

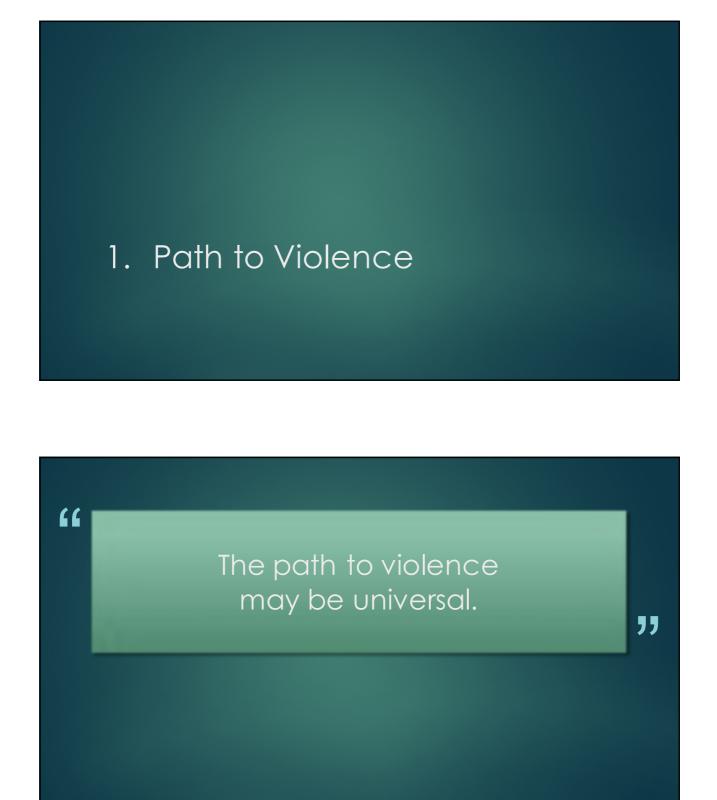
Stephen D. Hart, PhD

# Some Thorny Issues in Threat Assessment

#### Four Issues

- 1. Is there a "path to violence"?
- 2. What is unique about "targeted" vioelnce?
- 3. What is unique about "intended" violence?
- 4. Is there a meaningful distinction between "affective" and "predatory" violence?

AETAP Annual Meeting, Ghent, Belgium





Dietz and Martell (1986), US Secret Service (1995)
US Secret Service (2002), followed by Calhoun &

Weston (2003) and others

### Semantic Analysis

Path = track, course of movement, schedule

- Assumes there is a single path to violence, traveled by all, that is clear or well marked
- Assumes paths to other outcomes may exist (e.g., to non-violence)

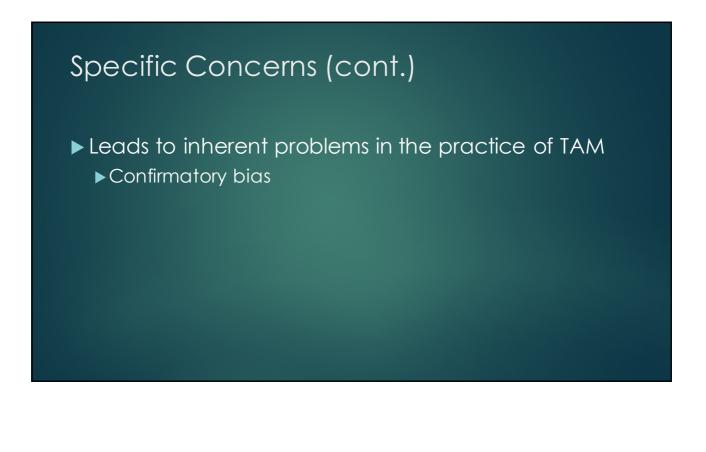
### **Theoretical Analysis**

Implicit/unacknowledged foundation is Action Theory Action = Goal  $\rightarrow$  Intent  $\rightarrow$  Behavior

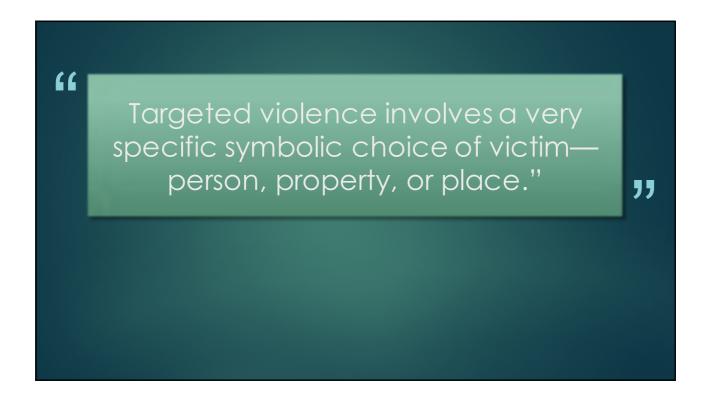
Assumes all violence is rational

### Specific Concerns

- ► Simplistic
  - Is the path really universal, applicable to all people and all types of violence?
  - Is the path always followed to its end with a simple, stepwise progression?
  - Why do people choose the path to violence, and how can we disrupt their travels?



## 2. Targeted Violence



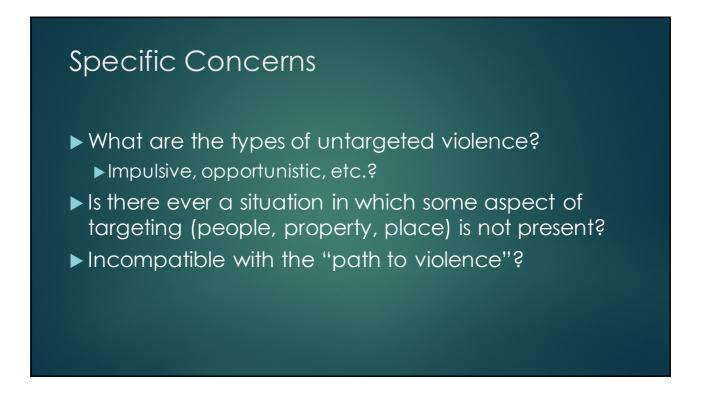
### History

▶ US Secret Service (1995), followed by many others

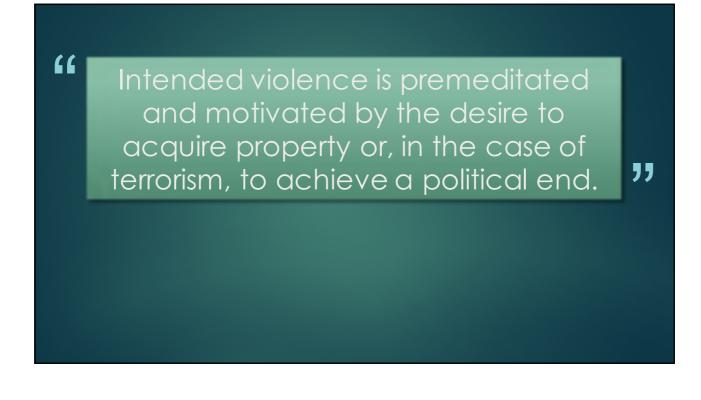


### Theoretical Analysis

No specific theory



### 3. Intended Violence

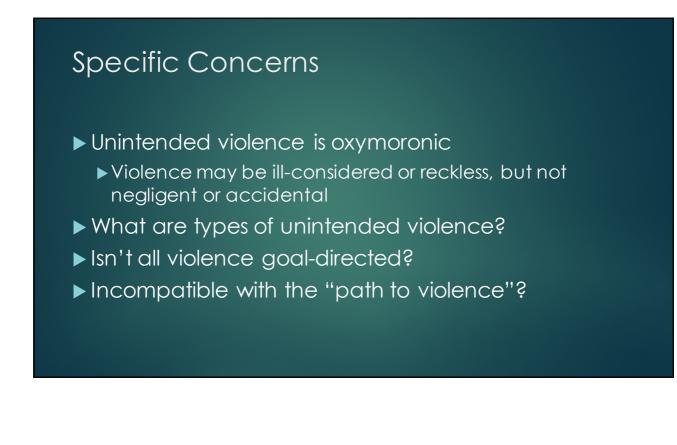


### History

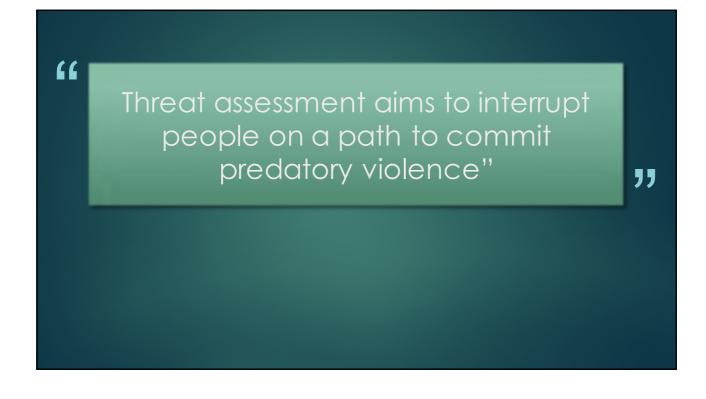
Calhoun & Weston (2003), followed by many others



No specific theory



### 4. Affective vs. Predatory Violence



### History

- Bard (1928), Wasman & Flynn (1962), McEllistrem (2004), etc.
- ▶ Meloy (1997), Raine (1998), etc.

### Semantic Analysis

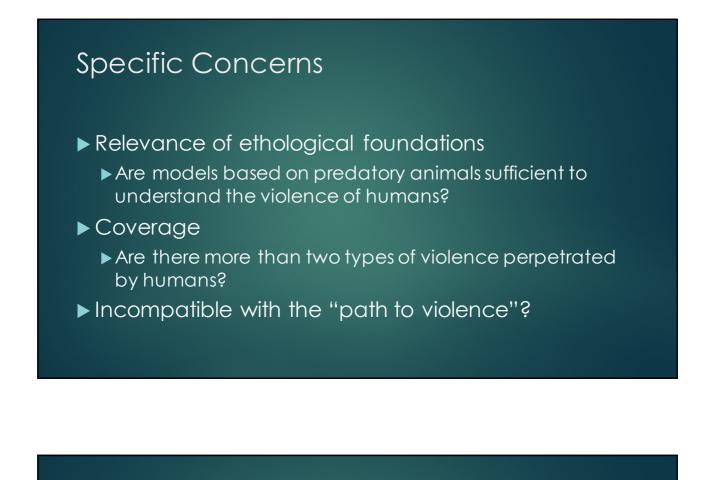
Affective = emotional, attitudinal Predatory = exploitative, selfish

Assumes two types are necessary and sufficient to categorize violent acts

### **Theoretical Analysis**

Implicit/unacknowledged foundation is evolutionary theory

► Two types of aggression have survival value



### General Concerns

### Concerns for Theory

- We don't know precisely what we are talking about
  - ► Causes confusion, apparent (dis-) agreement
  - ▶ Impedes knowledge cumulation and dissemination

The conscious decision to kill or physically harm specific or symbolic victims in a workplace is now categorized as targeted or intended violence. In contrast to affective or impulsive violence, targeted violence is by definition planned, emotionless, and predatory. Systematic research and extensive case experience by ourselves and others has demonstrated the central notion of a targeted "pathway to violence," and its significance for workplace violence risk assessment. On the path to "targeted" or "intended" violence (as opposed to violence for gain such as robbery, or impulsive acts of violence) a potential perpetrator follows often observable stages or steps leading up to an attack.

#### Intended Violence

Violent acts that meet the following criteria: intent to commit the act; selecting an attack mode that ensures injury, death, or property damage; and a motive that does not profit the attacker

### Concerns for Practice

- Is it a model/typology of acts or actors?
- ▶ What is the coverage of the model/typology?
- ► How do we assess it?
- ▶ When do we assess it?
- What is the reliability of the assessment?
- ▶ What are the implications for TAM?

### Contact Information

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