

Hellman, D. S. & Blackman, N. (1966). Enuresis, firesetting, and cruelty to animals: A triad predictive of adult crime. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 122, 1431-1435.

Throughout our ever-changing society, there has been increasing intensity in aggressiveness and predictive factors of criminal behavior have become necessary. Currently, there is a strong relationship exists between parental loss/rejection and psychological diagnoses of mental illness and personality disorders (Earle & Earle, 1961; Field, 1940; Partridge, 1928; Rabinovitch, 1952; Szurek, 1942). In addition, enuretic children have great difficulty in controlling expressions of love and aggression (Salfield, 1956). Enuresis itself has been associated with sadism by urinating being equal to the fantasies of destroying and damaging (Fenichel, 1945). Enuresis also has been closely associated with firesetting (Michaels & Steinberg, 1955; Lewis & Yarnell, 1951; Sakamoto, 1960).

The current study was conducted at an acute intensive psychiatric treatment center where patients are referred by courts, parole offices, and city jails. All referrals receive an inpatient evaluation for the first few weeks including a psychiatric examination and complete battery of psychological tests. Eighty-four prisoners admitted between 1963 and 1964 comprised the sample and were divided into a group of aggressive/violent criminal charges and a group of those charged with misdemeanors or nonaggressive felonies. The authors defined enuresis as “unintentional voiding of urine, usually occurring during sleep and persisting in the individual past the age of 5 years”, firesetting as “setting particular objects on fire as a child”, and cruelty to animals as if the subject reported “killing or torturing dogs, cats, pets, or baby animals” (Hellman & Blackman, 1966, p. 1432).

Seventy-four percent of those in the violent offenses group of this study had a history of the triad or part of the triad. The triad or part of the triad was evidenced in only 28 percent of those in the nonviolent crime group. Age and type of crime showed no relationship but those with a history of the triad were significantly younger than those with no history. This could be due to memory distortion that comes with older age (Hellman & Blackman, 1966).

This study supports the triad as a pathognomonic sign which alerts parents and the community that a child may be trouble in the future. This information can aid the prevention of serious criminal acts during adulthood by early detection and management of those children who may be at risk for further violent criminal activity (Hellman & Blackman, 1966).