# 4

# THE CURRENT MODEL OF SCIENTIFIC PROFILING

Although the authors of the nonscientific profiling models described in chapter 2 use scientific terminology or make reference to scientific tenets to varying degrees, none of those models claims to represent a completely scientific approach to profiling. Each author either directly emphasizes the importance of an artful component to criminal profiling or implies as much by encouraging the use of intuition, investigative experience, and professional judgment. As an alternative, a model could use science as its foundation. Currently, the Canter model, discussed in this chapter, is the only one that arguably fits this description.

## THE CANTER MODEL

The impetus for much of Canter's work has been his criticisms of artful profiling, as conducted by the FBI, independent psychologists, and other law enforcement agents. In the *Offender Profiling Series*, Alison and Canter (1999b) stated that profiling processes, "whilst presented with great conviction are, at best, subjective opinion, common sense or ignorance or at worst, deliberate deception" (p. 6). They faulted the media and American culture in general for being unable to discard the myth of the expert profiler, who succeeds in finding the perpetrator when the police fail. They further argued

that current accounts of profiling lack systematic procedures and are devoid of any references to psychological principles. In their view, this constitutes a misrepresentation of psychology that raises ethical concerns.

Having spent some time visiting the FBI, Canter had additional specific criticisms about their profiling approach. "Neither the *Silence of the Lambs* nor the publications and lectures of FBI behavioral science agents indicated how to produce an 'offender profile'" (Canter, 1994, p. 35). Instead, FBI profilers claim to rely heavily on intuition, and "any approach that deviates from this 'gut feeling' is perceived as inferior and unlikely to bear fruit" (Alison & Canter, 1999b, p. 7). Although critical of the intuitive approach, Canter was also critical of the irony that this approach is actually inconsistent with the FBI's own practice. According to Canter, much of the information presented in profiles by Douglas, for example, contains general characteristics typical of known perpetrators of violent crime (e.g., previous criminal convictions, poor relationships with women). Therefore, Douglas's profiles appear to actually use data and probabilistic information rather than to rely exclusively on intuitive judgment. Canter also argued that FBI profiles contain assertions about characteristics that the profiler deems unlikely to be present in the unidentified offender. These are also based on probabilistic data because typically these characteristics have low base rates in the population to begin with (e.g., no military experience). Thus, an FBI profiler would not need intuitive expertise to make these observations.

Canter (1994) criticized the lack of research in the FBI's approach to profiling: "For them, research is collecting interview material, but little systematic use is made of it . . . Bob Ressler said he had a bunch of statistics somewhere but he clearly did not give it much credence or significance" (pp. 82–83). This lack of science is significant, Canter asserted, because of the legal implications of profiling. It could be argued on ethical principles that any licensed psychologist who engages in profiling should not ignore the scientific framework of psychology when creating profiles. More important, however, acting outside the parameters of science has serious implications even for profilers who are not psychologists when such "judgments are likely to influence serious decisions across an investigation and within a court of law" (Alison & Canter, 1999b, p. 9).

To address these criticisms, Canter presented a scientifically based model of profiling, in which he argued that the profiling inferences important to police investigators, including those that the FBI claims to invoke through intuitive methods, are actually empirical questions that can be answered by psychological research. Canter identified the following categories from which these profiling inferences and empirical questions are derived:

- *behavioral salience*, which refers to the important behavioral features of a crime that may help identify the perpetrator;

- *distinguishing between offenders*, which refers to the question of how to indicate differences between offenders, including differences between crimes;
- *inferring characteristics*, which refers to inferences that can be made about offender characteristics that may help to identify him or her; and
- *linking offenses*, which refers to the question of attributing multiple offenses to the same offender.

According to Canter (2000), the tasks of profiling research are to develop scientific ways to assess these categories within a psychological framework and to use that information to infer and provide offender characteristics that will be useful to law enforcement agents.

The concept of linking behaviors, personalities, and other human characteristics is not a new endeavor in the field of psychology. Similar questions about behavioral consistency across situations, and differences between and within individuals, make up most psychological inquiries. Canter pointed out, however, that the application of these types of inference to investigative situations is unique for two reasons. First, the material available to profilers is limited. The information provided by a crime scene is typically limited to the identity of the victim, the location where and time when the crime took place, and an account of what happened. Profilers are unable to directly observe the crime or have direct contact with the offender when the crime is taking place. Even in cases in which a victim gives an account of the crime, that person is not able to provide reliable information about the perpetrator's thoughts, personality characteristics, or other internal processes—the variables with which psychologists typically work. Thus, predictor variables in profiling research are limited to those that are external to the offender. Second, the kind of information that a profiler is asked to provide in an offender profile is also likely to be limited in that it must be information that will be of use to law enforcement investigators. So, for example, information about an unidentified offender's living situation or physical characteristics would be useful to an investigation, whereas information about the offender's unconscious psychodynamic conflicts would be difficult for investigators to uncover and might not be as useful.

With these limitations in mind, Canter represented the concept of linking offense actions and offender characteristics with the following canonical equation:

$$F_1A_1 + \ldots F_nA_n = K_1C_1 + \ldots K_mC_m,$$

where $A_{1 \ldots n}$ represents $n$ actions of the offender and $C_{1 \ldots m}$ represents $m$ characteristics of the offender. The left side of the equation contains the kinds of information about a crime that would be available to law

enforcement. The right side represents the offender characteristics that would be useful to the investigation of the crime.

The possibility of empirically based profiling relies on the presence of reliable relationships between actions (A) and characteristics (C). That is, it must be the case that "there are some psychologically important variations *between* crimes that relate to differences in the people who commit them" (Canter, 2000, p. 29, italics in original). To apply profiling to the categories of empirical questions described previously, one must be able to use information from a particular crime to correctly make inferences about the perpetrator. Unfortunately, according to Canter, there is no clear and simple relationship between these variables. First, there are no uniquely strong relationships between a given action and a given characteristic. A variety of combinations of actions can give rise to a variety of combinations of characteristics; thus, there are many possible relationships within a data set of crimes that link actions to characteristics. For example, an offender who wears latex gloves to commit a burglary may do so because he has had the experience of being apprehended after fingerprints were found at the scene of a previous burglary. In this situation, wearing latex gloves (A) would indicate previous criminal experience (C). Another offender who wears latex gloves to commit a burglary may do so because he is an avid watcher of crime shows on television. From watching these shows, the offender has seen fictional burglars apprehended because they left their fingerprints at the scenes of their crimes. In this case, wearing latex gloves (A) would be linked with avid crime show watching (C). As can be seen from these two scenarios, there is no unique relationship between wearing latex gloves and a single offender characteristic. Instead, there are at least two possible characteristics that could be derived from this single action. A second problem with establishing clear relationships between actions and characteristics is that variations in the inclusion of variables in the action set (A) may change the weightings ($F_{1 \ldots n}$ and $K_{1 \ldots m}$) in the characteristics set (C). So, for example, if a victim fails to report a particular action, analyses would generate different offender characteristics than if that action were reported. The task at hand is therefore to develop methods to accurately establish the values of the weightings ($F_{1 \ldots n}$ and $K_{1 \ldots m}$) in the equation.

According to Canter, theory is the key to establishing the weightings in the preceding canonical equation. Other nonscientific profiling approaches essentially use common sense, sometimes labeled *intuition*, to infer offender characteristics. Canter (1994) instead advocated for using scientific study to build "psychological theories that will show how and why variations in criminal behavior occur" (p. 344). "What are required scientifically are explanatory frameworks that can lead to hypotheses about the sorts of

offender characteristics that are likely to relate to particular offence behaviour" (Canter, 2000, p. 27).

Before addressing specific theories, there are two hypotheses that Canter discussed as a basis for considering scientific explanatory frameworks for profiling: (a) offender consistency and (b) offense specificity. The *offender consistency hypothesis* posits that there are consistencies between the manner in which an offender carries out a crime on one occasion and the way he or she carries out crimes on other occasions. These similarities are attributable to characteristics of the offender rather than to features of the situation in which the crime was committed. Crime is thus an extreme form of noncriminal activity and therefore also likely to reflect variations that occur in an offender's ordinary, day-to-day interpersonal activities. In addition, this hypothesis requires considering both the degree of variation within a single offender's actions and the variation across multiple offenders. Canter (1994) stated, "The actions that may be characteristic of a person across a series of offenses may be quite different from those actions that help to discriminate him or her from other possible offenders in a large pool" (p. 348). This means that there are certain consistencies that will allow the linking of a series of offenses to a single offender and other consistencies that will set that offender apart from a larger pool of suspects. An example of how offender consistency can be applied to profiling is the determination of an offender's spatial criminal range. According to Canter, offender consistency should extend to the locations of a single offender's crimes, such that these locations will evidence some degree of structure or consistency.

*Offense specificity* addresses the degree to which offenders are specialized in the types of crimes they commit. According to Canter, three possible arguments can be made about degrees of offense specificity. One possibility is that offenders do not specialize; accordingly, the commission of any particular crime depends on two things: the social processes that determine the preparedness of an individual to be criminal and the appropriate opportunity or circumstance for an individual criminal act. If this argument is correct, criminals could be difficult to distinguish from each other because under the right circumstances, an individual with criminal tendencies would be just as likely to commit one type of crime as another. A second argument is that violent or emotional crimes are committed impulsively. According to this approach, criminal acts are so unstructured that no offender characteristics, other than impulsivity, are likely to be revealed in crimes. This argument would render the profiling endeavor useless, because it would mean that no useful information is likely to be gleaned from examining a criminal's actions during the commission of a violent crime. A third argument, which Canter called the *modus operandi* (MO) *argument*, views an offender's actions as unique to that individual. Under this argument,

offenders are highly specialized, and their criminal acts necessarily reveal idiosyncratic personality characteristics.

Although Canter's view of offender consistency indicates that there are likely to be consistent patterns within the actions of a single offender, offenders are often eclectic in their crimes; that is, individuals who commit one type of crime are likely to have also committed other types of crimes. Given that offenders show consistency in their criminal actions, the first two theories of offender specificity, involving either circumstance or impulsivity, will not adequately explain criminal behavior. However, given that offenders are not completely consistent in their actions, the MO argument of offender specificity is also unlikely to be successful.

To illustrate this interplay between offender consistency and offender specificity, Canter framed criminal actions as a hierarchy. At the lowest level, there is the most general difference between people who commit crimes and those who do not. At the next level, criminal actions can be divided into classes of crime (e.g., property crimes vs. violent crimes). At the third level are more specific types of crimes (e.g., homicide, theft). Next are patterns of criminal behavior, addressing the differences between individuals who commit the same type of crime in different ways. At the fifth level is MO, and at the sixth and most specific level one would examine specific criminal signatures (e.g., a particular type of weapon or binding technique). Because, as previously indicated, offenders do not necessarily specialize, Canter (2000) stated that the hierarchy should be considered as "an inter-related set of dimensions for describing crimes" (p. 30).

## Theories Linking Actions to Characteristics

Although offender consistency and offense specificity establish a basic rationale for linking offender characteristics to offender actions, theoretical approaches are still necessary for attempting to explain these links. Canter (1995) discussed five theoretical approaches: psychodynamic typologies, personality differences, career routes, socioeconomic subgroups, and interpersonal narratives. Each of these approaches takes at least one of three general theoretical perspectives: attempting to explain how offender characteristics (C) cause offender actions (A), attempting to look for intervening variables that are produced by C to cause A, or attempting to find a third variable or set of variables that causes both A and C.

### *Psychodynamic Typologies*

The focus of this approach, the "internal emotional dynamics of the criminal" (Canter, 1995, p. 350) rather than criminal acts themselves, is exemplified by the rapist and serial killer typologies used by Holmes and

Holmes (1996) and the FBI (see chap. 2). By presenting only a few broad types of offenders in a typology, these typologies provide a small number of simple hypotheses about the link between A and C. Canter referred to these hypotheses as simple equations involving themes such as power and anger. Criminal activity is described as an avenue for compensating for perceived inadequacies related to these themes. It is not surprising that psychodynamic typologies tend to be used specifically for violent crimes; as Canter pointed out, there do not appear to be any examples of such typologies for fraud or burglary.

*Personality Differences*

This approach holds that A and C variables are linked through underlying personality characteristics. According to Canter, psychological research has used this approach, comparing convicted offenders who have been separated into groups according to their crimes. For example, such studies would compare rapists with child molesters, or murderers with wife-batterers. Canter asserted that the goal of such research is typically to establish personality differences between criminals who commit different types of crime. Although Canter criticized this approach because of the heterogeneity of offenses committed by many offenders, he did acknowledge that an individual's personality is likely to be reflected in the way he or she commits offenses. He stated that the task is "identifying those 'real world' A and C variables that do have direct links to personality characteristics" (Canter, 1995, p. 351).

*Career Routes*

Canter (1995), describing this approach as deriving from general criminological theory, posited that a criminal career unfolds as an individual gains experience, success, or interest in particular types of crime. The individual begins as a general offender but specializes as his or her career continues. Canter described two possibilities for relating this approach to his canonical equation. The first is that a matrix of equations is necessary—one equation for each stage in a criminal career. The second, simpler possibility is a single equation that deals with C variables as aspects of an individual's criminal stage.

*Socioeconomic Subgroups*

A social theory of offender differences would hypothesize that A and C variables both reflect socioeconomic processes. This theory depends on the existence of distinct social characteristics for subgroups of offenders (e.g., robbers are from a distinctly impoverished sector of society). Canter (1995) pointed out that such links between social characteristics and

offender subgroups would be difficult to establish because it is likely that most criminals are drawn from similar socioeconomic groups. Discriminating between them on the basis of social characteristics is therefore unlikely to be fruitful.

*Interpersonal Narratives*

Canter's own theoretical perspective is based on *interpersonal narratives*, an approach that he asserted "attempts to build links between the strengths of all the approaches outlined above" (Canter, 1995, p. 353). According to Canter, any crime is an interpersonal transaction that involves characteristic ways of dealing with other people. Although there will, of course, be commonalities across a range of offenders who have committed similar crimes, there will nonetheless be a more limited set of criminal activities within which an individual offender will tend to operate. This includes both the types of crimes committed and the actions within a particular type of crime; Canter did not specify whether his discussion of interpersonal transactions applies to nonviolent or property crimes as well as violent crimes. From the previously stated premise, Canter derived two related hypotheses: that individual offenders will have overlapping sets of repertoires that will have characteristic themes associated with them, and that predictions can be made about the correlation between themes of an offender and his other characteristics.

Recall Canter's hierarchy of criminal actions. According to this heuristic, criminal actions vary from those that are very general to those that are specific to individual offenders. Canter (2000) applied his interpersonal-narratives theory to the task of "describ[ing]" (p. 32) these criminal behaviors by identifying dominant interpersonal themes. Canter conceptualized these themes as being distinct from the independent categories typical of typologies. Because Canter argued that there are no truly pure types of crimes or criminals, the practice of dividing crime information into a set of independent categories is problematic. Instead, Canter (2000) proposed that criminal behaviors be arranged in a "radex" (p. 31) structure—a series of concentric circles that move from the general at the center to the specific at the periphery, with the dominant interpersonal theme distinguishing between different offense qualities conceptually radiating around the center.

Canter provided an example of the interpersonal themes he believes to be involved in violent crime. He stated that

> the crucial distinctions between the dramas that violent men write for themselves are the variations in the roles that they give their victims . . . variations in the emphases of the vicious interpersonal contact are therefore the first major themes to consider when interpreting any violent crime. (Canter, 1994, p. 339)

The following themes illustrate interpersonal narratives as manifested in the various roles in which offenders cast their victims. Within each role theme is a dimension that refers to the level of desire for control involved in the offender–victim interaction, which Canter (1994) described as "the degree of power or aggression" that the offender shows, which "reflects his deformed approach to the control of other people" (p. 340). This dimension interacts with the role of the victim to produce variations in the interpersonal narrative. As Canter (1994) stated, "The destructive mixture of a callous search for intimacy and an unsympathetic desire for control is at the heart of the hidden narratives that shape violent assaults" (p. 340). The three victim roles discussed are victim as object, victim as vehicle, and victim as person. The desire-for-control dimension is divided into either high desire for control or low desire for control. Note that although these themes relate to victim roles, the characteristics described by Canter are predominantly those of the offender.

*Victim as Object*

Some offenders completely lack any feeling for their victims. They make no attempt to see the world from the victim's view; neither is the victim expected to play an active part in the assault. In this role, the victim is likely to be one of opportunity and may be encountered by the offender in a nondescript public place.

In cases of high desire for control, the victim's body may be mutilated, with parts being cannibalized or taken away as souvenirs. The offender is described by Canter as similar to the FBI's concept of the disorganized offender. He is likely to be of low intellect and may lack contact with reality. This perpetrator will likely live alone, or be in transition, moving in and out of institutions. His community will probably know him as an eccentric. The offender's background will have been somewhat dysfunctional, with frequent changes of parenting during childhood and adolescence, and possible poverty. The offender will be aware of the criminality of his actions but may not try to evade capture, other than by changing his crime venue when suspicions are aroused. His crimes are likely to come to notice accidentally and, once captured, the offender is likely to confess.

If the offender has a low desire for control, victims are more likely to be selected because of some feature that is attractive to the offender. Thus, the sexual component of the crime will be more prominent than acts of mutilation or dismemberment. Typically, murder is not the goal of the assault but is instead a consequence of the offender's other violent acts toward the victim (e.g., hitting the victim to keep her under control). Rather than being bizarre or disorganized, an offender with low desire for control is obsessed with obtaining more victims. He may find a secluded

area where victims can be kept over a longer period of time in privacy. Rather than impulsively snatching victims off the street, this offender is likely to commute to look for victims in areas where vulnerable individuals who are attractive to him are likely to be found. The offender will then target any person who comes along in that group. (Note that in the initial description of victim as object, the offender is described as being likely to encounter victims of opportunity. It is possible that a difference in level of desire for control accounts for the discrepancy presented here. Canter did not specifically address this discrepancy in his writings.) The offender will not have much verbal interaction with victims and may come prepared with weapons and binding materials to overpower them quickly. Socially, this type of offender is likely to be quiet and isolated. He will be employed in a "non-demanding job" (Canter, 1994, p. 349) that requires little contact with other people. When asked questions about his crime, this type of offender is likely to respond nonchalantly, or with disinterest, as if he does not understand the seriousness of his actions.

*Victim as Vehicle*

The central theme of this role is the offender's "anger with himself and the fates" (Canter, 1994, p. 350). This offender casts himself in the role of the tragic hero and feels denied his rightful place. Committing assaults allows the offender to steal back his lost power.

At a high desire for control, this offender is similar to the FBI's concept of spree murderers. He may act in one episode to kill many people in an expression of anger and frustration and may also evidence what Canter (1994) called the "Samson syndrome" (p. 351), intensifying the experience by committing suicide after destroying his victims.

At a low desire for control, the offender is aware of having a destructive mission, and the killings become more deliberate and serial, rather than consisting of a single intense event. Desiring recognition, this offender will talk at length with law enforcement and want his story told through the media. He is intelligent and appears socially facile, using superficial charm to manipulate victims and gain their trust. The offender

> will have much more apparently social contact with his victims than our first group, but this will be an interaction in which the victim has to be harnessed to the offender's will. It is not sufficient for them just to be used; they must be exploited. (Canter, 1994, p. 353)

Although this offender is more "sane" than offenders who cast victims as objects, he still lacks remorse and empathy. Central to the "inner despair that drives these men" (Canter, 1994, p. 353) will be some relationship problem—a significant breakup or death of someone close to the offender. Canter conceptualized the offender's assaults as attempts to rebuild these

relationships in his inner narratives. In general, however, this offender's background will be more stable than that of the offenders in the victims-as-objects category. "There will be obvious episodes in their lives that trigger the emergence of their violent inner narratives" (Canter, 1994, p. 354); thus, his offenses will not be entirely unpredictable or spontaneous. Canter described this offender as similar to the FBI's organized offenders. He is older and likely to have children and a history of failed relationships. He travels to commit crimes and is very dangerous because his assaults are not limited by any sense of compassion or empathy for the victim. He may kill in response to the victim's reactions or simply to avoid leaving a witness. If there is a preexisting relationship between offender and victim, the assault is likely to be particularly violent.

*Victim as Person*

In this theme, offenders "recognize the existence of their victims as particular people" and "try to understand the experience of their victims" in what Canter (1994) described as a "parody of empathy" (p. 357). The inner narratives of this offender cast him as a hero in a dramatic adventure. The offender views violence as normal, and although he appears to be capable of normal social interaction, there is a lack of true empathy for his victims. This offender may believe that he understands the viewpoints of others, but often he misinterprets victims' reactions. For example, this type of rapist may assault a woman and then ask her for a date later that week. Victims are selected largely by circumstance. Situations that might normally induce anger or annoyance escalate for this offender into violent confrontations that range from bar fights to murder. This individual typically offends indoors, and the physical assaults are sometimes an unplanned extension of a robbery or home invasion. A second manifestation of the victim-as-person role can be found in offenders who attack elderly women in their homes. These offenders are typically teenage boys from the neighborhood who commit nonsexual attacks against their victims during burglaries or thefts. The victim is typically known to the offender and may even be a family member. In this type of offense, the victim is selected to provide some sort of gain for the perpetrator—he is therefore unlikely to commit similar subsequent assaults. A third manifestation of this victim role is in the rapist who believes that he is forging some personal relationship with the victim through the assault. This victim is likely to be stalked, and the offender is likely to assault her in her home. During the rape, he may seek out personal information about her to gain a feeling of intimacy. This may become his preferred form of sexual fulfillment. This type of offender begins his assaults in his home range and may initially target women he knows. He may also be married to a younger, subservient woman who is easily

manipulated. Canter did not specifically address the control dimension in his discussion of the victim-as-person role.

## Testing of Hypotheses

Canter used a multidimensional scaling technique called *smallest space analysis* (SSA) to test his interpersonal-narratives theory and his more basic hypotheses of offender consistency and offense specificity. This method accomplishes two tasks. First, the statistical procedure calculates the correlations between a set of variables and then represents the correlations as proximities in a spatial field. The more correlated two variables are, the closer together their points will be in this space (for a detailed introduction to SSA, see Schiffman, Reynolds, & Young, 1981). Second, Canter used his theories to identify dominant themes among these variables. Thus, the space in which the correlations are plotted is divided into sections that represent distinct interpersonal themes. In some cases, the variables that are hypothesized to cluster into distinct offender themes are specified in advance. The analysis is therefore conducted to confirm the existence of these clusters. In other cases, the themes are identified by a visual examination of the clustering of variables in the SSA scatter plot. Canter asserted that, in this way, his approach can be used "in both [a] hypothesis testing and hypothesis generation mode" (personal communication, December 4, 2002). Using data from SSA and the incorporation of his interpersonal-narratives theory, Canter addressed the categories of empirical profiling questions introduced at the beginning of this chapter.

### *Behavioral Salience*

Canter described the assessment of behavioral salience as an empirical endeavor, in that to understand which behavioral features of a crime are important, one must have some basic understanding of the base rates of various criminal behaviors. Unfortunately, he did not further describe the manner in which base rates should be informally or formally considered in an assessment of behavioral salience. Once behavioral features of a crime are determined, Canter used SSA analyses to demonstrate that his hierarchy of criminal actions empirically corresponds to his radex heuristic. That is, when one examines an SSA scatter plot of criminal actions, one finds that the most frequent aspects of a crime are indeed at the center of the scatter plot, whereas less frequent actions, such as those that make up criminal signatures, are found around the periphery. Canter conceptualized behavioral salience as the location of an action at different distances from the center of this pattern of actions. According to Canter, this model of behavioral salience is refutable

> because it is possible that distinct subgroups of actions could occur in any class of crime which, whilst frequent, were typically associated with distinct sets of rarer actions. In such a case, the concentric circles that make up the radex would not be found. (Canter, 2000, p. 35)

Rather than relying exclusively on the SSA scatter plot findings of various criminal actions to elucidate salient acts as previously described, Canter (2000) suggested that a consideration of theory be used to elaborate on "central criminal acts" (p. 36). For example, if the central criminal act is a violent one, then theory can be used to consider whether that violent act was instrumental or expressive. Canter and Fritzon (1998) considered a series of arsons by evaluating them according to whether they were directed at certain types of targets. By doing so, they sought to distinguish between "person-oriented" and "object-oriented" arsons (Canter & Fritzon, 1998, p. 73). They hypothesized that there would be a thematic distinction between arsons that were committed as an expression of emotion (expressive) and those that were set for some secondary gain (instrumental). In Canter's view, such an elaboration of the central criminal acts helps to give criminal acts their investigative salience. He asserted that "the elaboration is clearest when the acts can be seen in the general context of other actions committed during similar crimes" (Canter, 2000, p. 36).

*Distinguishing Between Offenders*

A central reason for Canter's argument that the behavioral salience of an act should be considered in the context of other behaviors that may co-occur with it is that "any single action may be so common across offenses or so ambiguous in its significance that its use as a basis for investigative inferences may suggest distinctions between offenders that are unimportant" (Canter, 2000, p. 36). Accordingly, to effectively distinguish between offenders, one must consider the patterns of their criminal actions, with an understanding of the interpersonal psychological themes that these acts reveal. Canter proposed that these thematic foci of acts—for example, the victim role themes that drive certain violent offender behaviors—are what differentiate crimes and, ultimately, offenders.

*Inferring Characteristics*

Canter argued that an understanding of the distinctions that can be made between offenders, via interpersonal themes, provides a basis for hypotheses linking offender actions (A) to characteristics (C) as represented in his canonical equation. Rather than approaching criminal behavior as a reflection of psychological dysfunction, Canter advocated for moving toward studying and understanding the structure of criminality and how that structure relates to characteristics of an offender that will be of use in an

investigation. (Canter did not elaborate on his meaning in discussing a *structure* of criminality.) According to Canter, even though single criminal actions may be unreliable, a group of actions that represent dominant interpersonal themes in the offender's criminal style can be strongly related to important offender characteristics. It should therefore be possible to infer offender characteristics on the basis of these thematic elements.

Canter acknowledged that the inference of offender characteristics has not typically included consideration of an offender's social context. He stated that other approaches "suffer from dealing with the criminal as an individual independently of the social or organizational context in which he or she operates" (Canter, 2000, p. 42). According to Canter, social context is important because "the social processes that underlie groups, teams and networks of criminals can reveal much about the consistencies in criminal behavior and the themes that provide their foundation" (Canter, 2000, p. 42). Thus, he asserted that social factors are necessary to understanding the important themes involved in offender behavior.

### *Linking Offenses*

The prospect of linking offenses is based on the hypotheses of offender consistency and offense specificity. To the extent that offender acts show consistent patterns, and to the extent that the acts of one offender can be distinguished from those of other offenders, the linking of offenses and the attribution of those offenses to an individual offender should be feasible.

Canter discussed two examples of offender consistency that potentially allow the attribution of a series of crimes to a single offender: behavioral consistency and spatial consistency. According to Canter, *behavioral consistency* is evidenced when there are elements that are consistent across a series of crimes committed by a single offender. These consistencies are hypothesized to be reflective of the perpetrator's interpersonal narratives. Canter provided some support for behavioral consistency, citing an unpublished study conducted at his research center that used SSA to evaluate rapists' actions (Mokros, 1999, cited in Canter, 2000). According to Canter, this study revealed that behaviors present in different crimes committed by the same person were indeed closer to each other on an SSA scatter plot than the actions of different offenders. Replications demonstrating the veracity of this finding would imply that evaluating criminal actions using SSA might allow profilers to identify which crimes or criminal acts were committed by a particular offender and which acts are likely to be the work of a different offender.

*Spatial consistency* extends the idea of behavioral consistency beyond the conceptual space in which an offender operates to include patterns in the offender's physical space. According to this concept, offenders who

engage in spatially consistent crime behaviors have a *home range* and a *criminal range* (Canter & Gregory, 1994, p. 170). The home range is an area, familiar to the offender, that surrounds his or her place of residence. The criminal range is "a finite region which encompasses all offense locations for any particular offender" (Canter & Gregory, 1994, p. 170). Using this distinction between home range and criminal range, Canter and Gregory (1994) divided offenders into *commuters* and *marauders* (p. 171). Marauders are those offenders who use their home or some other fixed base as a focus for their activities; that is, the locations of their homes and the locations of their crimes show little or no distance (e.g., a child molester who offends against children in his neighborhood). Because they operate in their home areas, geographic profiling models that analyze the patterns of offense locations can therefore be used to determine the likely location of these offenders' homes. In contrast, offenders who are commuters travel away from their homes to other areas to commit their crimes (e.g., a sex offender who travels to red light districts to abduct prostitutes). Because there is no necessary relationship between their home and offense locations, it is therefore more difficult to use geographic profiling techniques to model the home locations of these offenders.

### Implications for Criminal Investigations

Canter (2000) suggested that an empirical approach to the categories of profiling inferences previously described, using interpersonal themes as a framework for understanding offenses and offenders, implies that "the days of the 'heroic' expert are numbered" (p. 43). Through the continued development of these theories, the field of what Canter (2000) called "investigative psychology" (p. 25) could provide police with the means to conduct scientific profiling, either through computerized processes or police training, without having to consult outside "experts."