

A COUNSELLING INTERNSHIP IN RURAL SCHOOLS  
WITH A RESEARCH STUDY ON THE PARENTING OF  
ADOLESCENTS IN RURAL AREAS

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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MAGGIE DOYLE









**A COUNSELLING INTERNSHIP IN RURAL SCHOOLS**  
**WITH**  
**A RESEARCH STUDY ON THE PARENTING OF ADOLESCENTS IN**  
**RURAL AREAS**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

This internship report consists of two parts. The first part describes an internship completed in three rural schools on the Northern Peninsula in 1995. The intern spent half time at a high school and half time between two elementary schools. An outline is given of the many goals set by the intern and the activities she took part in to accomplish these goals. A detailed description of the intern's supervision and evaluation is also included.

The second part of this report describes a research study of parenting of adolescents and parenting programs in rural areas, specifically, the need for and the effectiveness of the **Active Parenting of Teens** program in rural areas was studied. Structured interviews were used in the assessment of the program's suitability for a rural setting.

The internship component provided the intern with an excellent opportunity for personal growth and professional development. The wide range of activities in which the intern participated enhanced her knowledge and skills in the field of school counselling.

The research component provided the intern with the opportunity to gain valuable experience and an understanding of the challenges of parenting adolescents and the unique problems faced by parents in rural areas. It also provided the intern with ideas for her future work with parenting programs.

## **PART I**

### **THE INTERNSHIP COMPONENT**

#### **RATIONALE FOR CHOICE OF AN INTERNSHIP**

At Memorial University of Newfoundland, candidates for the Master of Education degree in School Counselling have the choice of completing a thesis, folio/project, or full-time internship of at least eight weeks duration. An internship was chosen. This decision was based on the exposure the intern received during her practicum. This practicum allowed the intern to experience the many challenges faced by school counsellors on a day to day basis, and while the experience was invaluable, the intern wanted to further enhance her counselling skills through the "hands on" experience offered by an internship.

Although the intern had four years of teaching experience, she felt that additional experience "in school" was needed, especially since her aim was to take on the new role of counsellor. The intern believed that the internship would provide her an effective means of preparation for this role.

There is a research component required as part of the internship. This offers the intern an opportunity to gain research experience. The completed study is found in part two of the report.

#### **RATIONALE FOR CHOICE OF SETTING**

A placement in a rural school was chosen. The intern made this decision because she felt that a rural setting presents unique challenges to a school counsellor. Typically there is a lack of resources and funding. In addition, difficulties due to distance and the lack of mass transit limit the access students and their families have to resources such as

mental health program day-care facilities, and employment opportunities. There are few such agencies in most rural areas to which the counsellor can refer students, and often there is a waiting period of months. As a result, counsellors are often left to deal with situations on their own. Another problem faced by counsellors in rural areas is heavy demand on time. It is quite common for counsellors to work in widely separated schools. Thus much time is lost in travel. Many also have teaching duties and hence have less time available to offer counselling.

The internship took place in three small schools on the Northern Peninsula of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Half time (mornings) was spent at Canon Richard's High School, an Integrated school servicing 264 students in grades seven to level III. The other half (afternoons) was spent between two elementary schools (k-6) in the area, Straits Elementary (student population 98) and Green Island Elementary (student population 93). The internship started on April 26, 1995 and ended on June 23, 1995.

## **GOALS AND ACTIVITIES**

The goals of the internship and the activities that were used to accomplish these goals are discussed below.

### **Goal 1:** To enhance individual counselling skills.

This goal was achieved by carrying out a number of different activities.

During the internship the intern provided individual counselling to six clients on a regular basis. The intern met with five of the clients on an average of three times a week

for 25 - 30 minute sessions. One of the clients was seen daily for 25 - 30 minute sessions for a period of one month at which time the student moved to another area.

The intern had three sessions with a pair of siblings and one session with two classmates who were having problems getting along. All of these students were at the elementary grades.

The intern met with the field supervisor once a week for about 40 minutes to discuss the intern's progress with clients. Less informal discussions took place daily as the counsellor and intern would discuss cases on their way to and from work.

The intern also met with an external consultant, Dr. Tom Daniels, professor of psychology at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College once during the term to discuss progression of placement.

In addition, a daily log of personal reflections, observations and experiences was kept by the intern.

**Goal 2:** To learn about the personal, social, and academic concerns of students.

In order to help the intern learn about the diverse concerns of the students in her school, a number of different activities were completed.

In carrying out the individual counselling, the intern consulted regularly (at least once a week) with the teachers of her clients as well as with the field supervisor (every day) to learn more about the student's needs and progress.

Using the Child Abuse Research and Education (C.A.R.E., 1984) kit with grade one students at Straits Elementary was another activity that the intern took part in. The C.A.R.E. kit is a personal safety program for grades K-3. The goal of the program is to



encourage and promote the rights of children, with special emphasis on the prevention of sexual abuse. The program is divided into four parts and takes three to six weeks to complete. Materials for the program include a Resource and Lesson Plan Guide, 12 Discussion and Message Cards, a Puppet and an Audio Tape. The program was beginning when the intern began her placement. The intern observed the local counsellor leading five of the sessions and led three sessions on her own.

The intern went into the grade nine classroom twice for 45 minutes to provide students with information on contraceptives and adolescent homosexuality.

She also helped orient and prepare the grade nine students for the senior high program. The intern gave two 45 minute lectures on the senior high credit system, graduation requirements, and senior high course selection. During the lecture the intern also answered questions about entry requirements for university and other, post-secondary institutions.

On two occasions the intern gave academic tutoring to a grade six student who was having academic difficulty.

The intern led two 40 minute activity oriented sessions on self-esteem with grade four students at Straits Elementary.

The intern met with the field supervisor for 40 minutes to plan the grade six's orientation to grade seven. Students also participated in the orientation program. Students from both schools met at one of the elementary schools. During the day, the students had the opportunity to get to know each other and were introduced to some of the instruments used by two visually impaired students in the class. This was done to

familiarize and desensitize students to peers with disabilities. A second day was set aside for the elementary students to tour the high school. The intern took one group of students on a tour of the school while the field supervisor took another group of students.

**Goal 3:** To gain further experience in group counselling.

This goal was met through several activities. The intern co-led, with the field supervisor, a six week parenting program entitled the **Active Parenting of Teens** (Popkin, 1990) program. The parent group to whom the program was offered met once a week for two and a half hours. The intern also met with the counsellor once a week for 20 minutes to prepare for sessions.

A self-esteem group with 16 grade fours at Green Island Elementary was also carried out by the intern. One 40 minute session took place at a rate of two to three times a week depending on the intern's schedule. The sessions focused on feeling good about yourself and making others feel good about themselves. The intern began every session with a warm-up activity. All sessions were activity oriented. The group ended with a party planned by the students themselves.

**Goal 4:** To acquire a higher level of professional awareness.

This goal was achieved through a variety of activities. The intern observed the field supervisor in her diverse role of counsellor in three different schools. The counsellor taught two courses at the high school level. She was also responsible for planning several study and personal skills programs at the elementary schools. A significant amount of discussion took place between the intern and the field supervisor on the counsellor's role when placed in more than one school. Much of the discussion centered around the

counsellor's use of time and the importance of being selective when choosing programs to implement at the different grade levels.

The intern also sat in on several sessions of a behavior management program entitled "Be a Better Student" (Mannix, 1989) related to school situations that the counsellor was implementing at the grade six level. Additionally, the intern observed the counsellor complete five sessions using the C.A.R.E. Kit (1984) with a grade one class.

During her placement, the intern observed the counsellor's consultative role at all schools. The counsellor was consulted regularly by teachers and principals. She seemed to be each principal's "right hand person". The counsellor also played an active role in planning various events at each school. One event involved a person with Aids coming to the school to talk to the students about the disease. In addition, the intern observed the counsellor offering career counselling to many senior high students.

The intern had the opportunity to attend two staff meetings and observe a Program Planning Meeting. A discussion with the field supervisor on the role of the counsellor on a program planning team also took place.

The intern observed an information session on the Senior High Credit System. The two hour session was held for parents of grade nine students who were entering senior high the following year. These sessions were led by the high school principal and counsellor.

The intern attended a one hour presentation on AIDS given by Trudy Parsons, a Newfoundlander living with Aids who had been invited by the school to talk to students and parents. The intern also met Ms. Parsons during her visit. The presentation was very

informative as Ms. Parsons presented current information and added a personal side to the illness.

The intern took part in a full day workshop on "school improvement" delivered by a school board official and the principal at the high school. This workshop looked at the goals that were previously set for the school and assessed whether or not some of these goals had been achieved.

The intern also went to the National Conference of the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association held in St. John's from May 23-26. During the week the intern had the opportunity to hear many outstanding speakers in the profession such as Dr. Peter Jaffe who spoke on the influence of media on violent behaviour and Maude Barlow who spoke on the privatization of Canadian schools and on the impact of economics on education. In addition, various workshop presentations were attended. One such workshop was entitled "Applying Psychodrama Techniques to Counselling Practice". This workshop was of interest to the intern because she had read a substantial amount of information on psychodrama during her studies at Memorial. This was the first time that she had the opportunity to see such techniques put in action. The conference provided the intern with the opportunity to network with other counsellors and therapists.

**Goal 5:** To gain an understanding and proficiency in the use of a number of different assessment techniques and tools at the school level.

This goal was met by the intern administering the WISC-III (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children) to two students at the elementary grades and writing reports on the results. The intern also worked with the Special Education teacher for an average of 120

minutes a week in the utilization of various reading assessments with elementary students. The assessments that were administered were the Alberta Series and the Burns and Roe. In addition, the intern worked with the field supervisor during an informal assessment (ie: observation) of a preschooler who was about to enter kindergarten the following school year. There was some concern that the child was not developmentally ready to start school without assistance. The preschooler was observed twice in the classroom setting. The intern and counsellor spent one morning and one afternoon (five hours) with the preschooler.

**Goal 6:** To further develop skills in consultation.

This expertise was assessed through a variety of activities: Observing the field supervisor consulting with teachers/parents three times during the term and through the intern's own extensive consultation with the teachers and parents of the clients the intern had assessed.

Taking part in a meeting of a Program Planning Team. This gave the intern the opportunity to consult with the teachers.

**Goal 7:** To become familiar with the support services and community resources available to counsellors in the area.

This goal was accomplished by discussing with the field supervisor the procedures used to obtain services from community support systems.

Making contact with a social worker four times regarding a client, as well as talking with the public health nurse once during the placement.

Discussing with the counsellor several community organizations in which the counsellor played an role. The intern learned that there was a Child Protection Team in the area made up of several counsellors, several clergymen, the public health nurse, a police officer, and a social worker. The team met every few months to plan activities for schools in the area. In addition, the counsellor, along with other counsellors in the area, the school psychologist and school board coordinator, were part of a Crisis Intervention Team.

**Goal 8:** To look at the need for a parenting skills program for parents of teens in the area.

The intern took part in many activities to meet this goal. The intern conducted interviews with 10 parents, those who had previously or were currently taking part in the **Active Parenting for Teens** program. As well, the intern interviewed four professionals in the locality on their view of parenting in the area and the suitability of the **Active Parenting of Teens** program.

The intern consulted with the university supervisor on a regular weekly basis via e-mail and telephone.

**Goal 9:** To gain experience in the delivery of a parenting support program.

This goal was met by the intern co-facilitating, with the counsellor, the delivery of a six week program entitled the **Active Parenting of Teens**.

**Goal 10:** To study the delivery of the **Active Parenting of Teens** program.

This goal was met by the intern conducting a study of the delivery of the **Active Parenting of Teens**. This study involved the intern reviewing the literature on the delivery of parenting programs to rural parents, gaining a familiarity with the specific

program being used in the area and conducting a series of interviews with both participants and professionals involved. These interviews were aimed at determining the effectiveness of the program and at indentifying issues and concerns related to the delivery of such programs in rural areas. A report, which includes a rational, a literature review, a discussion of the methodology used and a discussion of the findings from this study is found in Part Two of this report.

### **EVALUATION AND SUPERVISION**

The supervision of the intern is the shared responsibility of the University and the receiving schools. The field supervisor of this internship was Ms. Dorothy White-Dredge (B.A., M.Ed.), a guidance counsellor with the Vinland/Strait of Belle Isle Integrated School Board. The university supervisor was Dr. Gary Jeffery, Professor with Memorial University's Faculty of Education.

During the course of this internship, supervision was accomplished by regular meetings between the intern and field supervisor. The intern and field supervisor met at least once a week for a formal discussion on various clients. In addition, the field supervisor observed the intern during some of her classroom guidance activities. Regular contact with the university supervisor was made by telephone and through e-mail. Contact between the field and university supervisor occurred at the end of the term. The intern met with the university supervisor mid-way through the term and at the end of the term. As well, because of the distance, a professor from Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, Dr. Tom Daniels, was asked to visit the intern in her setting. The duties of Dr. Daniels

included such things as assessing the level of satisfaction that the intern was having in her setting, assessing the progress the intern was making by looking at whether the intern was meeting the goals she had previously set for herself, and discussing with the field supervisor the progress of the intern.

Due to time restraints and distance, Dr. Daniels did not get the opportunity to visit the intern in her setting. The intern did however, meet with Dr. Daniels once during the term in Corner Brook. Discussion with Dr. Daniels centered around the intern's satisfaction with her setting as well as the extent to which she was meeting her internship goals. The intern also spoke to Dr. Daniels several times by telephone.

A report on the intern's internship performance was submitted to Dr. Jeffery and Dr. Daniels by Ms. White-Dredge upon completion of the internship.

The intern also used self-evaluation throughout the term. A daily journal was kept by the intern to write about her observations and experiences during her placement. The journal was reviewed periodically.

### **PERSONAL REFLECTIONS**

Many of the skills the intern learned in the Counselling Program were further enhanced by doing the internship. The individual counselling, group counselling, and assessment skills that the intern learned while in the Counselling Program were practiced with the students and parents that the intern worked with during her placement.

The intern had a very active role in consultation, much of which was linked to assessment. Regular consultation occurred between the intern and the counsellor,



teachers, students and parents. Being called upon as a consultant on matters related to assessments was new to the intern. Although she had done much testing in her training, she had never been called upon to explain, in laymans terms, the results of a testing session, to a parent or a teacher.

Because of the small and diverse population found in this rural setting, the intern had to address a wider range of problems and duties than she encountered in her previous training. The intern became aware of the importance of the counsellor being multi-skilled. The school counsellor in a small school setting is not only responsible for individual and group counselling, she is also often required to teach as well as to participate in such things as program development. In addition, the counsellor must have skills which allow her to work with all age groups. For example, the intern worked with small children even though this demanded skills that she had not previously practiced. Her previous experience and training had involved working mainly with adults and adolescents. Because students and families in rural areas often have limited access to sources of assistance and because there are usually no agencies in the immediate area to which a counsellor can refer students, counsellors have to recognize and deal with diverse problems on their own.

Time management came to be regarded by the intern as an essential element of an guidance program. Since the intern was shared between several schools, she realized the importance of planning carefully which programs were to be offered. The intern came to understand the importance of setting limits. It was realized that it is better to have two or three really solid programs in a school than six or seven weak programs. Working in a

rural setting means that much time is spent travelling and that one experiences very great demands coupled with the feeling of being very "thinly spread" over a perhaps too wide range of professional demands.

While demanding and stressful at times, the intern gained the satisfaction of being more "immediately" involved at a personal level with colleagues, students and their parents. Due to the small number of students and teachers at each school, she had much daily interaction with both students and teachers. In other words, she experienced a broad range of contacts and gained a wide perspective on the needs and situations found in the community.

The experience of working with the field supervisor, a competent and respected professional, was deemed to be most worthwhile and satisfying. The intern had the opportunity to observe and to readily discuss with the field supervisor both personal and professional matters. The close relationship also offered to the intern the support of a fellow profession with a shared set of concerns and experiences. The value and importance of such a support system came to be recognized and much appreciated by the intern.

### **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DISTANT PLACEMENTS**

Although the intern thoroughly enjoyed her internship and felt she profited much by doing it in rural setting, she feels that she did not get the amount of supervision from the University that was needed. Her choice of a rural setting contributed to the less than optimal level of supervision. This section is included so that other students who wish to

do their internship in such settings can make better arrangements and plan better. The following considerations should be made for interns in rural settings:

A long lead time should be used to allow for overall planning of the internship. The intern did not know for sure that she would be able to do her internship in the setting until about three weeks before her placement was to begin. This was due partly to the fact that the intern had great difficulty finding a supervisor. The intern feels that supervisors should be appointed to students when they first enter the program. At least three months of preparation and planning should go into finding an internship setting.

Although some contact was made with the field supervisor by the university, the intern feels that earlier contact should have been made.

All parties involved in the internship should be fully aware of their duties before the internship begins. Such was not the case in this matter. Many of the parties involved were confused about the role they were to play in the supervision of the intern.

Interns who choose a rural setting should be given special funding or support to allow them to return to campus to meet with their internship supervisors as well as to pay for other expenses (ie: telephone calls to supervisor).

Internships should be conducted at the beginning of the school year or after Christmas break. The end of the school year is a very difficult time to enter a new setting as many of the school's events are finishing up. As well many of the programs implemented by the counsellor are ending.

Eight weeks is not sufficient enough time in a setting especially if the intern is entering a new setting, i.e. one that the intern did not work in during their practicum placement.

## CONCLUSION

An internship placement in a rural school offers an excellent opportunity for a student in the Educational Psychology Master Degree Program (School Counselling) to develop knowledge and skills in counselling. As stated previously, since Newfoundland is mostly rural, it is deemed beneficial for more students in the counselling program to gain experience in rural schools. Rural areas pose unique problems for school counsellors.

By doing the internship, the intern came to better understand some of the tasks faced by rural counsellors and became better equipped to deal with them. It became very evident that anyone seeking to offer a service in a rural community needs to be skilled in a multiplicity of areas and also needs to be "adaptable".

By completing the research component of the internship concurrent with the field experience, the intern gained a more integrated knowledge of both the demands and skills needed by a counsellor in a rural area and a better understanding of the needs and demands placed on rural parents. The study illustrated that there are virtually no parenting programs specifically designed for rural use. It was also found that there is a place for parenting skills training in rural communities and that such training can be offered by the school counsellor. In doing this study, it was evident that currently available parenting programs appear to be designed for urban parents. Such programs will need modification if they are to be used in a rural setting.

In conclusion, as a function of the overall internship experience, the intern feels more prepared to meet the challenges that the role of school counsellor will bring.

## PART 2

### THE RESEARCH COMPONENT

#### **"Parenting of Adolescents in Rural Areas"**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

It is predicted that "...schools of the future will become family centers" (Pecks, 1993, p.249). In order for counsellors to be effective in the future school setting "Counsellors must assume a more proactive stance by collaborating with parents, teachers, and school administrators to develop and implement family programs aimed at preventing some of the difficulties experienced in today's families" (Gerler, 1993, p.243).

Many of the problems that adolescents present have a family dynamic element. Having a knowledge of family systems and using family intervention techniques can help address many of the problems encountered by children in the school system.

This study looks at the parenting of adolescents and the needs of parents in rural areas. It was initiated based on a rural community's recognized need for some form of intervention. Parenting intervention programs had been previously offered in the largest community. The availability of a graduate student, provided the school with the opportunity to study the effectiveness of the existing parenting program entitled the **Active Parenting for Teens** (Popkin, 1990).

##### **Purpose and Rationale for the Study**

This exploratory study assessed the needs of rural parents and evaluated the suitability of the **Active Parenting for Teens** (Popkin, 1990) program for a rural area.

The rationale for this study is based on the body of literature that has identified adolescence as a challenging time for parents. Many parents in today's society are confused and uncertain about their roles and their relationships with children. The traditional, authoritarian approach to parenting, which many parents themselves experienced, is no longer being found, by many parents, to be effective, particularly when rearing adolescents (Kottman & Wilborn, 1992). Many parents are seeking help through parent education programs. Although there is a substantial amount of literature on parent education for parents with children aged one to nine, there are a limited number for parents of adolescents (Huhn & Zimpfer, 1989). Few studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of parent programs for parents of adolescents.

The rural setting poses a unique problem for families who could benefit from assistance. There are few helping agencies to which families can turn. Because of a counsellor's heavy workload, parenting programs are often the only resource the counsellor can use to aid parents.

Given the fact that there was a limited amount of research done on the parenting of adolescents, this study is considered useful even though the sample for this study was small.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were explored in this study:

- 1) How do people view parenting practices in small rural communities?
- 2) What types of problems are parents in rural areas having with their adolescents?

- 3) What are the parenting skills and competencies needed by rural parents?
- 4) What are the parents' stated reasons for involvement in the parenting program?
- 5) Did parents view the **Active Parenting of Teens** as being effective?
- 6) Did the program have a positive effect on the participants?
- 7) Do parents feel that this program is appropriate for use in rural areas?
- 8) Can the needs of rural parents be addressed through a parent training program?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Parenting Of Adolescents**

The relationship between parents and adolescents has been the subject of much research. Adolescence is a time of major developmental change in children and is often a demanding time for parents. It can cause significant transformations and realignment in family relations. The patterns of interaction that family members have spent years developing may be rapidly changed or disrupted by the physical, psychological, and social changes brought about by adolescence. In a review of the literature, Johnson, Shmuel and Collins (1991) found that these changes brought about "increased assertiveness by both parents and children, decreased perceptions of acceptance, increased incidence of conflict exchanges, and decreased expressions of physical affection and positive feelings among family members" (p.237). The parent-child social system that was once relatively stable and predictable often no longer exists. "The hierarchical parent-child system is replaced by an egalitarian peer-peer system in which parents and adolescents occupy a more nearly



equal status" (Montemayor, 1983, p.84). During adolescence, children have increased unsupervised contact with peers and begin to place greater importance on peer approval, views, and advice (Fuligni & Eccles, 1993). At this time adolescents begin to spend less time with their parents and appear to distance themselves emotionally from them (Larson & Richards, 1991). Because of this, family members must learn new behaviours based on their new status. This may cause much stress for the participants particularly the parents.

A review of the literature indicates that parents are likely to feel less adequate and less comfortable when parenting adolescents than when parenting younger children (Small & Eastman, 1991). In a study on the difficulty of parenting children of various ages, Ballenski and Cook (1982) found that mothers reported more problems with their adolescents than with any other age group. Problems were related to the adolescent's moodiness, independence, and discipline.

Another study of parental perception was conducted by Pasley and Gecas (1984), who investigated the stresses and satisfactions of parenting by stage in the family life cycle. Using a sample of 285 mothers and fathers, they found that the stage of child rearing perceived as the most difficult by the sample was the period from 14-18 years of age. Reasons given for the difficulties associated with this stage fitted into two categories: "issues of independence" and "lack of control". The responses of the mothers and fathers to the difficulties associated with parenting adolescents had distinct themes. Parental aggravation and annoyance with the adolescent's increasing independence was noted. Parents made comments like "She won't listen to me". Parental fear and concern regarding the potentially undesirable consequences of the teen's independence were also

noted. Parents expressed many worries about their children's behavior. These included the adolescent using poor judgement, delinquency, rebellion, and using drugs.

In their work with families, Dickerson and Zimmerman (1992) found that parents of adolescents had difficulty distinguishing between the aspirations they had for their children and the aspirations their children had for themselves. They found that parents of teens were often unwilling to let their children make decisions for themselves even though the decision was a good one. The adolescent was left with the difficult decision of making choices between what was better for him/herself and what his/her parents wished. Usually the end result was adolescent- parent conflict. Conflict and arguments are the primary complaints of parents about relations with their adolescents (Montemayor, 1986).

In an attempt to explain variation in the level of conflict between parents and adolescents, Barber (1994) analysed 1,828 white, black, and Hispanic families of adolescents. Results showed that there were no cultural differences with respect to the types of issues that parents and adolescents disagreed on. Conflict was reported to occur more frequently over everyday matters such as chores, family relations, school and dress. Little conflict was reported about substantive issues such as drugs and sex. Barber contended that this likely meant that parents and adolescents do not often discuss these issues as opposed to having no differences in attitudes about them. Barber's findings supported an earlier study done by Montemayor (1983) on a sample of white families. The two strongest predictors of conflict across cultural groups in Barber's study were personality characteristics of the adolescent and dysfunctional parenting. Barber suggests

that it is possible that negative parenting precedes and contributes to both the personality of the adolescents and the conflict they have with their parents.

There are also large discrepancies between perceptions of parents and adolescents regarding conflicts. In a study by Callan and Noller (1986) on perceptions of family cohesion and adaptability, it was found that compared to parents, adolescents of almost all age groups (13-17 years) were less satisfied with the levels of adaptability in their family and judged their families as less cohesive. A second study by Callan and Noller (1986) on communication between adolescents and their parents found that parents maximize their similarities with their children while the children minimized the similarities. The investigators proposed that parents did this because of the effort and commitment they have invested in the lives of their families. Adolescents on the other hand tend to minimize the similarities in order to express their sense of autonomy and independence. The investigators found that adolescents, in general, want change in their family. A later study by Noller and Callan (1989) set out to explore how ratings of the family by family members would compare to the ratings of the same family members in an outside family. They predicted that parents from the two families were more likely to differ in their perceptions than the adolescents. Their predictions were found to be true. In addition, they found that negative ratings by the adolescent member of the family matched those of both the adolescent and the parents in the outsider family. This finding suggests that parents are not accurately viewed by their adolescent children.

Changes in society and the nature of adolescence have also contributed to the challenge of raising adolescents. Hamburgg and Takanishi (1989) identify many

conditions that create difficulties for adolescents in contemporary society. These conditions also have an effect on the parents of teenagers. These authors state that "The lengthening of the period of adolescence has led to a protracted period of responsibility for parents and a greater uncertainty regarding how to raise adolescents" (p.455). They suggest that the rapid sociocultural change and the great amount of information and values our society presents have left many parents confused about how to best prepare their children for future adult roles. Today's parents may also be more worried as a result of the greater number of potentially dangerous activities, substances, and influences to which adolescents are exposed. The erosion of the family and social support networks has made it difficult for parents of adolescents. This erosion has led "to greater isolation of parents from one another and to fewer friends and relatives who can be sought as sources of support and information on parenting" (Small & Eastman, 1991, p.455).

As indicated, parenting adolescents is a difficult task, a task for which many parents are not ready. In fact parenthood has been described as the "greatest single preserve of the amateur" (Dembo, M. H., Sweitzer, M., & Lauritzen, P., 1985). Some support for this statement has been found in a 1977 survey of parents by Yankelovich, Skelly, and White (Dembo, et al., 1985). They found that 70% of the parents surveyed felt that they needed help. It is likely, today's parents feel a greater need for assistance in acquiring and maintaining parenting skills.

### **Rural/Urban Differences in Parenting**

While little research has been done specifically on the differences between rural and urban parenting practices, research does indicate differences in rural and urban families.

A study done by Jeffery, Lehr, and Hache (1992) found that rural parents faced many difficulties that were somewhat different than those experienced by urban parents with respect to how they could help their youth make career decisions. Two of the major problems were the lack of career-related information and the lack of knowledge of how to obtain available information. Youth from rural areas have fewer educational and employment opportunities available to them than their urban counterparts. Due to this limited number of opportunities available, rural youth are at a disadvantage in terms of both educational and occupational opportunities (Looker, 1993). Results from a study conducted by Sharpe and White (1993) evidenced that more youth in rural areas than urban areas do not go on to attend post-secondary institutions, those that did attend were more highly concentrated in non-university type post-secondary institutes. The region of residence also affects occupational expectations. Rural youth tend to have lower occupational expectations (Tilley, 1975) and have more traditional occupational expectations (Looker, 1993). People from rural areas are also somewhat more likely than city dwellers to be school leavers (Gilbert, Barr, Clark, Blue & Sunter, 1993).

In looking at the perceptions of individual family members towards family orientation, Jurich, Schumm, and Bollman (1987) found that rural and urban differences did exist. They found that rural adolescents agreed with their parents more and were more

family oriented than their urban counterparts. Rural family members seemed to have less of an individualistic philosophy and more consensus were found among family members. Urban fathers were found to be low on family orientation when compared to the rural fathers. Both the urban and rural mothers demonstrated a high degree of family orientation, although the rural women were less individualistically oriented. Adolescents in the study wanted the autonomy of an adult but still wanted the security of knowing they had family-oriented parents.

In a study on the parenting perceptions of rural and urban families by Coleman, Ganong, Clark and Madsen (1989) differences were also found. Urban parents placed more emphasis on social development than rural parents. Urban populations tended to be more mobile, and had fewer close kin readily available. Because of this, social development was stressed so that children had the social skills necessary to assimilate into new groups and maintain social interaction. The researchers suggested that the culturally homogenous population and close kinship ties in a rural area may lower parents' perceptions of the need to stress social development in their children, as they believe that it occurs naturally. Rural parents were found to place more emphasis on emotional development than did urban parents. The close-knit relationships in the community make rural environments relatively "safe". Thus rural parents may encourage their children to be affectionate, to express feelings, and to be considerate. People living in urban areas know less about their neighbours and others in their environment and therefore may teach their children to be more reserved and cautious about expressing their feelings.

### **Group Intervention**

Most parenting programs involve groups. Groups can be an efficient and an effective means of delivering services to parents of adolescents. People change more rapidly in groups than they do in individual therapy (Corey, 1991). Groups "provide the social context in which members can develop a sense of belonging and sense of community" (Corey, 1991, p.161). In groups "...parents can share together, feel understood, and offer and gain strength from one another" (O'Brien, 1994, p.236). They are able to gain a renewed sense of self-worth by learning that they are not alone and by sharing coping strategies with one another (Lieberman, 1991). A 1984 study by Silverman and Smith (Gazda, 1989) on three self-help groups found that people who joined groups did so out of a need to find someone else who had a similar experience. Peers who have gone through a similar experience seem to be "unique sources of help for people in stress" (p.247).

As well, groups give people the opportunity to help others. Reissman suggests that helping might be beneficial to the helper (Gazda, 1989). "Doing something worthwhile to help someone in need may give the helper a sense of adequacy and effectiveness" (Gazda, 1989, p.247). The helper may also profit from the status associated with the role. In addition, through the process of helping, the helper may be acquiring a broader outlook on his or her situation. Gazda (1989) reporting on the work of Rappaport refers to this process as "empowerment", that is "gaining psychological control over oneself and extending the positive influence to others" (p.247).

Lieberman (1990) outlines four central process characteristics of successful groups. The first characteristic is group cohesiveness. A cohesive group offers its members almost unconditional acceptance and provides a supportive environment for taking risks. It gives participants the motivation to remain in and work with others in the group. A second characteristic is that the group must provide a setting that is different from "ordinary social interaction" (p.32). Members must perceive and experience the setting as unique. The third critical feature that makes a group is its' ability to provide participants with new ways of thinking about problems. A last characteristic of a successful group is the provision of a diversity of experiences. Successful groups encourage a wide range of behaviours from the participants; those include "what is talked about as well as a wide range of curative factors" (p.35).

Given the fact that many parents often feel unequipped to parent adolescents, the group setting is a viable option for learning parenting skills.

### **Review of Parenting Programs**

Society is finally beginning to recognize its' failure to provide significant training for perhaps the most critical and difficult task of all, namely, being a parent (Kottman & Wilborn, 1992). This is evidenced by the rapid growth of the parent education programs.

The terms "parent education" and "parent training" are used interchangeably in the literature. Parent education is viewed as the more general term, while parent training is subsumed under parent education rubric. Parent training is defined as a "process that



includes at least one component; teaching specific skills" (Dembo, et al., 1985, p.156). Although the format, materials and emphasis may differ in various parent programs, most of the programs attempt to help parents develop greater self-awareness, use effective discipline methods, improve parent-child communication, make family life more enjoyable, and gain useful information on child development (Dembo, et al., 1985). The aim of parent education programs is improved parent-child relationships and improved parent effectiveness (Fine & Gardner, 1991). Dembo et al. (1985) in an extensive review of the literature cite the work of several authors. They point out that Lamb and Lamb define a parent education program as a "formal attempt to increase parents' awareness and facility with the skills of parenting" (p.14). They also cite Croake and Glover who view parenting training as a "purposive learning activity of parents who are attempting to change their method of interaction with their children for the purpose of encouraging positive behaviour in their children" (p.151). Finally, they cite Fine who defines parent education as "a systematic and conceptually based program, intended to impart information, awareness, or skills to the participants on aspects of parenting" (p.5-6).

There are many diverse approaches to parent education. Some programs are in the form of commercially published kits and others are in the form of theory based guidelines. Amongst the better known published programs are: the **Parent Effectiveness Training (PET)**, the **Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP)** and Behavioral parent training such as **Winning, Responsive Parenting**, and **The Art of Parenting**. Parent Study Groups offer a theory based approach to Parent Training.

**Parent Effectiveness Training (PET)** is an eight week, three-hour program developed by Thomas Gordon (1975). The program makes use of the concepts and techniques of Carl Rogers (1951). Sessions include lectures, readings, role-playing, and homework exercises. PET focuses heavily on communication between the parent and child. The participants learn how to become active listeners, how to sort out whether the parent or the child owns the problem (use of "I-messages"), how to present a concern in a nonjudgmental manner, and how to work out a solution that allows both the parent and the child to feel successful (Fine & Gardner, 1991).

The Parent Study Groups are based on the writings of Alfred Adler (1927; 1930). Adlerian writings have been interpreted and developed by Dreikurs and Soltz (1964) and Dinkmeyer and McKay (1976). The parent study groups meet for eight to 10 weeks. Each week the participants discuss readings from Dreikurs and Soltz (1964). As well, they discuss the experiences faced the previous week (Dembo, et al., 1985). Some of the goals of this program include helping parents to understand children, how they think, and helping parents comprehend the motives for their child's actions. The behaviour of children is viewed as goal oriented and purposeful. Child misbehaviour is seen as a way of gaining attention, displaying power, getting revenge, or showing inadequacy. Two of the key elements in this program are the use of encouragement by parents and setting consequences for the children's behaviour.

**The Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP)** is a modification of the Adlerian approach. This highly structured program was developed by Dinkmeyer and McKay (1976). Parents in this program meet for nine two-hour sessions (Dembo, et al.,

1985). Children are depicted as wanting to behave in socially appropriate ways so as to achieve a positive identity. Because of discouragement, the child seeks other negative means to establish an identity (Fine & Gardner, 1991). This program uses some of the approaches used in the PET program including the use of active listening and use of the "I-messages" along with the basic Adlerian concepts.

The goal of behavioral parent training program is to bring about changes in children's behaviour by first making changes in parents' behaviour. The emphasis is on teaching parents specific techniques to manage their children's behaviour. The concepts taught usually include an overview of the basic behavioral concepts, the nature and use of social and nonsocial reinforce, and the manner in which children shape the behaviour of their parents. Two particularly important steps in this program are training parents to observe and record carefully children's behaviour, and training parents to use techniques that reinforce children's behaviour appropriately. Parents in the program are taught the principles of behaviour modification (Fine & Gardner, 1991).

### **Evaluation of Parenting Programs**

Much of the existing research indicates that parent education programs are effective in creating positive changes in the children of parents who attend these programs (Powell, 1983;1986). For instance, in a literature review it was found that there were improvements in children's cognitive ability (Brems, Baldwin, & Baxter, 1993), school performance (Dembo et al., 1985), and achievement (Brems, Baldwin & Baxter, 1993).

Parent education has also been shown to be successful in changing parental attitudes about child-rearing practices (Dembo et al., 1985; Pinsky & Geoffrey, 1981).

Although there has been a substantial amount of research on the effectiveness of parent education, few of the studies have evaluated parent programs aimed at the parents of adolescents. Most of the outcome investigations of these parent education programs have relied on the comparison of traditional parenting programs such as **Parent Effectiveness Training** (PET), Behaviour Modification, and programs based on the Adlerian Theory.

A series of studies by Schultz and her colleagues (Noller & Taylor, 1989) on parenting programs found that attending parenting programs resulted in positive changes in parental attitude in both post-test and follow-up, and that maternal ratings of household happiness at post-test were significantly more positive than those of the nonattending control groups.

Similar results were found by Hinkle, Arnold, Croake, and Keller (Croake, 1983) in a study of Adlerian parent education. Parents who took the parent education program rated themselves on the Attitude Toward Child Rearing Scale (ATCRS) as having an increased democratic attitude toward childrearing. The same study also found that the children of these parents reported positive self-esteem changes.

Some studies found that attendance in these programs had long lasting effects. Schultz, Nystul, and Law (1980) set out to compare the interventive and preventive techniques from three approaches: the Drikursian/Adlerian approach entitled **Children: The Children**, the Gordon (1970) approach using **Parent Effectiveness Training**, and

the Behaviour Modification approach. A pretest - post-test control group was designed. One hundred and twenty mothers took part in the study. The investigators found that the three models produced a more liberal attitude toward freedom 12 months after the group experience.

### **The Active Parenting Program**

The only training program found by the researcher on the parenting of adolescents is entitled the **Active Parenting for Teens** (Popkin, 1990) program. The video-based discussion program, founded by a child and family therapist, is made up of six, two-hour sessions, one held each week for six consecutive weeks. The **Active Parenting for Teens** is one part of the larger **Active Parenting Program**. The other part is recommended for parents of children aged two to 12 year olds.

The program is similar to STEP in its content. It incorporates Dreikurs', as well as Gordon's concepts into a well-organized, video-based format. The 40 video segments of the package add up to a total of 120 minutes. The videos, in a dramatic format, depict three families played by professional actors, engaged in a variety of typical family situations. The segments present examples of typical adolescent behaviours and examples of parents appropriately and inappropriately dealing with these behaviours. The videos offer a model of appropriate behaviour and clarify the nature of inappropriate behaviour. Every session ends with a video "blitz" summarizing the content of each session.

The package comes with two books, a Leader's Guide and a Parent's Guide. The Leader's Guide is divided into six sessions, one for each group session, and an additional

section to prepare leaders. Each session includes a session organizer that is broken down into topic areas, group exercises and video scenes. The Guide also contains questions to be used when viewing the video; instructions for group activities; brief explanations for use by the leader; and home activity assignments. The other major component of the program, the Parent's Guide, includes all the information covered in the sessions. It is filled with examples, charts and photographs. The Parent's Guide includes activity pages for each session. Parents are encouraged to apply their new skills at home and fill out the activity pages.

The session titles of the program are:

Session 1 - The Active Parent

Session 2 - Instilling Courage and Self-Esteem

Session 3 - Developing Responsibility through Discipline

Session 4 - Winning Cooperation through Communication

Session 5 - The Challenge of Alcohol and Other Drugs

Session 6 - Parenting and Teen Sexuality

### **Research on Active Parenting**

The only study found by the researcher on the **Active Parenting for Teens** (Popkin, 1990) was done by Charles Buroker in 1993 in the Lima City School district of Ohio. This school district supplemented the **Active Parenting for Teens** program with information on the development of effective study habits. After the implementation of the program, the district investigated the degree of parent satisfaction with the program, and sought to determine if there were any significant changes in parenting behavior in terms of school involvement and other parenting variables.

Seventy five parents of students in grades 7 - 10 volunteered to take part in the study. Data was collected using two research instruments. The first instrument was the Parenting Conference Evaluation questionnaire, a questionnaire consisting of a six-item, four-point, Likert-type response scale. This evaluation was used as a post assessment. The second research instrument was a twenty-one-item, four-point, Likert-type response scale developed by the researcher. Each item represented one parent/school involvement behavior. This instrument was administered pre and post to the group to determine if there were any changes in parenting behavior. More than 140 parents participated in this phase of the study. All data was self-reported and was collected from the ten parenting education training sessions.

The first part of the study investigated the perceived satisfaction of the parents involved in the **Active Parenting for Teens** (Popkin, 1990) program. The results found high participant satisfaction on all variables researched. Parents consistently scored the parenting program as "good" to "excellent". Parents were particularly pleased with

program leadership and materials. One hundred percent of the respondents indicated that they would recommend the program to other parents.

The second part of the study looked at the degree of change in self-reported parenting behaviors as a result of participation in the parent education program. Parents reported increased involvement in their child's learning and an increase in (1) understanding of misbehavior; (2) goal setting skills; (3) ability to correct misbehavior; (4) response to requests; (5) positive comments; (6) teaching; (7) family involvement; (8) listening skills; and (9) ability to say "no". There were also significant decreases in negative parenting behaviors. Parents reported decreased yelling, arguing, and involvement in power struggles with their children.

## METHODOLOGY

This research uses a "bottom up" strategy. Rural parents and others in the community who are immediately familiar with the situation provided the researcher with data. The strategy is based on the model offered by Goffman (1974) who suggested that in order to fully understand a situation, it is necessary to approach those who "own" the situation and know "from their own experience..." (p.20). In this case, the "own" group was represented by the participants of the **Active Parenting of Teens** (Popkin, 1990) program.

Goffman also suggested that information can be obtained from a second group, whom he refers to as the "wise". This group is made up of individuals who are informed



about and socially accepted by those who "own" the situation. For the purpose of this study, the "wise" included the guidance counsellor, the principal, a school board official, and the public health nurse.

### Sample

The opportunity to participate in the **Active Parenting for Teens** was advertised in **The Northern Pen**, a local newspaper. The advertisement stated that this program was only open to parents who had children attending the local high school or one of the two elementary schools that were feeder schools. The advertisement ran for one week. Because of the poor turnout at the registration (four people), it was decided that notes would be sent home to parents of students in the three schools. In the end, 10 participants took part in the program. The participants met as a group once a week for six weeks at the local high school. Sessions began May, and terminated in June. The program was co-lead by the intern, and the school counsellor. The **Active Parenting** program had been used by the counsellor twice before. The counsellor had implemented the **Active Parenting** for parents of children 2-12 years and the **Active Parenting of Teens** program.

Prior to the start of the group, all participants were told of the intern's intent to conduct a study on the **Active Parenting of Teens** program.

All participants were interviewed at the end of the program. Members of the "wise" were also interviewed after the completion of the program. A consent form for participation in the study was obtained from all the participants in the study (see Appendix

A). Information of employment status, age, and number of children was collected. All parties were informed about the confidentiality of this data.

Responses from the interviews were analysed to see if the parents found the program effective. Suggestions were also sought regarding possible improvements. Responses of the "wise" group were compared to those of the "own".

All participants came from seven nearby communities in the Strait of Belle Isle area on the Northern Peninsula. The subjects were chosen based on their involvement in the **Active Teen Parenting** (Popkin, 1990) program.

Members of the "own" sample consisted of 10 females. The group included: a janitor, a student assistant, homemakers, fishplant workers, and teachers. Subjects ages ranged from 30 to 46 years. Seven of the participants had an adolescent in the family; two had younger children in the six to 11 year age range and one subject had no children. The subject with no children had joined the group purely out of interest.

Members of the "wise" consisted of four professionals in the area. Of the professionals, two were female and two were male. All members were above the age of 30 years and had been working in the area for more than five years. All members were familiar with the **Active Parenting for Teens** program.

### **Procedure**

A 15-20 minute structured interview was used with each member of both the "own" and the "wise". All were asked open-ended questions that were designed solely for

the purpose of this investigation. Each group was presented with both common and different questions (see Appendixes B& C respectively). Some of the questions dealt specifically with the **Active Parenting for Teens** program while others dealt with parenting practices in the locality. All interviews took place after the completion of the program. Members were interviewed individually.

In the data collection, detailed notes were taken during all the interviews of the "own". Eight participants were interviewed in person and two interviews were conducted by telephone. An audiotape recording was made of all the interviews that were done in person. When reviewing the data, after the interviews, in no case was it necessary for the researcher to seek clarification of the content discussed.

For the "wise" group both written notes and audiotapes were collected. This group was divided into two groups "wise 1" and "wise 2". Members of "wise 1" consisted of two professionals who had acted as co-facilitators. Members of "wise 2" included members who had acted as participants in a previous offering of the program. Both groups were presented with common and different questions. In every instance the audiotapes of sessions were reviewed to ensure the comprehensiveness of the written notes.

### **Design and Analysis**

There are two aspects to this study. One was to identify the range and nature of adolescent-parenting issues perceived in the community as identified by the data (i.e.: interviews of the "wise" and "own"). The other aspect was to test the applicability and

utility of the **Active Parenting of Teens** program for a rural setting. The purpose of this research was not to collect any detailed or diagnostic data in the functioning of individual families. For this reason, the data represented below represents a paraphrasing of responses. The comments made by all subjects were recorded in point form and paraphrased. Where more than one subject raised a similar issue, a number followed the response indicating the frequency of the response.

The researcher felt that the collection of data through in-person and telephone interviews of parents and professionals allowed the collection of more in-depth data than would be obtained through a questionnaire. This data collection technique often "produces the most authentic and deepest description" (Polkinghorne, 1994, p.510). Interviews can also "establish a climate of trust and openness between researchers and their subjects" (p.510). This closeness can lessen the biasing effects that derive from subjects' need to manage the impressions they give, and can also make possible the exploration of private and privileged aspects of subjects' experiences (Polkinghorne, 1994).

Data obtained from all the interviews were analysed using qualitative techniques. All information was compiled to provide descriptive detail of the data and to obtain frequency of responses. In addition, where appropriate, the data collected from the parents - the "own", was compared to the data obtained from the professionals - the "wise".

## RESULTS

As stated above, this study sought to accomplish two things namely (1) to identify the range and nature of parenting adolescents in the region and (2) to test the applicability and utility of the **Active Parenting of Teens** program for parents in rural areas. An interview format was used to obtain data. The researcher conducted an interview with each participant and professional. Specific questions about the need for a parent program and its effectiveness were presented. All responses were paraphrased. A bracketed number following the response indicates the frequency of a certain response.

### The "Wise"

Members of the "wise" were interviewed first. All members were familiar with the **Active Parenting of Teens** program. As stated previously, for the purpose of this paper, the co-facilitators will be referred to as "wise 1" and the members of the "wise" who acted as participants as "wise 2". The researcher presented members of the "wise 1" and "wise 2" with both shared and group specific questions.

Listed below are questions that were presented to all members of the "wise":

1. What problems, if any, have you observed with parenting in this area?
2. Do you think there are differences between raising children in a small community and raising children in a large center? Explain.
3. Do you think that it is more difficult or less difficult to parent children in a small community of large center? Why?

4. Do you feel that this program is suited to meet the needs of parents in this area?

The group specific questions asked to members of "wise 1" were:

1. How did you find out about the **Active Parenting** program?
2. Why did you choose this particular program?
3. Were there any other parenting programs available? If so, which ones?
4. Have you encountered any problems implementing this program?
5. Why did you decide to do something in the area of parent education?
6. Do you think the program has an impact on participants?

The group specific questions that were given to "wise 2" were:

1. Do you think it is important to do something in the area of parent education? If so, why?
2. Do you feel that some/most/all parents in this area are in need of training to help them deal with their teen? What % do you feel needs support?
3. Why did you join the **Active Parenting for Teens** program?
4. What problems, if any, were you experiencing with your child?
5. What kinds of things did you learn from the program?

The counsellor had received information on the **Active Parenting** program through the mail. This program was chosen because other programs such as STEP were felt by the counsellor and the other facilitator to be outdated.

When asked if they had experienced difficulties implementing the program, "wise 1" commented on problems related to delivery times. Trying to find a time to

accommodate most parents was reported by one facilitator as being very difficult. Problems identified related to an appropriate time of the year (i.e. spring or fall) and time of day (i.e. during school or after school) to offer the program. One facilitator said that starting the program in the spring would have been better for the people running the group but not for many local parents as the spring seems to be a time in the area when motivation is down. As well, having sessions immediately after the school day would have been preferred but was not suitable for those parents whose workdays did not end until 5:00 p.m. An additional difficulty was noted with the first **Active Parenting for Teens** program that had been offered. The group was too large and allowed only limited discussion. It had also been made up of mostly professionals and often the discussions would be dominated by them. Making sure the group was not dominated by one person or a small number of persons had been sometimes difficult ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ).

Both facilitators said that they decided to do something in the area of parent education because they felt it was needed by the communities. Both stated that they believed that what children do in school (e.g. academics and self-discipline) is related to the relationship they have with their parents and that the many problems students were having at school were caused by inconsistencies between the home and school. They noted that many students did not seem to understand that acts had logical consequences. One facilitator stated parenting was one of the most important roles that anyone could have and that parents should have access to programs that could make them better in this role. A parenting program could accomplish this.

The "wise 2" respondents who had joined an earlier group as participants, concurred that parent education was needed as many parents in the area were having difficulty raising their children especially adolescents. They reported that all parents could benefit from a parenting program and every parent needed support when raising adolescents.

Both members said that they joined the **Active Parenting for Teens** program to learn more about parenting in general. One member reported having problems maintaining curfews with her children; the other reported no apparent problems with his children at the time of joining the group.

All members of the "wise" agreed that they observed many problems with parenting in the area. All agreed that one of the main problems is that of disciplining (4/4). They felt that many parents in the area have lost control of their teens. For example, local teens typically have control over the family vehicle, how much money they get, and how late they stay out. Very few parents actually impose curfews or provide their children with a fixed allowance (2/4). Many parents in the area seem to have the opinion that disciplining is "unkind" and that the "few" parents who did impose curfews or give their kids allowances are viewed by many in the community as "bad" parents (2/4). Perceived problems related to allowances were attributed to the fact that when this generation of parents grew up, their parents either had few material things to give their children or were too strict. This has led many parents to have the "I'm not going to be like my parents" attitude.



A second problem viewed by all members of the "wise" is that there is great pressure on parents to compete (4/4). Often, parents feel forced into giving their teens things that they cannot afford. As one member put it "Teens in the area have all kinds of toys". Many teens have their own vehicles or have easy access to their parents' vehicles; they have expensive ski-doo's, and four wheelers. It is quite common to see a fourteen year old driving an eight or nine thousand dollar ski-doo (1/4). One respondent made the comment that teens in the area do not have to earn these things or work for them. The idea that having a good job and having money is contingent on doing well in school is not really emphasized. The absence of this link might be due to the fact that, for many years, people in the area were very wealthy and many students dropped out of school to go work on draggers or in the fish plant where they made large sums of money (1/4).

Another problem identified was that many parents and teens spend little time doing activities together (1/4). Many parents and teens do not have hobbies to entertain themselves. This boredom is believed to have often led to involvement with alcohol (1/4).

A fourth problem given considerable attention by one member was that men in the area do not play as great a role in parenting as they should. Many men in the area view child-rearing as the woman's responsibility. It is the women who has to take most of the responsibility for discipline. Women had to take on the role of disciplinarian when the men went away fishing. As a result, there is often a lack of consistency between the husband and wife when trying to enforce rules in a household. Both parents need to work together if there is going to be any consistency in the disciplining of children.

Three respondents (3/4) commented that many local parents also seem to lack self-esteem. Members also agreed that parents in the area do not give themselves enough credit (3/4). Respondents noted that non-professional parents have been encouraged to conduct and lead the parenting groups but unfortunately the response has been nil. Non-professional parents in the area will not take such a role because they do not think that they can do the job as effectively as professionals. As one member of "wise 2" stated "We really need to empower the parents in this area to take control".

Another concern related to parents' perceptions of parenting (1/4). Most parents in the area have the view that parenting comes naturally and that it can not be learned. It has always been very difficult to get parents involved in groups. Because many people in the area have the perception that only those parents who have problems go to these groups, many parents do not join for fear of the stigma attached to being in a parenting group (1/4).

Although all members agreed that both rural and urban families had problems, they believed that living in a rural area posed several unique problems (4/4). All members concurred that one problem was that teens do not have as many different activities to become involved in and that this leaves time for teens to become involved in inappropriate activities such as alcohol use (4/4). In addition, those teens who have special talents and interests (e.g.: drawing or painting) have little opportunity to expand this talent (1/4). There are no local summer camps and institutes offered in the area. Consequently, unless the family can afford to send the child away, the child misses out.

Another problem in the rural setting presented by all members of the "wise" is the involvement of the extended family in the raising of the teens (4/4). Often there is a lot of interference on the part of the extended family particularly the grandparents. This interference comes especially in the area of discipline. Grandparents appear to have an almost equal partnership in the parenting of children.

A fourth problem in the rural areas is the felt pressure to conform. In small communities everyone knows everyone and what everyone is doing. There is therefore pressure on parents to parent in the same manner as their neighbours (4/4). Frequently, it is perceived that the "right" way to parent, is to do the same as everyone else. Thus, it becomes very difficult for a parent to impose curfews if he/she is the only one in the community trying to do so. One member argued that there seems to be a misconception that everyone in a small community is "close". People all know one another but not in the sense that they will support and want the best for one another. There is a lot of competition between parents in the area.

People in the area were also noted as being more committed to the comfort of their kids rather than the teaching of their kids (2/4).

When asked if they felt the program had an impact, all responses were positive (4/4). The program was said to have helped increase communication between parents and teens. It helped parents become "askable parents", that is parents that teens can approach and talk with. Basically, the program taught parents "how" to begin to communicate with their teen (1/4). The program was responsible for getting parents to look at things from a different perspective in that sometimes the problem was seen to belong to the teen and not

the parent (1/4). An additional problem that was noted as being addressed by the program related to how to talk to teens about alcohol and teen sexuality (1/4). The program was said to have been very useful in that it gave parents the opportunity to reflect on their own parenting practices (1/4).

The program was felt to have had a significant impact on parents and teens. A change was observed in teens whose parents attended the program (4/4). One member said that she felt that the teens, whose parents were involved in the program, were trying to become better children because they saw that their parents were trying to become better parents. The teens began to realize that their parents were not perfect and that if their parents could work on things, they could as well (2/4). In addition, the program seemed to have played a role in raising the parents' self-esteem (2/4). These members believed that the program had helped to "empower" some parents to take a more active role in their community.

All members of the wise responded affirmatively when asked if they felt that the program was suited for rural areas (4/4). One member, however, did say that he felt that parts of the video did not represent the lower income families. All respondents acknowledged that an additional component should be added to show parents how to set up their own support groups so that they could meet after the "official" parenting group ended (4/4). Two of the members argued that there was not enough time allotted for discussion (2/4) and one member suggested that the program should be extended from six weeks to eight weeks. Another member suggested that a component on the self-esteem of parents would be beneficial since this was a problem in the area (1/4). It was noted

that many of the parents who really needed the program had not taken part. Respondents felt that many parents do not realize the importance of enhancing parenting skills and are apprehensive about joining parenting groups (2/4).

One member of "wise 1" noted that when the school offered the **Active Parenting** for parents of children 2-12 year olds, the response was not as great as it was with the **Active Parenting for Teens** because many people have the perception that young children do not pose any real problems. This member suggested that only when problems (e.g.: alcohol and drugs) scare parents or that other people in the community are aware of these problems, that parents reach out for help. All members of the "wise" concurred that all parents in the area should do the program if they had a chance and suggested that all parents need to take time out to re-evaluate their parenting skills and how they are working with their children.

### **The "Own"**

Members of the "own" group included all participants attending the sessions. These members were asked many of the same questions as the "wise". They included:

1. Why did you join this parenting group?
2. What problems, if any, are you currently experiencing with your children?
3. What kinds of things have you learned from this parenting program?
4. What problems, if any, have you observed with parenting in the area?

5. Do you think that there are differences between raising children in a small community and raising children in a large center? Explain.
6. Do you think that it is more difficult or less difficult to parent children in a small community or large center? Why?
7. Do you feel that this program is suited to meet the needs of parents in this area?

Questions that were asked specifically to the "own" group were:

1. Have your parenting practices changed? If so, in what way?
2. Did you see any changes (good or bad) in your children?
3. What if anything would have made this experience more effective for you?
4. What do you feel should be included in a program for parents in this area?
5. What kinds of support do you feel would be beneficial to parents in the area?

When members of the "own" were asked why they joined the **Active Parenting for Teens** program. Six members stated that they joined to find out more about parenting i.e. discipline (6/10). Other reasons included: to find out what other parents were doing in relation to rules and curfews (2/10); to socialize and to learn more about parents as they had to work with many parents in their job (1/10); and to become prepared to meet the challenges that parenting adolescents would bring (1/10).

Of the 10 participants, nine were parents. Two parents were not experiencing any problems with their children at the time of the group. The other parents reported numerous behaviors that could be classified under the category "being defiant". Some of the

members stated that their children were not obeying curfews (4/10), not listening (2/10) and not doing their chores (1/10). One parent described her kids as being "out of control", not having any regard for parental authority.

There was a high degree of agreement among the participants regarding the success of the group (10/10). Learning "how" to communicate was one benefit noted by all participants. All stated that they now could talk more easily with their children instead of shouting at them (10/10). All said they tried to stay calmer during disagreements with their children, had become better listeners and now allowed their children to tell their side of the story (10/10). In addition, three participants reported that they felt more comfortable about talking about things like sexuality and alcohol with their kids. Several (6/10) tried to remember to use the "I" messages when they talked with their children. Two members liked the emphasis the program placed on the importance of praising children. One member argued that parents often forget that teens need just as much praise as small children. Participants also said that they benefitted from the discipline techniques (5/10). Many expressed that learning about logical and natural consequences helped in their choice of technique (2/10).

When asked if their parenting practices had changed, all but one parent answered affirmatively (9/10). Responses included: "I talk more rather than shout", "I stop and think before I say something", "I am calmer", "I use more praise", and "I think in terms of logical and natural consequences when I give a punishment". All but three parents reported that they saw changes in their children that they felt were related to the program (7/10). Those parents who saw change described the change as positive. Some parents

(3/10) responded that they had a closer relationship with their children as a result of the program. These parents stated that their children seemed to be more expressive and related better to them (1/10). One parent said that she felt her daughter related better to her because she found herself relating better to her daughter. Another parent observed that her children were actually doing more chores around the house and being more cooperative.

When asked what, if anything, would have made the group more effective, two of the recommendations were formally presented by the "wise"; the program should provide more time for discussion (6/10) and having the program at a different time in the year was recommended (1/10) as spring time was very hectic as summer was near and kids were starting to get ready for exams. Role-playing different situations that parents find themselves faced with in raising adolescents was also seen as a useful addition (1/10).

Two participants felt they would have benefitted more if their husbands had been part of the group. These parents argued that it would be beneficial to see parenting from the male's perspective. They felt that if disciplining was to work, both parents had to be consistent and agree on the type of punishment that was to be enforced (2/10). They complained that part of the problem with parenting in their households was the fact that their husbands held different views on discipline. Because of this, the children would often play the parents off against one another. Usually the mother was the one left to discipline the child and both women felt that often this made them to be the "bad guy" in the eyes of their children. This view corresponds with a point made by one member of the "wise" who argued that men in the area view child-rearing as the women's responsibility.



A recommendation was made for having the teens as part of the group (1/10). This might be helpful as both the parents and the teens might come to better understand each other and get to see things from the other's point of view. A follow-up session to be held a few months after the group officially ended to see how everyone was doing was also suggested (3/10). The final recommendation was that more resource people from the communities come into the group to discuss ways of handling different problems (i.e. alcoholism) that parents might encounter with their children and to let parents know what services are available (1/10). One parent said that she did not feel that the program needed to be improved at all. She felt that the program had accomplished all of its goals.

The question "What problems, if any, have you observed with parenting in the area?" yielded similar answers given by members of the "wise". Parents in the area were viewed by many participants as being too lax in their parenting skills (4/10). Rather than have conflict, parents permit their children to do what they want. Teens are given too much freedom and choice. They are allowed to set their own curfews and do not have to learn to handle money as they are allowed to spend whatever they want (4/10). Often parents will make financial sacrifices to give the child material things. Participants felt that too much emphasis is placed on material things (4/10). There is a pressure put on parents to conform to other parents (7/10).

As previously noted by members of the "wise", members of the "own" said that the extended family poses another problem for parents in the area. The extended family especially the grandparents were felt as being too involved in the raising of their

grandchildren (4/10). Additionally, it was noted that families do not do enough activities together (1/10).

One member stated that there is a sense of hopelessness among people. Most people in the region had depended on the fishery and since the fishery no longer exist, many people feel a sense of despair. One member felt that this has resulted in many people in the area not feeling good about themselves (1/10). She had the view that low self-esteem has an obvious negative effect on parenting skills. Many parents want better lives for their children but try to compensate by giving their children material possessions (1/10).

Of the 10 participants, nine stated that they believed that there were differences between raising children in a small community and raising children in a larger center. Many alluded to the fact that teens in larger center have more activities to take part in (4/10). One parent, who had experienced living in a larger center, said that she had enjoyed it because there were more family oriented activities to take part in. In small communities teens and parents seem to do their own things. Another difference that was noted was the involvement of the extended family (3/10). The extended family plays a much greater role in the raising of children in small communities as family members often live right next door to one another. In small communities there is considerable shared knowledge people's private lives, there is very little privacy (3/10).

Two participants felt that raising children in larger centers was more difficult than raising children in small communities. The reasons being that there was more danger in the larger centers, teens have more access to alcohol and drugs, and it is more difficult for

parents to check up on their children as not all parents know one another (2/10). Those parents who argued that it was more difficult to raise children in small communities posed such arguments as: the extended family can become too involved (4/6), everyone knows everyone else's business (1/6), there is a lot of pressure put on parents to parent the same way as other parents (1/6). Two participants said that they did not feel that one was more difficult than the other rather that both had advantages and disadvantages.

All participants agreed that while the **Active Parenting for Teens** program was suited for parents in the area (10/10), however most felt that it needed to be revised somewhat by using the recommendations presented earlier (9/10).

When asked what kinds of support they thought was needed in the area to help with parenting, all responded that support groups such as the **Active Parenting for Teens** were needed (10/10). However, three of the participants felt that the groups should be more centralized, that is that every community have its own parent group. The participants suggested that these groups should get together and discuss things like curfews. The view was that a consensus should be reached by all parents so that they have support. The local P.T.A. could play a more active role in parenting and offer activities like information sessions on different aspects of parenting (1/10). More resource people such as the public health nurse from the communities could also be involved in the groups, providing information about the services they can provide to families (2/10). It was suggested that teens be part of the group so that there could be more interaction between adults and teens thereby fostering a better understanding of what each is going through (1/10). One parent argued that there were not enough services available to

families in the area who were experiencing problems. It was noted that the local doctor, the RCMP, and the school counsellor handled most of the problems, some of which they are not trained to deal with (1/10). One member stated that by "helping families in the area is a process, all problems cannot be solved overnight. Everyone in the area must become involved".

### **Comparison of "Own" and "Wise"**

In comparing the responses of the "wise" and the "own", it was evident that all members of both groups felt that the **Active Parenting for Teens** (Popkin, 1990) program was a success in that the participants learned more about parenting and many observed positive changes in their relationships with their teens.

The "wise" and the "own" noted that parents in the area seemed too lax when it came to disciplining their teens. Adolescents were given too much freedom. Teens are permitted to set their own curfews and are not taught how to be responsible with such things as money.

Another common theme was the emphasis on material things. Both groups commented on the fact that parents in the region seem to place too much emphasis on material things.

Pressure to conform to other parents was a commonality. Parents in the community were perceived by the "wise" and the "own" as trying to parent the way other parents in the area do. No parent wanted to be seen as "being different".

The low self-esteem of parents was a common theme presented by members of both groups. Most of the people in the region are dependent on the fishery. The cod moratorium has caused a sense of hopelessness among people.

Several comments were made about the involvement of the extended family in parenting. The view that grandparents was too actively involved in the raising of their grandchildren was shared by both groups.

Males were noted as not having enough input into the disciplining of their children. Usually the mother is the person responsible for discipline.

## CONCLUSION

This study provided input into the area of parenting of adolescents and discussed the need for more parenting programs for children of this age group. The results of this study demonstrate that members of the "wise" and members of the "own" concurred on the need for and effectiveness of the **Active Parenting for Teens** (Popkin, 1990) program for parents in their area.

In this study, participants expressed the view that parents in the locality had parenting problems. These problems were related to such things as disciplining their children, too much involvement from the extended family, lack of parent self-esteem, pressure from other parents, and lack of male involvement in parenting.

There was a mutual agreement between members of the "wise" and "own" on the success of the **Active Parenting of Teens** program. Participants stated that they learned "how" to communicate more effectively with their teens and felt more comfortable discussing things like sexuality and alcohol. Parenting practices also changed as a result of taking part in the program. Parents stated that they used more praise with their children, avoided shouting, and used logical and natural consequences when giving punishment. All but three participants reported positive changes in their children that they felt were related to the program.

It is felt that both the delivery of the program and the contents of the **Active Parenting of Teens** program could be improved if specifically adapted for rural use.

Although the **Active Parenting for Teens** program was viewed as being suited to rural areas, it would need to be improved upon. The delivery of the program might need

be changed to accommodate group participants. For example, offering the program in the winter would not be a good time as many people in the area are involved in winter activities. Due to the lack of resources for families, more local resource people will need to be encouraged to take a larger role in the parenting program.

With regard to the contents of the **Active Parenting for Teens** program, it would be useful to include a unit on self-esteem for parents would need to be added as members of both the "wise" and "own" identified this as being a problem. Obviously, the self-esteem of the parent will affect the "parenting" of the child. Parents in the area need to be "empowered" to play a more active role in their communities. A follow-up session should be held a few months after the group ended. Another recommendation is that teens to take part in the parenting group. This would be beneficial as both parents and teens could come to better understand each other.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the **Active Parenting for Teens** program was suited for these rural parents. It would be optimal to adapt the program somewhat for rural use. Further investigations will need to be carried out to determine if the changes recommended make the program more suitable for rural areas. In addition, other parenting programs for parents of adolescents need to reviewed as research indicates that adolescents are the most difficult age group to parent.

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**Appendix A**  
**CONSENT FORM**

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education (School Counselling) at Memorial University. I will be studying the parenting practices in your area and will be looking at the **Active Parenting for Teens** Program to see if it is meeting your needs. I am asking you to take part in this study.

Your participation will consist of answering questions about your current parenting practices and the **Active Parenting for Teens** Program. I will also be asking about what you need to learn to enhance your parenting skills. I will be gathering this information during the Active Parenting sessions as well as on an individual basis through a 15-20 minute interview. You are not obligated to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with answering. The individual interviews will be audiotaped for my use only and will be erased as soon as I have written your comments on paper.

All the information gathered in this study is confidential and at no time will individuals be identified. I am interested only in the gathering information on the parenting practices of people in this area in general terms and not in any individual's skills. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. This study has received the approval of the Faculty of Education's Ethics Review Committee. The results of my research will be made available to you upon request.

If you are willing to participate in this study please sign below and return the form to me. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at 456-2461 (w) or 877-2325 (H). If at any time you wish to speak with a resource person not associated with the study, please contact Dr. Gary Jeffery, professor of education at Memorial University.

I would appreciate it if you would please return this sheet to me by \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Yours Sincerely,

Maggie Doyle

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby agree to be a participant in a study on the Parenting of Adolescents undertaken by Maggie Doyle. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time. All information is strictly confidential and no individual will be identified.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

**Appendix B****INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS  
'WISE '**

1. How did you find out about the **Active Parenting for Teens** program?
2. Why did you choose this particular program?
3. Were there any other parenting programs available? If so, which ones?
4. Have you encountered any problems implementing this program?
5. Why did you decide to do something in the area of parent education?
6. Do you think the program has an impact on participants?
7. What problems, if any, have you observed with parenting in this area?
8. Do you think there are differences between raising children in a small community and raising children in a large center? Explain.
9. Do you think that it is more difficult or less difficult to parent children in a small community or large center? Why?
10. Do you feel that this program is suited to meet the needs of parents in this area?

**'Wise 2'**

1. Do you think it is important to do something in the area of parent education? If so, why?
2. Do you feel that some/most/all parents in this area are in need of training to help them deal with their teen? What percentage do you feel needs support?
3. Why did you join the **Active Parenting of Teens** program?
4. What problems, if any, were you experiencing with your child?
5. What kinds of things did you learn from the program?
6. What problems, if any, have you observed with parenting in this area?
7. Do you think there are differences between raising children in a small community and raising children in a large center? Explain.
8. Do you think that it is more difficult or less difficult to parent children in a small children or large center? Why?
9. Do you feel that this program is suited to meet the needs of parents in this area?

### Appendix C

#### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS 'Own'

1. Why did you join this parenting group?
2. What problems, if any, are you currently experiencing with your children?
3. What kinds of things have you learned from this parenting program?
4. What problems, if any, have you observed with parenting in this area?
5. Do you think that there are differences between raising children in a small community and raising children in a large center? Explain.
6. Do you think that it is more difficult or less difficult to parent children in a small community or large center? Why?
7. Do you feel that this program is suited to meet the needs of parents in this area?
8. Have your parenting practices changed? If so, in what way?
9. Did you see any changes (good or bad) in your children that might be related to the program? Explain.
10. What if anything would have made this experience more effective for you?
11. What do you feel should be included in a program for parents in this area?
12. What kinds of support do you feel would be beneficial to parents in this area?









