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**26 July 2012**

## **Visiting experts at UCT to discuss how young children's self-control builds national well-being**

**17h30 Thursday, 2 August 2012, in Kramer LT3, Cross Campus Road, Middle Campus**

**Hosted by UCT's Safety and Violence Initiative and the Centre of Criminology**

Childhood self-control predicts criminal offending, addiction, personal finances, parenting skills, savings for retirement, and physical health and illness diagnosed via biomarkers, according to the findings of collaborative research conducted by married team Dr Avshalom Caspi and Dr Terrie Moffitt. The two psychologists will discuss their work at a public lecture at the University of Cape Town on 2 August 2012 at 17h30, organized by the Safety and Violence Initiative (SaVI) at UCT.

Internationally, policymakers are considering large-scale early intervention programmes to enhance children's self-control, with the aim of reducing crime and improving citizens' health and wealth. Experimental studies and economic analyses suggest that such programmes could reap benefits for a nation. Following a population-representative cohort of 1000 New Zealand children from their birth in 1972 to age 38 in 2011, Dr Moffitt and Dr Caspi show that childhood self-control predicts a range of future adult behaviours, and such effects could be disentangled from children's intelligence and their parents' social-class.

In another cohort of 500 UK twin-sibling-pairs, the sibling with better self-control at age five had better life outcomes than the twin sibling with weaker self-control, despite sharing the same parents and family background. These predictions from childhood followed a gradient of self-control, suggesting a nation's health and wealth could be improved by enhancing self-control in all of its children. Early interventions enhancing the population's self-control skills might reduce taxpayer costs of crime control, health care, and old-age dependency.

### **About the guest speakers**

Dr Terrie Moffitt studies how genetic and environmental risks work together to shape the developmental course of abnormal human behaviors and psychiatric disorders. Her

particular interest is in antisocial and criminal behavior. She is associate director of the Dunedin Longitudinal Study, which follows 1000 people born in 1972 in New Zealand from birth to age 38 so far. She also co-directs the Environmental-Risk Longitudinal Twin Study, which follows 1100 British families with twins born in 1994-1995 from birth to age 18 so far. For her research, she has received the American Psychological Association's Early Career Contribution Award (1993) and Distinguished Career Award in Clinical Child Psychology (2006), the Royal Society-Wolfson Merit Award (2002-2007), the Stockholm Prize in Criminology (2007), the Klaus-Grawe Prize in clinical psychology (2009), the NARSAD Ruane Prize (2010) and the Klaus J. Jacobs Prize (2010). She is a fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences, the American Society of Criminology, the British Academy, the American Psychopathological Association, Academia Europaea, the American Academy of Political and Social Science, the Association for Psychological Science, and King's College London. She works at Duke University, in North Carolina in the USA, at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London in the UK, and at the Dunedin School of Medicine, in New Zealand.

Dr Avshalom Caspi grew up in Israel and received his professional education in the USA (PhD; Cornell University). His research spans the fields of psychology, epidemiology, and genetics. His current work is concerned with how childhood experiences shape the course of health inequalities across the life span; how genetic differences between people shape the way they respond to their environments; and finding the best ways to assess and measure personality differences between people.

For his research on human development and mental health, Dr. Caspi has received awards from the American Psychological Association, the Society for Research in Adolescence, the American Public Health Association, and the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development, as well as the Mortimer D. Sackler MD Prize for Distinguished Achievement in Developmental Psychobiology, the NARSAD Ruane Prize for Outstanding Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Research, and the Klaus J. Jacobs Research Prize for Productive Youth Development. Dr. Caspi works at Duke University in the USA, at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London in the UK, and at the Dunedin School of Medicine, in New Zealand.

## **About SaVI**

The [Safety and Violence Initiative](#) at UCT brings together a wide-ranging interdisciplinary group of scholars who are interested in addressing, through their research, a national priority: understanding violence and promoting safety.

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