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# In search of the serial killer

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## Abstract

Between 1985 and 2010 approximately 150 prostitutes were murdered in various regions in the Netherlands in gruesome, and often similar, ways. Many remained unsolved, and were seen as "difficult" cases to investigate. Up to that point, however, there hadn't been a nationwide research in the Netherlands into the possible behavioral linkages between these cases: different law enforcement agencies did not work well together and registration of crimes remains inadequate. Potential similarities between these cases remain overlooked and serial offenders may not have been recognized and identified. The Cold Case Tam and Behavioral Science Unit from the Rotterdam police force took it upon themselves to try to change this. This research project hopes to provide a scientifically based yet practical solution. The aim is to determine clusters of linked cases that may have been committed by a single killer by developing a method in which behavioral, forensic and operational knowledge can be integrated structurally, to achieve a more holistic synthesis, yielding more powerful insight. This contrasts with traditional methods where the primary focus is on the search of the offender in the isolated case. Different types of analysis will be used to investigate the dataset of approximately 150 cases: quantitative (like SSA) qualitative (comparative case analysis) and geographic linkage analyses. To verify the assumed link, a cold case team will look for technical- or forensic evidence. Forensic, tactical and behavioral insight in these 150 cases will help to determine which forensic traces should be (re)examined. Apart from a method for linkage analyses on behavioral aspects, aim is to develop tools to simplify the comparison of cases on a forensic and tactical level.

## Biography

Hester Brink, born and living in the Netherlands, completed her Masters in Law in 1998 from Erasmus University Rotterdam. She has 14 years of experience in crime related scientific research, working for the Dutch Police Force. Her focus has been research on port related organized crime, working together with (inter)national customs and police forces. She has managed a team of 25 analysts and was co-responsible for setting up the Behavioural Science Unit in 2006. She leads the nationwide research on prostitute killings and provides advise in ongoing police investigations on criminal profiling, the modus operandi of perpetrators, their motivations and victimology. Most of the research is confidential; in 2002 a book about port related crime was published.