

Summaries

Justitiële verkenningen (Judicial explorations) is published eight times a year by the Research and Documentation Centre of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice in cooperation with Boom Lemma uitgevers. Each issue focuses on a central theme related to judicial policy. The section Summaries contains abstracts of the internationally most relevant articles of each issue. The central theme of this issue (no. 3, 2013) is .

The interaction between judgeship and personality

J.G. Tielenius Kruythoff

In this article former judge Jaap Tielenius Kruythoff tries to answer the question how being a judge influenced his personality and vice versa. Decision-making is both a rational and emotional process. Judges are susceptible for being manipulated by litigants and colleagues as well as acknowledgements from others. The author stresses the importance of having the possibility to express doubts in the course of the decision-making process between judges. Trying to erase doubts – for instance when one judge is dominating discussions in the judge's chambers – interferes in finding the real truth in a case. Also, colleagues can help creating awareness of tunnel vision. According to the author there is no such a thing as a general sense of just punishment. Discussions about reasonable punishments are influenced by previous decisions. Being a judge gave the author a lot of fulfilment in his work and a higher social status.

A final goodbye to forensic psychiatry

E.J.P. Brand

Having a job is an all day reality, having a job in a prison or a forensic psychiatric hospital is not. Dealing on a daily basis with disturbed people who have committed a severe crime requires a highly professional attitude. For the professional working in this field, individual thoughts and feelings (of disgust of the criminal and his crime for example, so common amongst the public) are not an option, while at the same time the given means for doing the work are highly dependent on public opinion as expressed by the media and political spokesmen. Ed Brand, forensic psychologist for more than thirty years, describes the

change in risk management which took place in those years on the social and political level in the treatment of psychiatric disturbed offenders. In his account he also refers to the changes in his personal life before he stopped his work in state prisons and forensic psychiatric hospitals.

We have to finish this dance together: Dutch prison officers on the enervating and energising aspects of their work

T. Molleman and E.F.J.C. van Ginneken

The job of prison officer is recognised as highly demanding, given that prisons are dynamic environments that place a burden on the mental and physical resources of staff. The article explores what prison officers consider the most rewarding and most stressful aspects of their job, and how they cope with job stress. The authors conducted seven semi-structured interviews with prison officers in a large Dutch prison to complement and illustrate findings from the literature. Prison officers especially enjoy human interaction in their job: working with their colleagues and with the prisoners. Poor communication about management and policy decisions, too much paperwork, and (violent) incidents caused frustration and stress among employees. Talking about problems with colleagues, family and friends alleviated some of the stress.

The importance of good care after shocking events. And the risk of overdoing things ...

P.P. Lückner

This article focuses on aftercare for professionals like policemen, firemen and soldiers who experienced a shocking event. The author, Peter-Paul Lückner, has been working in aftercare for many years. He observes a trend in professional counseling to diagnose and start treatment as soon as possible. In the past however, the basic principle has been to give somebody a break, to provide practical support and to rely on a natural recovery. Most people recover well this way after experiencing a shocking incident. This individual recovery process is best facilitated by providing a safe and supportive environment through recognition and appreciation, thus preventing secondary traumatization. This approach seems to contribute more to the prevention of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than rapid intervention, early screening and counseling. Sometimes however, the cumu-

lative effect of stressful experiences leads to the conclusion that the job doesn't fit the person involved anymore. Recognition and appreciation sometimes involve saying goodbye and making a new start.

Police officers and the risk of PTSD; an appropriate concern or medicalization of a profession?

M.J.J. Kunst

Several policy measures have recently been undertaken to enhance resilience in Dutch police officers. The author of this article argues that these initiatives rely on false beliefs about the stressful nature of police work. Police officers are often exposed to traumatic or otherwise stressful events, but this does not necessarily render them at an increased risk of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other (trauma-related) psychosocial problems. After a discussion of empirical studies which support his view, he speculates that these false beliefs are grounded in the Western tendency to qualify stressful events as (potentially) traumatic. This tendency to medicalize stressful events is reflected both in the history of the diagnostic criteria for PTSD in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and the empirical literature. The author concludes with pointing out a potential negative by-effect of this medicalization tendency: simulating PTSD (symptoms) for external motives, such as financial gain.

Frontline social work in the big city

B. Rombout

This article focuses on the activities and working methods of the Rotterdam social aid agency Bureau Frontlijn. It is based on the personal views and experiences of the author, Bureau Frontlijn director Barend Rombout, a former policeman who switched to social work in the disadvantaged districts more than ten years ago. The teaching of skills, coaching and training are key concepts in the work of Bureau Frontlijn. Many people suffering from a crisis because of unemployment, divorce, homelessness or early pregnancy are not adequately helped by state institutions, but instead get entangled in all kinds of bureaucratic procedures. What is needed in social aid is a more comprehensive and tailor-made approach. Even though individual responsibility is important, society has a moral obligation to protect the less privileged, because many of them have been in a disadvantaged situation since their birth or even earlier.