

Preface

An international manual is like a world cruise: a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

All the more reason to consider carefully whether it is necessary. This can hardly be the case if previous research in the selected field has already been the subject of an earlier review—or even several competing surveys. On the other hand, more thorough study is necessary if the intensity and scope of research are increasing without comprehensive assessments. That was the situation in Western societies when work began on this project in the summer of 1998. It was then, too, that the challenges emerged: any manual, especially an international one, is a very special type of text, which is anything but routine. It calls for a special effort: the “state of the art” has to be documented for selected subject areas, and its presentation made as compelling as possible. The editors were delighted, therefore, by the cooperation and commitment shown by the eighty-one contributors from ten countries who were recruited to write on the sixty-two different topics, by the constructive way in which any requests for changes were dealt with, and by the patient response to our many queries.

This volume is the result of a long process. It began with the first drafts outlining the structure of the work, which were submitted to various distinguished colleagues. Friedhelm Neidhardt of Berlin, Gertrud Nunner-Winkler of Munich, and Roland Eckert of Trier, to name only a few, supplied valuable comments at this stage.

A working group set up by the Interdisciplinary Institute for Conflict and Violence Research developed the draft into a form that was discussed in the spring of 1999 by Wilhelm Heitmeyer and John Hagan (who was then still working in Toronto). Invitations to contributors were then sent out—successfully, as this compilation demonstrates.

The complexity of this project was further increased by the fact that we had planned from the outset to publish as nearly simultaneously as possible in German and in English. This meant that, even while the chapters were still being written and revised, they also had to be translated, into German or English as the case might be. We recruited Ina Goertz of Tradukas, Berlin, as our translation coordinator: she and her team including Adelheid Baker did excellent work, and our working relationship was an exceptionally friendly one. But for her, this manual could never have arrived at its present form.

We received equally fruitful assistance when we found ourselves working outside the boundaries of the skills available to the Institute’s editorial team and urgently needed additional expertise. In this context, we must especially mention Harald A. Euler of Kassel University, who provided invaluable assistance on, for example, the texts and problems relating to the evolutionary psychology of violence.

Editors can never achieve much without the support of a highly committed, enthusiastic team, able to draw upon a wide range of very different skills—academic, editorial, linguistic, organizational, communicative, and technical. That applies to the core editorial team: Heiner Bielefeldt and Johannes Vossen, in particular, were invaluable, and they were well supported at different times by other members of the Institute's staff, including some of the contributors to this manual.

For a long period, until she left the team to work in a different project, Julia Tölke was an outstanding coordinator, taking charge of communication with contributors and the technical revision of the text. She was replaced by Peter Sitzer, who worked closely with Stefanie Müller to maintain the same standards in this important task. Our secretaries, Mrs. Ward and Mrs. Passon, were persistent and efficient in dealing with our numerous and sometimes hectic communications needs and the collating of the translations. Finally—as was only to be expected—Monika Näther brought a perfectionist's dedication to the complex technical preparation of the print copy for the German version.

Last but not least, without financial support such project can not be brought to fruition—especially if it is to be published in two languages, with all the time and cost-intensive translation work involved. We are therefore deeply grateful to Dr. Wolf Jenkner of the Ministry of Science of the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia, without whose backing this project would never have been launched.

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