

The Application of ESP to Crime Detection

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The need to utilize ESP in the detection of criminal offenders seems to be recognized even in primitive cultures. For example, African shamen and Indian medicine men are often asked to identify evil doers. Our Western culture seems, however, to be ambivalent on this issue: the police usually reject ESP help until other means are exhausted and public pressure to solve the crime mounts. Only then do they become ready to "use everything," including psychics. Some famous psychics have been extensively consulted. The late Dutch "paragnost," Gerald Croiset, was invited to participate in criminal cases all over Europe, Japan and the U.S.A. I have been present at some of his efforts in New York.

The art of using psychics in police work is still rather undeveloped. No methods have been developed and validated through scientific research. Officers who contact psychics are usually totally unprepared and do not appreciate the help of an experienced parapsychologist. We have frequently been asked for assistance by members of homicide squads, detectives of local police units, state police, and also by the families or friends of victims. While the most common requests for help involve murder cases, we have also been asked to assist in locating lost planes and missing persons.

The most extensive involvement we had in crime detection work was in the Berkowitz, "Son of Sam," case, where we were in for a surprise: our knowledge of experimental parapsychology was of little help. We were struck by the realization that ESP tasks in such crime detection work as finding a murderer are

very different from the detection of targets in the lab. For example:

1. The amount of information: a small chunk of information obtained in the lab could lead to a hit in an experiment; a large amount of information, however, is needed to recreate the crime situation, describe the killer, trace motives, describe the getaway vehicle, living quarters, current whereabouts, and such sources of evidence as the location of the weapon, belongings of the victim hidden by the killer, etc. In short: in the lab we need a small chunk of information while in application a sustained flow of many chunks is required.

2. Focusing tasks of selecting the correct sources of information: In the lab, the target is clearly defined and the displacement possibilities are relatively few. In crime detection, the targets are many and exceedingly complex. The displacement or misplacement possibilities are uncountable at every turn of psi scanning. Focusing on the task is obviously crucial. The tracking of the crime has to be made very fascinating, saturated with "felt meaning" (Gendlin) for the psychic, and a heightened motivator, capable of out-weighting all other "pulls" of the situation is also necessary. In other words, motivation has to be like a "smart bomb" which seeks out and follows the target.

3. Space-time delineations: Lab tasks usually relate to sharply drawn space-time structures, such as Schmidt's random event generator which is in front of the participant and produces targets and gives feedback in the matter of a split second. Targets in crime detection cases can involve a territory of thousands of square miles and various time periods, e.g., the time when the criminal act is perpetrated, getaway, hiding objects, present whereabouts, past associations between the victim and the killer, etc.

4. Psychological and physiological states conducive to psi applied to crime detection: When psi tasks and cognitive processing differ between lab work and crime detection with respect to amount, focusing and space-time spread of information, different psychological and physiological states might be needed for optimal functioning. The emotional involvement of the psychic is also very different: in the lab, a light, playful,

sometimes competitive feeling might be experienced, while the retrocognitive "witnessing" of a brutal murder is much more stressful, arousing, and might involve such emotions as disgust, anger, compassion, moral outrage, etc. Brainwaves which accompany such emotive situations are often overshadowed by strong muscle movements and tensions. The psychophysiological recordings become substantially different in crime detection work than the usual psi experiment.

This outline delineates clear differences between psi tasks of lab experiments and of crime detection. It would be presumptuous to simply generalize from what we know of lab psi to so radically different a situation as tracking a murderer. Some of the information might be unapplicable or misleading. Apparently we lack a pertinent information base for optimizing crime detection procedures. The available literature consists mainly of popular write-ups of crime detection cases involving famous psychics and very little else. We should recognize this situation and squarely face the skimpy information base when designing research. In my estimation, this is the time for hypothesis searching, rather than hypothesis testing. One cannot build highways where the trails are still unexplored. We have first to delineate clear, practical questions to be answered in subsequent research. Law enforcement officers who want to consult psychics are full of practical questions: How much should I tell the psychic? Should I say when he/she is right and wrong? Should I come to your lab, bring the psychic to the precinct office, or to the scene of the crime? Should I ask specific questions or let him/her ramble on?

We perceive our first exploratory task to be finding out what we need to know. The following is an array of questions which might be considered in subsequent research in this area.

A. Procedural Questions

- I. Who should be the contact person present with the psychic?
 1. Parapsychologists only, no one actually involved in the case.
 2. An officer who is not the primary investigator in the case and who has little involvement and few passionate or pet ideas about the case.
 3. An officer who is in charge of or working on the case.
 4. Relatives or friends of the victim.

- II. Should objects belonging to the victim or perpetrator be used?
 1. Objects once carried by the victim but not on his/her person at the time of the crime.
 2. Objects carried by the victim at the time of the crime.
 3. Objects left by the perpetrator, e.g., bullets.

- III. Where should the session take place?
 1. In the quiet of the laboratory, with only intercom contact between the psychic and investigators.
 2. In a face-to-face session between participants.
 3. Visiting the site of the crime.
 4. Combination of the above.

- IV. How should the psychic be briefed?
 1. Virtually no briefing.
 2. Scant briefing: sex, age, first name, place and cause of death.
 3. Full briefing about the victim, how and where the crime occurred, including photos, but no discussion about leads on the possible perpetrator.
 4. Full briefing, including leads and particular type of information needed.
 5. Briefing in stages: first no leads, then gradually introducing them when first impressions are given.

V. What expression channels and technical aids should be used?

1. Verbal "readings" only.
2. Drawings of people, scenes, buildings, vehicles, etc.
3. Composite portraits put together with the aid of a skilled officer who knows how to use the kit.
4. Working together with a police artist who would draw according to the descriptions/instructions of the psychic.
5. Maps used in verbal readings.
6. Map dowsing with the use of pendulum or similar devices.

VI. Dialogue or monologue: the best way of interacting with the psychic during the session?

1. Monologue: participant simply gives his/her impressions.
2. Minimal interference with few questions.
3. Give and take in continuous dialogue.
4. Keeping the psychic away from long-shots and "on the track" with questions oriented to the known facts.

VII. What questioning style is optimal?

1. Mild, encouraging free flow.
2. Active, suggesting what to look for, e.g., "Go around to the front of the house and tell me how it looks?"
3. Demanding more information, coming back to points which the psychics "don't see" and which are important.
4. Dwelling on a few aspects or moving in fast.
5. Pointing out contradictions with known facts.

VIII. Should several sessions be used?

1. One session approach.
2. One session but afterwards an informal period of socialization and free give-and-take.
3. More than one session.
4. Different approaches in subsequent sessions, e.g., first verbal narrative, then map dowsing, sketches, composites, going around the search area in order to find previously "seen" scenes, houses, etc.

B. Questions About the Psychic

- I. What are the conducive psychological states of the subject?
 1. Relaxed.
 2. Ganzfeld.
 3. Normal.
 4. Intense, aroused by the drama of the procedure.
 5. Out-of-body.
 6. Trance.
 7. Communication with the ostensible "spirit" of the victim.

- II. How much feedback is optimal?
 1. None or minimal.
 2. Giving informative answers when asked.
 3. Unsolicited feedback.
 4. Feedback excluding any information on leads or speculations about the perpetrator.

- III. What are the conducive physiological states of the psychic which indicate correct impressions?
 1. EEG patterns of frequency, amplitude.
 2. EMG tension-relaxation level.
 3. GSR arousal level.

- IV. What voice patterns indicate true statements?
 1. Patterns indicating better hit rate.
 2. Patterns indicating psi-missing or absence of psi.

C. Analyses of Responses

- I. Are statements in harmony with the briefed (or known) information as evidential as those which contradict or are neutral?
 1. Statements in harmony with previous knowledge.
 2. Statements which do not correlate with previous knowledge.
 3. Statements which contradict previous knowledge.

II. Are spontaneous statements more evidential than responses to questions?

- 1. Participant's initiated statements during question and answer period.
- 2. Statements after silence up to 30 seconds.
- 3. Statements after a silence longer than 30 seconds.
- 4. Answers pertinent to the topic of the question.
- 5. Response, which is not an answer to the question asked, but gives information which is not anticipated in the question.

III. Are first impressions of a particular topic more evidential than subsequent ones?

- 1. Impressions which do not reoccur.
- 2. Impressions which come back to the same topic, same information.
- 3. Impressions which come back to the same topic, new information convergent with previous statements.
- 4. Same topic with new information which is unrelated but not contradictory to first impressions.
- 5. Same topic, new information contradictory to first impressions.
- 6. Persistent items which the psychic returns to several times.

IV. Do some styles of impressions provide more evidential information?

- 1. Perception like imagery, "seeing" or "hearing".
- 2. Emotionally loaded, strongly felt imagery.
- 3. Intuitive "knowing" or guessing.
- 4. Interpretation or elaboration of primary impressions.
- 5. "Automatic" responses, such as map dowsing.

V. Is the psychic's confidence in his/her own statements useful?

- 1. Doubtful.
- 2. Neither doubt nor confidence indicated.
- 3. Confident.

- VI. Does consistency between psychics indicate evidential statements?
1. Item not consistent with anybody else's or vague similarities.
 2. Item in partial agreement with some other.
 3. Agreement on the main substance of the item.
 4. Close agreement.
 5. More than two psychics in agreement.

Next Steps

This list of questions seems to be describing some very real problems germane to research on crime detection and ESP. According to older research designs, one or two of these variables could be manipulated and tested, while others are kept constant. The difficulty with such a design is obvious: by manipulating just one or two variables and letting the others down, we cannot optimize conditions for satisfactory psi performance, which also depends on other variables. A similar situation existed in sociological research utilizing mail and telephone surveys. Response rates depended on wholistic impressions about the questionnaire approach and optimizing just one or two variables did not sway the wholistic response. The entire idea of mail surveys was left in disrepute. Dillman¹ then developed a "Total Design Method," which optimizes a whole array of factors judged to be important. After some initial stumbling, success was phenomenal and fully rehabilitated mail and telephone surveys, now in frequent use. I propose a similar leap to optimization in our problem area.

¹ Dillman, D.A. Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1978.

My gut feeling is that after straightening out initial errors we would succeed.

Our data has added another impression which complicates matters: what is optimal for one individual might be crippling for another. Individual differences in psi functioning seem to be as strong as in the creativity of top artists or eccentric inventors. For example, some psychics function well by working closely together with officers, while others clam up. Optimization procedures which have full respect for the personalities and beliefs of the participants appears to be necessary.

At the present stage, we have gathered enough observations from our case work to design two or three optimized procedures for careful scientific testing if adequate funding for personnel and instrumentation is forthcoming.