

Police Trying To Out-Psych The .44 Killer

By MOLLY IVINS

The psychological profile being pieced together by Dr. Harvey Schlossberg is an abstraction, but unlike many such abstractions, this one has a real model somewhere in New York City—a model who has already killed five people and wounded three others.

And the game that Dr. Schlossberg—a patrolman-turned-psychologist—is playing is not an academic exercise. He is trying to out-psych the man who has become known, from the weapon he has used, as the .44-caliber killer.

Thirty detectives from the Bronx and Queens, where the killings have taken place, are working under Deputy Inspector Timothy Dowd, a policeman for 37 years, to find the murderer. They are following up on over a hundred phoned tips, checking gun shops and psychiatric hospitals and recanvassing possible suspects.

The most important lead so far is a note the killer left at the scene of the last murders, on April 17. The note was described as "rambling, incoherent and ghoulish."

Dr. Schlossberg, a 39-year-old director of psychological services for the New York Police Department, has spent more time than he cares to thinking about the killer, all but one of whose victims were young women with shoulder-length brown hair. The fifth was the male companion of one of the women and he, too, had shoulder-length brown hair.

"I was called in between the second and third killings," said Dr. Schlossberg, "as soon as they recognized it was a pattern. It's a very unusual case. No conversation. Usually the killer will say something, almost like a fetish, to explain why he's doing it. Or he'll take something from the victim—a ring, a piece of clothing.

'I Look at Everything'

"I look at everything—the style of the crime—gun, knife, does he hit the head or the stomach? The time of day it occurs, the area. And, of course, the victims. What do they have in common? In this case, the hair is obvious, but I'm convinced there's something more, some connection we haven't found yet.

"Guys like this killer don't kill spontaneously. There's a sort of ritual, it's almost like choreography. It's part of the pleasure they take in building up the fantasy.

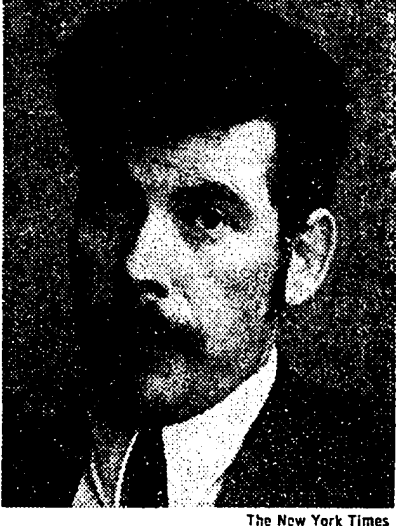
"We haven't found it yet in this case, but two, three days before a killing, he'll make contact. Bump into the victim on the street, ask for a match. Then he spends a couple of days stalking, building up fantasy, until it comes to the final act. It's his orgasm."

Dr. Schlossberg earned his Ph.D. in psychology while he was a traffic patrolman. He is now a licensed psychologist with a private practice in addition to his police work. He works out of a shabby ninth-floor office in the Municipal Building at 346 Broadway.

What kind of experience would turn someone into the kind of killer the 30 detectives are hunting?

"He is somebody who is looking for help, believe it or not," said Dr. Schlossberg. "Rather than commit suicide, he has redirected his anger toward someone else. He's lonely, he has no friends. I see him in some cheap furnished room. He's probably afraid of women. I don't know who rejected him—wife, girlfriend, sister, mother—but now his fear has turned to rage. He is very sick and really needs help.

Dr. Schlossberg does not believe the killer is stupid. "Just because you're psychologically disturbed doesn't mean you're dumb," he said. "If he were sim-



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Dr. Harvey Schlossberg

ple, he would be more likely to find other ways to express his anger—taking it out physically, in athletics. But he's moody, a brooder, a thinker."

Dr. Schlossberg is a curly-haired, energetic man given to wearing huge gold rings and a flashy watch. He is perfectly serious about trying to out-psych the killer.

The psychologist said he now thought the killer's excitement had changed from whatever perverse kick he got from killing to the excitement of eluding the police.

"It's like poker," he said. "As the ante gets higher, the game gets more absorbing. His charge now is that we can't catch him. O.K., fine. He can fool me all he wants, but he doesn't have to keep killing to taunt us. He can leave evidence, taunt us with it, but now he doesn't have to kill."

Dr. Schlossberg downplays his role in this case.

"You have to remember," he said, "that I'm just one part of what the detectives are working with. They're receivers, getting information from all over.

"Detectives will use anything that might help—a psychologist, a Ouija board—they explore every avenue they can get. A policeman knows instinctively what psychologists learn in school. A good detective will come up with the same kind of profile I will. I can sit here with all my books and all my theories, but they're sophisticated by experience.

"What I try to tell them is that all human behavior is perfectly understandable and even justified, according to the point of view of the person doing it, if you can just figure out what is motivating him."