

# Crime prevention

**W**ITH crime, as with illness, prevention is better than cure. Few people would argue that the optimal strategy to reduce coronary heart disease is to carry out quadruple heart bypass operations. Instead, efforts are made to identify the key risk factors for heart disease by following people up over time. These risk factors include smoking, a fatty diet, and lack of exercise. Efforts are then made to tackle these risk factors by encouraging people to stop smoking, to have a more healthy low-fat diet, and to take more exercise. This strategy has led to a marked decrease in coronary heart disease in many Western countries.

The same risk-focused prevention strategy can be implemented to reduce crime, and a lot of research by psychologists has taken this approach. Prospective follow-up studies have identified key early risk factors for offending, including impulsiveness, low school attainment, poor parental supervision and harsh or erratic parental discipline. Experimental studies show that these risk factors can be tackled successfully in early prevention programmes, and later offending can be reduced. Effective prevention methods include cognitive-behavioural skills training, pre-school intellectual enrichment programmes, and parent management training (Farrington, 1996). Furthermore, risk factors for offending are often the same as risk factors for other types of social problems, and programmes



*To address the centenary slogan 'Bringing psychology to society' The Psychologist is pleased to introduce a series of articles taking the form of practical advice on how to tackle major societal problems.*

*In the first of these 'action plans' DAVID P. FARRINGTON proposes ways in which psychology can contribute to the reduction of crime.*

that reduce offending often reduce other types of social problems as well.

Logically, it must be better to prevent offending by intervening early in life than to wait until someone has committed many offences and then intervene – many victims would be spared. And yet most crime reduction resources are devoted to the police, court, prison and probation services, and very few to prevention. Nationally and locally, there is no agency whose primary mandate is the early prevention of offending. For example, the very worthwhile intervention programmes being implemented by Youth Offending Teams are overwhelmingly targeted on detected offenders. These arguments lead logically to my first two recommendations:

1. *A national agency should be established*

*with a primary mandate of fostering and funding the early prevention of offending.*

2. *In each area a local agency should be set up to take the lead in organising the early prevention of offending.*

The national agency could provide technical assistance, skills and knowledge to local agencies in implementing prevention programmes, could provide funding for such programmes, and could ensure continuity, co-ordination and monitoring of local programmes. It could provide training in prevention science for people in local agencies, and could maintain high standards for evaluation research. It could also act as a centre for the discussion of how policy initiatives of different government agencies influence crime and associated social problems. It could set a national and local agenda for research and practice in the prevention of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health problems and associated social problems.

The national agency could also maintain a computerised register of evaluation research and, like the National Institute of Clinical Excellence, advise the government about effective and cost-effective prevention programmes. Medical advice is often based on systematic reviews of the effectiveness of healthcare interventions organised by the Cochrane Collaboration and funded by the NHS. This leads to my third recommendation:

3. *Systematic reviews of the evaluation literature on the effectiveness of criminological interventions should be commissioned and funded by*

government agencies (see Farrington & Petrosino, 2000).

The local prevention agency could take the lead in measuring risk factors and social problems in local areas, using archival records and local neighbourhood and school surveys. It could then assess available resources and develop a plan of prevention strategies. With specialist technical assistance, prevention programmes could be chosen from a menu of strategies that have been proved to be effective in reducing crime in well-designed evaluation research. This would be a good example of evidence-based practice. However, the knowledge base for both risk factors and prevention strategies needs to be strengthened:

4. *New prospective longitudinal surveys are needed to identify early risk factors for offending.*

Existing British longitudinal surveys of offending were often conducted many years ago when social conditions were very different, and results are often based on white males living in cities. New surveys are needed to take account of the increasing ethnic diversity of the population, to advance knowledge about risk factors for females and in non-urban areas, and especially to advance knowledge about protective factors that prevent offending. Ideally, prevention programmes should aim not only to tackle risk factors but also to strengthen protective factors, and both risk and protective factors should be measured and targeted. Relatively little is known about protective factors against offending.

5. *High-quality experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations of the effectiveness of prevention programmes are needed.*

Most knowledge about the effectiveness of prevention programmes, such as cognitive-behavioural skills training, parent training and pre-school intellectual enrichment programmes, is based on American research. British research on the reduction of offending is rarely based on randomised experiments. High-quality evaluations of the effectiveness of these programmes in preventing offending in the UK are needed.

An important development in the 1990s, spearheaded by psychologists and economists, has been the increasing use of cost-benefit analysis in evaluating prevention programmes. Arguments such as 'for every dollar spent on the program,

## THE PLAN IN BRIEF

- A national agency to foster and fund the early prevention of offending
- Local agencies to organise the early prevention of offending
- Government-funded reviews of the evaluation literature on the effectiveness of criminological intervention
- New prospective longitudinal surveys to identify early risk factors for offending
- High-quality evaluations of the effectiveness of prevention programmes, including cost-benefit analyses
- Research on the cost-effectiveness of early risk-focused prevention in comparison with other general crime reduction strategies

seven dollars are saved in the long term' (Schweinhart *et al.*, 1993) have proved particularly convincing to policy makers. This leads to my sixth recommendation:

6. *Cost-benefit analyses of the effectiveness of prevention programmes should be carried out.*

Few strategies for reducing crime have been evaluated at all, and even fewer have been evaluated using high-quality methods. It is hard to evaluate large-scale crime reduction strategies, and to answer questions about whether it is better (in terms of crimes saved per pound spent, for example) to invest in risk-focused early prevention, in physical or situational prevention, in more police officers or in more prison cells. Nevertheless, this question is of vital importance to government policy makers and to the general population. Hence:

7. *Research is needed to investigate the cost-effectiveness of early risk-focused prevention in comparison with other general crime-reduction strategies.*

There have been many promising developments in this country in the last

few years. Early intervention strategies have been included in the government's 'Sure Start' and 'On Track' initiatives and in the Family Fund administered by the Children and Young People's Unit. Risk-focused prevention has been implemented in the 'Communities That Care' programme funded by the Rowntree Foundation. These developments have clearly been influenced by psychological research on risk factors and intervention strategies. The time is ripe to expand these experimental programmes into a large-scale national strategy for the prevention of crime and associated social problems.

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## COULD YOU 'BRING PSYCHOLOGY TO SOCIETY'?

If you think you're up to the challenge of making concrete proposals concerning a major societal issue on the basis of your psychological knowledge, we would like to receive your action plan. Articles should be no longer than 1500 words, and should take the form of up to 10 practical recommendations on how the application of psychology could benefit society. Explain each recommendation with suitable examples to bring the topic alive for the non-specialist reader, but keep references to a minimum.

Your article will be reviewed by the Editor and an associate editor. Send five copies to *The Psychologist* at the Leicester office, or by e-mail to [psychologist@bps.org.uk](mailto:psychologist@bps.org.uk).

# Reducing the psychological impact of unemployment

**D**URING the last century psychological theory and practice has increasingly enabled unemployed people to compete effectively in the labour market.

A hundred years ago unemployed people were generally regarded as physically and morally inferior to those in work. William Beveridge's view, that any difference was a consequence rather than a cause of unemployment, focused attention on the psychological effects of unemployment. He argued for a national network of labour exchanges, which were established by the President of the Board of Trade, Winston Churchill, in 1910. During the 1930s research raised awareness of the wider psychological and social impact of unemployment (Eisenberg & Lazarsfeld, 1938).

Psychologists were first employed in the Ministry of Labour as members of multidisciplinary rehabilitation teams assisting disabled ex-servicemen after the Second World War. Over the years the 15 Industrial Rehabilitation facilities have transformed to reflect the changing requirements of disabled clients and the labour market, into the current 50 Disability Service Teams where psychologists now play a wider role (Dalglish, 2000).

The introduction of occupational guidance by the ministry is attributed to the influence of a persuasive lecture in 1963 by the leading occupational psychologist Alec Rodger (Price, 2000). Young adults feeling unsettled or facing an enforced change in employment were offered an interview with selected officers, trained by psychologists.

The provision of better quality advice was extended to the personal adviser service in the new jobcentres, introduced from 1973. Psychologists contributed to the major staff training programme required and in a range of other ways, including the layout of the jobcentres, the design of vacancy boards and the

BY MARY DALGLEISH

design of computer software to meet jobseeker needs.

As unemployment rose in the 1980s more active interventions were introduced to assist people back to work. Psychologists adapted the US Jobclub model for the UK, achieving high levels of success. They developed interventions that enhanced feelings of control and self-confidence for the majority of those attending. The design of employment programmes drew on psychological theories and research (Jahoda, 1981; Warr, 1987), for example that negative effects of unemployment can be mitigated by providing aspects typically linked to employment, such as structured time, social contact, a purpose, status and identity. Current developments aim to tailor interventions to maximise each individual's employment chances. Alongside this, psychologists' work with employers in

designing fairer recruitment practices increasingly enables unemployed people to compete on a more equal basis.

In the 21st century psychologists continue to influence the experience of many unemployed people, both directly through individual assessments and indirectly through informing and developing the support available and employers' recruitment methods.

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**Important contributions and influential figures from the last 100 years of psychology. This month – the impact of occupational psychology on unemployment, and Susan Isaacs, Carl Rogers and J.G. Taylor.**

## James Garden Taylor

BY NORMAN WETHERICK

**J**AMES G. TAYLOR was born and educated in Scotland. He graduated in 1919 and presented a paper at the first British Association meeting to have a section devoted to psychology (in Edinburgh, 1921). He was a staff member of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology (NIIP) on its foundation in 1922, but in 1924 took up a lectureship at Cape Town University and remained there till retirement in 1962. He then spent a year at Harvard with S.S. Stevens and a further year in Canada. However, during that time he was declared a prohibited immigrant by the South African Government (he had been

active in liberal politics) and was also refused permission to settle in Canada. He returned to Britain in 1965/66 and died in 1973.

Taylor must certainly be counted among the most active British psychologists of his generation. In the 1930s he contributed to the theory of factor analysis, and these papers were cited regularly into the 1960s. In his publications at this time he appears as second author to his head of department (H.A. Reyburn), but the work was Taylor's. In the 1940s he became interested in Hullian behaviour theory, publishing in the *Psychological Review* and corresponding with Hull – who deferred to him on mathematical issues. In the 1950s and 1960s

### Correction

In the February issue it was wrongly stated that Beatrice Edgell was the first head of the Department of Psychology at Bedford College, London. Apologies to the author.

# Carl Rogers

**C**OUNSELLING psychology is at a crossroads. We have now an established presence within the Society and clear pathways to qualification, Chartering and employment. Nevertheless, success has confronted us with a fundamental dilemma, which can be expressed as a choice between two modes of being and is encapsulated in Martin Buber's distinction between the 'I-it' and the 'I-thou'. This translates into seeing ourselves, as practitioners, as either 'technical experts' or 'persons-in-relation'. Currently the pressure is very much in the direction of technical expertise. It is therefore timely to revisit the contribution to our discipline of Carl Rogers and to remind ourselves, in turn, of a distinctive contribution made by counselling psychology to the discipline of psychology in general.

Much could be said about Rogers's work, but one very striking thing is his insistence on the centrality of the relationship in therapeutic processes, and on seeing therapeutic relationships as not differing in kind from other relationships in everyday life. Rogers paid close attention to identifying and describing those dimensions of relationships that enhance our capacity to meet each other and establish depth in our contact. He also demonstrated how, in a quite profound way, their lack during development is the source of much distress. In becoming clearer about such dimensions we are enabled to explore and develop them in our own lives and relationships and bring them more consciously into our therapeutic work.

he published in Canadian and British journals, crossing swords memorably with Sir Cyril Burt on the subject of consciousness (for more details see Wetherick, 1999).

His principal publication, *The Behavioral Basis of Perception* (1962), is not an easy book to read. It was well received on its appearance but most psychologists were (and are) willing to regard our capacity to perceive objects in the world as innately given, without the need for a learning theory explanation. They do not recognise the enormity of this claim. Visual input consists of brief 'snapshots' between saccades and, since objects move (as do the eyes), no object will be likely to project the same image in successive snapshots. How do we determine which of our images of objects refer to one continuing object in the world, and which to different objects? There is now evidence that a learning

BY SHEELAGH STRAWBRIDGE

Research has confirmed the significance of relationship itself and of the dimensions identified by Rogers as 'unconditional-positive-regard', 'empathy' and 'congruence'. Differing therapeutic approaches now draw upon this understanding, but often reduce relationship to a precondition for the application of techniques; the 'technical expert' overshadows the 'person-in-relation'. What can be overlooked is the intrinsic value of meeting when depth of contact can be established in the relationship, and Rogers's emphasis on the extraordinary therapeutic potential of this *ordinary human capacity*. Such therapeutic meeting requires personal risk and cannot happen if we hide behind techniques.

Therefore we owe much to Rogers's careful work in researching the nature and potential of our capacity for relationship. We also owe to him the recognition (denied by academic psychology at the time he was writing) that this implies a value position, a 'prizing' of persons simply as persons. Standing at the crossroads, perhaps tempted by the status and power of technical expertise, a rereading of Rogers may help us reclaim our unknowing, our courage to meet and a distinctive contribution to psychology.

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process is involved even in early infancy; Taylor believed that this had to be the case because of the sheer quantity of stored information that would have been required if the capacity was innate. He believed that the perceptual system remains capable of learning new adaptations (e.g. to distorted visual input) even though such a capacity is not normally required after infancy.

Taylor did enough to deserve to be remembered in any history of 20th century British psychology. His theoretical work on perception may yet prove to be significant.

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■ *Norman Wetherick is retired.*

# SUSAN ISAACS

BY JANET SAYERS

**S**USAN Isaacs was a major figure in British psychology in the early years of the Society. She was born in Bolton in 1885 and became involved with feminism and socialism. She graduated with a first in philosophy from Manchester University in 1912, researched children's spelling difficulties with C.S. Myers in Cambridge, and taught logic in Manchester. In 1914 she married a biologist, William Brierley, and from 1915 taught psychology for London County Council, London University, and the Workers Education Association. The Society benefited greatly from her work with the Education Section and the *British Journal of Psychology*. She wrote her first book, *An Introduction to Psychology*, in 1921, joined the National Institute of Industrial Psychology and went into analysis with Flugel, a psychology lecturer at University College London.

She and Brierley divorced and she married a metal dealer, Nathan Isaacs. She studied psychoanalysis at the Brunswick Square Clinic, qualifying in 1923, and from 1924 till 1927 headed an experimental progressive nursery school in the Malting House, Cambridge. She then lectured at Morley College, and at UCL popularised child psychology through magazine articles, radio talks and books (notably *The Nursery Years* and *The Children We Teach*). She chaired the Society's Education Section, and worked on the *British Journal of Medical Psychology* and the *British Journal of Educational Psychology*.

In 1933 she was appointed to run England's first university-based child development department at London's Institute of Education, and she became a major influence on education and childcare policy in the following years. This was particularly through her supervision of the wartime Cambridge Evacuation Survey, and her 1945 memorandum to the Curtiss Committee advocating foster care rather than institutional care for homeless children. She was also centrally involved during the war in securing psychoanalytic recognition of the early origins and ubiquity of fantasy in shaping our psychology. She was made a CBE in January 1948 and that October died from cancer, from which she had suffered intermittently since 1935.

For more on the life and work of Susan Isaacs see Sayers, J. (2000). *Kleinians: Psychoanalysis inside out*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

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