Summaries

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internationally most relevant articles of each issue. The central
theme of this issue (nr. 5, 2006) is The kick.

Kicks; some notes on transgression and contemporary mysticism
M.P.J. van de Port
Several scholars have noticed that contemporary societies are
characterized by a ‘passion for the real’, a desire to encounter a
truth that is incontestable. My argument is that much of what
in colloquial parlance is labeled ‘a kick’ might be understood in
terms of this quest for the really real. The word ‘kick’ refers to the
sensations that follow from a move into the unknown, and this
move calls into existence an order of reality that transcends the
limitations of the individual consciousness. In anthropology, such
transgressive acts have long been recognized as a way to encounter
the Sacred, and I argue that it is thus that kick-producing behaviour
should be understood: as a re-enchantment of the world.

What is so funny about political violence?
O. Verkaaik
The study of militant organizations tends to be one-sided in its
focus on ideology, political discourse and strategic manoeuvering.
However, if this line of research is complemented with a more
anthropological approach to militant groups as communities,
providing its members and sympathizers with more than an outlet
for ideological grievances and feelings of injustice, it becomes
understandable why being part of a violent movement can be fun.
In this article it is argued that there are various aspects to the fun of
violence. It entails the euphoria of power generated by the sensation
of solidarity among militant revolutionaries, but also the pleasure
of competition for status and reputation between peers, as well as
the ridiculization of negative stereotypes that exist in the media and
public opinion about the militant group.
Fatally vital; the criminology of a liquid society
J.C.J. Boutellier
Crime cannot be understood without its cultural context. This context has changed dramatically over the last thirty to forty years by at least two influencing processes: globalisation and individualisation. Contemporary culture differs completely from the ideological twentieth century (until about 1970). This has consequences for the lifestyle in western countries, in which violations of norms are no longer 'deviant', but 'out of control'. The article explores the protocriminal character of contemporary culture.

Towards a criminology of the body? On fears, risks, experiences and identities
P. van Calster
Criminological studies often seem to focus almost exclusively on functionality and rationality. Many researchers tend to construct crime as an object, and then to find relations between 'it' and its environment. The focus then is on crime as a goal driven object. This view holds that success in crime depends on the roles and tasks people assimilate. It equates success in crime with stability and functionality. Researchers are seldom interested in everyday, informal elements and events such as coincidental encounters that may occur in everyday life, personal interactions which have no direct connection with criminal activities, or emotive reactions. In this contribution, I try to suggest an additional or complementary perspective to more traditional analyses about crime. This additional framework that I call 'a criminology of the body', is interested in the messiness and unpredictability of everyday relations and interactions.

The psychology of the kick
J.A. Feij
In this article it is argued that risky activities can be intrinsically satisfying, in particular for people with high scores on the personality trait 'sensation seeking'. Risky behaviour gives them pleasurable sensations and feelings of excitement. This kick stems probably from neurological reward mechanisms in the brain. Research on sensation seeking has demonstrated that this trait has a significant heritability and has several biochemical
and psychophysiological correlates. Furthermore, scores on sensation seeking are related to the frequency of positive, socially acceptable risky behaviours as well as negative, antisocial or criminal activities. The fact that delinquency is also related to this biologically-based personality trait in this article, does not mean that we would disparage the influence of factors in the social environment. On the contrary, there is always interaction between personality dispositions and, for example, someone’s socio-economical circumstances or characteristics of the peer-group. With regard to delinquent behaviour, this might be hard to change when it is reinforced by a ‘kick’ and by the social pressure from the peer group. Nevertheless, trying to replace the connection between negative risky behaviour and pleasurable sensations by a link with positive risky behaviour may be a promising strategy for treatment and prevention.

The bored ape; evolutionary psychological perspectives on kick/sensation seeking and human nature

R. D’Hooge

Personality characteristics like novelty or thrill seeking, impulsivity and disinhibition appear to be related to psychopathological features like criminal behaviour, aggression and drug abuse. Therefore it is not clear why these elements are part of the normal personality spectrum, but evolutionary psychologist have proposed some plausible explanations based on the adaptive value of such thrill seeking behaviours. However, this often resembles the late 19th century views that regarded criminal behaviour as a genetic-evolutionary remnant of our primitive prehistory with some undesirable individuals retaining more of these innate atavistic characteristics than others. We feel that these views lead to a highly cynical regard of human nature, and that they have to be profoundly criticised. Most contemporary students of behaviour will obviously not endorse such extreme positions, but genetic determinism still dominates many theories in evolutionary psychology. We propose an inquisitive human species whose behaviour spectrum is based on the functions of its large brain, and a long biological evolution that led to potentiality and freedom of thought and action in homo sapiens.