

## ABSTRACT

### THE MACDONALD TRIAD: PREDICTOR OF VIOLENCE OR URBAN MYTH?

The Macdonald triad is an alleged phenomenon that has enjoyed popular acceptance for almost half a century. The triad consists of three behaviors: extreme cruelty to animals, firesetting, and enuresis. It is often cited by academics, professionals, and practitioners as precursory to a variety of violent criminal careers. Presence of the Macdonald triad in childhood has long been held to be predictive of later interpersonal violence. Using a methodology based upon grounded theory, this study examined the origins and evolution of the triad with an eye to evaluating its utility as a predictive factor in subsequent violent behavior. An extensive review of the literature reveals little empirical support for the validity of this triad. The fact that the Macdonald triad has been and continues to be presented as fact suggests a need to revisit the process by which theories of violent behavior are derived and sustained.

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