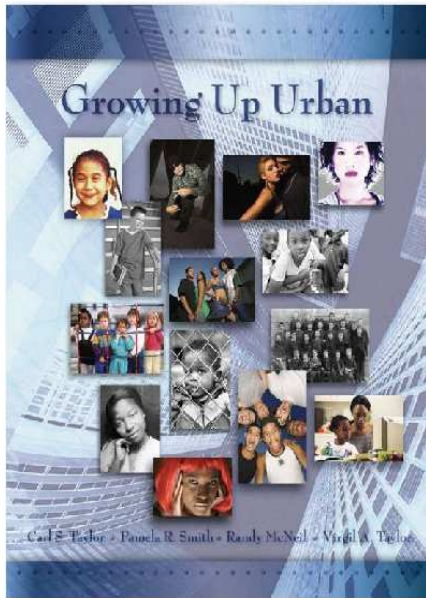


Growing Up Urban excerpt

by Carl S. Taylor, Pamela R. Smith
Randy McNeil and Virgil S. Taylor

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Chapter 1: Growing Up Urban

In these modern times urban children and youth are far too often negatively influenced and affected by factors in their community. Professionals and volunteers working with young people are frequently challenged by the negative influences. Historically, positive youth development methods and practices have been implemented in urban communities via the nuclear and extended family and through such institutions and organizations as block clubs, churches, recreational clubs, agencies and leagues and others. Today street culture is increasingly dominant, frequently supplanting the values learned by children and youth through traditional methods and programs.

For the past three decades street culture has become more dominant, its tentacles digging ever deeper into mainstream society as Madison Avenue and big business frequently embrace its “flava” for commercial appeal. In urban communities the rapid evolution of street culture has created a widespread negative impact on children and young people.

The normalization of ignorance and violence are the most obvious and detrimental elements affecting urban (and other) communities, and nowhere is this more apparent than with the children and youth. A wide array of activities attract young people in the new millennia, from sports and recreation to music and dance and an increasingly vast array of interests involving technology; modern young people are more and more diverse in their interests.

With this in mind it is of paramount importance that activities and new technologies are utilized at every opportunity to positively influence young people and help to counteract the increasingly pervasive negative influences of street culture.

To effectively do this, individuals working with children and young people in urban communities must understand the dynamics of street culture and how it impacts and influences every aspect of working with urban children and youth.

It is also important to note that in these modern times there can be an element of danger in working with people of all ages, it is therefore critical that the professional and volunteer alike be ever vigilant while performing the various tasks associated with their

jobs or assignments. Far too frequently, people young and old will choose to resort to violence when they are angry or dissatisfied.

This model will address some methods for dealing with violent situations and scenarios but nothing replaces common sense, vigilance and attentiveness to potentially volatile situations. As often evidenced by television news programs and in media reports children are sometimes the target of enraged, disillusioned and/or mentally unstable adults. Violent assaults against children by parents, associates and lovers of parents and others have become more commonplace in news reports.

The professional and volunteer working with children and young people must be continually vigilant and aware of potential threats on properties where children are involved. The ability to quickly recognize a potential threat and act appropriately can literally mean the difference between life and death in extreme circumstances.

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