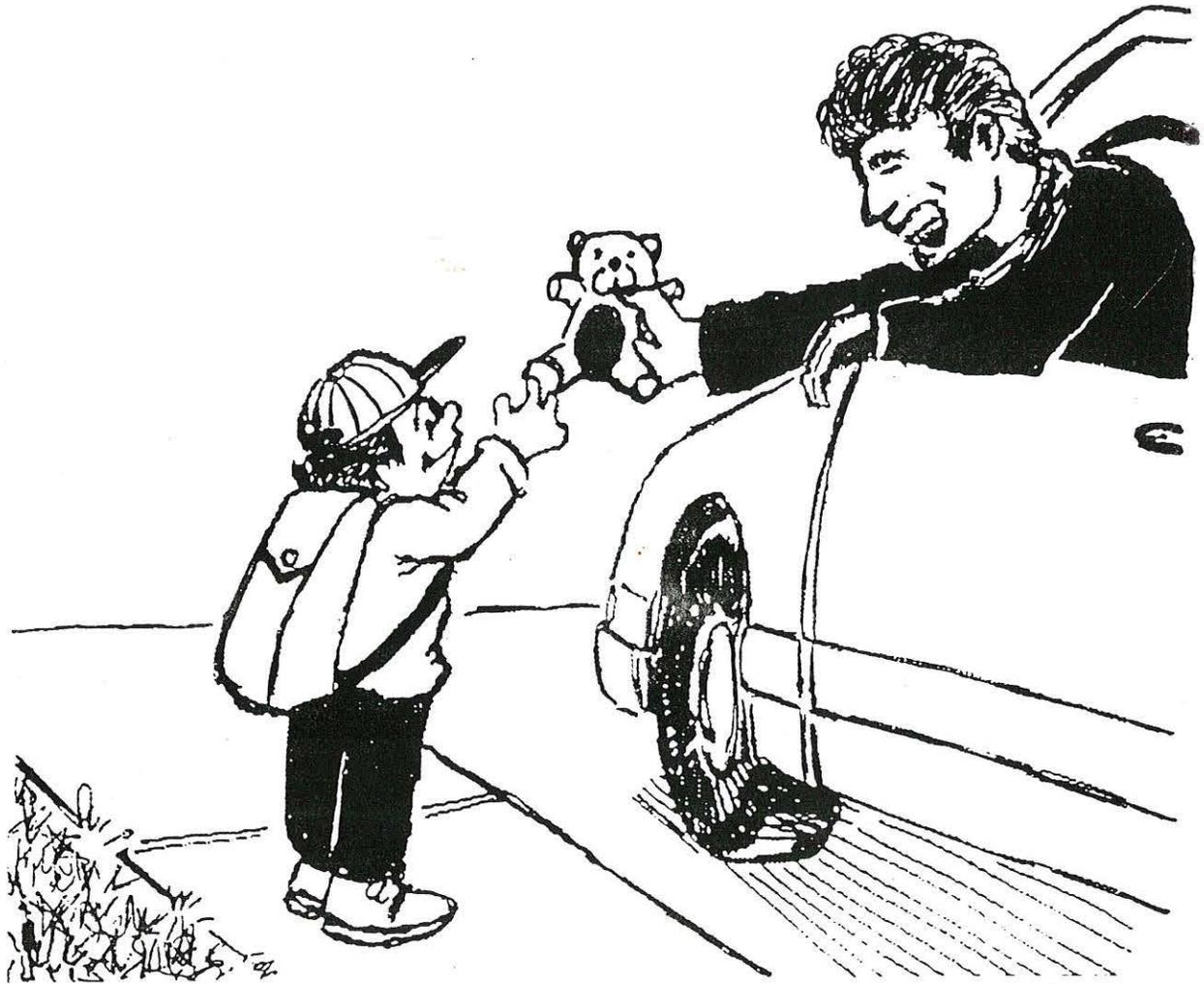


# ***STREET SAFE KIDS***

*Protecting children from sexual predators – a street-proofing manual*

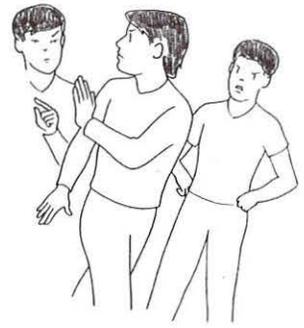


*“Street Safe Kids is one of the most comprehensive self-defense and street-proofing courses available. We strongly recommend that parents enroll their children in this ‘hands-on’ program.”*

*Mabyn Armstrong, director of prevention*  
The Missing Children’s Network Canada

**George J. Manoli**

# Gangs



About 10% of all sexual assaults on teenage girls are committed by gangs. There are about 60 active gangs of various ethnic backgrounds, on the island of Montreal: Jamaican *Posse*, Haitian *Blocos*, South American *Latinos*, Quebec *Canqué*, Arab, Iranian and Lebanese *Ahabs*, *Skin heads*, *Punks* and Graffiti artists or *Taggers*. Their efforts are concentrated in the northern, eastern and central southern region of the greater Montreal area. They cause fear, destroy or damage property, threaten or hurt peaceable residents and drive out business. Kids join gangs for a variety of simple reasons:

1. Identity and status (self image among peers).
2. Activity and excitement (things to do).
3. Companionship (sense of family, respect, love).
4. Economics (earn income through theft, robberies and drugs).
5. For protection and security (in neighborhoods and school).

We are noticing several worrisome factors involving gangs: (a) *Children as young as 10 years old are joining gangs* - they stay in these gangs for a longer period of time (at 10 years old they watch and participate in some gang activity, they enroll at 13, adhere to a gang at 16 and stay till approximately 22 years of age). *Gangs are getting tougher and more organized* - unexpected and spontaneous in their criminal activity and in their recruiting methods. *Territorial expansion* - the gangs' territorial expansion at times is in close relations with organized crime. Many gangs have close affinities to ethnic ideology. (b) The socioeconomic conditions of a city (physical degradation, poverty, mobility of population, long-term unemployment, etc.) best explains the area's distribution to delinquency. Street gangs are most often seen in socially impoverished sectors. (c) The breakdown of the family structure.

**Gang psychology** : Several things happen within a group that do not occur in one-on-one confrontations. In group situations, the assaulters get their courage from collective action. The guilt and responsibility is divided amongst the group, giving them a feeling of reduced sense of accountability, risk and anonymity within the group. On top of all that, there is peer pressure amongst members to keep pace with the group as well as to perform and participate equally. People in groups often behave in a more crude, detached fashion. Gangs leave signs of their presence and your child may adopt some of them as a gang member or imitator. Here are a few:

1. Specific colors, emblems and special hand signals.
2. Graffiti on walls and gang symbols on books or clothing.
3. Major attitude changes and negative behavior, such as poor performance at school, staying out late without good reason, 'hanging out' with known or suspected gang members, carrying weapons, wearing certain colors of clothing in specific ways, possessing unexplained and relatively large sums of money.

When dealing with gangs, the thing that helps make a child a target is anonymity. We recommend that your child get to know youngsters from groups other than their own, preferably on a first name basis in order to avoid getting ripped off or implicated in a fight. Once your child is known as an individual - Bill, Susan, Jonathan, they will run a smaller risk of being attacked or ripped off. Gangs like the idea of seeking out the unknown person as their victim. By getting to know other kids on a first name basis, your child's personal identity will overshadow any particular classification they may be placed in.

Safety in numbers is the message you want to get across to your child. Having many friends around is a good means of protection. It is best to be with several friends, who can go for help or stick up for you in case things go wrong, rather than be caught alone and having to deal with the group.

Children in school should inform themselves on what is and is not considered safe behavior as well as possible gang territory or hangouts. Your child should wear the same type of clothes as everyone else in school. As a parent, you should be sensitive to such things as clothes - the unofficial school uniform. Your child should do their best to be "A zebra in a herd of zebras," blending in with other kids.

### *Types of gangs*

**1. The social gang :** The social gang is a relatively permanent organization that centers around a specific stable location. All members are intimately known to one another and there is a sense of comradeship. Activities are socially dominated and membership is not based upon self-protection or social athletic prowess but on feelings of mutual attraction. Leadership is based on popularity and constructive leadership qualities.

**2. The delinquent gang :** The delinquent gang is dominated by delinquent patterns of activities characterized by such direct illegal behavior as stealing or assault with material profit as the essential objective. It is a 'tight clique,' and membership is generally approved by all gang members. The leader is usually the most effective thief, the best organizer and planner of delinquent activities.

**3. The violent gang :** The violent gang's activity is dominated by sociopathic themes of spontaneous prestige-seeking violence. The gang's organization and membership are constantly shifting in accord with the emotional needs of its members. For most gang youth members, it is an opportunity to channel aggressions and hostilities they have about other personal matters. Gang wars originate over trivia in many cases. Territory, a 'bad look,' an exaggerated argument over a girl, or a nasty remark may be the basis for stirring up gang warfare activity.





## ***Indicators prior to a gang attack***

*Pre-assault cues* : The targeted victim should keep in mind the following pre-assault cues given out by assailants which indicate that a physical attack is imminent. These cues usually occur as a result of stress. They are done to intimidate, to prepare the body to fight or to cause the intended victim to drop their guard. These cues apply to multiple and single assailant encounters.

### *a. Verbal indicators*

- Change in voice (mouth breathing).
- Confrontational/aggressive language.
- Using words that don't make sense.
- Repeated words or phrases.
- Direct threats.

### *b. Visual indicators*

- Looking around (for witnesses, escape routes).
- Looking where they will attack.
- Looking past the victim.
- Looking at each other.

### *c. Physical indicators*

- Getting closer to victim.
- Tightening of jaw, clenching of teeth
- Unusual or inappropriate sweating.
- Positioning of gang relative to each other and to victim.
- Turning body sideways (weight shift, protecting vital areas, etc.).
- Shoulders roll forward, chin tucked, knees bent (pre-attack position).
- Distracting victim to test nerves (dropping things, hand distractions, etc.).
- Tension in body and face.
- Turning open hands into fists

## ***Surviving a gang encounter***

"About 10% of all rapes are committed by gangs, and 90% of gang rapes are planned. Teenage girls are often the victims of these group rapes."  
(Les Aggressions Sexuelles - Stop - Quebec Government Report, 1995).

Instruct your child to size up the situation before they decide to fight. If the odds are stacked against them, reconsider. If they decide to physically fight back against multiple assailants (which we do not recommend) they must be 100% mentally committed to finding a way out of this. The first 3-5 seconds of the confrontation are critical. Here are some important pointers to consider in order to survive the encounter:

## Gangs

---

- ➔ Avoid focusing on one gang member (use your peripheral vision).
- ➔ Cause a commotion, use your voice to attract attention and give orders.
- ➔ Keep moving, don't stand still.
- ➔ Take out the leader or closest and most aggressive gang member totally .
- ➔ Strike and kick people you are not looking at. Use direct, short, compact strikes
- ➔ Don't be predictable when fighting back (there is no perfect position).
- ➔ Cause a psychologically devastating visible injury.
- ➔ Use walls, obstacles and the environment to your advantage.
- ➔ Use assailants against each other.
- ➔ Aim to maim and hurt (eyes, nose, groin - all out retaliation).
- ➔ Avoid wrestling and ground fighting.

### ***Talk with your children about gangs***

Many gang members say they joined a gang because it offered them support, caring and a sense of order and purpose - all the things most parents try to give their kids. The better parents meet these needs, the less need children will see for gangs. Here are some suggestions that might inspire you before a problem arises:

- a. Talk with, listen and spend time with your child.
- b. Tell them what your feelings are about gangs. How do they feel about gangs?
- c. Inform them that you don't want to see them hurt or arrested.
- d. Let them know they are special and worth protecting.
- e. Put a high value on education - no dropping out.
- f. Identify positive role models and heroes with your child.
- g. Involve child in supervised, positive group activities.
- h. Praise them for doing well.
- i. Know what they are doing and whom they are with.
- j. Know your children's friends and their families.
- k. Inform your child that you will work together to handle any problems.
- l. Inform your child that family members don't keep secrets from each other.
- m. Inform child that you and other parents are working together versus gangs.
- n. Develop together a simple plan of action if your child is ever confronted.
- o. The proper authorities (school and police) should be advised if problems arise.