Forensic Psychology – Adult Firesetting –

Dr Caoilte Ó Ciardha
What is Forensic Psychology?

- What people think of...
What is Forensic Psychology?

• What we actually work on…

- treatment
- youth offending
- reoffending
- trauma
- child molestation
- group offending
- violence
- paedophilia
- objectification
- aggression
- eye-tracking polygraph
- desistance
- sexual violence
- rape
- firesetting
- gender
- society
- surveys
- arson
- criminal guilt
- pyromania
- ruminating
- bullying
- sex offending
- alcohol
- interviewing
- sex offending
- gangs
- intergroup aggression
- prevention
- experiments
- animal cruelty
- mental health
- policy memory
- rehabilitation
- female offenders
What do I work on?

• Social Cognition and Offending
  • What people believe?
  • How they make decisions?
  • How they interpret the actions of other people?
  • Does any of this cause offending?

• And, can we measure these processes accurately?
What do I work on?

• Topics
  • Child Molestation
  • Sexual Violence
  • Firesetting
Firesetting Research at Kent

2010 – Very little knowledge of the psychology of adult firesetting
2011 – Large Government grant awarded to Prof Theresa Gannon
2011-2014 – Intense period of data collection
Firesetting Research at Kent

The Multi-Trajectory Theory of Adult Firesetting (M-TTAF)
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1 University of Kent, UK
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3 Kent University, Australia

ABSTRACT
The assessment and treatment of adults who set fires deliberately are underdeveloped relative to other areas of forensic clinical psychology. From a service-practitioner perspective, all clinical assessment and interven- tion should be guided by a theoretical and empirically based understanding of the propensity to commit arson. In this paper, we critically review current typologies, theories, and therapies regarding the psychological features of deliberate adult firesetting. Thus, using a theory-driven perspective, we synthesise the phases of this information into a comprehensive typological framework of deliberate firesetting. The results are intended to be used by practitioners as a basis for identifying the psychological features of this population and matching them with the appropriate interventions.

The implicit theories of firesetters: A preliminary conceptualization
Caioíne O Ciardha 3, Theresa A. Gannon
University of Kent, UK

ABSTRACT
The implicit theories of firesetting are the foundation and reinforcement of criminal behavior. This has been highlighted and recognized in numerous offender populations. In particular, professionals have theorized that various offender populations hold differing implicit theories of firesetting. However, the role of cognition in deliberative fire-setting has not been studied extensively. This study examined the relationship between the implicit theories of firesetting and the characteristics of firesetting. The results suggested that the implicit theories of firesetting are related to the characteristics of firesetting. These findings have implications for the development of more effective interventions.

Male Imprisoned Firesetters Have Different Characteristics Than Other Imprisoned Offenders and Require Specialist Treatment
Theresa A. Gannon

Method: To determine if firesetting offenders are distinct from other prison offenders, a multiple regression model was conducted. The results suggested that the firesetting offenders have different demographic and psychological characteristics than other prison offenders.

Multiple factors in the assessment of firesetters' fire interest and attitudes
Caioíne O Ciardha 3, Nichola Tyler, School of Psychology

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influence firesetting behavior.

Method: A multiple regression model was conducted. The results suggested that the factors that influence firesetting behavior are related to the psychological characteristics of firesetting.

Examing the psychopathology of incarcerated adult male firesetters using the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III
Caioíne O Ciardha 3, Emma K. A. Alleyne, Nichola Tyler, Magali F. L. Barnoux, Katarina Mosova and Theresa A. Gannon
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Research to date has been equivocal on the relationship between firesetting and psychopathology and has been impeded by studies lacking adequate control samples. The present study examined psychopathology in a sample of incarcerated adult male firesetters (n = 112) and prison controls (n = 113) using the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III. Fire-setters demonstrated multiple elevated scores on personality and clinical syndrome scales. Logistic regression showed that the borderline personality scale was the strongest personality scale discriminator between firesetters and controls. Major depression and drug dependence were the strongest clinical syndrome scale predictors. However, both clinical syndrome scale predictors appeared to be mediated by borderline personality scores indicating that firesetters are best characterized by overlapping and distinct personality traits. The results suggest that, relative to other offenders, firesetters face unique challenges with impulse control, affect regulation, stability of interpersonal relationships, and self-image.

Keywords: firesetting, arson, psychopathology, personality disorder, MCMI-III
Firesetting Research at Kent

2010 – Very little knowledge of the psychology of adult firesetting
2011 – Large Government grant awarded to Prof Theresa Gannon
2011-2014 – Intense period of data collection
2013/2014 – Two treatment programmes were launched
Firesetting Research at Kent

Firesetting Intervention Programme for Prisoners (FIPP)

Theresa A. Gannon

FIP-MO

Firesetting Intervention Programme for Mentally Disordered Offenders (FIP-MO)

Theresa A. Gannon & Lona Lockerbie
Firesetting Research at Kent

Firesetting Intervention Programme for Prisoners (FIPP)

Theresa A. Gannon

28 weeks

- Fire Factors ✓
- Coping with Emotions/Communication ✓
- Self Esteem ✗
- Fire/Offending Supportive Attitudes ✓
- Awareness of Risk ✗
Specialist group therapy for psychological factors associated with firesetting: Evidence of a treatment effect from a non-randomized trial with male prisoners

Theresa A. Gannon, Emma Alleyne, Helen Butler, Harriet Danby, Aparna Kapoor, Tamsin Lovell, Katarina Mozova, Elizabeth Spruin, Tracey Tostevin, Nichola Tyler, Caolite O’Clirdha
University of Kent, UK

ABSTRACT

Despite huge societal costs associated with firesetting, no standardized therapy has been developed to address this hugely damaging behavior. This study reports the evaluation of the first standardized CBT group designed specifically to target deliberate firesetting in male prisoners (the Firesetting Intervention Programme for Prisoners; FIPP). Fifty-four male prisoners who had set a deliberate fire were referred for FIPP treatment by their prison establishments and psychologically assessed at baseline, immediately post treatment, and three-months post treatment. Prisoners who were treatment eligible yet residing at prison establishments not identified for FIPP were recruited as Treatment as Usual controls and tested at equivalent time-points. Results showed that FIPP participants improved on one of three primary outcomes (i.e., problematic fire interest and associations with fire), and made some improvement on secondary outcomes (i.e., attitudes towards violence and antisocial attitudes) post treatment relative to controls. Most notable gains were made on the primary outcome of fire interest and associations with fire and individuals who gained in this area tended to self-report more serious firesetting behavior. FIPP participants maintained all key improvements at three-month follow up. These outcomes suggest that specialist CBT should be targeted at those holding the most serious firesetting history.

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