

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

AN EXPLORATION OF ATTITUDES OF PRE-ADOLESCENT  
BOYS TOWARDS SUNDAY SCHOOL

BY  
CLEMENT OUKO

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of  
Arts in Christian Education

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JULY, 2007

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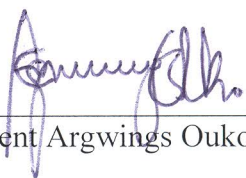
**July, 2007**

Student's Declaration

**AN EXPLORATION OF ATTITUDES OF PRE-ADOLESCENT BOYS  
TOWARDS SUNDAY SCHOOL**

I declare that this is my original work and has not been  
submitted to any other College or University for academic credit

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of the Nairobi Evangelical  
Graduate school of Theology or the Examiners

(Signed)  \_\_\_\_\_  
Clement Argwings Ouko

July, 2007

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is a grounded theory study investigating the attitudes of pre-adolescent boys towards the traditional Sunday school. The first chapter focuses on the background and significance of the study. The second chapter contains a brief interaction with literature related to the topic of concern. The focus in this chapter is on the definition of the term attitudes and the link between attitudes and behaviour.

The third chapter justifies the research model and deals exhaustively with the methods and procedures that I used to investigate the attitudes of boys to the traditional Sunday school. Chapter four summarizes the findings of the field interviews, namely the strong polarity of the boys' attitudes and the surprising ambivalence towards their teachers. These findings are in turn related to the main aspects of attitudes using relevant literature on the subject. This chapter concludes with a proposed theoretical model to account for the boys' attitudes. Chapter five, the concluding chapter, contains pertinent recommendations arising out of the findings of the research and some suggestions for further research.

To

Allan Ger Ouko 1959-2000

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I acknowledge with profound gratitude the contribution of the following people: Dr Lois Semenye for encouraging me to embark on this long journey; my brother Edward R. Ouko for his generous contribution towards the purchase of a desktop computer; my late cousin James Edwin Rakwar Oduol for encouraging me to finish the task; Dr. Suraja Raman, the Head of Educational Studies for demonstrating the meaning of the term ‘grace’ time and time again; my readers Dr. Richard Starcher and Prof. Victor Cole for the valuable input, and last but not least, my dear wife Lilian Mwende, for being there for me. To God be the glory.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **The Origin and Importance of Sunday School**

Robert Raikes of Gloucester pioneered the Sunday school concept in England in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The idea rapidly spread in Protestant churches. In North America, the work of the American Sunday School Union, founded in 1824, made a great impact through the production of curricular materials (Wilhoit 1987). Many of the early Sunday schools grew into churches, a phenomenon particularly marked in the area that came to be known as the “Bible Belt”.

Since its late eighteenth century inception, the Sunday school has remained an important component of the socialization process of the church (Reed and Prevost 1993). Through this socialization process, children grow up to become adults who know and effectively practise their faith.

This study is an exploration of the attitudes of pre-adolescent boys towards the traditional Sunday school programmes. Attitudes being an important component of behaviour (Rokeach [1968]; Kenrick [1999]; Feldman [2001]), positive attitudes are likely to lead to more active involvement in Sunday school, which will in turn ensure the success of the Church’s socialization process.

## Research Problem

Teaching pre-adolescent boys is a daunting challenge. Up to the age of ten, the attendance patterns, levels of participation and even behaviour of boys and girls are generally similar. In many instances from then on, the teachers with whom I have had occasion to interact report a marked variation between the genders. The boys start to play truant or prefer to join the youth programmes targeting those in the late teens. When they attend class, their behaviour presents problems. The boys either distract the class or are reluctant to participate in group activities.

Discussions that I have held with parents, church leaders and curriculum developers confirm this observation. These discussions also point to a variety of explanations, for example, the gender of the teacher, the curriculum, class size and composition and, finally, the psychological and social stage of development of the boys.

Boys are believed to prefer male teachers. A curriculum that does not encompass much physical activity easily bores the boys. Some classes are too large for the boys to receive adequate attention. As pre-adolescents, the boys may not enjoy being with girls, a situation that changes dramatically a few years down the road.

In all of these discussions, the perceptions of the boys themselves receive scant attention. The reason for this glaring omission is unclear. Hearing the views of the boys will thus shed much light on the actual attitudes governing their behaviour.

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to explore the attitudes of pre-adolescent boys at the Nairobi Pentecostal Church towards Sunday school. Three semi-structured interviews each involving groups of ten to fifteen preadolescent boys

were carried out in late March 2007 at Nairobi Pentecostal Church, Central, in an effort to understand and explain their behaviour.

### Ethical Issues

Given that the boys are legally minors, two ethical issues impose themselves. The first is that of gaining access to them. The second is that of respecting their privacy and that of their families. Guarding the actual identity of the participants, a requirement for all interview processes, is the third ethical issue.

### Research Questions

#### *Grand Tour Question*

What attitudes do pre-adolescent boys at NPC Central hold toward Sunday school?

#### *Sub Questions*

- a. What draws the boys to Sunday school?
- b. What repulses the boys from Sunday school?
- c. How do the boys relate to the teacher?
- d. How do the boys relate to each other?
- e. What Sunday school activities do the boys really like?
- f. How often are these activities carried out?
- g. How do the boys perceive their parents' reaction when the teachers report that the boys were absent?
- h. How do the boys perceive their parents' reaction when the teachers report that the boys misbehaved?
- i. How interested do the boys think their parents are in Sunday school?

## Definition

For purposes of this study, attitudes may simply be defined as “overall evaluations of some aspect of the world” (Kosslyn and Rosenberg 2001, 676). These evaluations in turn provide the motivation for acting in definite ways.

## Delimitations

This study was carried out over a period of two successive Sundays on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2007 at the Nairobi Pentecostal Church, Central. The study focused on discovering the present attitudes of preadolescent boys aged 10 to 12 years, rather than on the evolution of their attitudes over time. The study did not include girls. In addition, the study did not focus on asking the boys for a justification of their present attitudes.

## Limitations

At the pre-adolescent stage of development, formal thought is only beginning to develop (Klausmeier 1984). The boys’ perception of certain aspects of their world may thus be expected to be limited to the concrete and directly observable. However, some exceptions to this general rule were observed, as will be detailed below. Sunday school is a part of the church, a place where the boys are generally expected to be on their best behaviour. Sunday school is also a place where the boys may fear to express themselves fully, especially to a relative stranger. In practise, the boys were quite free with their opinions.

