning or criticizing ones original faith thereby opening up the possibility of religious switching. It is at this moment that we posed a numbers of questions gathering data useful for our analysis as independent variable including the following; what factors could lead to religious switching at the University. Could it perhaps include: the new social status, education, peer and lecturers influence, future

spouses or personality of preachers? The details of responses to these questions are represented in table One.

In this table, most respondents identified peers influence as an important factor for religious switching at the University. This may be linked to the need for socialization and acceptance within the campuses. The second emphasis was placed on theological and doctrinal teachings of a given religious denomination or affiliation as a justification for the possibility of religious mobility or preference. The third strong factor according to our findings was the personality of the preacher or the pastor of the new religious denomination. Most students indicated that they would prefer an all around pastor who is familiar with the doctrines of the church and is sensitive to the feeling of the youth and is able to contextualize his or her message. Finally, another group of respondents including the two pastors and some lecturers emphasized the influences occasioned by secularization. These they said is possible because of the literature that students are introduced to at the university and also some of the remarks made by their individual lecturers or professors. With these findings, we can now briefly discuss our conclusion.

3.0. Conclusion

Our study set out to investigate and answer two main questions; why Kenyan University students switch their religious faith within which they were raised to different religious tradition? And what factors influence the process of religious switching? We asked these questions on the backdrop of the assumption that the answers are influenced by interpretations of postmodern characteristics-differentiation and dedifferentiation.

The two characteristics are not necessarily new in any human cultural account or explanation. But, today, they operate differently from the past. Differentiation of postmodern we pointed out operates in terms of freedom and micro narratives. That is, emphasizing on plurality of interpretations of phenomena like religious faith. Whereas, the dedifferentiation of postmodern underscores the importance of individual choice. These two levels of operation address and answer the first part of the main question raised by this paper. Namely, that students at the Universities switch their religious preference because they are free to make their own individual choices among the plurality of religious traditions.

But, religious switching is not a simple socio-cultural change. It is a complex theological phenomenon which hardly occurs by accident. The switching presupposes a theoretical explanation in order to appreciate and pin down the circumstances that prompt the preferences. Such theories include; identification, social status and social inertia theories. The others are random social mixing model, theory of adaptive preference, market competition and human capital theories which have already been discussed in this paper.

Theories however, may remain abstract realities without intervening factors necessary for empirical interpretations and or application. Accordingly, we identified and explained eight factors which motivate students to decide to switch their religious orthodoxy and tradition. Such factors included; rational choice theory as a factor; adaptive, socialization, geographical mobility, marriage, gender perspectives, education and secularization. We believe that any serious explanation of the phenomenon of religious switching must include these two areas of consideration- theories and factors of religious switching.

Still, to answer our two main questions adequately and from an empirical dimension; we carried out a random stratified sampling technique. The results of which are detailed in table One of this paper. We had several variables to help us explain the reasons why students at Nairobi and Kenyatta

Universities are prone to switching their religious orthodoxy and tradition. All the respondents attempted an answer to all our questionnaires, even though with noticeable variations. Among which, one hundred and forty eight respondents (35%) agreed that peer influence is indeed a leading factor for explaining the phenomenon of religious switching. Peer influence is an important factor of socialization in the life of young adults. It is the source of strong relationships which are often linked to perceived self worth, high level perspective taking and pro-social behavior, and even increased risk of emotional and behavioural problems. Accordingly, who among the young adults would want to challenge and separate themselves from their peers? The saying that a human being is a social animal perhaps means more to young adults at the University level than to other members of the society.

The second outstanding influence or reason for religious switching was stated to be a theological or doctrinal interpretation and presentation. This in fact is associated with the perceived nature of the contemporary society - an informed society. Today, information is no longer a monopoly of the few. People are able to acquire information from several sources. This places leaders and interlocutors of religious faith in a tight challenging position. He or she may not underrate or assume their audience. A preacher who is not sensitive to these post modern realities may easily be a cause for one's religious switching. The respondents linked theological and doctrinal reasons with the personality of the preacher, the individual whose responsibility it is to present and interpret the word of God. If this personality is not sensitive to the present critical and selective characteristics of the contemporary postmodern individuals, his/her attempts to reach out to such persons would be a fiasco. We have fairly explained this in parts of this paper under socialization factors as a motivating reason for religious switching.

But, students (our respondents) being members of institutions of higher learning did not forget to say that education (10%) and secularistic influences (10%) are part and parcel of the processes which explain the phenomenon of religious switching. It was mentioned at the beginning of this paper that parts of initial challenges to new students at the Universities are the impact of academic programmes, lecturers' direct or indirect remarks about religious faith and the freedom to access any form of literature be it theistic or otherwise. Being away for the first time from the guarded boarding schools and parental supervision, the existence and use of freedom at the campus may be too difficult to handle. Accordingly, without extra personal efforts, young University adults may soon be dissuaded from their religious obligations or they may simply question the rationale of their original faith and switch to other religious affiliations.

Finally, we may at this juncture restate the answer to the two original questions posed at the beginning of this paper that; yes indeed, a number of students at both Nairobi and Kenyatta Universities do switch their religious orthodoxy and tradition during their period of study. And that the switching may be at any time within the four years of study, granted that the first year students tend to experience more switching than any other year. Again, the male students more than females are likely to switch their religious affiliations, especially when the movement in initiated by a female colleague. And, although retention was not a part of this study, we realized from our respondents that the switching is more within the main line Protestant denominations (76%) followed by those within indigenous African Churches to Protestant denominations (20%) as represented in table One in our study.

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APPENDIX I
TABLE ONE
FACTORS OF RELIGIOUS SWITCHING

Items	Total	Percentage
Respondents interviewed	422	100%
Male students interviewed	170	40%
Female students interviewed	252	60%
Students who switch in 1st year	253	60%
Students who switch in 2nd year	42	10%
Students who switch in 3rd year	21	5%
Students who switch in 4th year	106	25%
Students who switch within the mainline Protestant denominations	322	76%
Students who switch from the Catholic Church to Protestant denominations	8	2%
Students who switch from the Protestant denominations to Catholic Church	8	2%
Students switching from Indigenous African Religions to mainline Protestant denominations	84	20%
Reasons for religious switching		
Family	4	1%
Marriage	8	2%
Peers	148	35%
Lecturers	4	1%
Theological/ doctrinal	84	20%
Lack of spiritual commitment	17	4%
Education	42	10%
Personality of the preacher	63	15%
Secularistic influences	42	10%
Geographical mobility	8	2%

APPENDIX II

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

THE PHENOMENON OF RELIGIOUS SWITCHING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: THE CASE OF NAIROBI AND KENYATTA UNIVERSITIES, KENYA QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

The following questionnaire is intended to conduct an investigation among university students on the process of religious switching and preferences. Your cooperation will be appreciated and any information given will be kept confidential. Tick ($\sqrt{}$) as appropriate:

1. How old are you?   (20-25)   (26-30)   Over 31 ( )

2. Year of Study at the University- a. 1st ( ) 2nd ( ) 3rd ( ) 4th Post graduate ( )

3. In which College/ School/ Faculty/ are your register in?_____
4. In which department/s are registered in?_____

5. Which Christian religious denomination/ affiliation do you belong? _____

6. Is this your parent/s religion?
   Yes ( ) /No ( )

7. Were you baptized as a baby or did you join a religion of your choice as an adult?
(a) It was my parent/s decision ( )
(b) It was my own decision ( )
(c) I was influenced by a friend/s ( )
(d) It was the influence of my future spouse ( )

8. Do you still go to the same church both at the campus and at home?
    Yes ( ) No ( )
   Explain why?
(a) Because Iam no longer interested in religion ( )
(b) I do not like the preaching in that church ( )
(c) Because i switched to another religion ( )
(d) Because my spouse is of different religious affiliation ( )

9. Are your parents still affiliated to the religion that you were baptized as a baby?
   Yes ( ) No ( )

10. If your response to the above is No, please explain why?
    (a) They are no longer interested in religion
    (b) They are no longer interested in that religion
    (c) They do not like the reaching in that church
    (d) They switched to another religion

11. The following are some of the reasons why people change/ switch their religious preferences or lave religion altogether. For each, please indicate if it is a major or minor reason why you switched from one religious preference to another:
    (a) You disagreed with the teachings of your original religion.
        Major ( ) minor reason ( )
    (b) You found a new religion that is more fulfilling. Major ( ) / minor reason( )
    (c) You grew dissatisfied with your local church and as a result switched your religion.
        Major ( ) / minor reason ( )
    (d) You disliked the fact that the leaders were struggling with each other to control the direction of your religion/ church/ denomination. Major( )/ minor reason( )
    (e) You married a spouse from a different religion. Major( ) / minor reason( )
    (f) You moved from your original location and could not find another church of your religion that you liked. Major ( ) / minor reason( )

12. Why do Kenyans tend to ignore Religious stability and make a change in their religious preference in their life?
    (a) _____
    (b) _____
    (c) _____
    (d) _____
    (e) _____

13. Does social status determine religious switching? Yes ( ) / No ( )

14. Mention advantages of switching religious preference.
(a) _____
(b) _____
(c) _____
(d) _____

15. Do any of the following Institutions of learning provide an environment for religious switching?
    (a) Secondary school Yes ( ) / No ( )
    (b) College Yes ( )/ No ( )
    (c) University Yes ( ) / No ( )

16. Who of the following influenced your religious switching? Tick as appropriate.
    (a) Fellow students ( )
    (b) Lecturers' remarks
    (c) Christian fellowship/ meetings/ associations ( )
    (d) The preacher of the new religion/ church ( )
    (e) Lack of sincerity on the part of the preacher/s in my former church ( )
    (f) Too long sermons/ homilies in my former church ( )
    (g) My future spouse influenced me ( )

17. Tick any of the following as reasons for religious switching/ preference (   ) :
    (a) Family (   )
    (b) Marriage (   )
    (c) Friends (   )
    (d) Theological dissatisfaction (   )
    (e) Change of location/neighbourhood (   )
    (f) Dissatisfaction with the clergy (   )
    (g) Others

    _____
    _____
    _____

18. Does having been raised in a mixed marriage family increase chances for religious switching? Yes (   ) / No (   )

19. Which of the following describes you?

    (a) Always have had the same religious preference (   )
    (b) Have switched from one religious preference to another (   )
    (c) Have not moved away from any religion whatsoever (   )