

# Cunning Predators Outwit Police and Parents

by Jerry McMullin

Crimes and criminals, like most aspects of our society, come in many varieties. It may be reassuring to watch television programs that show how dumb criminals have been caught or that demonstrate sophisticated technologies now used by investigators as they evaluate crime scene evidence.

Such programs may give the impression that teams of law enforcement professionals, armed with superior intelligence and the benefits of modern science, have the upper hand in the war against crime. Although this may be true with some types of crimes and in some places, it does not necessarily follow that all criminals are so easily detected or that law enforcement professionals are equally as competent everywhere.

It is probable that the intelligence of criminals is widely distributed on a bell shaped curve just like the rest of the population. If so then we can assume that those criminals with higher I.Q.s are more able to avoid detection or perhaps more able to get someone else convicted for their crimes. Obviously, criminals who have acquired the technical knowledge of how crimes are investigated are less likely to be caught. Those criminals who have both knowledge and money can acquire and use sophisticated methods of avoiding detection that are beyond the skills and resources of local law enforcement.

Criminals, just like their law enforcement counterparts, can work in teams and share their expertise. Also, because law enforcement professionals only see those criminals who were not clever enough to avoid detection, they may become complacent believing that they are ahead of the game.

The child predator community has been highly successful at evading effective law enforcement. Although some predators are successfully investigated and convicted, indications are that many people are getting away with reprehensible crimes against children. Because so many predators have successfully outwitted law enforcement, parents must be more street smart.

Several factors may account for the apparent failure of many parents to protect their children from those predators who have successfully evaded apprehension. Perhaps the key factor is the innocence and helplessness of the population they victimize. Predators know that little children can often be easily controlled, intimidated, bullied, deceived, terrorized, and manipulated. They know how to exploit this vulnerability in ways that make their crimes difficult, if not impossible, to investigate.

A second factor that plays right into the hands of the predator community is the widespread ignorance, naivete, complacency, and trusting nature of parents and others who have responsibility for child care. Misinformation and common stereotypes about child predators can create a false sense of security that is easily exploited. Obviously, those who are most successful are the ones who know how to not look like predators. Therefore, many child predators are well educated, married with children, involved in civic and/or church service, active in their professions, property owners, well dressed, and socially competent. Few would suspect that any person's primary motive for developing these various trappings of respectability would be to more readily access children. Perhaps the most dangerous stereotype is the common belief that predators are loners. People don't usually consider the possibility that a married couple could both be predators or that two or three youth leaders could be working together to access victims.

Third, predators often use a natural and socially appropriate modus operandi. With time on their side, they don't need to be in a hurry. They may take years to build relationships of trust with relatives, neighbors, supposed friends, and church associates. Over time, situations will arise that allow them to be alone with other people's children. They may be given the opportunity to baby sit, give a child a ride to an activity, take a child or teen on an overnight camp, invite a child to play in their home, build friendships with children in a church class, or meet one on one with a child to teach a skill or provide tutoring.

Fourth, many predators are cunning enough to commit their crimes in ways that are very difficult for either parents or the police to detect. These predators know how to terrorize and manipulate the minds of their victims by utilizing drugs, hypnosis, and traumatic forgetting to ensure that the crime will not be reported for years, if at all. If the crime is ever reported, so much time will have elapsed that there will be no hard evidence that would stand up in court. Often, the only evidence is an adult's memory of a childhood event. And because people are

**innocent until proven guilty, the reputations of the predators are protected so they can continue their crimes unabated. To muddy the water further, many predators know how to stage their crimes in ways that result in false memories and false accusations.**

**Fifth, the predator community as a whole continues to use its influence to neutralize society's efforts to deal with the problem. A glimpse of the potential leavening power of the predator community becomes visible whenever a law enforcement professional, doctor, school teacher, camp counselor, child psychiatrist, lawyer, newspaper editor, congressman, high school principal, church leader, university professor, entrepreneur, or millionaire is convicted of a crime against children.**

**Such convictions still seem to shock a society determined to stick to stereotypes. A more enlightened response might be to acknowledge the realities that 1) many very competent people perpetrate crimes against children, and 2) with this type of enemy, parents have no choice but to keep their children close by. The threat of a community of intelligent and skilled child predators, like the threat of a highly contagious fatal disease, necessitates a certain amount of distance between people. It is an uncomfortable distance that parents who care about their children dare not avoid.**

**Parents must be ever on the alert to the possibility that they may be unnecessarily making their children vulnerable to predators. They must begin to place more limits on who will be trusted with their children, when, and in what circumstances. Without making accusations, they must be open to the possibility that some of the people who are close to them have ulterior motives. Until law enforcement is more successful at investigating and prosecuting crimes against children, common sense precautions and the social distance that may sometimes result is the price parents must pay to ensure that their children are safe.**