

## Inaugural Editorial

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We live in an age of risk.

Let us be clear: It is not that the world is becoming a more dangerous place. Indeed, the opposite is true. On the whole we human beings live longer, healthier, and safer lives now than at any time in the history of our species. However, because of the complexity of modern society and progress in science and technology, every day we learn more about perils to our well being, each of which seems to demand our attention and action (see Hardy, 1923, for an early discussion, and for more recent discussions, see Beck, 1992; Bernstein, 1996; Castel, 1991).

Therefore, although the world is actually *less dangerous* than ever before, we are more aware of risk. And a major risk to our well being, we have come to understand, is violence. Human beings cause psychological and physical injury to each other with alarming frequency and with serious emotional, social, and economic costs. Individual and collective violence is a major cause of human morbidity and mortality. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated the total number of lives taken by violence in the year 2000 to be 830,000—a figure that corresponds to about 15 fatalities per 100,000 people per year; the total number of people who suffered nonlethal physical injuries or serious psychological harm cannot be estimated with the same precision but probably is larger by about two orders of magnitude (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002). The money spent by people to prepare for, prevent, and respond to violence is astounding. According to the World Bank, about 2% of global gross domestic product (GDP) is devoted to military spending (see <http://data.worldbank.org>). According to figures from the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, criminal justice costs total about 3.5% of global GDP (Farrell & Clark, 2004). According to the WHO, the health care costs attributable to violence may be as high as 1% of global GDP (Krug et al., 1992). Unaccounted for are the costs of humanitarian, health care, and social services for people affected by violence.

What makes these figures even more disturbing is that, unlike many of the other risks human beings face, violence is a problem entirely of our own making. Violence is a deliberate act perpetrated by people against people. It is not the result of accident, negligence, or ignorance. Violence is, at least in theory, 100% preventable, as are the consequences and costs attributable to it.

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The *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management (JTAM)* is devoted exclusively to the topic of violence risk. It focuses on operational or applied issues, that is, the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies, procedures, and programs for assessing and managing violence risk. It strives to promote the values of interdisciplinarity and internationalism, based on the view that preventing violence requires collaborations that cross both professional and geopolitical boundaries. The aims and values of *JTAM* are directly reflected in the membership of the Editorial Board, which comprises law enforcement, national security, corporate security, and mental health professionals from around the world, in addition to applied researchers. *JTAM* was founded with the cooperation, and also has been endorsed as an official publication, of the four major professional associations devoted solely to threat assessment and management: the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP), based in the United States; the Association of European Threat Assessment Professionals (AETAP); the Canadian Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (CATAP); and the Asia Pacific Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (APATAP). These features—aims, values, and links with professional associations—make *JTAM* unique.

The impetus for the development of *JTAM* arose about 10 years ago. At that time, there was no journal devoted to the topic of threat assessment. Articles on violence risk assessment and management were being published in journals specific to various disciplines—psychology, psychiatry, social work, criminology, policing, security studies, human resources, education, and so forth. It was an expensive and time-consuming process for threat assessment professionals to locate and retrieve these articles. Furthermore, many of these articles were focused more on basic science issues than on operational issues. Whenever a large group of threat assessment professionals met, someone would bring up the need to establish a new specialty journal. Eventually, one of us (SDH) wrote a proposal supported by the three threat assessment professional associations that existed at the time—ATAP, AETAP, and CATAP. A short time later, APATAP (as it is now called) was founded and joined in supporting the proposal. The proposal was submitted to various publishers for consideration.

The American Psychological Association (APA) responded very favorably to the proposal. To be frank, this surprised us. We had assumed, mistakenly and perhaps unfairly, that a commercial publisher would be more interested in a multidisciplinary journal than would a not-for-profit organization such as APA. However, the APA's Office of Publications and Databases, under the direction of Gary VandenBos, immediately saw potential in the proposal and have worked tirelessly to support its establishment and development. Put simply, *JTAM* would not exist without the constant and patient support of APA and the Office of Publications and Databases staff.

As Senior Editors, we will do our best to make sure *JTAM* stays true to its aims and values. This issue includes articles that deal with topics ranging from mental illness and violence to sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and stalking. Coming issues will include articles dealing with topics such as terrorism and workplace violence, case studies illustrating approaches to threat assessment and management, descriptions of threat assessment units in law enforcement and national security organizations, and overviews of the associations that endorse *JTAM*. We will promote discussion, debate, and sharing of opinions regarding best practice by soliciting commentaries on one or more articles in every issue. We hope it is clear from this description that although we are pleased to receive research reports on operationally relevant topics, we strongly encourage and will be actively soliciting nonempirical submissions. If you, the reader, have an idea for

a submission, please contact us—we will be happy to discuss it with you and help you maximize its appropriateness for *JTAM*.

—Stephen D. Hart, Jens Hoffmann, J. Reid Meloy, and  
Lisa Warren, Senior Editors.

### References

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