



The Use of Psychics in Police Investigations of Missing Persons

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Abstract – Anecdotal cases about successful contributions of psychics to police investigations continue to appear, but most lack evidential value. This paper examines whether psychics are actually useful in solving crimes or locating missing persons. Questionnaire and experimental studies show that about one in three police departments in Germany, Holland, and the USA has experience with psychics, though reported usefulness ranges only from 0% to 21%. Quantitative parapsychological research in which psychics attempted to obtain unknown information has occasionally produced significant but very modest results. Experimental studies where psychics tried to solve crimes – often by handling crime-related objects – showed no positive outcomes, though most tests occurred under highly artificial conditions, limiting real-life applicability. Studies comparing predictions about perpetrators under more realistic conditions found psychics scored lowest, though overall accuracy differences between groups were small.

Part II analyzes psychic contributions in two Dutch missing-girl cases and finds them entirely useless. Many contributors did not consider themselves psychics but felt emotionally compelled to share impressions they believed had been correct in past cases. As a group, psychics' predictions were no more accurate than scientific profiling, possibly because the perpetrators fit common stereotypes.

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Part III compares missing-person investigations with and without psychic involvement. Psychics participated in about 15% of 418 cases, usually when families feared the missing person was dead. In four years, three cases were solved following psychic advice. Overall, about 10% of psychics contribute something useful, and roughly 3% offer correct solutions, though even correct information may not lead to locating the person.

Most relatives later felt positive about involving psychics, valuing psychological support and the sense of having explored all options, despite recognizing limited investigative value. The study suggests that local experience and knowledge, not paranormal ability, likely explain occasional successes. Systematic research into missing-person cases may enable trained officers to outperform psychics. The final part offers recommendations for how police and the public should handle psychic involvement.

Keywords: crime investigations, criminal telepathy, missing persons, police investigations, psychics

Part I: Overview of Empirical Studies

Psychics believe to be able to obtain paranormal impressions about matters unknown to them at the time. They use the information contained in these impressions to advise clients who consult them. To help them to obtain paranormal impressions some psychics use an inductor, an item belonging to the person about whom the information is requested. Psychics are most often consulted about problems of life such as a bad relationship with the partner, children who do not well at school, problems at work, etc. But psychics become also involved or provide unsolicited advice in more dramatic events. For instance, when someone disappears and the relatives have reasons to fear that the missing person is in great danger.

The question whether it is demonstrated or not that a paranormal process exists by which information can be acquired is mainly an academic problem which excites some scientists but not the public. Clients mainly judge the information provided by psychics on its usefulness, not on how the psychics got that information. Normally psychics know already a number of details about the problem of the client when they provide their paranormal impressions. The client who consults a psychic starts often with discussing the background of the situation. Or the psychic learned about the situation from reports in the media. Many clients feel supported by the advice of psychics and there are anecdotal reports about psychics who were successful in finding missing persons and in solving crimes. It is the assumed usefulness rather than the possible paranormal character which motivates people to continue to consult psychics. Therefore psychics, sometimes called the poor man's therapist, are still active today.

Psychics often become involved in police investigations because the relatives of the victim of an unsolved crime or disappearance ask for their help. The suggestions made by the psychics

might have far-reaching practical consequences and that can easily create tensions between police and the relatives when police refuse to follow up such 'leads'. For instance, from my own experience I know a case of a missing girl in which a psychic 'saw' that the girl had been murdered and that the body was hidden in the garbage dump of a big city. This psychic had already provided information which had led the police to find some clothes of the girl in a deserted area not searched before. Understandably the relatives of the girl were anxious to find her and because of the previous successful advice insisted that the police should dig up the garbage dump. However, that posed a serious dilemma for the authorities because already weeks had elapsed since the disappearance and the removal of the meanwhile strongly increased mountain of garbage would become very expensive.

There are various potential problems which the involvement of psychics in police investigations. Most of them are of a practical nature. From a legal point of view a psychic is not different from other civilians. The present study was undertaken with the aim to advise police on how to deal with psychics. Can psychics be useful for police and if so, how to benefit from it and how to avoid that their activities impede the police investigation? The advice ought to be based on the available research data. These concern the research data on the achievements of psychics in general, the research data concerning the contributions of psychics to police investigations and the results of own investigations in this area.

Anecdotal Reports

Many anecdotal reports exist about psychics who helped police to solve crimes or to find missing persons. In his dissertation on legal aspects of the use of psychics by police Brink (1958) describes an anecdotal case which illustrates why people can become impressed by the contributions of a psychic, even when the psychic failed to solve the crime.

A substantial amount of money had disappeared from the vault of a company. The vault was found locked and undamaged and the office in which the vault was located appeared undisturbed. Only the bookkeeper and the owner of the company possessed a key to the vault. Police investigated the matter but could not find any clue (no damage, no fingerprints, etc.) as to what could have happened. On advice of the bookkeeper the owner consulted a psychic known to the bookkeeper. The psychic came to the office and in the presence of the police found a key hidden in an old desk in the office of the director which according to him could be used to open the vault. That turned out to be true. No one in the company knew that this key existed. It was not certain whether that key had actually been used to open the vault. Next the psychic went over the personnel records and using the key as an inductor got the impression that a certain

employee of the company had committed the theft. The bookkeeper had already repeatedly indicated that he suspected that person. But the 'suspect' denied the theft and no action was taken against him. The case was solved five months later when police took a professional burglar in custody who confessed to 75 burglaries, among others the one described above. When searching the office he had found the spare key to the vault, took the money and as was his habit had left the premises without leaving a trace (ibid., pp. 47–49).

Brink presented this case to illustrate one of the potential pitfalls for police when they work with psychics. The fact that the psychic provided correct and unknown information about the existence of the spare key could easily have tempted the police officers to also accept as probably true the psychic's impressions about the perpetrator. That could have resulted in the unlawful harassment of an innocent person.

Anecdotal stories like this one might be a reason for many people to believe that psychics are able to assist usefully in police investigations—but Brink was aware of the limited evidential value of anecdotal accounts. Therefore, he carried out a few studies with psychics under more controlled conditions. Four psychics participated and used photographs and objects as inductors. They were informed that not all inductors were related to crimes. The trials were held at different locations which varied from a room in a police department to the house of the psychic. All sessions were taped. No further details are given about details of this study such as number of sessions or nature of the crimes involved. Brink's personal impressions of the value of the data were presented as the results of the study. For that reason, the study is discussed in this section on anecdotal material and not below in the section on quantitative research with psychics. Brink noted that many statements were actually made in the form of rhetoric questions and that the psychic claimed a 'hit' when such a statement turned out to be correct but did not rate it a 'miss' but only a 'question' when the statement appeared incorrect. According to Brink it is difficult to draw conclusions from this study in view of the limited number of trials. However, in his opinion, and as a police officer he was able to judge that, these sessions did not yield anything useful to police investigations.

The Value of Anecdotal Reports

There are various reasons why anecdotal reports do not lend themselves to gain an insight into the usefulness of psychics for police investigations. The reports themselves might be unreliable, it is not certain whether the published reports are representative for the psychics' contributions to police investigations and, because the failures tend to remain unpublished, these reports do not allow to establish the ratio of successful versus unsuccessful psychic contributions.

The potential unreliability of anecdotal reports

Reports become unreliable when the events are not correctly and not completely reported. When he presented his anecdotal accounts, Brink stated that as a police officer he had access to all police reports and that he was able “to obtain full knowledge of all the facts of the cases” (ibid., p. 41). Because of his profession he was trained in the accurate reporting of events and it can be assumed that his account of the cases he studied adhered to the same standards. That is an exception. In many cases of ostensibly successes of psychics the reports, sometimes only press accounts, were written some time after the events happened. It is often unclear who provided the information, whether all persons involved in the events were interviewed and whether they would agree with the way the events were presented. Although Brink might be assumed to have correctly reported the events he witnessed even he could not know whether his report was really complete. What did the psychic already know, to whom had he spoken and what experience did the psychic have with perhaps similar cases of theft?

The most complete overview of variables and potential sources of errors associated with anecdotal reports on psychic detection is provided by Lyons & Truzzi (1991). The sources of errors they discuss range from outright fraud, media distortion and fallible memory to foreknowledge, experience, psychological variables which might make people susceptible to accept psychic claims and the lack of a baseline for what can be expected on the basis of ‘normal’ guessing. But that so many sources of errors might have distorted these accounts is in itself not sufficient reason to reject the possibility that psychics are able to provide useful contributions to police investigations. Normal communication between people is also rife with potential errors and misleading reporting, still few would argue that therefore meaningful communication between people is never possible.

It is not difficult to find for each of these sources of errors an example of a psychic success story in which that source of error might have played a role. Many critical analyses of anecdotal cases (for instance Hellwig, 1929; Lyons & Truzzi, 1991; Nickell, 1994) have been published with the aim to demonstrate that the apparent psychic success was actually not what it seemed to be. These analyses suggest that psychics or the persons who reported the story tend to exaggerate the apparent successes. Critics sometimes state that these ‘debunked’ successes are representative of the genre at its best (for instance Hoebens, 1985) and some conclude (not Hoebens) that consequently there is no shred of evidence that psychics have ever contributed to police investigations. But that conclusion seems far-fetched. First because there are so many reports which are still unchallenged if only because already so much time has passed that further investigation is not possible. Secondly, it is unavoidable that many ‘proofs’ of debunking

are weakened by the same potential sources of error which made the original reports disputable. For instance, the possibility of fallible memory when the original report is considered to be untrue because years after the events a witness declares that according to his or her recollection the psychic had not said or done as was described in the original account.

Are these reports representative for the contributions of psychics to police investigations?

Many of the published accounts of psychic successes create the impression that they also served to promote the name and fame of the psychic involved. The famous and well-publicized cases might be especially vulnerable to inaccuracies and exaggerations. The stories were often brought to the attention of the public by the psychics themselves or by admirers, sometimes with the help of reporters who were perhaps more interested in the impact of the story than in the accuracy of their report. As a consequence, it seems often taken for granted that all psychics are fond of publicity and self-promotion. That might not be the case. The atmosphere of these stories and the kind of psychics who figure in them seem often at variance with my own experiences with psychics. There are many psychics who do not seek the limelight. Therefore, it is not certain whether the much publicized and criticized cases of apparent psychic successes, found in the literature, are representative for the daily practice of the involvement of psychics in police investigations.

Successful and unsuccessful psychic contributions to police investigations

In order to draw a conclusion about the usefulness of psychics to police investigations it is not sufficient to demonstrate that successful contributions have been made. It is also necessary to know what the ratio is between successes and failures. However, as Lyons & Truzzi observed “positive newspaper accounts of psychics far outnumber critical articles, and on television skeptics are normally given short thrift” (Lyons & Truzzi, 1991, p. 3). Readers and viewers are more interested in success stories than in failures, especially when the success has a touch of the magical. It is undeniable that apart from the specialized skeptical literature which focuses on debunking esoteric claims the media rarely bring accounts on failures of psychics. But there must be many failures. A famous psychic like Croiset of the Netherlands was consulted nearly daily by relatives of people who disappeared or who were in some other kind of trouble, still only a few successes were published each year. That does not imply that all cases who remained unreported were failures but many must have been. The lack of data on failures of psychics makes it impossible to estimate the ratio of successes against failures and therefore to establish how effective the use of psychics for police investigations really is.

The discussions about the potential pitfalls of anecdotal cases in the literature and the many attempts to demonstrate that well-known cases of successful psychic detection are better explained by misrepresentations and fabrications than as real achievements have as yet not resulted in a general rejection by the public of the view that psychics might contribute to the solution of crimes or to the search of missing persons. Police is still confronted with contributions from psychics to investigations, often at the request of relatives. Because anecdotal reports cannot be used that leaves only data from scientific research to establish the usefulness of psychics for police investigations.

Quantitative Research on the Abilities of Psychics in General

Can psychics really obtain information about matters unknown to them? From the beginning of scientific research into the paranormal in the 1880s, this ability claimed by psychics has generated much interest. Sessions with psychics in which they applied their paranormal abilities were extensively analyzed but, as in the experiment of Brink with four psychics discussed above, the interpretation of the data remained a subjective matter. It was not until the 1930s that the first attempts were made to develop methods for a quantitative and statistical evaluation of the information contained in the statements of psychics. This has been mainly a process of discovering and eliminating the many potential sources of error involved in such an evaluation. Contemporary evaluative methods are statistically sound, but only applicable to situations in which psychics provide information without receiving feedback. Therefore, the results of the quantitative studies carried out with psychics are not representative for what psychics do in daily practice. Normally clients provide feedback and additional information in reaction to the statements of the psychic. Still, these research data are worthwhile to consider. If psychics are able to obtain unknown information under no-feedback conditions there is no reason to doubt that they would also be able to do so under feedback conditions. On the other hand, if psychics are not able to obtain unknown information in a no-feedback situation but they do provide correct information under feedback conditions, it follows that the information contained in the feedback is probably a necessary condition for them to be successful.

An assessment of over 50 quantitatively evaluated studies with psychics published until 1990 revealed that less than half of the studies reported positive results, i. e. that the psychic provided significantly more correct information than expected by chance (Schouten, 1994). However, most of these studies with a positive outcome are older ones in which potential sources of errors not accounted for in the evaluation might have inflated the results. However, the deviations from chance expectation from the studies with positive results, or the achievement in terms of

information provided, appeared often marginal and not impressive. The fact that a number of studies yielded significant positive results might be of interest scientifically, but from a practical point of view it is the usefulness of the information which counts. Most of these studies were carried out with at the time well-known psychics. It was therefore concluded that there is little reason to expect psychics to provide much correct information about unknown matters under no-feedback conditions.

The above-mentioned overview contained one experimental study which differed in important aspects from the others and which did include feedback conditions. This experiment (Boerenkamp, 1988) involved over 200 sessions with 12 psychics. Variables, as for instance degree of feedback, presence of target person and importance of event, were systematically varied over sessions. In the standard condition, psychics provided their paranormal impressions under the same circumstances as normally existed when they were consulted by a client. In the standard condition feedback varied from no feedback (not even non-verbal, the psychic handled an inductor and made the statements alone at home at a time he or she felt most optimal) to full feedback when a client was present who was free to react as he or she liked. For the quantitative evaluation of the data all statements were first rated by independent judges, who did not know which statements were correct or incorrect, on spontaneity and specificity. Only statements that on these criteria were judged to be of potential paranormal value (with a probability of 10% or less) were included in the evaluation. With this so-called window model all statements with a general or probable character (in view of the already available information to the psychic at that moment) were excluded from the analysis.

No evidence was found for paranormally acquired information under any of the conditions of this experiment. Two groups of non-psychics achieved comparable results, one randomly chosen and comparable in age, gender and educational background to the psychics, whereas the other group consisted of professionals used to deal with problems of people. It was observed that the information provided by the psychics was strongly influenced by the level of feedback, i.e. the amount of normally acquired information. The psychics' information varied from an average of 144 statements in the full-feedback condition to an average of 17 statements in the no-feedback condition when the statements were made by the psychic alone at home. This finding implies that sensorial acquired information plays an important role in the generation of supposedly paranormal impressions of psychics.

Boerenkamp was the first who made an extensive quantitative analysis of the verbal aspects of the statements made by psychics. For instance, the topics discussed and the verbal styles psychics use to convince their clients of the 'paranormal' character of the statements. The latter involved not only the use of specific types of statements, such as ambiguous statements which

can be either interpreted as a statement or as a question (the amount varied from 35% of the statements in the standard conditions to 10% in the no-feedback conditions), but also the way the psychics handled negative feedback, i.e. a denial by the client of the correctness of a statement made by the psychic. Insight in the verbal styles of psychics, although not the topic of this paper, helps to explain why many clients including police officers and relatives of victims or missing people might become impressed by what psychics are able to 'see', even in the case an objective evaluation would indicate that there was no reason at all to be impressed.

Research Data on the Use of Psychics by Police

The Brink study

There are cases of serious crime or missing persons in which psychics become involved either by their own initiative or on request by relatives or police. It is unclear how frequently this happens. Brink (1958, 1960) was the first who investigated this problem as part of his study on the legal aspects of the involvement of psychics in police investigations. He started his questionnaire study by establishing first that none of the 57 countries associated with the ICPO (International Criminal Police Organization, a predecessor of Interpol) officially accepted the involvement of psychics in police investigations. In addition, he asked 14 chiefs of police of big cities in Europe how they felt about psychics. All answered that they did not use psychics in their investigations. Brink then turned to Holland and mailed questionnaires to authorities in the legal system, mainly district attorneys charged with prosecuting criminals, and to police departments all over the country. His main questions were: "Did it happen in your district or city that police used psychics in criminal investigations and if yes, what were the results?;" "Did it happen that psychics participated in the search for missing persons or missing goods on your initiative?" and "Did it happen that psychics participated in the search for missing persons or missing goods on initiative of the relatives or friends?"

Brink received 199 responses, 53 from legal authorities and 146 from police departments. Eighty respondents (42%) answered the first question positive (no 112, no answer seven). Ten respondents had experienced that a psychic contributed directly to the solution of a case by providing the name or description of the perpetrator (no contribution 69, no answer 120). According to six respondents, accurate information of a psychic had indirectly contributed to the solution of a case (no solution 66, no answer 127). Unfortunately, it is not clear from the report whether these 10 and six respondents who reported a positive contribution overlap. If

they overlap 12.7% of the respondents who knew one or more cases in which psychics were involved would have had a positive experience of their usefulness. In the case of no overlap this proportion would be 21%. Twenty-six respondents (14%) affirmed that they had on one or more occasions asked advice from psychics in cases of missing persons or goods (no 162, no answer 11) but only one respondent considered this a positive experience (doubtful two, negative 23, no answer 173). As to the third question 89 (no 89, no answer 21) respondents (50%) knew one or more cases of missing persons or goods in which a psychic had participated on request of the relatives or friends. Seven respondents indicated a positive result of the involvement of the psychic, two respondents were uncertain and 86 respondents experienced a negative result (no answer 104).

Brink concluded from these data that “the police investigator, like the writer, expects little from the assistance of paranormally gifted persons” (p. 104). He added that the statements of the psychic usually are so speculative that it is “incorrect to use the information supplied by the paragnost concerning his extra-sensory experiences as a witness-statement in the penal process” (p. 105). It is evident that Brink himself does not belong to the 10% to 20% of the departments who had experienced that psychics did contribute to the solution of a criminal investigation because he adds the personal observation that he “was continually disappointed by the paragnost, both in the sporadic cases where the initiative to call upon the assistance of a paranormally gifted person came from the investigator (Brink) and in the cases where he gave his assistance at the insistence of the public” (p. 104). He observed that according to his experience “people, who, at a short notice, want information about the physical or psychical state of missing persons, or about the facts or data, attach an unfounded and non-critical value to statements of so-called paranormally gifted persons” (p. 104). According to him this noncritical attitude might explain why contrary to the police the public still tend to take psychics seriously.

The Leeftlang study

In 1979 Leeftlang, a student at the Dutch police academy, carried out a similar questionnaire study. He started his report with discussing a few anecdotal cases, all reported by police officers. One of these cases, in which the psychic correctly had predicted where and when a drowned child would be found, dated from 1963 and had already been reported in a police journal. The other cases, however, he had collected himself as part of his study. These cases, one with a positive result, one in which the advice of the psychic led to the probable suspects of arson and one a failure, had all taken place in the preceding two years. Leeftlang suspected already that the examples he gave of successful contributions of psychics to police investigations were

rather the exception than the rule because the majority of police officers he had interviewed as part of the preparations for his study had displayed a negative attitude towards psychics. Unlike Brink, Leeftang was not only interested in the experiences of police departments with psychics but also in the attitude of the departments towards the idea that psychics might assist in police investigations.

Leeftang mailed his questionnaire to the head of the detectives of all police departments in the nation. He asked the respondents to base their responses on their experiences of the last two years. Of the 109 respondents 67 (61%) had no experience with the involvement of psychics in police investigations. Of the 43 departments (39%) which did have experience with psychics, seven (16% of the 43) reported a positive experience and 36 (84%) a negative experience. The question was phrased in such a way that a positive experience implied that the psychic had provided information which contributed to the solution of the case. The 16% positive experiences agree well with the results of Brink who had found that between 10% and 20% of the departments who had experience with psychics reported a positive experience.

The 43 departments based their responses on 67 contributions of psychics. It is not clear from the report whether this number refers to 67 cases in which more than one psychic might have been involved or 67 contributions from individual psychics. However, in view of the phrasing of the question it probably refers to contributions from individual psychics. Over 70% (n=48) of these psychics were involved in the search for a missing person. The initiative to consult a psychic was most often (79%) taken by relatives or friends. The initiative to consult a psychic was only four times taken by the police department. In 57 (85%) contributions the information provided by the psychic did not contribute to a solution of the case. Seven (10%) times the information contributed indirectly to the solution of the case and three (4%) times the contribution resulted in solving the case. On average the departments had a negative attitude towards psychics and only 3% would be inclined to take themselves the initiative to consult a psychic. However, if the parents of a missing child would turn to a psychic 58% would be willing to check the information provided by the psychic if it contained the possible location of the child. The negative attitude towards psychics was significantly more prominent in the departments of the bigger cities. Not surprisingly, the departments which reported a positive experience with the involvement of psychics indicated a significantly more positive attitude. Leeftang concluded that the on average negative attitude is understandable but points out that still 14% of the contributions were considered useful to the investigation. He argues therefore that the involvement of psychics in police investigations is justified but only as a last remedy when all other methods have failed. He added that in the case psychics are consulted police should take care to avoid to raise false expectations in the minds of relatives and victims.

Studies by Sweat and Durm

Lyons & Truzzi's (1991) book on the blue sense creates the impression that the mass media in the United States compared to Europe more frequently feature stories on psychics aiding police in finding bodies of missing persons or in solving crimes. This might indicate that the use of psychics by police is more widespread in the United States. Sweat and Durm (1993) undertook an investigation in which the police departments of the 50 largest cities in the United States were asked to what extent psychics had been involved in police investigations and to what extent they had been successful. A questionnaire was sent to the chief of police in each city. Forty-eight departments responded. Seventeen (35%) departments affirmed that they had used or were using psychics in solving investigations. In 15 departments psychics had been involved in homicides, in one department in a missing persons investigation and in three departments in other crimes. Thirty-three cities indicated that they handled information received from psychics as no different than information received from other civilians but seven departments would handle it differently. Twenty-six departments answered the question "if your department has used psychics, was the information received more helpful in solving the case than other information received?" All answered no. The authors concluded that there is not a prevalent use of psychics among the police departments of the big cities in the United States.

Because it was pointed out that psychics are probably more often used in rural than in urban areas the authors decided to extend the study to police departments of small and medium-sized cities (Durm & Sweat, 1994). Although Truzzi (1993) had criticized the wording of the questions it was decided for the sake of comparison to use the original questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to 150 small and medium-sized cities. The response rate (43%) was the same for the small-sized and medium-sized cities. Of the 65 departments who responded 15 (23%) indicated that they had used psychics in investigations. In 13 departments the psychics had been involved in homicide investigations, in eight departments in tracing missing persons and in two departments in cases of kidnapping. None of the departments considered the information received from the psychics more helpful in solving the case than other information received. Thirteen of the 15 cities who did have experience with psychics in police investigations would not consider such information as more helpful than information received from a regular source. The authors concluded that rural police departments use psychics less than large cities and that psychics are definitely not helpful to police investigations.

The Milke study

Milke, the head of the Missing Persons Bureau of the state of Bavaria, Germany, discusses in an exhaustive treatise on the legal and practical aspects of police investigations of missing persons the results of his questionnaire study concerning the contributions of psychics to the finding of missing persons (Milke, 1994, chapter 29). The book is written in a “sehr persönlich gehaltenen Stil” (a highly personal style, p. 5) and that perhaps explains why the results of the study are presented without numerical data. Reasons for the study were that the state bureau for criminal investigation (Bayerisches Landeskriminalamt), in fact Milke’s own department, lacked an insight in how often psychics were involved in the investigation of missing persons, whether the involvement of psychics created false hope in the relatives and whether the suspicion that the relatives were financially exploited by psychics was true. The results of this study was to be used by the police to advice relatives who considered to consult a psychic and would also be useful to the police itself in the case they received information from psychics and had to decide whether to follow up on that information.

Local police departments in Bavaria were sent two questions. They were requested to communicate, with a short description of the cases, how often and in which cases the police or relatives had received offers from psychics to assist in the investigation or the relatives had taken the initiative to consult psychics. In the second question they were asked how often the advice of the psychics had succeeded or failed in finding the missing person or how often it happened that the predictions had been partly correct or false. Many police departments reacted. Most of the cases they sent in had taken place in the previous five years. Because the respondents had often used terms such as ‘some’, ‘several’ or ‘a great many’ to indicate the number of psychics who had participated in investigations Milke could not establish the exact number but he estimated it to be approximately 100. Because he himself knew of many cases in which psychics were involved and which were not described by the respondents he assumed that the real number must be much higher. No case was reported in which the police had taken the initiative. The more publicity about a case the higher the number of psychics who contacted police or relatives. Milke did not learn much about the fees psychics requested for their services but he concluded from his investigation that probably the clients were not financially exploited, provided one was not of the opinion that any money which was spent on psychics should be considered a waste. He had noted that especially in dramatic widely published cases many psychics offered their services for free.

Milke received no case in which the psychics had contributed a useful clue to the police or had helped the investigation in any way. According to him it is unlikely that a more positive

result would have been found if also cases had been included in which the psychics only communicated with the relatives. If a disappearance would have been solved not as a result of the police investigation but for other reasons police always had to ascertain how that had happened. Consequently, they would have learned when the result had been due to the advice of a psychic. Because of this 100% failure of psychics Milke wondered why psychics continue to engage in cases of missing persons. He speculated that psychics continue to take the risk because a hit in a well-publicized case could bring them fame and a source of income thanks to the resulting flow of clients. Milke concluded that police should not follow leads supplied by psychics and that they should not concede to pressure from media, superiors or relatives to do so, even when the investigation is at a dead end. That might be difficult, especially when the relatives themselves believe in clairvoyance. A solution to that problem might be to advise the relatives to consult more than one psychic. If they do so the relatives will probably hear different stories from different psychics and hence they can discover themselves that most or all of such information must be incorrect.

Discussion

The percentages observed in these studies for the involvement of psychics in police investigations agree relatively well (42%, 39%, 35% and 23% respectively). Hence it appears that approximately one in three departments has experience with the involvement of psychics in investigations. This figure is probably an underestimation. The questionnaires were addressed to the heads of the departments. Some of them might not have liked the idea of an association between their department and psychics. In addition, a head of a department will base its response mainly on formal reports of investigations. It is likely that in a number of investigations detectives had contact with psychics without mentioning it in a formal report. Many detectives have a negative view on psychics and want to have nothing to do with it or they are aware that their superiors have such negative feelings. Or they might consider it a waste of time to report about the activities of psychics, because of the negative results of their involvement. Although the response rates for the medium-sized and small cities in the United States was rather low the percentages for the use of psychics by police departments in the United States obtained, 35% and 23% respectively, are on average smaller than the percentages found in the Dutch studies (42% and 39%). Hence it appears that despite the strong interest of the media the use of psychics by police is somewhat lower in the United States. However, it is quite possible that the differences observed are also due to the differences in the way the questions were formulated. In the USA studies the question was 'Did your department use psychics' whereas Brink and Leeftang asked 'Do you know of investigations in which psychics were involved'. In many investigations,

especially those concerning missing persons, psychics are consulted by relatives. Police might hear about the suggestions of these psychics via the relatives but they would probably not rate such activity as use of the psychic by the police department. Hence such cases would probably yield a positive response in the Dutch studies but a negative one in the American investigations.

The studies vary strongly as regards the observed usefulness of psychics. Brink reported a success rate of either 12.7% or 21%. Leeftang a success rate of 16%. The two studies from the USA and the German study from Milke, however, reported a success rate of 0%. Here again the differences can to a certain extent be explained by the way the questions were phrased. As Truzzi (1993) already pointed out, in the American studies the question was whether the information of the psychics was 'more helpful' or 'more valuable' than other information received in the investigation. In the case described in Brink's thesis the psychic solved the riddle of how the money was stolen without the vault being damaged. Undeniably this was a positive contribution to the investigation. However, the psychic did not find the perpetrator. It might well be that in the American studies the answer to the question of success based on this case would have been 'no'. If the question had been whether the psychic information had been helpful or valuable to the investigation, as was the case in the Brink and Leeftang studies, the same respondent might have answered 'yes'.

Milke's negative result is somewhat puzzling. That in none of the cases a psychic succeeded in finding the missing person is quite possible. But, apart from the fact that there are psychics with an extensive experience in investigations of missing persons, only from a statistical point of view it seems improbable that none of the hundred or more psychics ever predicted anything which was only partly correct. Many psychics obtain impressions about the fate of the missing person, for instance that the person committed suicide and is not alive anymore. These predictions cannot always have been incorrect. Perhaps this negative finding is due to the way he obtained his data. Milke had to base himself on the reports, received from the heads of the departments, which must have been rather condensed and restricted as to the information on the activities of the psychics involved. It might well be that a detective at the time of the investigation had a different idea about the validity and usefulness of the suggestions of the psychics. Another consideration is that at that time Milke functioned as head of the national bureau for missing persons. Perhaps the local departments rather viewed him as a superior than as an investigator. If his skeptical views on psychics were already known that might have motivated the departments to express themselves carefully when reporting on the nature of their connections with psychics.

Research Data on the Contributions to Police Investigations of Unsolicited Psychic Impressions

When investigating crimes which attract much media attention police usually receives many unsolicited letters with supposedly paranormally acquired information about the crime and the perpetrator. When such a crime is solved it becomes possible to examine how accurate this information was.

The Atlanta murders

At the request of the police of Atlanta, USA. who were trying to solve a series of child murders, Roll & Grimson (1983) analyzed the more than 2000 psychical reports police had received. The letters were sent to the police in the first half of 1981 when already 12 children had been murdered. The murderer was apprehended in June of that year.

After eliminating content-less reports and combining different contributions sent in by the same person 580 reports remained for analysis. Of these contributions 146 were from persons who claimed to be a psychic and 434 from persons who did not make such claims. The contributors judged significantly often the perpetrator to be male and black, which turned out to be correct. Except for the possible motive (sexual versus revenge) no significant differences were observed between the psychic and non-psychics contributors. Although some reports mentioned details which afterwards appeared to apply to the perpetrator apparently no report provided a combination of correct details which could have been useful to the investigation. According to the authors simple logic could have led to most 'hits' observed, for instance that the perpetrator would be male and black. The last name of the perpetrator was Williams, not mentioned in any psychic contribution. However, the authors found it of interest that of the names provided the combination WIL was used most commonly as the first three letters.

The Heineken abduction

In November 1983 the well-known Dutch beer tycoon Heineken and his driver were abducted in Amsterdam. Demands for ransom were made. During the three weeks the investigation lasted police received about 1500 tips from the public, among them 112 ostensibly paranormal impressions. Eight times (7%) these impressions were sufficiently detailed to allow police to follow them up but none of these actions yielded result. After the case was solved and the perpetrators apprehended Neu (1985) analyzed the 112 psychic contributions and found that there

was little agreement between the statements of the different reports and between the statements and the facts of the case. None of the locations mentioned by the psychics where the victims were supposed to be kept prison came close to the real location. Only three reports contained statements which, in hindsight, appeared to be of interest. For instance, one psychic felt that one of the perpetrators was a horse-lover and that the group of perpetrators had something to do with speedboats. However, even if the police had known beforehand which three of the 112 reports contained veridical information it is doubtful whether that information would have contributed to the solution of the case. Despite the disappointing results Neu proposed that on a next occasion better results might be obtained if the information from and the activities of the psychics were processed and managed by someone with experience in dealing with psychics.

The Heijn abduction

The opportunity to test the validity of this suggestion came six years later when G. J. Heijn, one of the directors of the Ahold concern was abducted (Gerding et al., 1989). The company offered a substantial reward for information and psychics were actively encouraged by researchers such as Neu to take part in the investigation and to try to find the victim. Psychics accompanied by researchers attempted to reconstruct the route by which the victim was transported in the hope that this would lead to the place where he was kept prison. Psychics handled objects which belonged to the victim and gave their paranormal impressions about the fate and whereabouts of Heijn. A number of search actions based on these impressions yielded no result. As in the Heineken case the impressions of the various psychics were most often at variance with each other.

In addition, the more than 1,900 unsolicited paranormal tips received by police from other psychics were analyzed on the assumption that patterns in the information might give an indication about the location where the victim could be found. However, all these attempts failed and after the case was solved, about seven months, later it turned out that hardly any of the psychic contributions received had been correct. The most remarkable finding was that two psychics had mentioned a 'Galgenberg' (Gallowshill). There is a Galgenberg 12 km away from the location where the victim had been buried by the perpetrator. Interestingly, the group of persons who called themselves in their letters as being paranormally gifted (46%) were on average less successful in 'seeing' important details, such as the number of abductors, the area in which the victim was hidden or the fact that the victim was already killed and buried, than the more modest contributors who just claimed to have had an incidental paranormal experience.

The lack of psychic successes might have been partly due to the fact that the characteristics of the crime appeared to deviate strongly from the 'typical' abduction case, much discussed in

the media during the investigation. The abduction was planned and committed by one person singlehanded, the victim was killed and buried on the day of the abduction and the car used was a simple Fiat instead of one of the more fancy makes favored by criminals. Only seven reports (0.4%) mentioned that one perpetrator was involved, 75 (3.8%) felt that the victim was buried in the woods and only five mentioned the correct make of the car. The unusual characteristics of the case combined with the near total failure of all the psychics' efforts supports the finding of Boerenkamp that paranormal impressions of psychics are influenced by experience and feedback, in this case feedback in the sense of normal information obtained via the media.

Research Data on the Usefulness of Contributions of Psychics to Police Investigation

Most experimental research with psychics is focused on the assumed paranormal character of the psychics' statements. In these studies, the psychic is usually required to provide information about a subject about which he or she knows nothing at that moment. For instance, the psychic is presented with an object and is asked to provide as much as possible information about the unknown person to whom the object belongs. This is a somewhat artificial situation but it makes the statistical evaluation easier. It is difficult to evaluate the assumed paranormal character of the statements made by the psychic if the content of these statements has been 'contaminated' by previous normally acquired knowledge. However, when psychics become involved in police investigations the situation differs in important aspects from the experimental situation. In real life the psychic has already knowledge about the problem, either from the media or because people involved in the investigation, relatives or police, have provided information. And the success of the psychic is not in the first place evaluated in terms of the supposedly paranormal character of the statements but mainly in view of the usefulness of these statements for the investigation. Unfortunately, the method applied in most studies on the usefulness of psychics appeared to have been strongly influenced by the design of the studies which focused on the paranormal character of the statements. That strongly limits their value.

How can the usefulness of the paranormal impressions of psychics be measured? One approach is to establish the usefulness of the contributions in view of the results. For instance, did the psychics provide the name of the perpetrator of the crime. Another approach is to compare the usefulness of contributions of psychics with the usefulness of contributions of groups of nonpsychics.

The Value of the Contributions in View of the Results

The Boerenkamp study

As part of the 'Importance of event' condition of the Boerenkamp (1988) study discussed above 14 psychics, among them well-known psychics as Croiset or Heilijgers, were consulted by a client (the present author) about the fate of a friend who had disappeared. In the sessions the psychic was presented a photograph of the missing person and asked for impressions about what had happened and where he could be found. The client answered requests for information as best he could and corrected wrong statements of the psychic. Hence the conditions of this study were in agreement with the normal real-life situation when psychics provide impressions about a missing person. The number of statements made by the psychics ranged from 21 to 120 with an average of 64. One psychic provided a drawing which indicated on a kind of map the location of the person. Applying the window model the judges reduced the total number of statements from 902 to 65 statements which were judged to be of sufficient potential paranormal value. The internal consistency of the various psychics turned out to be low. Psychics differed in their impressions about the reasons for the disappearance and about the location where the target person might be found. If the information received was sufficiently specific as regards the whereabouts of the missing person attempts were made to find him but these were all unsuccessful. The body was found weeks later. It turned out that the man had committed suicide by drowning himself in the North Sea. Only one statement of a psychic concerning the fate or the location of the missing person (the psychic stated that he drowned) was correct. None of the statements of the psychics were of use for the investigation.

The Reiser, Ludwig, Saxe & Wagner study

Reiser et al. (1979, reprinted in Nickell, 1994), associated with a police department in California, carried out a study with the aim to investigate the feasibility of utilizing psychic information to aid in the identification and apprehension of suspects in major crime cases (Nickell, 1994, pp. 193–194). Hence the question was whether psychics were able to provide sufficient information in order to apprehend the perpetrator. Twelve psychics (eight professionals, four nonprofessionals) made statements about four crimes (two unsolved, two solved). Each psychic received a closed envelope which contained an item associated with one of these crimes. The impressions obtained from the envelope used as an inductor were recorded. Then the envelope was opened and after having seen the item the psychic could add additional impressions.

For the analysis only verifiable statements about in advance established key-indicators (for instance details about the victim such as gender, age, address, cause of death, modus-operandi of the crime) were considered. Non-verifiable statements were discarded. In view of the stated aim of the study most of the chosen key-indicators seem somewhat unusual. It is not clear how psychic impressions about for instance gender, age or address of the victim, information which is normally available to the investigators, would aid in the apprehension of the perpetrator. The tables in the publication only provide for each psychic the indicators which were correctly identified. No data are provided on total number of statements, number of incorrect statements and number of discarded statements.

The authors concluded that the psychics did not provide significant additional information leading to the solution of these crimes. In view of the stated aim “to aid in the identification and apprehension of suspects” this conclusion appears justified. However, in a subsequent publication (Reiser & Klyver, 1994, see below) stronger claims were made. There it is stated that “the information generated by the psychics ... was judged to be no better than chance” (p. 205). In view of the fact that the authors were not able, as is stated on the same page, to “assign(ing) clearly derived probabilities to the data produced by the psychics” this conclusion appears to be based on a subjective impression and not on a proper quantitative evaluation.

The Value of the Contributions Compared with the Contributions of Other Groups

The Reiser & Klyver study

Approximately around the time the Reiser et al. study (1979, 1994) was carried out a report was published by the Californian Department of Justice (1979) which presented a more positive view of the use of psychics by law enforcement’s officers. Of the 11 officers who had worked with psychics eight reported positive experiences. According to this report “a talented psychic can assist by helping to locate the geographic area of a missing person, narrow the number of leads to be concentrated on, highlight information that has been overlooked, and provide information previously overlooked by the investigator” (Cited in Reiser & Klyver, 1982). Hence two reports had appeared on the usefulness of psychics with contradictory results. Therefore, Reiser decided to run a replication study. Perhaps because they had become aware of the subjective and unrealistic criterion for usefulness applied in the first study (Reiser & Klyver, 1982, reprinted in Nickell, 1994) this time two additional groups of subjects were included which could provide empirical reference points for measuring achievement. Twelve psychics, eleven students and twelve homicide detectives took part in the study.

Four items of physical evidence from four different murder cases, two solved and two unsolved, were sealed in envelopes and presented to the participants. Like the psychics the nonpsychic participants were requested to take each piece of evidence and to intuit or guess characteristics of victim and suspect. Undoubtedly a most unusual task for them and especially for the homicide detectives contrary to their normal way of working. According to the authors the detectives clearly felt uncomfortable with the task. This resulted in very terse and highly qualified statements from the detectives. The students appeared less inhibited. The psychics produced approximately 10 times as much information as either of the two comparison groups.

The data generated by each subject were classified into 20 response categories and the total number of accurate statements for each group about the victims (summed over all cases) and about the suspects (summed over the two solved cases) were established. The groups appeared not to differ statistically in the total numbers of correct statements. The authors observed that no information that would have been especially useful to the investigation, such as first or last names, license plate numbers, apartment house locations, etc., was accurately produced by any of the subjects. Hence they concluded that, in agreement with the findings of the previous study, the assistance of psychics in the investigation of major crimes is unlikely to produce useful information.

Lyons & Truzzi (1991, pp. 52–53) criticized various aspects of the two Reiser studies. Their main objections are that a number of statements of the psychics which might have been verifiable and, if true, useful to the solution of the crime, were discarded by the authors as ‘unverifiable’ and hence excluded from the analysis. Also, no distinction was made between no information provided and incorrect information and therefore ‘no information’ statements (including perhaps discarded non-verifiable statements) were treated as a miss. This is a disputable procedure but in fact without consequence because the design of both Reiser studies do not lend themselves to establish the expected accuracy of the statements. Nothing can be concluded about the significance of the number of correct statements in these experiments. However, even if the subjective conclusion of the authors that nothing of investigative value was gained in these studies is correct, it does not tell us much about the usefulness of psychics because the conditions were very artificial. Normally psychics and detectives work on the basis of general, and in the case of detectives sometimes very detailed, knowledge of the crime or disappearance. It seems a bit far-fetched to generalize the findings from this artificial situation to the conclusion that therefore psychics, detectives and students would also not be able to make useful contributions to a crime investigation in real-life situations. All we can conclude from these studies is that it appears not possible for psychics, detectives or students by only touching or seeing one physical item associated with an unknown crime scene to obtain accurate and detailed impressions which results in apprehending the perpetrator.

The Lucas report

Lyons and Truzzi reported on what they call a semi-experiment carried out by a news team of a television station. Because I don't have access to the report (Lucas, 1984) I follow the description given by Lyons & Truzzi (1991, pp. 51–52). A group of psychics examined original evidence from about a dozen unsolved and solved crimes and then gave their psychic impressions in answer to questions. An unspecified number of college students served as a control group and were asked to make 'wild guesses' in answer to the same questions. According to the author each group scored according to chance and the psychics did not better than the students. No details were given about the way these conclusions were reached. Therefore, it seems likely that no quantitative analyses were carried out and that the conclusions were based on the subjective impressions of the author or experimenters.

The Wiseman, West & Stemman study

In 1994 the authors of this study (Wiseman, West & Stemman, 1996a) were contacted by a British television company who was interested to film a controlled test of three well-known psychic detectives. As the authors stated in the paper, they welcomed the opportunity to undertake additional research into this topic and to design a test which did not suffer from the methodological shortcomings of the Brink and the Reiser studies. The test compared the performance of three psychics with a control group of three students. Participants were presented objects (a shoe, a bullet and a scarf) each related to a different crime. These crimes were solved and about each a great deal was known. First the participants described their impressions concerning each crime. Then they were requested to match 18 statements involving uncommon details, six for each crime, to the crime they were related to. This was done because psychics with more experience in criminal matters might have an advantage over the students because of the information which could be derived from the nature of the objects. For instance, that the scarf was related to a murder by strangulation. Examples of the uncommon details the participants had to match with the proper crime are that a victim had an only son of four years old, that the victim was eccentric or that the perpetrator had many children.

Based on the matching task none of the participants scored significantly above chance and no difference was observed between the scores of the psychics and students. Overall, the psychics provided a total of 39 statements and the students 20 statements in their descriptions of the crimes. A comparison of the level of accuracy of these statements scored by two independent judges also revealed no significant difference between psychics and students. The significance

level of the accuracy of the statements could not be established but many were judged to be obvious, for instance that the scarf was used to strangle the victim. No participant produced precise information such as the name of the perpetrator or of the car registration number that would have been helpful to investigating officers. Therefore, the authors concluded that this small-scale study provided no evidence to support the claims of psychic detection. It was noted that the psychics after the debriefing stressed the positive elements of their statements. Therefore, the authors propose that some psychic detection may appear to work because inaccurate predictions are forgotten whereas successful ones are recalled and elaborated on.

As in the Reiser studies the design and artificial character of this test make it difficult to generalize the results to real-life situations. The participants were presented with an object which they knew to be related to a crime but that was all the information they had. They were aware that their performance was filmed for TV. No feedback was provided. The only statistical analysis was based on a guessing task involving specific details about which the participants had no spontaneous impressions when they handled the objects and which to a large extent would have been irrelevant for the investigation if these details had been known to police. The significance level of the accuracy of the spontaneous impressions the psychics did have about the crimes could not be established but was subjectively considered to be of no interest because many correct statements were judged to be obvious. Since this evaluation depends on what is considered 'obvious' it might explain why afterwards the authors and psychics appeared to differ in their assessment of the achievements. Already soon after the study was shown on TV one of the participating psychics declared in a TV broadcast that this test had proven his psychic abilities after which in another TV broadcast the first author denied that claim and stated that the test had, in fact, resulted in negative findings. This study was also published in the *Skeptical Inquirer* (Wiseman, West & Stemman, 1996b) but, probably to avoid possible cognitive dissonance in the minds of the readers of that journal, in this version the authors left out all references to methodological flaws in the Reiser studies.

The O'Keeffe & Alison study

O' Keeffe & Alison (2000) examined the differences between the account-giving styles of eight psychics with a control group of 12 students. Although the emphasis of the study was on the rhetoric styles both groups employed, the data also allowed a comparison of the average number of accurate statements. A police officer not informed about the details of the crimes presented each participant with objects or photos associated with three different recent sexual and/or violent crimes. With each test, only some minimal information on the crime was provided, for

instance that the crime involved the homicide of one person. The participant was then asked for impressions about the crime and the offender. The crimes were presented successively in the same session.

For the evaluation the accuracy of the impressions was assessed by independent judges. The psychics made on average 10 statements about each case, the controls on average five statements. The psychics turned out to be more verbose than the controls because although they provided twice the number of statements they used three times the number of words for their statements. For the evaluation of the achievements of the two groups only the number of accurate and inaccurate statements was considered. The probability of the accurate and inaccurate statements was not assessed. An independent t-test showed no difference for the number of accurate statements made by psychics and controls in each test. However, the psychics made significantly more inaccurate statements.

Discussion

Nearly all studies discussed above differed in important aspects from the normal situations in real life in which psychics are active. Participants were only given an object related to a crime, no further information on the crime or crimes was available. Feedback was not provided which explains, in agreement with Boerenkamp's (1988) findings, the on average low number of statements observed in these studies. Some studies deviated also in other aspects. For instance, because the evaluation was based on beforehand established specific details of the crimes which had to be 'seen' or because the participants had in the same session to provide information on three different crimes. In none of the studies the accuracy of the spontaneous impressions of the psychics or controls could be statistically assessed. Therefore, no formal conclusions could be drawn whether the amount of correct information provided by the psychics exceeded chance levels and consequently could have been more useful than just guessing.

The artificial character of most of these studies might be partly due to the influence of the design of studies aimed at the establishing a possible paranormal character of the psychics' impressions. But also because the expectations of the investigators about the usefulness of psychics might have been unrealistic. No anecdotal case is known in which a psychic only by handling an object related to a crime about which he or she had no further information was able to correctly identify the perpetrator. If names are mentioned about possible suspects, as happened in the case described by Brink, it is because the psychic had already information about the crime and about the people who were or might be involved. If a criterion for usefulness is applied, as probably was the case in some of these studies, that psychics must provide information which

directly leads to the perpetrator, the outcome will always be that psychics are useless for police investigations. It might well be that the image many of these investigators had of psychics was rather based on the, often exaggerated, accounts of psychics who love publicity than on personal experience with psychics who were involved in police investigations, among them many with a less self-promoting attitude.

However, the studies all agree in the conclusion of the researchers that the psychics did no better than the controls in providing useful information. Since the authors were familiar with the original material this observation is important because undoubtedly the researchers would have noted if one or more psychics had provided striking details about a crime or offender which could have been helpful in an investigation. But the artificial character of most of these experiments makes it questionable to generalize the findings to real-life situations. To conclude from these studies that psychics would be unable to provide useful contributions to police investigations in real-life situations would be as unjustified as, for instance, to conclude from the Reiser & Klyver (1994) study that detectives are not able to do so.

Psychic Detection and Criminal Profiling

The aim of criminal profiling is to assist police in the investigation of serious crime. Criminal profilers use information gathered at the scene of the crime and from victims and witnesses to construct a biographical sketch that is as specific as possible to the type of person who perpetrated the crime (Kocsis et al., 2000). Criminal profiling is based on the assumption that criminals give away details about themselves by their behavior at the crime scene. Therefore, profiling seems most valuable in the case of contact crimes such as murder or rape. In addition, profilers use for their predictions statistical data, i.e. results from analyses of collections of comparable solved crimes which yield data on perpetrators such as the average age, marital status, etc., and they rely on clinical psychological knowledge. Criminal profiling was first used by the FBI in 1971 and the FBI approach has developed over the years into a systematic process that involves the following sequence of stages: data assimilation, crime classification, crime reconstruction and profile generation. The psychological profile of the personality of the perpetrator can then be used to direct the investigation. Although originally the focus was on the generation of the profile of the perpetrator the investigative suggestions derived from the analysis of the crime have at present become more prominent (Jackson et al., 1993).

Criminal profiling and psychic detection have much in common. Profilers and psychics make predictions about unknown facts associated with a crime or a disappearance with the aim to help to solve the crime, to apprehend the perpetrator or to find the missing person. The con-

clusions stated above by the California Department of Justice (1979) concerning the potential use of psychics (can assist by helping to locate the geographic area of a missing person, narrow the number of leads to be concentrated on, highlight information that has been overlooked) also apply to a large extent to the potential use of profilers. Both fields have also in common that they draw much public interest. The crimes or disappearances involved are often of a rather sensational character which in itself already generates a lot of media attention. The mass media tend to focus especially on the relatively few cases in which either a profiler or a psychic appeared to have played an important role in solving the case. This one-sided concentration on successes easily creates the impression that both approaches are quite effective. The two fields also share a somewhat mysterious character. This is obvious in the case of the paranormal but it also holds to a certain extent for the activities of profilers. Kocsis et al. (2000) observed that "the media often depict the profiler as able to evoke apparently mystical visions of the way in which the crime was committed" (p. 313). The public does not always realize that a profiler has knowledge of many details of the crime and of statistical data about comparable crimes which are not available to them. Therefore, although criminal profiling is based on a rational approach, the sometimes accurate predictions of profilers might in the eyes of the public also appear like a 'magical' feat.

The main differences between criminal profiling and psychic detection concern the focus of attention, the accuracy and the method on which the predictions are based. However, these differences are less strong than they appear on first sight.

The original focus of criminal profiling was on providing a psychological profile of the perpetrator. This is in contrast to psychics who tend to focus on the victim. But part of the sequence of profiling stages, which is the basis of the FBI approach, is crime reconstruction, in which the characteristics and behavior of the victim play a central role. On the other hand, many psychics not only obtain impressions about the victim but also about the person who committed the crime.

As regards the accuracy of criminal profiling and psychic detection, the few available data suggest that both approaches are less successful than the public might think. The investigators of the studies discussed above were not impressed by the effectiveness of the psychics in providing useful information about the crimes involved. No doubt due to the fact that criminal profiling is a recent development the number of studies on the effectiveness of criminal profiling is even lower than the number of studies on the contributions of psychics to police investigations. Jackson et al. (1993) appear to have been the first to address this problem quantitatively. They analyzed extensively 20 cases from the Netherlands in which profilers assisted. The majority of the detectives investigating these cases were satisfied with the assistance of the profilers but mainly because of the investigative advice and because they learned much from the experience of the profiler when discussing the case. As regards the expected task of the profilers it was

found that only in 30% of the cases a profile of the perpetrator was actually made. Those that were made seemed not successful.

In daily practice both profilers and psychics use available information on the crime when making predictions. Hence the most optimal test for the potential usefulness of psychic detection would be to compare psychics with criminal profilers under the condition that both have the same information on the crime.

The Pinizotto & Finkel study

There are only a few studies in which criminal profilers were compared to other groups as regards their ability to provide accurate predictions about the perpetrator of a crime. In a comparative study (Pinizotto & Finkel, 1990) an analysis of predictions about the (known) offender of a sex offence case revealed that profilers scored significantly better on accuracy scores than detectives, psychologists and students. However, similar differences were not found when the predictions concerned the perpetrator of a homicide. The profilers did not appear to process the material in a way qualitatively different from the other groups. The fact that the accuracy scores of the non-profiler groups came close to those of the profilers may have been partly due to the fact that multiple choice questionnaires were used. That might have given the non-profilers groups suggestions about the crime which they otherwise would not have considered. This study did not include a group of psychics. However, the study discussed below did.

The Kocsis, Irwin, Hayes & Nunn study

In real-life situations the information about the crime available to psychics is in general less than the information available to profilers. According to the results of a study by Kocsis et al. (2000) profilers tend to yield more accurate predictions about the perpetrator of a crime than psychics, even in the case that the available information is the same for the two groups. However, the differences were not large. In this study five groups of participants, profilers, detectives, psychologists, students and psychics, were presented with a detailed report of a (previously solved) homicide case. The report included a scene of crime report, postmortem information, details of the identity and background of the victim, etc. Participants were requested to write a detailed description of the person they envisaged as the offender in the case. After that they had to answer a multiple-choice questionnaire concerning characteristics of the offender. The analyses were based on the accuracy of the answers to the multiple-choice questionnaire.

The profilers scored on average 42% correct responses, more than the psychics who scored on average 34% correct responses. The other groups who participated in the study, detectives,

psychologists and students, obtained respectively 35%, 38% and 36% correct responses. The profilers also scored significantly better than expected on the basis of the social stereotype of a murderer whereas the psychics did not. In other words, the predictions of the psychics did not differ from predictions based on the stereotype the public has about an offender of that type of crime. This finding indicates that the assumed paranormal impressions of psychics about the offender are influenced by that social stereotype. On the other hand, the fact that profilers are still considered to be useful to police investigations and the relatively small difference in success percentages between profilers and psychics suggest, that it is unlikely that the contributions of psychics are entirely worthless.

Discussion

The results of the two studies indicate that profilers tend to do better than non-profilers, including psychics, but that the differences in accuracy are small. The main difference between criminal profiling and psychic detection seems to be the method on which profilers and psychics base their predictions. Psychics claim that their predictions are based on paranormal impressions. However, the quantitative research into the abilities of psychics in general, discussed above, has demonstrated that knowledge about the circumstances of the target person and the experience of the psychic does influence the extent and content of the supposedly paranormal impressions. Psychics apparently apply a mixture of knowledge, experience and psychic ability. Criminal profiling is supposed to be a rational method based on experience, knowledge and psychological insights. However, in most publications on profiling it is added that intuition also contributes to the results. For instance, Jackson et al. (1993) when discussing the FBI approach to profiling stated that the resulting profile is “essentially an opinion but obviously an informed opinion based not only on psychological knowledge ... but also on ... straightforward detective intuition” (p. 8). Kocsis et al. (2000) devoted an entire paragraph to the role of intuition in profiling and concluded that “the value of intuitive processes to psychological profiling remains an open question” (p. 314). Hence from a pragmatic point of view the differences between the two approaches seem rather a difference in method claimed and in name-giving, psychic versus intuition, than a fundamental difference in nature of approach.

Conclusions

Psychics are occasionally consulted in police investigations, and in some cases the police have come to a positive assessment of their contributions. However, it remains unclear whether these

relatively sporadic positive experiences justify the time and money spent on all the other useless contributions made by psychics. Unsolicited psychic impressions, such as those received by the investigating authorities in the Atlanta murder case and the Heijn and Heineken kidnapping cases, appeared to be of no use. According to studies that have examined the general abilities of psychics and in which the accuracy of their statements could be statistically evaluated, it appears that psychics have achieved significant results in some of the studies, but the practical usefulness of the information provided is limited. None of these studies, however, addressed police investigative work. The experimental studies, on the other hand, which focused on the possible usefulness of psychics in police investigations, almost all used experimental conditions that differed considerably from practical reality. Furthermore, the design of these studies was unsuitable for a statistical evaluation of the practical value of psychics' spontaneous insights. The only study that included a comparison between profilers and psychics under realistic conditions showed that profilers achieved better results, but that the differences between the two groups were small. However, the fact that psychics have not achieved any outstanding results in any of the studies discussed so far, as well as the finding that psychics have proven to be less useful than profilers and police detectives under comparable conditions, suggest that the likelihood of the police benefiting from the contributions of psychics is not high.

PART II: Unsolicited Contributions of Psychics in High-profile Disappearances

The few studies available on the usefulness of unsolicited impressions from psychics, which we discussed in Part I of this article, mostly concerned rather unusual crimes, such as kidnappings and serial murders. However, psychics are most frequently involved in investigations concerning missing persons. These are often limited to local areas and receive little media attention. There are, however, a few examples where a missing person case has attracted nationwide media attention. This is the case, for example, when young girls go missing who may have been victims of murder. Cases of this kind often generate hundreds of unsolicited submissions from psychics. The author has obtained and analyzed data on two such cases.

The Poolman Investigation

The disappearance

On November 28, 1991, the seven-year old Nympe Poolman disappeared. She had gone shopping at the supermarket with her father. On the way home, at about 15.30 in the afternoon, her father dropped her off about 600 meters from where they lived because Nympe wanted to walk the last stretch home. She never arrived there. The Poolman family lived on the outskirts of a small village, Vriescheloo, in a rural area in Groningen, the northern province of Holland, not far from the German border. The disappearance attracted a lot of media attention, not only because of the age of the girl but also because it appeared incomprehensible how a young girl could disappear without a trace on an open, quiet country road close to her home. Search and rescue actions by police started immediately and were continued for many days but without success. As usual witnesses came forward who claimed to have seen her at various locations in the country but none of these leads yielded results and for more than a year her whereabouts remained a mystery.

The parents were interested in esoteric topics such as astrology and dowsing and strongly welcomed the cooperation of psychics. They organized search actions in which the father accompanied by a group of psychics tried to locate the missing girl following the psychics' impressions. Parents and police communicated regularly and the suggestions from the psychics were passed on to the police. Police also received many verbal and written communications from psychics separately. All verbal communications from psychics, either received via the parents or directly, and the content of some letters from psychics, were recorded in the BPS (the police computer process management system). Letters from psychics not processed in the BPS were kept in a separate file. On a few occasions, police followed up on suggestions of psychics, mainly in the case a specific address or location was mentioned which could relatively easily be checked out. None of these actions yielded anything of interest except one time when it appeared that on the location suggested by the psychic a man lived who in the past had been accused of indecent involvement with his own children, a fact only known to the police. However, this man had nothing to do with the disappearance of Nympe.

In February 1993 a German named Georg Adler was arrested for the rape of a young girl in the Netherlands two weeks before. The man, an ex-sailor, had already been in jail from 1987 till 1990 for the rape of various German children. After his release from jail he went to live in Bunde, Germany, where he grew up and where his father got him a job at a waste depot located in Breinermoor, also in Germany, approximately 11 km from Bunde. Bunde is close to the Dutch border and only 11 km from Vriescheloo. This man confessed to the rape of another

six-year old Dutch girl in the summer of 1992 and later on also confessed to the abduction and murder of Nymphe. According to his confession he had been driving around in his car looking for a girl to rape. When waiting for a while alongside a road in Holland he had spotted a young girl walking alone. After the abduction which was not seen by anyone he had driven to a parking lot where he had tried to rape the girl but was interrupted by the arrival of another car. Although Adler gave different versions of what happened next most probably he then strangled the girl to prevent her to call for help. He did state that the girl died while still being in Holland. After her death he drove back to Germany where, after a visit to his girlfriend, he went to the waste depot of which he had a key and there he put the body in one of the containers for medical waste. These containers were regularly shipped to England where the content was burned in a facility especially constructed for the destruction of medical waste. Adler was sentenced for the murder of the girl. Her body has never been recovered.

The contributions of the psychics

In total 114 contributions from psychics were available for the analyses, 88 recorded in the BPS and 26 filed as letters and not included in the BPS. Three of the 88 BPS records contained impressions of several unknown psychics which were reported to the police by the father of the missing girl.

From each contribution the following variables were scored. Details on the psychic who contributed the information:

- gender, date of receiving the information, how the information was available (BPS record and/or letter), had the psychic advised police before, was the psychic known as a professional psychic, did the psychic live in Groningen or Drenthe (the adjacent province) so that it can be assumed that he or she was familiar with the area of disappearance.
- details of information of relevance for the investigation: fate of the missing girl (alive and kept somewhere inside a house, dead and buried, dead and body left in nature, dead and body in water), number of details concerning the location where she could be found, the distance from the location to the place of disappearance, the distance of the location to the place where the body was hidden (Breinermoor), number of details concerning the perpetrator and number of details related to the car used for the abduction.

Details of information about topics not relevant for the investigation and details of information which could not be verified were not included in the analyses.

As an example of how the number of details of information was established, one of the first psychic impressions recorded in the BPS stated that the girl, if she has been murdered, is buried on a camping between Vriescheloo and Bellingwolde and that a 'fashionable' man who lives in the neighborhood of the parents probably knows more about it. The following details of information are derived from this contribution. Fate: dead and buried; two details of location: camping, between Vriescheloo and Bellingwolde; two details about the perpetrator: fashionable, lives in neighborhood of the parents; zero details on the car and zero details on other topics. That according to the psychic the perpetrator is a man has not been scored as a detail of information for when a young girl is supposed to be abducted that information is so obvious that it not really aids the investigation. However, if a woman is described the fact that a woman is assumed to be involved in the crime was scored as a separate detail of information. This psychic, and he is not the only one, expressed himself carefully and used the phrases "if she has been murdered" and "probably knows more about it". Such formulations were not taken into account in the scoring. As a rule, any statement which afterwards, if turned out to be correct, might have resulted in a claim by the psychic that he or she had 'seen' it correctly has been treated as information regardless of the phrasing. The same applies to information about the perpetrator. In many contributions the word perpetrator is not used when a person is described but if the psychic could have claimed afterwards that the description applied to the perpetrator it has been treated as a description of the perpetrator.

As could be expected the psychic impressions strongly vary as regards topics and amount of detail. For instance, in 97 contributions details are given about the location of the girl, but in only 18 contributions something is said about a car involved in the disappearance. In the discussion of the results of the analyses the percentages mentioned always refer to only those contributions which contained information on the issue discussed. For instance, if it is stated that 15% believed the girl to be in Germany it means 15% of the 72 contributions which contained information about the country in which the girl could be found, not 15% of all 114 contributions.

Who contributed the psychic impressions

A preponderance of female psychics was observed. Thirty-eight male (44%) and 49 female (56%) psychics contributed impressions. From five males and 10 females more than one report was received. Eight contributions were anonymous and of 12 contributions it was not possible from the police record or letter to establish the gender of the psychic. Eighty-eight contributions were registered in the BPS, from 26 contributions only the letter was available. Half of the 95 contributions came from psychics who lived within 50 km of Vriescheloo.

There appears a relationship between publicity and contributions of psychics. Although it took 14 months before the case was solved over half of the contributions were received in the first two months after the disappearance when there was a lot of media attention for the disappearance. An increase of contributions is noticeable after TV reports. After the police investigation was slowed down because investigative possibilities were exhausted publicity decreased accordingly and so did the contributions of psychics. The last contribution was received six months after the disappearance but more than half a year before the solution became known, at a time when police investigation had already come to a dead end.

Nine psychics indicated in their letter or communication that they had advised police on previous occasions and 15 persons considered themselves or were known to be professionals. Although it cannot be excluded that other psychics also should be classified in these groups, either because they did not mention their previous activities or police did not record it in the BPS, it seems safe to conclude that the majority of the contributors were non-professionals. This is somewhat surprising and raises the question why these people felt compelled to send their impressions to the police. In 20 contributions the information appeared acquired by applying a technique as for instance dowsing or hearing voices in music. In these cases, it is certain that the psychic had made a conscious effort to obtain information on the missing girl.

The fate of the missing girl

Except for one psychic who believed in an accident all contributions in which the fate of the girl was discussed (61) assumed that the girl had been abducted and that a crime had taken place. According to 42 contributions (69%) she was dead, in 19 contributions she was assumed to be abducted but still alive. If the girl was assumed to be dead, 43% believed she was buried, 20% she was left somewhere in nature and 37% believed her to be in water.

The car used in the abduction

In 18 contributions 45 details were provided about the car used in the abduction. Most frequently mentioned details were color and make. Although 22% of the details appeared correct none of the psychics mentioned the correct color and make.

Where the missing girl could be found

For this analysis the waste deposit in Breinermoor, Germany, has been considered the correct location where the girl could be found. England would also have been rated as correct but

England was never mentioned. In 97 records 200 details were provided about the location where according to the psychics the girl could be found. Only 8.5% of these details appeared to be correct and applicable to the real location. One psychic saw the girl located at a waste depot but the waste depot he referred to is a different one located in the Netherlands. Fourteen percent of the psychics correctly assumed the girl to be in Germany but none of these mentioned Bunde or Breinermoor. The average distance of the locations provided by the psychics (excluding one psychic who mentioned the Middle East) from Vriescheloo is 45 km ($n=76$). The real distance Vriescheloo – Breinermoor is approximately 20 km. The average distance from the locations mentioned to Breinermoor is 61 km. That the locations mentioned are on average closer to the location of disappearance than to the location where the girl was hidden implies that the psychics as a group did not have a tendency to mention locations roughly in the direction of where the girl could be found. The location of disappearance appeared to have had a stronger influence on the impressions of the psychics than the actual unknown location of the girl. The difference of 16 km between the two averages is not much different from the distance Vriescheloo – Breinermoor. This suggests that the locations mentioned were more or less randomly distributed in all directions around the location where the girl disappeared.

Information about the perpetrator

The majority of the psychics believed that one perpetrator committed the abduction, only 8% felt that more than one perpetrator was involved. Six psychics indicated that one or both parents knew more about the disappearance. In 64 contributions the psychics provided on average 3.3 details about the perpetrator of which afterwards 11.4% turned out to be correct. None of the psychics provided a sufficient number of correct details to make the resulting description useful to the investigation.

Relationships between variables

No relationship was observed between gender of psychic and the variables professional, advised police before, familiar with the neighborhood of Vriescheloo, fate of the girl, to be found in Holland or in a foreign country, and average number of details concerning car, location and perpetrator. However, a significant difference ($\chi^2(1) = 5.8, p = .01$) was observed between the percentages of correct details of location and perpetrator. Male psychics scored 14% correct details on location and 6% correct details about the perpetrator. In the case of female psychics these figures are reversed (5% correct location and 14% correct perpetrator).

Sometimes the lack of a relationship can be of interest too. No relationship was observed between average number of details given in the BPS records and in the letters on file, despite the fact that the letters on average contain much more words than the rather condensed BPS records. This suggests that police adequately processed the information received from psychics by telephone or otherwise in the computer records. Neither no relationship was observed between number of details given for location and number of details given about the perpetrator.

Psychics who could be assumed to be familiar with the environment of the disappearance mentioned locations where the girl could be found significantly closer to the location of disappearance than did the others (psychics living in the neighborhood: $M = 14$ km, psychics living away from the environment $M = 79$ km, t -test $t = 2.45$, $p < .01$). A similar difference but to a less significant degree is the relationship between fate of the girl and distance to the location where she could be found. When the girl is assumed to be alive she is assumed to be hidden much further away, at an average distance to Vriescheloo of 103 km, whereas when she is supposed to be dead the average distance is 29 km ($t = 1.59$, $p = .06$).

Although 16 psychics (16.5%) mentioned an exact location where the girl could be found only one of them belonged to the group of professionals. The difference is not statistically significant but a tendency is noticeable that professionals avoid to mention an exact location or the name or address of the perpetrator, probably because that information can easily be checked and falsified. Apparently, professionals are less inclined to take risks than non-professionals.

Discussion

Statements in the BPS records indicate that on occasion psychics had discussions with police officers about the case or that a psychic and police together searched for the girl at a location provided by the psychic. The parents were regularly informed by police about the developments of the investigation. Many psychics were in contact with the parents and from the book Mrs. Poolman published years later (Poolman, 1999) about her experiences during this time it is apparent that especially in the beginning of the investigation the parents were inclined to inform the psychics as best as possible about what they knew about the disappearance. Hence it can be assumed that a number of psychics had information not available to the general public.

Nevertheless, the number of correct details about the car, location and perpetrator is relatively low. The most accurate details were given about the car, of which 22% appeared correct. However, none of the contributions mentioned a brown Mercedes, the car used by the perpetrator. The percentages of correct details related to location and perpetrator are lower and even

had police known which details were correct it is doubtful whether that information would have been helpful. Most psychics correctly believed the girl to be dead but that in itself was not really useful information. Therefore, it must be concluded that in this investigation the impressions of the psychics did not and could not have contributed to the investigation.

The Jansons Case

Because the disappearance of Sybine Jansons took place in the period that this investigation was carried out it became possible to organize the incoming stream of psychic contributions in a more systematic way. Police agreed to avoid verbal contact with psychics and requested each psychic who called to send in their impressions by letter. In addition, unlike the Poolmans the parents of Sybine refused all personal contact with psychics. Hence with one exception which will be discussed below (the psychic policeman) this time it could be assumed that no special information from the side of police or relatives could have influenced the contributions of some psychics. All psychics could only rely on the information provided by the media.

The disappearance

Sybine Jansons, a 13-year old girl, attended a high-school in Doom, a village about three km away from her home in Maarn. The villages are situated in a wooded area in the middle of the Netherlands not far from the city of Utrecht. On Tuesday, January 19, 1999, Sybine had to stay at school after normal school hours of her class and therefore had to bike home on her own. Normally the group of pupils who lived in Maarn traveled together on bike to and from school. After leaving school Sybine went to buy something in a shop in Doom. That was the last time she was seen. When she did not arrive home at the expected hour her mother started soon to worry because Sybine always informed her parents when she was unexpectedly delayed.

Therefore, the same afternoon the disappearance was reported to the police. Despite the fact that a 13-year old runaway is not uncommon police assumed immediately that this disappearance might be of a more serious nature and extensive search actions were initiated. These were unsuccessful except that a few days later her bike was found hidden in the woods not far from where she lived.

The disappearance and the failure of the subsequent search actions were widely publicized and generated a nationwide public interest. As a result, within 11 days, until February 1, 160 psychic contributions were received. The number of contributions then dropped to 66, until the body of the murdered girl was found on February 24 in a canal in Breukelen, approximately

32 km away from the location where she had disappeared. After the body was found another 40 contributions were received, this time mainly with impressions about the perpetrator. The case came to an end with the arrest and conviction of Martin Couzijns, a notorious rapist who had already served a long sentence in prison for serial rape. Couzijns was convicted on DNA evidence but never confessed to the crime and refused to tell how the abduction and murder of Sybine had taken place. It is likely though that she was murdered because the perpetrator's face might have been familiar to Sybine. After his release from jail Couzijns had worked as a bus-driver, among others on the route between Maam and Doom. It is quite possible that Sybine had seen him on one of the occasions that she took the bus to school and recognized him as a bus driver when she was abducted.

The contributions of the psychics

A total of 279 contributions were received of which 30 (10.8%) were anonymous. Of the 249 psychics of which the address was known 163 (65%) could be reached and interviewed by telephone before the body was found. All communications from the psychics were coded as described above in the Poolman case. However, due to the interviews there are a few differences between the two sets of data. In the interview the psychic was asked about additional impressions not mentioned in the letter, hence the contributions can be considered to truly reflect all information the psychics could provide. Also, data were collected on the nature of the impressions, why the person believed he or she should communicate their impressions to the police, about previous psychic experiences, about their professional status as a psychic or healer and about their familiarity with the area of disappearance. These data were either not available in the Poolman case or had to be assumed based on other data. For instance, in the Poolman study it was assumed that persons living in the provinces of Groningen and Drenthe would be familiar with the area of disappearance, whereas psychics living elsewhere in Holland would be not. In the present study this information came largely from the interviewed psychics themselves.

Who contributed the psychic impressions

Again, a preponderance of female psychics (61%) was observed. The majority of the impressions had a spontaneous character (69%), it just occurred to the person. Fourteen percent were based on dreams and in 7% dowsing was used. Twenty-five percent of the psychics had advised police before and 23% considered themselves professionals in the sense that they had earned income as psychics or healers. Twenty-seven percent was familiar with the area of disappearance.

As in the Poolman case it is noteworthy that the majority of the contributors (77%) are not professional psychics or healers. In the interview many of the non-professional contributors answered the question, why they had sent their impressions to police, by relating stories to the effect that on previous occasions the impressions they had when hearing about a crime had afterwards turned out to be true. Because of the possibility that this time their impressions might also be true they felt it their responsibility to submit them to the police. Most did not consider themselves psychics at all. On the contrary, many of these contributors felt clearly quite uncertain and expressed their concern whether they had done the correct thing by informing the police. When being told that police had received many of such impressions and that most impressions were at variance with each other a number of them felt actually quite relieved. Nearly all of them showed to be emotionally strongly involved with the events and sympathized with the plight of the parents. None of the letters discussed the possibility of a remuneration. The main impression left by the interviews was that these persons were emotionally involved in the disappearance and wanted to help. They did not want to run the risk that afterwards it would turn out that their impressions had been correct again and that their information could have solved the case but that they had done nothing with it.

The fate of the missing girl

Of the 182 contributions which gave information about the fate of the missing girl a majority (54%) assumed her to be dead. If she was assumed to be dead 19% percent felt she was buried, 40.5% assumed she was left somewhere in nature and 40.5% 'saw' her in water.

The car used in the abduction

Ninety contributors mentioned together 252 details about a car involved in the disappearance, an average of 2.8 details. Of these 10.7% were correct. None of the psychics gave a complete correct description of the car, a rented red Ford Escort station wagon.

Where the missing girl could be found

Hundred-ninety contributors provided together 615 details about the location, an average of 3.2 details, of which 12% turned out to be correct. In 28 contributions a detailed location was given. Most successful was the psychic policeman, discussed below, and an anonymous psychic who 'saw' her inside a house in the center of Breukelen, approximately three km from the location where she was found.

Only 13% of the contributors believed her to be in a foreign country, all of these assumed that the girl was alive and abducted. If only foreign countries are considered the average distance between the location of disappearance and the location where she could be found is 427 km. Various countries were mentioned. If only locations in Holland are considered the average distance between the location of disappearance and the location where she could be found is 25 km and the average distance between the location where she could be found and where she actually was found 41 km. The distance between the locations where she disappeared and where she was found is 30 km. As in the Poolman case the locations mentioned are on average closer to the location of disappearance than to the location where the girl was later found.

Information about the perpetrator

An average of 4.5 details about the perpetrator were provided by 160 contributors of which 20.5% turned out to be correct. Thirty-one percent believed that more than one perpetrator was involved in the disappearance. In no instance a psychic provided a more or less accurate complete description of the perpetrator which might have been helpful to the investigating officers.

Relationships between variables

As in the Poolman case no relationship was observed between gender of psychic and the variables professional, advised police before, familiar with the environment of disappearance, fate of the girl, to be found in Holland or in a foreign country, distance of location of finding to location of disappearance, distance of location of finding to actual location of finding and average number of details concerning car, location and perpetrator. Contrary to the Poolman case no significant difference ($\chi^2(1) = .3$) was observed between the percentages of correct details of location and perpetrator. In this case male psychics scored 15% correct details on location and 22% correct details about the perpetrator, the females scored 11% correct details on location and 20% correct details about the perpetrator.

All possible relationships between variables were studied and nearly all turned out to be not significant, including a near zero correlation between number of details about location and number of details about the perpetrator. Only the outcomes of interest are discussed here. The significant relationship observed in the Poolman study between being familiar with the environment of the disappearance and distance to the location where the girl is supposed to be is confirmed by the data of this study. Contributors who were familiar with the environment of Doom and Maam mentioned locations on average 14 km away from the location of disappear-

ance, whereas for the others the average distance is 45 km ($t = 4.57, p < .01$, locations in foreign countries excluded). Also, in agreement with the results of the Poolman study was the finding that when the girl was assumed to be alive the average distance of the location where she could be found to the location of disappearance (146 km) is significantly larger than when she was assumed to be dead (37 km) ($t = 2.14, p = .02$).

A significant association was observed between being professional and having advised police before ($\chi^2(1) = 5.9, p < .05$). As in the previous study it turned out that professionals are less inclined to provide an exact location where the girl could be found. Of the 20 contributors who provided an exact location and of which is known whether or not they were professionals only three were professionals. Professionals did not differ in any respect from non-professionals except for a non-significant tendency that professionals were more inclined to incorrectly assume that more than one perpetrator was involved in the disappearance (47% as opposed to 32% of the non-professionals).

Discussion

In the Poolman disappearance only 31% believed the missing girl to be alive, in the case of the disappearance of Sybine 46%. The difference of 15% might be due to the difference in age of the two girls. Sybine was six year older and therefore more likely to have gone off on her own.

The difference in age could also explain the much higher percentage of contributors who assumed that more than one perpetrator was involved in the disappearance (8% in the case of Nympe Poolman, 31% in the case of Sybine Jansons).

Overall the data of the two studies are quite consistent. The average number of details provided about the subjects relevant for the investigation (location, car used for the abduction, perpetrator) is rather low, about four in the Poolman case and less than six in the Jansons case. This low number is explainable in view of the finding of Boerenkamp (1988) that the non-feedback condition yielded the lowest number of statements. In these two real-life cases the number of statements is even lower compared to the on average 17 found for the non-feedback condition in the Boerenkamp study. This might be due to the fact that in Boerenkamp's experiment the psychics were free to discuss any topic whereas in the case of the disappearances of these girls the topics were, due to the nature of the problem, mainly limited to location and perpetrator.

In the two studies the location of the girls indicated by the psychics were on average closer to the location of disappearance than to the location where they really were. This demonstrates

that it is the location of disappearance which in general influences these impressions and not an awareness of the real situation of the missing girls. This conclusion is supported by the finding of the two studies that psychics who are familiar with the environment of the disappearance obtain significantly more impressions about locations related to that environment.

In both studies no correlation was observed between the number of details about the location and the number of details about the perpetrator. Hence two possible conclusions can be rejected. A negative relationship would have suggested specialization. Some psychics mainly obtain impressions about the location where the girl could be found whereas other psychics would be more specialized in impressions about the perpetrator. A positive relationship might have indicated a difference in psychic ability. Some psychics obtain lots of impressions about both topics, others are not so able and can only get a few.

In the two studies the average percentage of correct details about location, car and perpetrator is 14% (range 8.5% to 22%). Most important, none of the contributions provides a correct description of either location, car or perpetrator. Hence it can be safely concluded that in both disappearances the contributions of psychics were useless for the investigation. Because about 20% of the contributors were professionals this poor result cannot be attributed to the preponderance of non-professionals.

An argument against the use of psychics, frequently put forward in critical discussions, is that following up the leads of psychics would be too much of a waste of time for police. As Rowe (1996, p. 593) stated in connection with the large number of unsolicited statements from psychics received in major crime cases: "Pursuing each of these leads would entail the diversion of significant police resources from other lines of inquiry". That view is not corroborated by the data. Most of these unsolicited contributions did not contain information which could be checked. They were usually of the type 'in water, near some bridge. A man with red hair is involved'. In our analyses the percentage of the contributions which contained information sufficiently exact to allow checking were respectively 16.5% for the Poolman data and 14.7% for the Jansons data. In addition, some of these suggestions involved locations or possibilities which would be and often were already checked by police as part of their own investigation. For instance, not far from the location where Sybine disappeared there is a small lake, the only water surface of substance in the area. That location was three times mentioned by psychics but had already been searched by the police.

The psychic policeman

The contributions of the psychic policeman to the investigation of the disappearance of Sybine Jansons deserve a separate discussion for two reasons. One is the apparent success. The other is that all activities of the psychic were witnessed by police officers who made protocols of the statements made by the psychic and of his activities during the search actions.

The story of the involvement of the psychic policeman in the Sybine Jansons case has all the characteristics of the familiar anecdotal reports of the past associated with great names of psychics such as Croiset or Heilijgers. The psychic policeman served in Utrecht as apart-time police officer and had achieved some reputation among his colleagues as a psychic. Shortly after the disappearance of Sybine, when it became apparent that she might have become the victim of serious crime, a large investigation team was set up and located in a new office in Utrecht especially built and fitted out to handle large-scale crime investigations. Some detectives from the team knew the psychic policeman, who himself was not part of the investigation team, and invited him to give his impressions about the disappearance.

In the first session held on February 2, i.e. two weeks after the disappearance, the psychic made the following statements as regards the location of the girl: “she is in the Netherlands”; “she is not in the woods between Doom and Maarn” and “Breukelen, after van de Valk, direction Amsterdam, into the polder” (all statements from the protocol literally translated. Van de Valk is a well-known restaurant along the highway just before the exit to Breukelen). At the end of the session an attempt was made to find the exact location by the use of a map. The psychic used a peculiar ritual to do this. He closed his eyes and then moved his finger over the map until he stopped. The location thus indicated appeared to be a small village called Vrouwenpolder. However, he himself had apparently little faith in this procedure because afterwards Vrouwenpolder is never mentioned again and in the following sessions fresh attempts are made to establish the location where the girl could be found.

In the second session held two days later he added “Area beyond Breukelen, surrounded by grassland, in a canal against a grid, from a bridge or a passage over a canal seven meter to the left against a grid between two canals.” However, he couldn’t get a more precise idea about where the area he was ‘seeing’ is exactly located. He then made a drawing with closed eyes of two canals and a church. The protocols of these two sessions were made up on February 10.

A third session was held the next day, February 11, in the morning. In that session the psychic again tried in vain to obtain more information about the location where the girl could be found. After the session which lasted approximately half an hour two police officers who

were part of the investigation team and the psychic policeman took a car and drove to the area of the disappearance. One of the officers was driving. The possibility to make such a trip was unforeseen and was the consequence of a computer network failure. That day all systems broke down which prevented the investigators to continue with their assigned tasks. First, they went to Sybine's school in Doom and starting from that point the psychic tried to reconstruct the route the girl had taken from school to home in order to find the location where she was abducted. The investigators stressed that they never provided information about the case to the psychic policeman but much was already published about her possible actions after leaving school and hence his reconstruction might have been influenced by what he already knew. After the visit to this area they went into the direction of Breukelen because the psychic policeman had mentioned Breukelen in the first session. At the request of the psychic the investigators took the first exit on the A2 highway between Utrecht and Amsterdam, located 100 meters after the van de Valk restaurant, and took the direction into the polder (the other direction leads to downtown Breukelen). On that local road (the N401), not far after crossing the road to Haarzuilens, the psychic requested that they stopped at a parking area. Looking around the area resembled more or less the drawing the psychic policeman had made the day before. The church tower they could see belonged to the nearby village of Kockengen. The protocol then ends with the statements: "The location of finding would resemble (according to the psychic) this area. This location does not have to be the location where she will be found." Then the investigators returned to Utrecht. Two weeks later the body of Sybine was found close by the parking area, floating in the Heicop, a canal which runs parallel to the N401 at the side of the road where the parking area is located. There is reason to believe, based on the statements of a witness, that the murderer has parked in the same parking area on the night of January 19, when he disposed of the body. Vrouwenpolder, mentioned in the first session, is about 13 km from the location where the body was found.

This would have remained an anecdotal report of a psychic success story with all the usually associated uncertainties were it not for the fact that all statements and actions were recorded by police officers. Hence the facts reported above can be trusted to be true. From the phrasing of the last sentences of the protocol it is clear that the psychic was not 100% convinced that this was the location where the girl would be found. But that is rather the rule than the exception. Most psychics, including Croiset, are or were always uncertain about the validity of their impressions because, whatever their reputation, they all had experienced their portion of failures.

I interviewed the two investigators especially to find out what happened during the last stage of the trip. The interviews took place after the body was found. Their statements largely

confirm each other but there are some discrepancies. The police officer who acted as the driver stated that the initiative not to go back to the office but to drive into the direction of Breukelen after the visit to Doorn and Maarn was taken by the investigators. The other stated that the idea came from the psychic. It is also not clear whether the name of Breukelen was mentioned when they started on the second leg of the trip. Apparently, they went into the direction of Breukelen because of the psychic's previous statements. According to one police officer the aim of that part of the trip was to find the area which resembled the 'image' the psychic had of the area where the girl would be. That makes sense because the idea behind the trip was to find the girl by reconstructing the route she had taken or was taken, starting with the school and the shop where she was last seen. The two officers agreed that it was the psychic who requested them to take the exit at Breukelen and to turn into the polder and also that the psychic asked them to stop at the parking area. According to one officer the psychic was restless and had stated in the parking area that "something was going to happen here." The other officer said that it was difficult to compare the 'mental picture' of the psychic with the area because they did not have maps (which shows that they came unprepared) and that they could not search there because the canals were frozen. According to this police officer the psychic had said that this could be the area but it could be just as well an area in North Holland. The image the psychic had (polder, canals, church tower) of the location where the girl would be found was apparently of a polder landscape and with the latter statements he probably meant that there are many polder landscapes in Holland which would match that image. After their stay at the parking area they went to Kockengen but the psychic felt nothing special there. Then they returned to Utrecht. One detective stated that he was convinced this was the place where Sybille would be found. The other investigator, who mentioned the lack of maps and the fact that due to the ice no search action was possible, was not so sure about that. According to him they had returned because there was nothing else they could do.

In the sessions held before the body was found statements were also made about other topics than the location. For instance, in the first session the psychic created the impression that the disappearance was partly voluntarily, that she ran away with a man she knew and that she did not have the courage to return home. At this stage of the investigation, two weeks after the disappearance, it seemed very probable that crime was involved but the possibility that she had disappeared voluntarily could not entirely be excluded. In the second session he felt that she was dead and that she would be found in the water tied up. Except for the fact that she was found in the water all these psychic impressions turned out to be incorrect. After the body was found more sessions were held to find out details about the crime and about the perpetrator, no doubt stimulated by the apparent success as regards his impressions about the location. These sessions did not contribute anything to the investigation and again many statements regarding

the crime and the perpetrator turned afterwards out to be incorrect. Hence the apparent success of standing close to the location where the girl was later found is embedded in many failures about other aspects of the crime. It should be noted that at the time the trip was made Breukelen and its surroundings were never discussed in the press nor by the investigators as a possible area where the girl might have been hidden.

Despite the interesting aspects of the case it must be concluded that from a pragmatic point of view also the psychic policeman could not contribute to finding the girl. This might be partly due to bad luck as regards the weather. If the canals had been free of ice it is quite likely that the investigators had taken a look along the Heicop. But the psychic and the investigators were not really certain that they were standing at the place where the body of the girl was. At least not to the extent that they tried to obtain permission to organize proper search actions, for instance by dredging the Heicop.

Predictions About the Perpetrator: A Comparison Between the Psychics and the Scientific Approach

Apart from the psychic policeman not one of the hundreds of psychics in the Poolman and the Jansons disappearances came even close in 'seeing' the true facts about where the victim could be found and what the perpetrator looked like. But although they failed as individuals to see the right combination of correct details, it might be that the psychics do better when their predictions as a group are considered. For instance, if 'Mercedes' is most frequently mentioned as the make of the car the abductor used, then 'Mercedes' is taken as the prediction of the group. We know already that the group's predictions about the locations were wide off the mark, the average distance of the predicted locations where the victims would be found was 40 to 60 kilometers away from the real locations of the bodies. Distances can be measured. It is more difficult to assess the quality of the predictions as regards the perpetrators. In order to assess the value of these predictions a comparison was made of the psychics' predictions as a group about the perpetrators with the predictions based on a scientific approach, the Catchem analyses.

The Catchem analyses

The Catchem database holds data on more than 3,000 murders, solved and unsolved, committed since 1960 in the U.K. in which female victims under 20 year of age and male victims under 16 years of age were involved. The database was set up by police officers during the eighties of the

last century as a result of a review of a couple of unsolved child murders which might have been connected with previous similar crimes. Originally the data were analyzed by police officers but later professional statisticians associated with university departments got the opportunity to apply sophisticated statistical tools to the database. One such analyses concerned a regression analysis, based on the data of about 400 victims and of the known offenders of these crimes. As a result, relationships were found between variables associated with the victim and the circumstances of the crime with characteristics of the perpetrator. Hence it becomes possible, based on known facts about the victim and the crime, to make predictions about the perpetrator. These predictions are in the form of probabilities. For instance, a possible outcome can be that there is 11% probability that the perpetrator is less than 21 years of age.

Two types of regression analyses have been carried out. One is based on a binary set of data, the other on an ordinal set of data. The results of the comparisons for both types of analyses are presented.

The comparison of the predictions of psychics and Catchem for the Poolman and Jansons murders

Catchem can provide predictions about a number of perpetrator characteristics. The psychics are dependent on spontaneous impressions and most psychics do not provide information on the characteristics which are predicted by Catchem. Therefore, only those Catchem characteristics have been included in this analysis for which impressions of at least 10 psychics were available. These are age of the perpetrator, the distance the perpetrator lives from the crime scene, the marital status of the perpetrator and his relationship with the victim. The percentages are based on only those psychics who provided information on the characteristic under discussion. For instance, of the 32 psychics in the Sybine Jansons disappearance who provided impressions on where the perpetrator lived, eight mentioned a location less than 7.5 km away from the location of disappearance, a percentage of 25%. As regards the disappearance of Nympe Poolman the Catchem analysis is based on the situation after her disappearance and on the assumption that she was abducted and murdered. In the case of Sybine Jansons the Catchem analysis is based on the information available after the body was found. The results of the analyses are presented in the tables below.

Table 1

The disappearance of Nymphe Poolman. Predictions of Perpetrator Characteristics by Catchem and Psychics Catchem Binary Regression Analysis

Perpetrator	Catchem	Psychics	True values
age < 21 years	11%	15%	0%
lives < 7.5 km	91%	25%	0%
acquaintance of victim	35%	20%	0%

Table 2

The disappearance of Nymphe Poolman. Predictions of Perpetrator Characteristics by Catchem and Psychics Catchem Ordinal Regression Analysis

Perpetrator	Catchem	Psychics	True values
age			
0–18 years	7%	0%	0%
18–25	65%	6%	0%
> 25	28%	94%	100%
relationship with victim			
relatives	20%	20%	0%
acquaintance	35%	40%	0%
stranger	45%	40%	100%

Table 3

The disappearance of Sybine Jansons. Predictions of Perpetrator Characteristics by Catchem and Psychics. Catchem Binary Regression Analysis

Perpetrator	Catchem	Psychics	True values
age < 21 years	3%	15%	0%
lives < 7.5 km	9%	25%	0%
lives with partner	46%	50%	100%
acquaintance of victim	3%	20%	0%

Table 4

The disappearance of Sybine Jansons. Predictions of Perpetrator Characteristics by Catchem and Psychics. Catchem Ordinal Regression Analysis

Perpetrator	Catchem	Psychics	True values
age			
0–18 years	3%	3%	0%
18–25	28%	17%	0%
> 25	69%	78%	100%
marital status			
married	20%	33%	0%
lives together	35%	17%	100%
lives alone	45%	50%	0%
relationship with victim			
relatives	1%	1%	0%
acquaintance	9%	19%	0%
stranger	90%	80%	100%

Discussion

In the Poolman disappearance the psychics did better than Catchem. The psychics provided five predictions closer to the true value. Catchem was more successful with three predictions. For the Jansons data the picture is reversed. Here Catchem was more successful with eight predictions closer to the true value against three for the psychics. The ‘failure’ of Catchem in the Poolman case is undoubtedly due to the fact that in this disappearance the body was not found. The Catchem predictions could only be based on the fact that the girl had disappeared and was assumed to be murdered. Scientific predictions are dependent on available information and do not function well without facts. More facts were available in the Jansons case after the body was found and consequently the Catchem predictions did better in this case. Nevertheless, even in this analysis the differences in accuracy between the two sets of predictions are not large.

That in this study the ‘average’ predictions about the perpetrator by the psychics as a group were not that bad is probably more a matter of coincidence than due to psychic abilities. The differences in the Catchem predictions for the two disappearances are larger than the differences in predictions the psychics made. In fact, in both cases the psychics as a group described more or less the same perpetrator. This suggests that as a group they reflect the stereotype the public

has about the type of man who would commit such a crime. The best example of this agreement between the two sets of descriptions concerns the predicted age of the perpetrator. In the Poolman case the average predicted age was 40 years ($SD = 13.2$), in the Jansons case the average age was 39 years ($SD = 14.8$). The public is inclined to associate the murder of young girls with 'dirty old men' which resulted in the relatively high average of about 40 years. In reality the average age of perpetrators of this type of crime is around 25 years. The age of the murderer of Sybine Jansons was 37 years and the murderer of Nympe Poolman was 27 years old, hence both by coincidence above the average age for perpetrators of these crimes and therefore more in line with the public stereotype.

In both the Poolman and Jansons murder the perpetrators were strangers, also in accordance with the public stereotype. Had the murder been committed by a relative or by a young acquaintance living in the neighborhood, also not uncommon, the psychics' stereotype would have failed considerably. Catchem seems much better suited to predict the different kinds of perpetrators who might be involved in these crimes. Although in this study the differences observed between Catchem and the psychics is not large it can be expected that with an increase of data the predictions made by Catchem will become more accurate in time. It is unlikely that the accuracy of the impressions of the psychics will become better in the future.

The comparison between the psychics' and Catchem predictions illustrates again, as was the case in the few comparative studies discussed in the section on literature, that the differences in effectivity between psychics and other methods of predictions are not large. This observation is not meant as a recommendation to use psychics but it confirms the view that it creates a too negative estimation of their value when in experimental studies the achievement of psychics is measured against the criterion that usefulness means providing the name or other data of the perpetrator which result in his or her arrest.

Part III: Contributions from Psychics Personally Involved in the Search for Missing Persons

The present investigation was aimed to obtain more data on the extent of involvement of psychics in police investigations and about their usefulness. The assumed paranormal character of the contributions of psychics is not considered in this study. How the psychics obtain the information they provide is a question which only makes sense when it turns out that psychics do achieve remarkable and unexplainable results. Because of the unavoidable limitations of laboratory studies it was decided to assess the usefulness of psychics for police investigations by studying real-life cases.

In a police investigation, psychics might be useful in two respects. Their expected role, and the one most important to police, is to provide information which contributes to the solution of the investigation. But psychics might also indirectly contribute in a positive sense by providing psychological support for the relatives. Although the focus of this study is on the usefulness of psychics to police investigations, data have also been collected on the psycho-hygienic aspects of the involvement of psychics.

This study focused on the involvement of psychics in cases of missing persons because in the Netherlands psychics are much more often involved in police investigations of missing persons than in other types of police investigations such as cases of abduction or murder. Leeftang (1979) found that over 70% of the psychics' involvement concerned cases of missing persons. There are several reasons for this association between psychics and disappearances. One is the difference in occurrence of these various types of investigations. The number of abductions and murders is small compared to the many disappearances. In the Netherlands the average annual number of abductions is less than one. The murder rate varies between 200 and 250 cases a year but many of these homicides are not of interest to psychics either because they are quickly solved or because they concern the settling of criminal accounts. The homicides which do draw much interest from public and psychics are usually the ones which start with the victim being reported missing. On the other hand, each year between 15,000 and 20,000 cases of missing persons are reported to the Dutch police. Although over half of these cases are solved within 24 hours hundreds of disappearances, among them cases of children who vanished, suicides, sexual offenses and deadly accidents, are of longer duration. Some last years or remain unsolved. These disappearances have a strong emotional impact on the relatives involved. If the police investigation remains unsuccessful the likelihood increases that the relatives turn to psychics for help. Another reason for the relatively strong involvement of psychics in cases of missing persons is that most of these cases are of a non-criminal character. This lowers the threshold for psychics to become involved because non-criminal disappearances are of a more local and restricted character and there are usually less restrictions as to the information relatives and police are allowed to provide the psychic.

The Data

Data have been collected about characteristics of cases of missing persons in which and in which no psychics were involved. The data made it possible to obtain an estimate of the extent of involvement of psychics in disappearances and to compare details of disappearances in which psychics were and were not involved. In addition, questionnaire data were collected about the experiences of police, psychics and relatives when psychics had participated in the investigation of a missing person. The appendix provides a list with the details of the data collected.

Details of cases of missing persons

Occasionally the media, especially the papers, bring news items on persons who disappeared. Many of these items are initiated by police soon after the disappearance with the purpose to obtain information from the public. Now and then special reports are published about older, unsolved cases. Based on such media reports, collected in the period 1997 to 2000, police was approached for further information on these disappearances. Public requests for information soon after a person is reported missing usually implies that at the time police seriously considered the possibility that the life and well-being of the missing person might be endangered. Hence the data mainly concern disappearances of a potentially serious nature.

Details of 642 cases of missing persons were collected. Of these cases 224 cases dated from before 1995 and 418 from the period 1995 to 2000. The details collected about the disappearances were among others gender of the missing person, age, family background, problems, use of medication, date and circumstances of the disappearance, the date the disappearance was reported to the police, when and where the person was found, the reason for the disappearance and, of course, whether psychics had been involved. The details were provided by the police. For legal privacy reasons it was not possible to approach the relatives directly for further questioning, all communications with the relatives had to go via the police.

Experiences of relatives of missing persons with psychics

When it appeared that psychics had been involved in a case of a missing person the relatives were approached, again via the police, with a request to fill out a questionnaire about their experiences with these psychics. Questions were also included about how the relatives appreciated the activities of the police. In addition, it was attempted to obtain questionnaire data from police and psychics involved in the same investigation.

Most of the questions were of the multiple-choice type but respondents were never forced to select only from the pre-formulated answers (except of course when they covered all possibilities) by adding the possibility of an open statement as the answer. In addition, there were a number of open questions. For instance, relatives and police were asked to describe in their own words what they experienced as positive and negative aspects of the involvement of psychics. It was stressed in the introduction of the questionnaires that there were no 'good' or 'wrong' answers, but that the answers should be based on how the respondent had experienced the events. Because sometimes these experiences concerned more than one psychic and because feelings can be mixed the respondents were requested to mark all the alternative answers to a

question which they considered appropriate. They did not have to restrict themselves to selecting only one response alternative. The results of this questionnaire study are discussed in the section 'Psycho-hygienic effects of the involvement of psychics.'

Part IV: Results

The Extent of the Involvement of Psychics in Cases of Missing Persons

Although the database includes 642 cases of missing persons for the analyses reported below only cases were included ($n = 418$) in which the person disappeared in 1995 or later. The older cases are less representative as regards the involvement of psychics because they mainly concern the more spectacular and better-known disappearances, many of them still unsolved, which because of their reputation and long duration have attracted relatively much interest from the public and from psychics.

The largest group of the 418 cases collected in the second half of the last decennia concerns disappearances in which it turned out that the person had committed suicide (28%). In 17% of the cases the missing person appeared to have run away and returned home relatively soon after the disappearance. The same percentage (17%) was found for the number of cases in which the person had ran away to start a new life elsewhere or to start wandering. Also, in 17% of the cases the disappearance turned out to be due to an accident. The other cases involved disappearances due to murder and various other reasons. About 8% of the disappearances remained unsolved.

It was already suspected in the period that the data were collected that the use of media reports as a starting point would yield especially data about disappearances of a potential serious nature. That turned out to be correct. In 62% of the solved disappearances the missing person appeared to have deceased when found back.

In 62 (15%) of the 418 disappearances psychics appeared to have been involved. This 15% involvement is probably an underestimation. It is likely that in some cases the relatives did consult a psychic but did not want police or others to know about it.

A Comparison of Disappearances With and Without the Involvement of Psychics

In order to investigate whether certain characteristics of disappearances are associated with the involvement of psychics the characteristics of disappearances in which psychics have been

involved were compared to characteristics of cases of missing persons in which no psychics were involved. All cases included in these analyses date from 1995 or later.

It was observed that cases in which the missing person was found to be dead (suicides, fatal accidents and murders) yielded percentages of involvement of psychics above the average of 15% whereas the disappearances in which the missing person was found back alive yielded percentages of involvement below the average of 15%. A chi-square test based on the number of solved cases with and without psychics in which the missing person was found back either dead or alive showed this difference to be significant ($\chi^2(1) = 10.5, p < .01$).

When the time of the year in which the person disappeared is considered, psychics appeared more active during the winter months (December to February) compared to the three summer months ($\chi^2(1) = 4.1, p = .04$). This might simply be due to the fact that psychics are on vacation during the summer. The number of potential serious disappearances did not differ for these two periods.

Psychics appeared more often involved in disappearances of persons who were at the time of disappearance in a bad psychological state ($\chi^2(1) = 10.7, p < .01$). There is also a preponderance of involvement of psychics in cases in which the person disappeared in the dark ($\chi^2(1) = 7.1, p < .01$), in which the person disappeared and left his or her normal belongings behind ($\chi^2(2) = 13.8, p < .01$) and in which the person was found back either in water or in nature ($\chi^2(1) = 10.4, p < .01$).

No differences between disappearances with and without psychics were observed for the variables gender and age of missing person, day of disappearance, duration of reporting to police, duration of the disappearance, whether the missing person lived alone or with others, use of medicine and physical problems of the missing person.

Discussion

Apart from the finding that psychics tend to be less involved in cases of missing persons during the summer all significant results observed reflect one common element: psychics are more frequently involved in cases in which the relatives have reasons to suspect that the missing person is in grave danger. That the relatives are often correct in their suspicion is confirmed by the finding that psychics are significantly more often involved in cases in which eventually, when the person is found, he or she turns out to be dead. When a person is in a bad psychological state and/or disappears at night leaving normal belongings such as a handbag or keys behind, or disappears insufficiently dressed, for instance without a coat when it is freezing outside, there

is ample reason to take the possibility of suicide or fatal accident seriously. And missing persons who committed suicide or had a fatal accident are usually found in uncommon places in nature or in water. Had they committed suicide by jumping from a high building or had they died in a traffic accident they would most likely never have been reported missing at all.

Psychohygenic Effects of the Involvement of Psychics

Originally it was intended to approach all the principal participants involved in cases of missing persons in which psychics had advised: relatives, police and psychics. This would have made it possible to compare how each of these participants viewed the value of the contributions of the psychics. However, it turned out that it was difficult to obtain sufficient data from police and psychics. As stated before, because the initial information about the cases were obtained from formal police reports the relatives had to be approached via the police. Hence it depended on the willingness of the relatives to return the questionnaire and to provide the names and addresses of the psychics they had met during the disappearance.

In a few questionnaires received from relatives, police and psychics, the question concerning the usefulness of the contribution of the psychic was answered by selecting the alternative “by providing the correct solution.” These ostensibly successful psychic contributions are discussed separately in the next section.

It will be noted that in the data reported below the numbers for the various analyses do not always agree with each other. There are several reasons for these minor discrepancies. Respondents could mark different alternative answers to the same question as being applicable, they did not have to restrict themselves to one choice. Sometimes the answers were based on the experience of the respondent with various psychics and consequently a question could be answered by selecting even different contradictory alternatives. On the other hand, most respondents did not answer all questions. Also, it appeared that occasionally respondents were not entirely consistent in their answers to different but related questions. The analyses presented below are based on all answers provided by the respondents.

The data from the police

Thirteen police officers returned the questionnaire about their experiences with psychics when investigating a case of a missing person. This modest contribution is not due to an unwillingness to cooperate but a consequence of the fact that in many cases of investigating disappearances police had no personal contact with the psychic(s) and hence could not answer questions about

the psychic's activities. Two of the 13 police officers stated that a psychic had correctly indicated the location in which the missing person eventually was found. In one of these two cases the relatives agreed with that judgment. In the other case we have to rely on the judgment of the police officer because this concerns a case of which no data could be obtained from the relatives and psychic involved.

The thirteen respondents had little previous experience with psychics and were initially either neutral or negative about the possibility that psychics could aid in the investigation. Despite this skeptic attitude they were willing to listen to what the psychics had to tell, probably because in all cases except two police suspected that the missing person was dead and because in about half of the cases the investigative leads had been exhausted. Hence not surprisingly the most frequently mentioned reason to accept the involvement of psychics was that they were willing to try anything to solve the case. The next frequently mentioned reason was that the relatives wanted to cooperate with the psychic. But the expectations were not high and only one police officer felt that psychics might provide a meaningful contribution to the investigation. The majority agreed with the attitude that little was lost by trying.

Despite or perhaps due to the initial skepticism most police officers stated that their first impression of the psychic had been favorable. In half of the cases the psychics had been in contact with different officers involved in the investigation, in the other half of the cases the contact was restricted to one officer (the respondent). But although they had been willing to accept the involvement of a psychic all officers stated that they did not provide information on the case to the psychics and only two police officers had taken part in search actions together with a psychic. The number of psychics involved in these disappearances varied between one and five with one exception, a well-known unsolved case in which about 30 psychics had advised.

Seven officers stated that they had not or only on a few occasions verified the statements of the psychics. Only three officers had frequently tried to check the psychics' impressions. The officer involved in the unsolved case in which about 30 psychics had advised estimated that police had lost about 15 hours in unsuccessful search actions by checking the suggestions of the psychics. Most officers appeared not impressed by the contributions of the psychics. Only three indicated that they were positive about the results, either because the psychic provided useful information which contributed to the solution of the case or because due to the psychic search actions were initiated which resulted in finding the missing person. But despite the fact that most officers found the results of the psychic's involvement disappointing only one of them was left with negative feelings towards them. Five officers felt afterwards positive about the psychics they had met and seven remained neutral and felt neither positive nor negative.

Asked how they felt about the effects of the psychics' activities on the relatives most officers stated that they had noticed both positive and negative effects. The most frequently mentioned positive effect was that the relatives obtained new possibilities for search action. The most frequently mentioned negative effect was that at the same time these new possibilities created false hope which in most cases left the relatives worse off after the psychic had disappeared from their lives without having achieved success.

The data from the psychics

From relatives of missing persons the names of 47 psychics were obtained whom they had met in the period that the person was missing. Questionnaires were mailed either directly to the psychics or to the relatives with the request to forward them to the psychics. Due to lack of addresses and/or lack of cooperation only 16 questionnaires from psychics were received. Of the questionnaires received some were very incompletely answered.

In three of the nine questionnaires related to solved cases the psychic claimed to have provided the correct solution to the case. In two of these three cases the relatives agreed with this claim. In the third case in which success was claimed no data were available from the relatives but in this case the police officer in charge of the investigation confirmed the claim to be correct. In one other case the relatives felt that the psychic had solved the case but the psychic herself was more modest and only claimed that her statements had stimulated new search actions which had resulted in finding the missing person.

The further data provided by these 16 respondents are mentioned here but due to the low numbers these outcomes can hardly be considered as representative of psychics in general. The data indicate that psychics tend to feel more confident about the value of their contributions when the case is still unsolved. For the none solved cases five times a contribution to the solution was claimed whereas in four questionnaires no contribution at all was indicated. However, for the seven unsolved cases the psychics claimed a total of 18 contributions to the investigation and in only two questionnaires no contribution was claimed. Because of the unsolved nature of the cases these claims cannot be corroborated but at least it is obvious that these 18 supposedly useful contributions did not result in finding the missing person.

All psychics had been in personal contact with either the relatives or the police but rarely with relatives and police. Nine psychics had actively searched for the missing person. The experience of the psychics agrees with those stated by the police that as a rule the police did not provide information to the psychics. Only three psychics had received some financial compensation but this only involved small amounts of money and should be rather viewed as compen-

sation for travel costs. The psychics who had been in personal contact with the relatives were all of the opinion that their involvement had been supportive to the relatives.

How the relatives experienced the involvement of psychics

Questionnaire data were received from 25 female and 17 male relatives or friends of missing persons who had been in contact with psychics during the disappearance. Of these 41 cases of disappearances 26 were solved when the relatives answered the questionnaire. In only two of these solved cases the missing person had been found back alive, in the other cases the missing person appeared to be deceased. In fifteen cases the cause of death was suicide. The other nine deceased persons had been the victim of accident and murder.

Of the respondents 32 belonged to the family of the missing person, six respondents were distant relatives, in two cases the respondent was a close friend and in one case the respondent rated himself an acquaintance. Nearly all had been in either daily or weekly contact with the person who had disappeared. Four respondents, all involved in unsolved cases, indicated that they themselves had problems too at the time of the disappearance.

Twenty-four of the respondents expected at the time of the disappearance the missing person to be found back dead and 12 believed him or her to be the victim of a crime. Because most respondents appeared to fear that the missing person was in grave danger not surprisingly all except one stated that the disappearance was day and night or very frequently on their minds. All had already undertaken a variety of activities themselves to find the missing person but without success. In such circumstances it is to be expected that the relatives and friends were inclined to try if psychics might be able to help.

Asked for their opinion about paranormal phenomena in general 15 respondents stated that they had never heard of it or were not interested in the subject before they were confronted with the disappearance. Five respondents believed it to be impossible. Seventeen respondents felt that paranormal phenomena might be possible and nine stated that they themselves had had paranormal experiences. Asked how they felt about psychics 16 respondents stated that they had been in contact with psychics before the disappearance. Thirteen respondents did not believe in psychic abilities, 25 felt that psychics might now and then 'see' something correctly and only two were convinced of the existence of psychic abilities and believed that psychics might find a missing person. In 23 disappearances the respondents or other relatives or friends of the missing person took the initiative to consult a psychic and 13 respondents indicated that it was the psychic who approached them. A few psychics became involved due to a TV program dedicated to disappearances which had invited them to shed their light on the mysteries.

By far the most frequently mentioned reason to accept the involvement of psychics was that the respondents wanted to try everything to find the missing person (mentioned 28 times). Second came the argument that they did not know what further they could do to find the missing person (mentioned 16 times). At the time of the first contact with psychics only five respondents expected the police to solve the case soon, 15 respondents did not know what to expect and 22 feared that police would not be able to succeed. To many relatives the psychics are apparently a kind of last resort. They had tried already everything else without success and the majority did not expect that police would soon solve the case. Reasons such as belief in paranormal abilities or previous successes of the psychic hardly played a role in the motivation and were only a few times indicated. Only two respondents expected that psychics could solve the disappearance. Eight respondents did not have such high expectations, on the contrary, they did not expect any success. Another eight respondents said that they did not know what to expect. Most respondents took a middle position, they hoped and expected that the psychics might be useful in some way.

After the first meeting most respondents had obtained a positive impression of the psychics. Only six respondents were apparently disappointed and expressed more or less negative feelings. Sixteen respondents stated that they themselves had felt better after meeting the psychic but for eight respondents the meeting worked out not that well, they felt worse.

The topic most frequently discussed in the first contact between relatives and psychics appeared to be the disappearance and the impressions the psychic had concerning the problem. Of the 28 respondents who stated that in their first meeting the psychic had provided information about the case, 21 felt that the psychic provided correct information and seven stated that the information had been incorrect. With 13 respondents the psychic had also discussed previous successes as a psychic. In total 24 times a psychic referred to someone who could corroborate his or her claims of previous psychic successes, most often police (six times), but only four respondents had actually attempted to verify these claims.

The frequency of contact between relatives and psychics after the first meeting appeared in general not high. Thirty respondents met the psychic only once or a few times. Only three respondents stated that they were in frequent contact with the psychic. The initiative to meet each other was more or less evenly distributed over relatives and psychics. Many psychics took an active interest in the disappearance. Twenty-eight respondents stated that the psychic had checked out locations in the hope to find the missing person, in 10 cases together with the respondent. The experiences of the relatives appear to agree with those of the psychics and police as regards the fact that police did not provide information to the psychics.

In order to obtain insight in how the respondents felt as regards the help the psychics provided four different questions were asked: how useful the contributions of the psychics had

been, what the relatives considered as the most important contribution of the psychics, how they felt afterwards about the psychic as a person and whether they would accept the involvement of psychics again if they ever found themselves in the future in a similar situation. The respondents appeared to feel rather mixed about the practical contributions of the psychics to the investigation. About half, 21 of the 39 respondents who answered this question, were disappointed and considered the contributions of the psychics to the investigation as useless. However, eight of these respondents were not entirely negative and indicated that in other respects they had benefited somehow, for instance because of the moral support the psychic gave them. On the other hand, 18 (46%) respondents felt positive about the usefulness of the psychics for the investigation. Four (10%) stated that a psychic had provided the correct solution. According to two of these (5%) respondents this had resulted in finding the missing person. Eleven respondents indicated that one or more psychics had provided new information unknown to the police which however had not contributed to finding the missing person. Five respondents were positive because psychics had generated fresh ideas about the investigation or had stimulated new search actions.

On average three to four psychics had been involved in each of these disappearances. If it is assumed that in each case the useful information came from one of the psychics involved, and that certainly holds for the contributions which led to finding the missing person, then the success percentages based on the contributions of individual psychics become 18 (13.5%) psychics who were useful, four (3%) who delivered the right solution including two (1.5%) whose advice resulted in finding the missing person.

Somewhat surprisingly in view of the 21 respondents who considered the contributions of the psychics quite useless the majority of the respondents, 29 (72.5%), felt afterwards-positive about the involvement of the psychics. The answer to this discrepancy lies probably in the reactions of the respondents to the question which contribution of the psychics they valued most. Of the 39 answers nine were related to the practical contributions of the psychics to the investigation, eight to the role of the psychic as someone to talk to but by far the most, 22 respondents, considered as most important the fact that by asking help from psychics they had done everything they could do to help solve the case. Asked how they felt about the psychics they had dealt with 26 respondents indicated a positive and 11 respondents a negative attitude. As could be expected the 11 respondents with a negative attitude towards psychics answered 'no' to the questions whether they would consider the involvement of psychics again if ever they would find themselves in a similar situation. Twenty-eight respondents answered that question with a 'yes'.

The relatives were also asked about their experiences with the police. It turned out that 15 respondents judged negatively about their first contacts with the police and the (lack of)

actions of the police after the disappearance was reported. However, the subsequent activities of the police succeeded in creating more positive feeling in some of these respondents. Asked how they felt now, at the time they answered the questionnaire, 30 respondents were positive about the police against 11 respondents who still felt negative.

At the time of answering the questionnaire the respondents felt more positive about the police than they did immediately after the disappearance. However, the difference between police and psychics as regards appreciation after the investigation came to an end, either because the person was found or because the investigative leads had run out, is not impressive. Nineteen respondents were positive about the contributions from police and psychics, seven respondents were positive about the usefulness of the psychics but negative about the police, 10 respondents appeared to show the opposite pattern, they felt negative about the psychics and positive about the police whereas four respondents felt negative about both groups. It turned out that this mixed picture has much to do with the success or failure of the police investigation. The appreciation of the psychics does not differ for solved and unsolved cases, for both groups about twice as many positive judgments compared to negative judgments. But the satisfaction with police differs strongly between solved and unsolved cases. Nearly all respondents involved in solved cases were positive about the contributions of the police, whereas for unsolved cases the negative judgments prevail. The difference appears significant ($\chi^2(1) = 6.5, p = .01$).

Not surprisingly a similar difference between solved and unsolved cases appeared when the feelings of the respondents are considered. Respondents were three times asked to select from a list of 22 adjectives which describe feelings, for instance 'desperate', 'optimistic', 'lonely', which feelings they experienced strongly in that period. First, they were asked to do this for the period immediately after the disappearance, then for the time after they first met the psychic and lastly for the present, the time when they filled out the questionnaire. As could be expected the feelings selected as being dominant in the period immediately after the disappearance were for more than 95% negative ones, with 'sad', 'desperate', 'miserable' and 'despondent' as the most frequently selected adjectives. After they had met the psychics the percentage of negative adjectives dropped to 52% for the solved cases but to only 73% for the unsolved cases. This difference becomes stronger in time. At the time the questionnaire was answered the respondents involved in solved cases selected already less negative (44%) than positive adjectives. But the respondents involved in unsolved cases felt apparently even worse than after meeting the psychics, of the dominant feelings selected 79% were of a negative nature. This difference between the feelings of respondents of solved and unsolved cases appeared statistically strongly significant ($\chi^2(1) = 14.8, p < .01$).

The Nature of the Contributions of the Successful Psychics

Four relatives and one police officer had stated that a psychic had provided the correct solution to the mystery of the disappearance. In addition, there is a case in which the police report indicates that the psychic might have given the correct location of the missing person before the body had become displaced. These six cases have been considered in more detail to find out to what extent the contributions of the psychics really helped to locate the missing person. Although there have been media reports on the disappearances discussed below I know of only one media report which featured the contribution of the psychic to the solution of the case.

Despite the fact that the cases discussed below are corroborated by relatives and/or police it should be stressed that the events described are basically based on anecdotal reports with all the associated drawbacks. In no instance precise records were made at the time of what was discussed, said and done by the psychics, which statements were made which turned out to be incorrect and how well informed the psychics were about the situation and possibilities before they made their statements. Hence it is difficult to assess how the psychics came to their statements. It is relatively easy, though, to verify what the effect of their statements was on the investigation.

Case 1

From this case only data from the police officer involved in the investigation are available. A five-year old boy had disappeared on a winter day. He was last seen playing near a canal in the small town where he lived. The canal was frozen but the ice was fairly thin and near the place where the boy was last seen the ice appeared broken. Nearby the cap of the boy was found. Therefore, police immediately assumed that the boy had ventured on the ice and had drowned after fallen through. However, the body was not found.

A man who worked in an administrative function in the police department was acquainted with a psychic who lived in a town approximately 65 km away. One day when the administrator was in contact with the psychic on the phone the psychic told him that the police officer involved in the investigation, the one who had sent in the questionnaire, had been that day at the spot where the boy would be found. This was surprising because according to this officer nobody knew at the time that he had gone looking for the missing boy that day. He had walked along the water further away from the assumed location of the disappearance than he had done before. The psychic mentioned also that there was a fence near the boy. According to the police officer this information stimulated him to initiate new search actions which eventually resulted in finding the boy. He was found in the water so the initial assumption that he had drowned

proved to be correct. The boy had already been missing for four weeks and had not been found before because the body had drifted away and had then become stuck underneath a crush barrier, a kind of fence. The police officer rated the contribution of the psychic as being the stimulus for new search actions which led to finding the boy.

Comments

The psychic had not been in the town where this happened but it can be assumed that she was informed about the situation and knew that the boy had probably drowned after falling through the ice. Therefore, the location where the boy could be found, somewhere in the canal, was already more or less known. That the boy had not been found at the time implied a) that he was not anymore at the place where he had drowned because that location had been searched and b) that the body probably had become stuck under water, a not uncommon phenomenon, because otherwise it would have found floating after a few weeks. Hence the main contribution of the psychic seems to be that she impressed the officer sufficiently strong, especially by 'seeing' that he had been searching that day which no one knew, to initiate new search actions which met with success.

Case 2

When the police arrived at a house to enforce an eviction because the rent had not been paid for a long time they discovered that no preparations had been made and that the eviction came as a complete surprise to the woman living there. When the woman tried to reach her husband at his work she learned that he had disappeared that very morning in his car. The husband was in poor health and took medicine for heart problems and diabetes. She soon found out that he also was in serious financial trouble. Nine years before the man had also disappeared during a stressful period. It later appeared that during this disappearance he had spent a couple of weeks on a Spanish island. Three days after the disappearance the woman contacted a psychic whom she knew because the psychic worked primarily as a therapist and had treated the couple before because of problems in their relationship. The psychic told her that her husband was alive, that he stayed in a foreign country and that he would contact his family. Six days after the disappearance a letter arrived from the husband, sent from Belgium, with the auto papers and car key included, in which he wrote where he had left the car (in a Dutch city nearby) and that he would be dead by the time the letter was received.

The wife worried about the suicide plans of her husband called the psychic again. The psychic told her that she felt that he would not commit suicide and that the woman would hear

from him shortly. This also appeared to be correct. Five days later the husband called from Belgium to his son with the request to come over and to take him home. After returning home they turned again to the psychic for counseling and according to the psychic at the time she answered the questionnaire the troubles were over for the couple. The woman who sent in the questionnaire judged that the psychic had provided the correct solution.

Comments

The psychic had clearly been a great support for the woman in this difficult period of her life and it is therefore not surprising that the woman appeared strongly positive about her contributions. The psychic predicted that the husband would not commit suicide and would return after a while. This happened to be the case and in that sense one can say she saw the correct solution. But except for mentioning a foreign country she did not say where the husband was. Hence from a practical point of view the information she provided was not really useful to police. As to her prediction that the man would not do away with himself it seems rather a matter of taste whether one calls her an able psychic or an able therapist who made a correct psychological judgement about the husband. After all she knew the husband already well from previous counseling sessions.

Case 3

A man left his house on a Sunday afternoon for a walk with his two dogs. The man, 49 years of age, was physically not well and suffered from a blood disease. He had also trouble with walking. When he did not return his wife went looking for him and she found the dogs playing not far from her house near the river. There was no sign of her husband. The same day search actions were started by police and eventually the two wooden shoes of the man were found on the banks of the river. Four days after the disappearance the brother of the missing man was in touch with a psychic who told him where to search for his brother. Police was impressed because that location, situated on the banks of the river, was also previously selected by a tracker dog. At that spot unsuccessful dredge operations had already been carried out. A new effort was made to find the man at this location in the river, this time by employing divers, but again without success. A week after the disappearance the body was found in the river 65 km downstream.

Comments

The man could not walk well so he couldn't have covered a large distance from his house before disappearing. It can be expected that after the man got into the water, it is still unclear whether

this was an accident or suicide, his wooden shoes would float and be carried away with the current. Hence it is fairly certain that the location where he got into the water could not have been far from his house and had to be upstream from where the shoes were found. It is not known what the psychic and the brother discussed and in how far she knew about the situation. In this case the possible locations where the man might have gone into the river were rather restricted, at best a stretch of one km length alongside the riverbank: upstream from the location where the shoes were found. Therefore, not surprisingly the information provided by the psychic did not differ much from what the police already knew. However, apparently she indicated exactly the same location as those indicated by the tracker dog, probably the location where he got into the water. Had the body become stuck somehow they might have found him in the vicinity of that location. However, the body was carried away with the current and by that time far away from the location the psychic had indicated.

Case 4

A 70-year old man, in bad health and recovering from an operation, had stated a number of times that he could not bear life anymore and that he was going to drown himself. One summer day he left the house. All the items he normally carried with him, money, car key, car papers, etc. he left behind on a table. He even went without his hearing aid. He was last seen walking into the direction of the local cemetery. When he did not return the relatives and police assumed immediately that he had finally carried out his threat. Search actions were undertaken but no trace of him was found.

The relatives, among others a daughter who considered herself a medium, asked advice from three psychics. Two declared that they saw the man in water. The relatives assumed this water to be a specific pond near a farm. One of these two psychics gave a vivid description of how the man had suffered when drowning. Dredging the pond had no success and the relatives felt afterwards very negative about the psychic who had described so vividly how the man had suffocated when drowning. The third psychic was fetched by a son-in-law. On seeing a photograph of the missing person, the psychic got an image of a church and trees. She stated that the man was lying on the ground near trees with grey leaves and that he was dead. The psychic and the son-in-law then went to the house of the man and starting from there the psychic followed the route she believed the man had taken, first to the cemetery and then she continued until they came to a quarry. Walking up the slope she looked at the town and according to her she saw the picture of the church and trees as she had seen in her mind before they embarked on the trip. Hence, she concluded that the man must be in that area. The relatives looked around but

did not see anything noteworthy. They then brought the psychic back to her house. The next day they returned to the area for a more thorough search. They found the body on the slope of the quarry, 18 days after the disappearance. The police report confirmed that the man was found by the relatives on the slope of the quarry. He had committed suicide by hanging himself but the body had fallen from the tree and was found lying on the ground.

Comments

The man was found by the relatives thanks to the information of the psychic. She did indicate the correct location, the quarry, a location on land in contrast to the general opinion which assumed that the man had drowned himself. The fact that already 18 days had passed and that the body was still not found might have increased the likelihood that he was not in water. However, it is not uncommon that a body in water remains undetected for a long period of time.

Case 5

Early in the morning of December 24, the day before Christmas, the staff of a nursing home observed a 77-year old male patient outside the building. The man walked on slippers, had left his spectacles behind and was not properly clothed for the winter day. When staff members went outside to fetch him they could not find him in the dark. He had disappeared in the wooded area in which the nursing home was situated. The man was in bad health, had recently suffered a stroke, had heart complaints, could hardly speak anymore, walked badly and although according to the staff he did not suffer from dementia, he was very forgetful. A couple of months previously he had also disappeared from the nursing home and although he was very familiar with the surroundings he then was found hidden under a bush because he had not been able to find the way back.

After receiving the report that the man was missing and in danger police first searched all the routes leading away from the nursing home. Two days after the disappearance, on December 26, police received information from a witness that he had seen the missing person walking on a certain road. The search actions became then focused on that area. The police also checked the area not far from the nursing home where the man used to go fishing and the area where one of his daughters lived and where he used to walk. Tracker dogs were employed but all efforts were without result.

On December 26, the relatives of the missing person called a psychic who lived in a nearby town, about three-quarters of an hour driving away, and made an appointment for the following

day. That day the relatives fetched the psychic by car and brought her to the nursing home from where the man had disappeared. The psychic then spent some time in the room of the missing person. According to her she is used to do this because it enables her to get impressions about what happened to the person. The psychic felt that the man was dead and that he was to be found in a bend of a road leading from the nursing home to the area in which one of the daughters and a son of the man lived. In the past the man had often followed that road on bike when he visited his children. The relatives then first brought the psychic back home. During the drive the psychic urged them after dropping her off to return and to start immediately to search for their father. She predicted that if they did so the father would be found within an hour. That prediction turned out to be correct. Soon after they started searching the man was found in the bend of the road as indicated by the psychic. The man had passed away, no doubt due to the cold, and was found hidden underneath a laurel bush. He was hidden so well that the body could only be seen by pushing the branches aside and looking into the bush. After police was informed they first ran a test by walking the tracker dogs over the road near to the body. The dogs did not react which explains why the man was not found before by the dogs when that area was searched.

Comments

In this case there is also no doubt that the body was found, again by the relatives, as a result of the information of the psychic. The road was already searched without success. To track people who become lost because they are confused or suffer from dementia and who are unable to find their way back is especially a difficult task. Such persons start to wander but they are not able to follow a rational plan. If they get cold and weary they often hide themselves underneath bushes or other places where they are difficult to find. If they are in good health they are sometimes found far away from where they left. In this case the man could not walk well and hence it was to be expected that he would not have been able to cover a large distance. Still that leaves a large area where he could have been hidden.

Case 6

On a November morning a man disappeared from home when his wife was away to do errands. The man was already for years under treatment for depression but she had not noticed anything special about him that day. Nevertheless, when he did not return the family reckoned with the possibility of suicide. They reported the disappearance to the police but the first weeks the police did not take any actions. The family was more active and tried to obtain information about his whereabouts among others by putting up posters and by taking part in a TV program

which focuses on tracing missing persons. Because the man used to walk with his grandchild along the sea shore about 15 km away police searched the coastal area, where he could have gone by bus, but without results. More search actions were carried out but all in vain.

Three psychics became involved in the investigation. All felt that the man was not far away from his home. One of these psychics was a young girl who had an aunt who knew the family of the missing person. This girl does not consider herself a psychic and does not work as such but had experienced before that she could obtain correct impressions in such cases. On the request of her aunt, who via a niece passed the information on to a son of the missing person, this girl tried to obtain an idea about where the man could be. She stated that the man had not taken the bus but had felt unwell and then made a walk, she saw a mill, a sports building, a train and what she called a skating area, i.e. a flooded meadow. There is no skating area in the vicinity of the house where the man lived. The family then searched in the environment of skating areas situated in two nearby villages. When that had no result they asked the girl again and this time she said she saw the man in water near mills and that the skating area was actually flooded land. According to the relatives she had also expressed her surprise that the man was not found already because so many people passed by the location where he was.

The next day the fire department (who are specialized too in diving operations) carried out search actions in a small recreational area situated approximately one kilometer away from the man's house. Here he was found, hidden by reed, in a shallow part of a canal which runs alongside a road called Mill Quay. Immediately south of the water three mills stand in a row. Immediately north of the water are sporting fields with a building. A railroad runs less than 500 meters away. The area is on three sides enclosed by houses. The disappearance lasted over five weeks.

Comments

The fire department who found the body was probably unknown of the statements of the girl because the relatives as well as the police stated that it appeared afterwards that the girl had provided an accurate description of the location where the man was found. None claimed that the man was found as a result of the description given by the psychic. That the man committed suicide in this area is quite remarkable. The area is in town, surrounded by roads, houses, with a railroad station nearby, and frequently people pass through the area. In addition, the water is very shallow. Hence it is somewhat surprising that nobody had seen the man entering and walking through the water in full daylight to the reed area where he drowned himself.

Discussion

The data from this study do not allow to provide an estimate as to how many police departments have experience with the involvement of psychics. Police officers who do have such experience indicated in the questionnaire that they mainly accepted the involvement of psychics because there was nothing to lose and because in a number of cases the psychic was already in contact with the relatives. However, they did not take themselves initiatives into this direction and in general did not cooperate actively with psychics by providing information or by taking part in search actions with psychics. Hence as far as the police is concerned the involvement of psychics actually limits itself mainly to listening to what the psychic has to tell and in that sense they do not treat psychics different from other civilians who provide information. Despite the low number of respondents from the police it seems that this attitude can be considered as fairly typical of how police reacts to the involvement of psychics. It is noteworthy that police rated the creation of false hope and the subsequent disappointment as the main negative effect of the involvement of psychics on the relatives, not the fact that the psychics as a rule did not contribute to the investigation.

No evidence was found to support the objection against the use of psychics that psychics take away valuable police time which could be better spent on traditional methods of police investigation. That objection seems anyhow unlikely because as a rule police officers are rather pragmatic, used to set priorities and not much inclined to spend a lot of time on what to many of them must appear to be just wild guesses. The respondents of the questionnaires estimated that the time spent by police on following up suggestions made by psychics is usually not more than a few hours. In the worst case, a still unsolved disappearance of a young girl in which about 30 psychics were involved, the time spent on the psychics amounted to about 15 hours. In addition, the police reports related to these cases create the impression that, if suggestions made by the psychic are checked at all, it often is done as part of other police activities. For instance, a location is checked out when police has to be in the area anyhow for other reasons. Or when for some reason time becomes available, as happened in the Jansons disappearance described below, when due to a break-down of all computer-systems the detectives suddenly got the opportunity to carry out search actions together with the psychic.

It is debatable in how far the psychics who took part in this study by returning the questionnaire can be considered as representative for the psychics in general. It might well be that those psychics who cooperated felt that they had been to some extent successful. But even the scant data available from this study confirms the general impression that psychics are inclined to exaggerate their claims when there is no possibility to validate their impressions. The data also confirm previous findings, for instance by Milke (1994, p. 245), that, as a rule, psychics become not involved for financial reasons.

The reactions of the relatives and friends of the missing persons seem of most importance. In all disappearances of this study the relatives had good reasons to fear that the missing person was in real danger. Most people who disappear voluntarily do this because they have serious problems. Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that only four respondents affirmed that they themselves had problems at the time. This creates the impression as if most relatives were either unaware of the problems or did not take them very seriously before the person disappeared and only then realized how bad the situation actually was.

The relatives who did accept the involvement of psychics did mainly so because they wanted to try everything to find the missing person and not so much because they believed in psychic abilities or in the paranormal. Still the fact that 16 of them (38% of all respondents) had already experience with psychics before indicates that they were probably already more positively inclined towards psychics than could be expected generally, because it seems unlikely that 38% of the population has personal experiences with psychics. It also implies that these previous experiences with psychics could not have been very bad. Over 80% of the respondents had a favorable first impression of the psychics. That positive impression deteriorated somewhat but despite the fact that more than half of the respondents felt that the psychics did not contribute useful information, at the end still over 70% of the respondents felt positive about them.

One might wonder why so many respondents remained positive in the absence of success. The data suggest that the feelings towards the psychics are not in the first place based on their ability to solve the case. In fact, the respondents rated the consideration that they had done everything they could do to help solve the case as the main contribution of the psychics. In other words, it is not so much what the psychics themselves do but that they provide an opportunity for the relatives to do something which makes their involvement important for most-of the respondents.

The reason why it is so important for the relatives to have the feeling that they did everything in their power to find the missing person might well be that this helps to reduce feelings of guilt. The occurrence of feelings of guilt appears quite normal after the death of a beloved one. When a person is lost because he or she disappeared there are even more reasons for such feelings. When suicide is feared relatives might ask themselves what they did wrong and why they were not able to prevent the suicide. In the case of a possible accident, which most often involve elderly mentally or physically disabled persons, relatives might reproach themselves for not having taken better care of the person. These worries and fears are amplified by the inherent uncertainty of the situation. As long as the person remains missing the relatives cannot put an end to the case and begin with building up their lives again. In this often tense emotional atmosphere the promise of new possibilities to solve the case offered by psychics can have a strong impact on the relatives.

Eighteen of the respondents (43%) were positive as regards the contributions of the psychics to the investigation. If we consider only those cases in which according to the relatives or police a psychic provided the correct solution then a success percentage of 14.3% is obtained (six out of 42, including the one case of which only data from police were available). That finding fits well with the earlier findings of Brink and Leeftang who reported success percentages based on the experience of police departments from 12.7% to 21%, but not with the 0% success rate found in the studies from Germany and the USA. Ratings by the police yielded a positive judgment about the contributions of the psychics of 23% (three out of 13) but that figure is based on a very small sample and hence less convincing. However, this percentage fits well with the 14.3% success rate based on the judgement of the relatives. Ratings by police of the usefulness of psychics will probably result in somewhat higher percentages than those given by the relatives because police might also consider other contributions, such as stimulating new ideas or search actions, as useful instead of only ratings of correct solutions on which the finding of 14.3% is based.

If the successes are viewed in terms of individual psychics then according to the relatives about 13% of the psychics were useful to the investigation and 3% provided the correct solution. According to our own analyses 1.5% contributed directly to finding the missing person. These figures also compare well with the findings of Leeftang. Based on the experiences of police with the individual contributions of psychics, he found that 10% were rated as useful and 4% as providing the correct solution. However, the success rates observed indicate that in practice the usefulness of psychics for actually finding a missing person is quite limited. Viewed from a different perspective, i.e. that the data were collected during four years, there appears to be on average one successful case every two years.

The police rated the creation of false hope as the main negative effect of the involvement of psychics but the data from the relatives do not support this impression. For the majority of the respondents, 25 of the 38 relatives from which data on this issue are available, the expectation of and satisfaction with the contributions of the psychics remained the same. Five respondents who had a low expectation felt afterwards positive about the contributions of the psychics and for nine respondents the opposite was observed, a positive expectation but a negative final judgment. Hence only for these nine relatives, less than 25% of all respondents, the 'false hope' argument might have been valid.

The difference in satisfaction with police and psychics after the investigation was closed turned out to be small. At first glance this suggests that it would not make much difference for the relatives whether police or psychics do the investigation. But that seems unlikely. The lack of difference might be due to other reasons, especially to a difference in expectations. It was

observed that at the time of answering the questionnaires the relatives of persons who were not found back had a significantly more negative attitude towards the police than the relatives involved in solved cases whereas the solved or unsolved nature of the disappearance did not affect their attitude towards the psychics. This indicates that in fact the relatives involved in unsolved cases expected and hoped that the police would solve the case. Except two, none of the respondents indicated that they expected the psychics to solve the case. It is also noteworthy that the relatives indicated that the most valued contribution of the psychics was not their help in finding the missing person but the fact that they gave the relatives the feeling that they had done everything to solve the case. Another reason why the respondents of the unsolved cases were so negative is the frustrating experiences with the police some had after reporting the disappearance. Often the police react with a 'wait and see' attitude before they take the disappearance seriously. This is very upsetting for relatives who suspect that the missing person is in grave danger. This lack of action in the beginning is of course the more frustrating when despite later efforts police not succeeded in solving the case. Some respondents might also have been disappointed in the lack of psychological support from police. Although individual police officers sometimes appear an enormous support for relatives that is not the rule. Not all relatives are aware that providing this type of support is not part of the task of police. Hence, they might also have become disappointed in police because in this respect they had too high expectations.

Despite the 'hits' of the psychics in the six cases discussed above the media were not informed and with one exception no media reports were published about the contributions of these psychics. This finding, although in view of the small numbers hardly representative, supports the possibility discussed in the introduction that the famous and well-publicized examples of successful psychic detection which can be found in the literature might not be as representative for the involvement of psychics in police investigations as is usually assumed.

This study did not consider whether or not the contributions of the psychics might have a paranormal character as the psychics themselves belief. That would be only meaningful when it is established that these contributions are sufficiently exceptional that an explanation is needed. As was already expected after reviewing the literature it is very rare that psychics do solve a case. The data of this study confirm that view. The few successes described above might seem remarkable but it remains difficult to assess how remarkable they really were. With the exception of the case of the psychic policeman it is not known what exactly was said by the psychics, what statements were forgotten, what information the psychics had, how well they knew the environment, etc. Research aimed at an explanation seems not warranted by the data of this study.

The number of successful contributions of psychics is simply too low to assume that we are dealing with an unknown information process. The few successes found in this study might well

have been based on experience and lucky guesswork. There is also a practical reason to consider. The difficulty to obtain valid data, in this study approximately one successful contribution every two years, makes systematic research nearly impossible.

Anecdotal cases and the experimental research described in this paper are usually discussed in terms of the potential usefulness of psychics for police investigations or to debate whether psychic abilities exist. However, the problem might also be approached from the opposite direction. There are reasons to believe that psychics with much experience in certain areas can occasionally be quite successful, for instance Croiset from the Netherlands who was frequently involved in the search of missing children. The results of this study support that notion. In experimental studies in which psychics have no knowledge about the circumstances of the crime or in the case of unsolicited contributions from inexperienced psychics they all fail. Successes are only observed in local cases in which the psychics are familiar with the circumstances of the missing person and with the environment. If experience and local knowledge is important, and there is nothing mysterious about the effect of experience on achievements, it might be more effective to do systematic research into the problem of missing children and other disappearances. Systematic research means in this case the search for trends in collections of accounts of solved disappearances. If experienced officers using the results of such research appear as good or better in predicting the whereabouts of missing persons than psychics do, then the problem can be considered to be really solved.

Part V: Recommendations for the Public and the Police

Judging from the data discussed in Part III of this article, relatives of missing persons seem to consult psychics more for psychological reasons than because they believe in paranormal abilities. Most of them contact psychics on the advice of friends or acquaintances. Their experiences with these psychics are generally not negative, partly because their expectations of the psychics' ability to find the missing person are not high. Many people missing a loved one are desperate and not inclined to act strictly rationally in such an emotionally charged situation. Psychics come into play at a point when the police have not been able to locate the missing person. For all these reasons, it must be assumed that advice suggesting the idea of paranormal abilities should be rejected and portraying psychics as potential fraudsters will inevitably fail to have the desired effect. The police must expect particularly strong negative reactions from relatives if they have not been successful in their own investigations but categorically refuse to cooperate with psychics. This cannot be in the interests of the investigation. The recommendations presented below are important in situations where relatives are already considering working with

psychics. The aim of these suggestions is to promote the potential psychological benefits that the involvement of psychics could bring to relatives, while at the same time avoiding any potential negative consequences it might have for the investigation itself. These recommendations for the public have been written as a kind of handy guide for relatives of missing persons who ask the police for advice on psychics. The text can easily be adapted for relatives of crime victims.

Recommendations for the Public

Everyone has a strange experience now and then. Perhaps we dream about an event that later comes true. Or we suddenly gain insight into something, but don not understand how this was possible. Such experiences always come unexpectedly. Psychics are people who try to intentionally evoke them, for example, to find out what problems a person has and how to solve them. This can also include the psychic trying to gain impressions of what has happened to a missing person and where that person might be found.

If you encounter a psychic, they will likely offer insights into your character, problems, and health. You may well be amazed at how accurate some of these statements are. This creates the impression that the psychic truly possesses special abilities and is able to “see” things that others cannot perceive. However, just because a psychic can make accurate statements about a person does not mean they can do so about every subject. For example, a psychic cannot predict the winning lottery numbers or which horse will win a race. If they could, most of them would be millionaires. For someone with a wealth of life experience who also has the necessary empathy for other people’s problems, it is easier to make accurate statements about a person than to predict something as specific as the winning numbers in a lottery.

The same applies to very specific knowledge, such as the whereabouts of a missing person or knowledge about a person who has committed a crime. A psychic may provide surprisingly accurate information about the missing person. However, a missing person could be in a virtually unlimited number of locations, which is why experience in dealing with people and empathy are not enough to locate a person’s whereabouts. Based on the results of this study, for example, a realistic expectation would be that a psychic has about a one percent chance of solving a case that the police have been unable to solve. The probability of a psychic being able to help find a missing person is therefore very low. Occasionally, psychics have mentioned names of people they thought were involved in someone else’s disappearance. These impressions have almost always proven to be false.

Sometimes a missing person case attracts considerable media attention, especially when a child or other young person disappears and may have been the victim of a crime, or when a

well-known person has been abducted. In investigations of such cases, the police always receive numerous letters containing alleged psychic impressions about the fate and whereabouts of the missing person. None of these letters has ever provided any information that has advanced the investigation. It is therefore highly unlikely that consulting a psychic “from afar” will lead to the desired result. The few instances in which psychics have actually contributed something useful are those in which they were personally and directly involved.

Many people have been disappointed by psychics, often because their expectations of the psychics’ abilities are unrealistic. Some psychics contribute to such unrealistic expectations by telling stories of miraculous successes. It is best to treat such accounts with great caution. Some people think that most psychics are frauds. However, this attitude seems far too negative. Undoubtedly, there are some bad apples among them, but most psychics truly believe that they possess special paranormal abilities. The primary motivation for many psychics is their desire to help others with their problems.

It is highly unlikely that a psychic will find a missing person or be able to solve a crime. However, you might still want to try, if only to ensure you have done everything in your power to find a missing person. In that case, it is advisable to keep the following points in mind:

- Advice from psychics not directly involved in the case has hardly ever helped to find a missing person. Therefore, consulting a psychic by letter, phone, or internet is highly unlikely to be effective.
- As in any profession, experience is paramount. Psychics with experience in missing persons cases and criminal investigations will likely be of greater benefit, if only because they understand better than others what it means for relatives when one of their loved ones has disappeared or fallen victim to a crime.
- Proceed with caution and provide the psychic with only the necessary information. Although most psychics are trustworthy, it is better to err on the side of caution when it comes to what you confide in them. This is especially true for information whose public disclosure, by any means, might not be in your or the victim’s best interest.
- Another reason not to be too forthcoming with information is that you could accidentally lead the psychic down the wrong track. Psychics are usually quite sensitive people, and your own anxieties and fears can easily influence the impressions they receive. If the psychic has to recognize essential elements themselves, this will give you an idea of their abilities.

- Many psychics enjoy talking, but their primary task is, if necessary, to find the missing person. Try to get the psychic to make statements that are specific enough for them to conduct searches with you.
- Sometimes psychics mention people who, in their opinion, know more about a person's disappearance or a crime. Psychics are not able to "see" the names of unknown perpetrators. If the names of known individuals are mentioned, the psychic has usually already been made aware that there are suspicions against these people. Do not attach any importance to such indications, and avoid addressing or confronting the accused individuals about such suspicions.
- Most psychics do not charge for their time and advice. Helping others is their primary concern. Research suggests that the likelihood of receiving beneficial information from psychics is so low that, according to conventional understanding, no service is being provided that justifies payment or reimbursement of significant travel expenses. However, if you allow psychics to assist you or actively seek them out, it makes sense to clarify the possible financial consequences for yourself in advance.

Recommendations for the Police

Disappearances which attract a lot of media attention might generate hundreds of contributions of psychics. The probability that these contain something useful to the investigation is practically zero. Most psychics prefer to communicate their impressions by calling the police and many of them can be rather verbose. The best policy is to request psychics who call to send in their impressions by letter. Apart from saving time this approach has a number of advantages. It avoids conflicts in the case psychics claim afterwards that they had provided police with correct information which could have solved the case earlier if only police had been willing to listen. The letters should be checked, which can be done at a time which suits police, for unusual information and whether it contains ideas to further the investigation. Not very likely but the possibility cannot be ruled out. A more important reason concerns the relatives of the missing person or victim who perhaps feel or hope that psychics might help to solve the case. Showing them the first 50 or 100 letters from psychics, no doubt all describing different scenarios for the disappearance and different locations where the person might be found, can be a real eye-opener and takes away any expectations they might still have about this method to find the missing person.

In the mainly non-criminal disappearances with a local character which do not attract much media attention psychics most often become involved via other family, friends or acquaint-

tances. It is quite unpredictable in which cases that will happen. Therefore, in disappearances of a potentially serious nature it makes sense for police to prepare the relatives beforehand for this possibility. Not as a recommendation to consult psychics but to inform the relatives so that they are better able to deal with the problem when good-willing friends try to help by inviting psychics or in the case they themselves want to try that approach.

To avoid the creation of false hope it is important to stress in that informative discussion that from experience and research it is known that the likelihood is very low that a psychic will find the missing person. The prospects for success might be better in the case the psychic has experience with investigations of disappearances. Although the relatives should be aware of the possibility of cheating in general that does not play a role. As a rule, psychics work without financial rewards. It makes sense, though, to discuss beforehand financial matters such as travel expenses. The relatives should be especially careful with psychics who are not averse of publicity. They might draw the attention of the media to the disappearance in an unwelcome way. For instance, because the psychic reveals personal details about the missing person which the relatives would have preferred to keep inside the family. There is also the risk that afterwards they are drawn in an unpleasant confrontation when the psychic makes claims about his or her successes which the relatives consider as exaggerated or unjustified.

If the relatives are willing to accept the involvement of psychics they should be careful with providing information, among others because that might put the psychic on a false track. And it allows them to obtain an impression themselves of what the psychic is able to 'see' about the missing person and the disappearance. In the case psychics refer to successes in earlier disappearances, as they occasionally do, police might offer to check these claims by their colleagues who have taken part in the investigation at the time.

If relatives are inclined to accept the involvement of psychics there is not much the police can (or should) do about it but it is wise not to create the impression that the police reject beforehand all contributions of psychics. That would be unwise if only for the fact that an experienced psychic might sometimes have a useful idea about where to find the missing person. If the police has discussed the problem along the lines described above it must be already clear to the relatives that the police has a more or less neutral 'wait and see' attitude. An a priori refusal to have anything to do with psychics makes it actually quite easy for them. He or she can safely offer 'solutions' to the disappearance which will remain unchecked if the police don't want to cooperate. The relatives might then get the feeling that due to 'prejudice' and 'unwillingness' the police is to blame for the fact that the case is not already solved. Especially in the case the investigation is at a dead end such antagonism between police and psychics might seriously strain the relationship between police and relatives.

It is relatively easy to avoid these potential problems. The psychological role of the psychic appears much more important than their practical contributions to the investigation. In this respect the psychic can support the relatives in ways which the police cannot, because providing psychological support is not a task for the police. Therefore, it makes sense to maintain a neutral attitude about interactions between relatives and psychics and in the case the psychics gives suggestions about the whereabouts of the missing person to stimulate joint search actions of relatives and psychics. This approach has a number of advantages. It allows the relatives to discover themselves how difficult it is to find the missing person based on the, as a rule quite vague, impressions of the psychics. It also confronts them directly with the often conflicting statements of a psychic and with the differences of opinion between psychics. If after some time a psychic might offer a solution which for police is difficult to verify, either for practical or financial reasons, the relatives might have more understanding for the position of the police. But at the same time it provides the relatives with the opportunity to do something, to take action and to try new approaches in the search for the missing person. That seems the most important contribution of psychics and it might also take work out of the hands of police. And who knows, there is always the small possibility of success.

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APPENDIX

Data collected about the disappearances

- Name, gender, address, date of birth of the missing person
- When and where did the person disappear
- When reported to police and by whom Police bureau where the disappearance was reported. Name of officer involved in the investigation
- Source of learning about the disappearance
- Have psychics been involved
- Past of missing person, previously disappeared
- Relationships, living situation, profession, means of transport of missing person
- Behavioural characteristics of missing person
- Types of problems the person had at the time of disappearance
- Recent developments in problems, use of medicine
- Description of events associated with the disappearance.
- How did the person disappear Physical and mental condition at the time of disappearance
- Details about the location of disappearance
- Details about how the missing person left, how dressed, what was taken, message left behind
- Assumptions as to what could have happened
- Developments in the investigation
- Where and how was the person found
- Details about the location of finding the person
- What happened to the means of transport
- Description of the events after the disappearance
- Reason for the disappearance

Data collected by questionnaire from the relatives

- Name of the missing person

- When and where did the person disappear
- Name and gender of the respondent Self problems in that period
- Relationship with the missing person
- Frequency of contact with the missing person
- Name of police officer charged with the investigation
- Prominent feelings after the disappearance and before meeting psychics
- How much mentally involved with the disappearance
- Consequences of the disappearance for the respondent
- Activities to find the person before psychics became involved
- Satisfaction with the activities of the police after reporting the disappearance
- Assumptions as to what had happened to the missing person
- When first meeting psychics, did the respondent at that time expect the police to solve the case
- Opinion about paranormal phenomena in general before the disappearance
- Opinion about psychics before the disappearance
- Previous experiences with psychics
- Names of psychics involved in the investigation
- Name of the psychic on which the answers to the following questions are based
- Topics discussed in the first meeting with the psychic
- References mentioned by the psychic
- Did the respondent attempt to check these references
- Main reasons to accept the involvement of the psychic
- Expectations of the psychic's contribution to the investigation
- The respondent's first impression of the psychic
- Prominent feelings after the first contact with the psychic
- Frequency of contact with the psychic
- Who took the initiative for these contacts
- Did the psychic undertake search actions
- Did the respondent and the psychic undertake joint search actions
- Did the psychic receive information from the police

- Correct and incorrect statements made by the psychic about the disappearance
- Which contributions did the psychic made to the investigation
- The most important contribution to the investigation
- Does the respondent belief that the psychic has paranormal abilities
- Satisfaction with the practical help of the psychic
- Satisfaction with the mental support of the psychic
- Type of support of the psychic most valued
- Negative aspects of the involvement of the psychic
- If someone disappeared would the respondent again accept the involvement of psychics
- Appreciation for the activities of the police
- Prominent feelings in this period of your life

Deutsches Abstract

Hellseher und polizeiliche Ermittlungen

Gelegentlich werden noch immer anekdotische Fälle über angeblich erfolgreiche Beiträge von Hellsehern zu polizeilichen Ermittlungen veröffentlicht. Obwohl fast alle Berichte keinen Beweiswert haben, nähren sie die Vorstellung, Hellseher könnten bei der Aufklärung von Verbrechen oder der Suche nach Vermissten helfen. Ziel dieses Artikels ist es, die tatsächliche Nützlichkeit solcher Beiträge zu prüfen.

Der erste Teil dieses Artikels untersucht die Ergebnisse von Fragebogen- und experimentellen Studien dazu, ob Hellseher nützliche Informationen für polizeiliche Ermittlungen liefern können. Fragebogenstudien aus Deutschland, den Niederlanden und den USA zeigen, dass etwa jede dritte Polizeibehörde Erfahrungen mit der Einbeziehung von Hellsehern in Ermittlungen hat. Nach Angaben der Polizei variierte der Nutzen dieser Beiträge je nach Fragestellung zwischen 0 % und 21 %.

Quantitative parapsychologische Untersuchungen, in denen Hellseher versuchten, Informationen über ihnen unbekannte Sachverhalte zu erhalten, haben gelegentlich signifikante Ergebnisse geliefert. Allerdings erschien dabei die Menge der gewonnenen Informationen sehr bescheiden. Darüber hinaus liegen mehrere experimentelle Studien vor, in denen Hellseher ver-

suchten, Verbrechen aufzuklären, in der Regel durch die Handhabung eines Gegenstands, der mit einem realen Verbrechen in Verbindung stand. Keine dieser Studien lieferte positive Ergebnisse, aber fast alle Tests wurden unter sehr künstlichen Bedingungen durchgeführt. Daher ist es fraglich, ob diese Ergebnisse auf reale Situationen übertragen werden können. Untersuchungen, in denen die Vorhersagen über Täter unter realistischeren Bedingungen zwischen Hellsehern, Profilern und anderen Gruppen verglichen wurden, ergaben, dass die Hellseher am schlechtesten abschnitten, wobei die Unterschiede zwischen den Gruppen insgesamt gering waren.

Bei allen im Fokus der Öffentlichkeit stehenden Verbrechen und Vermisstenfällen erhält die Polizei viele unaufgeforderte Hinweise von Hellsehern. Teil II analysiert solche Beiträge in zwei bekannten niederländischen Fällen vermisster Mädchen. Die Ergebnisse bestätigten frühere Erkenntnisse, dass solche Hinweise für die Ermittlungen völlig nutzlos waren. Interviews zeigten, dass die meisten Einsender sich selbst nicht als Hellseher sahen, sondern aufgrund früherer, vermeintlich zutreffender Eindrücke handelten. Die meisten von ihnen hatten ihre Eindrücke an die Polizei geschickt, weil sie bereits in früheren, öffentlich bekannt gewordenen Kriminalfällen Eindrücke erhalten hatten, die sich später als richtig erwiesen hatten. Im Allgemeinen zeigten diese Personen eine starke emotionale Bindung zu den Opfern und den Eltern. Ein Vergleich der Vorhersagen der Hellseher als Gruppe mit wissenschaftlich fundierten Vorhersagen über die Täter dieser beiden Verbrechen zeigte, dass sich beide Methoden in ihrer Genauigkeit nicht wesentlich unterschieden. Dieses Ergebnis könnte teilweise darauf zurückzuführen sein, dass die Täter in beiden Fällen zufällig mehr als üblich dem öffentlichen Stereotyp entsprachen, auf dem die meisten Eindrücke der Hellseher zu basieren scheinen.

Teil III stellt eine Studie zu Vermisstenfällen vor, in denen Hellseher beteiligt oder nicht beteiligt waren. Ziel war es, ihre Nützlichkeit für Ermittlungen und Angehörige in realen Situationen einzuschätzen; der mögliche paranormale Charakter der Eindrücke der Hellseher wurde nicht untersucht. Die Ermittlungen betrafen hauptsächlich Vermisstenfälle von potenziell schwerwiegender Natur. Fast alle waren lokaler Natur und fanden in den Medien wenig Beachtung. In etwa 15 % der 418 Ermittlungen waren Hellseher, in der Regel einer oder wenige, beteiligt. Der Glaube an paranormale oder übersinnliche Fähigkeiten spielte für die Entscheidung der Angehörigen, die Hinzuziehung von Hellsehern zu akzeptieren, kaum eine Rolle. Auffällig war, dass Hellseher häufiger in Fällen konsultiert wurden, in denen die vermisste Person später verstorben war. Es handelte sich also um Fälle, in denen die Angehörigen berechtigte Gründe hatten, sich um das Wohlergehen der vermissten Person zu sorgen.

In den vier Jahren, in denen Daten für diese Studie gesammelt wurden, wurden drei Fälle gefunden, in denen der Rat des Hellsehers zur Auffindung der vermissten Person führte. Literatur und Studienergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass etwa 10 % der Hellseher einen nützlichen

Beitrag leisten und rund 3 % die richtige Lösung liefern, die jedoch nicht immer zur tatsächlichen Auffindung führt.

Die Fragebogendaten zeigen, dass die Mehrheit der Angehörigen die Beteiligung der Hellseher positiv bewertete, obwohl über die Hälfte deren konkreten Beitrag zur Ermittlung negativ einschätzte. In ähnlichen Situationen würden die meisten dennoch wieder Hellseher hinzuziehen. Geschätzt wurden vor allem die psychologische Unterstützung, neue Suchansätze und das Gefühl, alles Mögliche getan zu haben.

Anekdotische Fälle hellseherischer Detektivarbeit sind wegen ihrer geringen Zuverlässigkeit und niedrigen Erfolgsquote ungeeignet, um übersinnliche Fähigkeiten zu belegen. Die Daten dieser Studie legen nahe, dass Erfahrung und Kenntnis der örtlichen Gegebenheiten wichtige Faktoren für einen möglichen Erfolg von Hellsehern sind. Ein sinnvollerer Ansatz wäre die systematische Forschung zu Vermisstenfällen. Wenn erfahrene Beamte, die die Ergebnisse solcher Forschungen nutzen, bei der Vorhersage des Aufenthaltsorts vermisster Personen genauso gut oder besser abschneiden als Hellseher, gibt es kaum noch Grund zu der Annahme, dass die hellseherische Detektivarbeit etwas Geheimnisvolles an sich hat.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Detektivarbeit, Hellseher, Kriminaltelepathie, Polizeiermittlungen, vermisste Personen