

Justitiële verkenningen

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Developments in youth violence

Summaries

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Youth violence in a historical perspective

P.C. Spierenburg

Although Dutch society in the past witnessed violence at several levels, this has partly retreated from collective memory. Present day aggressiveness, on the other hand, is a concern to many people. This article attempts to answer the question whether a historical study of violence can enhance our insight into the behavior of aggressive youths in present-day society. Historically, a key question concerns the behavior of young men from the social elites. For a long time, they were allowed to indulge in a culture of violence. Gradually however, the upper layers of society got pacified, which resulted in a negative social valuation of violence which lasts until our day. Among lower class youths, collective fights were common until the middle of the twentieth century. Around 1800, however, there was a shift from using knives to fist fights. The culture of knife fighters, flourishing in Amsterdam and other places around 1700, forms a special case. The participants had specific rituals and notions of honor based on bravery. Today, certain groups appear to have a similar culture again, but the majority of the population continues to be unaccustomed to violence. Pleas for intervention from the public, therefore, are problematic.

Trends in juvenile violent crime

K. Wittebrood

This article provides a description of trends in juvenile violent crime in the Netherlands based on two measures: official police statistics and self-report studies. The police statistics contain information on the number of juvenile suspects; self-report studies capture information on behaviour that might never come to the attention of the police. Both measures have their own limitations. Police statistics clearly show that juvenile arrest rates are substantially increased for all types of violent crime. Self-report studies also show an increase in juvenile violent crime, but the increase is much smaller than the police statistics show. It is suggested that the large increase in juvenile violent crime shown by police statistics is partly due to the enlarged attention for youth crime and violent crime as well as to a more professional registration. Both police statistics and self-report studies show that violent crime is committed mainly by male offenders.

Aggressive youngsters; a cultural-historical view

G. van den Brink

In this article the author discusses the fact that the average citizen nowadays has become much more assertive, ready and able than for example forty years ago. The author indicates that citizens have become more narcissistic. Relations between people should nowadays be seen in a general positive view of men; people want their sense of self-respect and self-esteem to be explicitly respected. 'The brighter narcissism shines, the more painful a scratch on the car lacquer is'. Besides, youngsters show relatively little self-control, due to a longer youth phase and the striving after more intensive physical experiences. In one formula: the precarious balance between self-love (evident through assertiveness) and self-control has broken down.

An inflated ego; on insecurity, self-conceit and male aggression

B.A.M. van Stokkom

The author supposes that an inflated ego of youths has increased violence in the streets, although insecurity plays a role as well. Especially because of the social reevaluation of displaying rough male behavior, on television and in leisure arenas, the image of the self has taken on inflated proportions and the threshold for frustration appears to be lowered. Boys seem to act rougher and tougher all the time: cool behavior in risky circumstances adds to a bigger reputation. According to the author the raw ideal of virility differs for deprived and privileged problematic boys: for the deprived problematic boys male showing off behavior is an expression of honor (see Spierenburg) while for the second group, the privileged problematic boys, it is more a matter of adolescent acting out behavior in the masking of dependency on others.

Media and violence

P. Nikken

Notwithstanding the vigorous debate on violence on the screen in the past years, the amount of media-violence has only increased. The increase in media-violence is, among other things, the result of the competition broadcasters, videoproducers and movie makers have to deal with. As a rule boys are more fond of aggressive media than girls. Although media violence may be popular because of the functions it serves in the development of children, science has now reached consensus that watching aggression on television may contribute to negative effects on behavior, knowledge and attitudes. Especially, so called minor aggressive behavior (fighting, kicking and beating) can be stimulated by watching aggression on the screen. These effects are mostly the result of violence portrayed by the heroes, portrayed as acceptable or portrayed without negative consequences. In accordance with the wish of many parents, the Dutch government has initiated a new system to classify audiovisual media on its suitability for young viewers. The system applies to all media, and is unique because the media are expected to make the classifications themselves.

Young men in groups?

O.M.J. Adang

Young males often behave provocatively or violently in the presence of other young males. We do not know why some young males seem to be more aggressive than others in this respect. However, it is clear that status seeking plays a role. In spite of the facts that often all of the ingredients for violent confrontations are at hand (a lot of young males, use of alcohol, presence of weapons, presence of different groups etc.), in most cases violence does not occur. There is no simple group process that leads almost automatically to irrational behaviour and violence. Processes present in everyday social behaviour provide the best clues. In spite of a lot of attention in the media and in politics, there is relatively little research into aggression and violence. Fundamental research is limited and fragmentary, there is little research aimed at a better understanding of violent interactions. As a result, there are few substantiated findings on the effectiveness of different interventions by the police or others. Research should not only focus on aggression and violence, but also on tolerance, tension regulation and reconciliation.

Violence and family

J. Hendriks and B.J. van Roozendaal

In this article it is emphasized that violence among young people is caused by highly complex and interacting factors (biological, personal, pedagogical and other environmental factors) and that a holistic view of the causes of violence should overcome the limitations of monocausal explanations. To make this clear the case 'Martijn' is described, in which the aforementioned complexity is illustrated. It is furthermore emphasized that for individual cases the origin of violent behaviour can to a large extent be explained by family and pedagogical factors. To illustrate this the case 'Jan' has been used, in which both highly unfavorable structural and functional characteristics of the family are seen to emerge. In this the influence is emphasized of intergenerational transfer of standards and values with respect to the use of violence and the role of modeling.