

Justitiële verkenningen

Vol. 23, no. 3, april 1997

Film and video violence

Summaries

Justitiële verkenningen (Judicial explorations) is published nine times a year by the Research and Documentation Centre of the Dutch Ministry of Justice in cooperation with the publishing house Gouda Quint BV. Each issue focuses on a central theme related to criminal law, criminal policy and criminology. This section contains abstracts of the most relevant international articles. The central theme of this issue is: Film and video violence.

A survey of computer games and their effect

O. Wiegman, E. van Schie en J. Modde

A number of studies into the relationship between playing aggressive computer games and children's behaviour were performed by the authors. A survey showed that many children spent time on playing these games and especially boys have a strong preference for playing aggressive computer games. This preference appeared to be positively related to aggressive behavior and negatively to a child's intelligence. No relations were found between playing (aggressive) computer games and a child's social integration and school performance. To find out if there is a casual relationship between playing aggressive computergames and aggressive behaviour in children an experiment was conducted in which children had to perform several tests and play games on a computer. In this experiment aggressive behaviour was measured by using a teacher-learner paradigm. Analyses showed that aggression was mainly effected by the type of computer game a child played; frustration and competition were of no influence. Now that many studies have shown a convincing link between aggressive media products and aggressive behaviour, the authors wonder why so far scientists, educators and the general public did not fully realize the possible harmfulness of media products. A number of recommendations are made for reducing aggression in the media.

Standards to determine the suitability of children's television programmes

P. Nikken

Instead of using violence in the media as a standard to classify media productions as unsuitable for children, other standards can be used to distinguish suitable media products. In three successive studies carried out among mothers, children and television professionals, it was determined which demands can be made on children's television programmes. Next to the common demand that a program be innocuous, six other types of standards were identified among all three groups, i.e.: a children's program should be comprehensible, aesthetically pleasing, involving, humorous, credible, and it should present role models. Although a high congruence for the types of standards a children's program should satisfy was found between the three groups, there was less agreement on the weight that should be assigned to these standards. Whereas mothers and children believed first and foremost that a program should be comprehensible, the professionals considered it most important that programmes be involving and credible. In addition, professionals were much less convinced that a children's program should be innocuous than mothers and children were. The differences between media professionals and the audience should be thought for concern in governmental policy on media and violence.

Age classification and product information; the audio-visual branche in The Netherlands

W. Buwalda

This article discusses the way the audio-visual branche in The Netherlands protects children against harmful influences. First a survey is given of the branche including the relevant sectors (cinema, TV, video, games, other), their products, trade-organisations, and market shares in terms of viewing time. Subsequently an overview is given of the rating systems and product information used by the separate

audio-visual sectors including the laws and regulations these are based on. The overall quality of the currently used rating systems and product information is judged to be poor, especially in the largest sector of them all - the tv-sector. Four measures are suggested to ameliorate the current situation: the development of more scientifically based rating systems; the inclusion of a new age group of 6 or 7 years old; the establishment of an organizational structure aimed at the enhancement of quality and harmonization between sectors; improved control and imposition of sanctions.

Blocking devices against violence

N. Baas

Especially in the United States and Canada there are (soon) several blocking devices, like the V-chip, available, and more technical developments are to be expected. Information on the experiences of parents with blocking devices is limited. Only one methodical study in Canada - and of this study only the provisional results - is known to us. In Europe a discussion is taking place on the desirability of following the example of the United States in forcing the producers of television sets to equip all their new apparatuses with a V-chip. In Europe there does exist some scepticism about the practicability and use of blocking devices. It seems that the technical problems of blocking devices and rating-techniques that can be used in the different European countries may be settled. However, it is questionable if blocking devices have the intended effect on the watching behaviour of children, especially on those that are easily influenced by seeing violence. Anyhow, for the use of blocking devices the collaboration of the industry, the broadcasters and - last but not least - the parents is indispensable