

CONCEPTUALISING RISK  
ASSESSMENT AND  
MANAGEMENT ACROSS THE  
PUBLIC SECTOR

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# CONCEPTUALISING RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT ACROSS THE PUBLIC SECTOR

From Theory to Practice

BY

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIRMIC	Association of Insurance Risk Managers in Industry and Commerce
ALARM	Association of Local Authority Risk managers
BS EN	British Standard European Norm
CAM	Contact Assessment Model
CDC	Centers for Disease Control
CIIA	Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors
COSO	Committee of Sponsoring Organisations of the Treadway Commission
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease-19 [identified in 2019]
CRM	Corporate Risk Management
ERM	Enterprise Risk Management
FERMA	Federation of European Risk Management Association
FMEA	Failure Model Effect Analysis
H1N1	Hemagglutinin Type 1 and Neuraminidase Type 1 [influenza strain]
HM	Her Majesty's
IEC	International Electrochemical Commission
IRM	Institute for Risk Management
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
MHP	Mental Health Pathway
MWI	Municipal Mutual Insurance
NAO	National Audit Office (UK Government)
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
NHS	National Health Service
NHS24	National Health Service-24 [24-hour call centre support service]
NORSOK	Norsk Sokkels Konkuranseposisjon
PACED	Proportionate, Aligned, Comprehensive, Embedded, Dynamic
PDCA	Plan, Do, Check, Act
PESTLE	Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental
SARS-CoV	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus

SARS-CoV-2	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2
SDS	Self-directed Support
SSSC	Scottish Social Services Council
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TBS	Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States [of America]
WEF	World Economic Forum

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Dr Jennifer Murray** is an Associate Professor in Decision Science, and an Associate Fellow and Chartered Member of the British Psychological Society. Her core research investigates the human judgement and decision making processes associated with risk and risk assessment-related decision making, with the core focus of this being on forensic, health and legal decision making. She is passionate about developing useful, theoretically sound interventions and outputs from her research which support practitioner decision making and effective risk assessment practice. Dr Murray collaborates across multi-disciplinary teams, working closely with and involving relevant stakeholders to make her research as applicable to real practice as possible.

**Dr Iniobong Enang** is a Senior Lecturer (Assistant Professor) in Risk Management. She is the Course Director for MSc Risk Management at Coventry University where she also teaches Project Management and Decision Making for International Business. Dr Enang is interested in risk governance issues in the private and public sector. She is particularly passionate about social risk and matters pertaining to social (in)justice issues. She is currently promoting understanding about the positive and negative components of social risks, including potential impacts on micro-, meso- and macroenvironments via public speaking engagements. Her goal is to develop and conduct much needed social risk assessments in collaboration with public and private sectors. This will facilitate strategic decision making and deliver positive outcomes, thereby co-creating value for the common good.

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# PREFACE

## WHY IS THIS BOOK NEEDED? WHO CARES, REALLY?

With such great depth and specificity within the academic risk assessment and management literature, newcomers or those tasked with more generalist approaches to assessing risk may be led to exclaim: *Well, this isn't relevant to my field!* In doing so, they inadvertently shield themselves from a wealth of excellent breakthroughs, approaches and lessons from related areas to their own. This book therefore aims to embrace the lessons from specific fields of risk assessment and management and present these in a 'generalist' fashion, to aid cross-sector learning. It supports experienced and inexperienced risk professionals to achieve a breadth of knowledge based on existing and transferrable approaches across the public sector risk field.

This preface sets the scene for the rest of the book, detailing why there is a need for a book which focuses on risk, risk assessment and management across the broad spectrum of the public sector. This book will discuss some of the current theoretical issues, such as lack of definitions, the challenges and benefits of interprofessional practice, siloed working and even a lack of knowledge in some of the public sector-related research disciplines. We propose that only through bringing forward some of the shared risk definitions and risk assessment and management practices that are relevant across the public sector can the field and practice develop and improve together. Implications of poor risk practice will be discussed in later chapters, and examples of the benefits of good risk practice will be emphasised throughout the book, with case study examples helping to bring the theoretical discussion into real practice focus.

Risk assessment and risk management are core tasks across the public sector to improve processes and outcomes. There is, however, little clarity over what these terms actually mean across public sector professions both conceptually and practically. There is also a growing need in the public sector for interprofessional, collaborative working practice. There is a concurrent expectation that risk assessment and risk management be carried out across the sector to the highest standard. However, with the current lack of cohesive

practice and processes in risk assessment and risk management across public sector professions, interprofessional, co-creative risk practice is impeded. In many cases, profession-specific risk practice is not problematic and may indeed be appropriate. In other cases, where there is a shared goal or focus across professions, such as working with a particular client group or on the same problem, this fragmentation may lead to poorer outcomes for the professions involved or for the people with whom they are working; this then becomes a barrier to best practice.

There are a number of reasons for fragmentation in practice, including poor operational definitions of risk across professional practice and within current academic publications, thereby impacting on the implementation of risk assessment and risk management in practice. This book will address these issues through providing a high-level, theory-informed discussion on the conceptualisations of risk, risk assessment and risk management across the public sector. Guidance on how to work interprofessionally to overcome these barriers will be presented using a combination of theoretically underpinned techniques and exemplars from practice.

This book is essential in drawing together the current theoretical underpinnings of risk, risk assessment and risk management relevant to the public sector. This book is written with a key ambition of appealing broadly across the public sector rather than being siloed within a specific professional grouping or theoretical paradigm. We made this decision very consciously, being interdisciplinary researchers, teaching on interdisciplinary courses and simply having had no such broad, general text which fits across the different public sector professions in this area to learn from ourselves. We really hope that risk professionals, both experienced and inexperienced, will find this book useful in developing and broadening their understandings of risk assessment and management both for use in their own practice and in understanding it more broadly when working across disciplines.

There has also been a proliferation of risk assessment and risk management discourse in the academic literature, which is unfortunately often presented with weak or no definitions. This then becomes translated or adapted – again, with weak or no understandings of the implications of the theoretical groundings – to interprofessional practice. Despite ubiquitous agreement that risk assessment and risk management are essential core aspects of public sector working, there continues to be poor understanding of the underpinning conceptualisations of risk across different public sector professions. This leads to wide variation in the process and utility of risk assessment and management and to miscommunications of risk across professions. This is further perpetuated through the lack of consensus, or even lack of operational definitions, of

risk assessment and management across associated academic fields, creating further lack of clarity. These, in consort, lead to barriers in interprofessional practice and co-creation of value across the public sector. To facilitate interprofessional working, public sector risk assessment and management practice must develop. There must be clearer understanding of what risk assessment and management is, how and under which circumstances these might be unified across the sector and how deviations across professions are needed. We will explore these issues from a theoretical perspective and will bring together the conceptualisations of risk assessment and management relevant to public sector working, discussing applied examples of how interprofessional risk assessment and management practice can be facilitated and achieved. The theory and applied foci will help to break those academic- and practice-led barriers which currently restrict co-creation across the fields and the sector.

The current book therefore very consciously brings theory back into focus in the risk assessment and management discourse and practice in the public sector field, which we believe is sorely needed. The topics covered in this book include: theoretical underpinnings and operational definitions of what risk is within public sector practice; underpinning approaches to risk assessment and risk management; how these impact decision making; risk communication; and interprofessional working and collaborative risk practice.

The three key learnings that we hope that the reader gains from this book are as follows:

- (1) Rather than focusing wholly on practice and ‘how to’, there will be broader appreciation and understanding of the key concepts and theories underpinning risk assessment and management across the public sector.
- (2) Developing an understanding of those key approaches to risk assessment and management in a generalist way, to appreciate the complexities and shared approaches that are possible across public sector professions, rather than focusing on highly specialised ‘siloes’ approaches which are limited to a very small section of the public sector field.
- (3) Really focusing on the co-creative and interprofessional public sector risk assessment and management as something that is achievable and meaningful, rather than something that is a hassle or too challenging to attempt.

Overall, however, we ultimately hope that the person who has previously professed that generalist approaches to risk assessment and management *isn't relevant to me!* will see that *yes! It can be!* We hope that we can bring people with us in appreciating and becoming passionate about embracing generalist

risk assessment and management approaches and using these to work together, across professions, to improve outcomes for professions, for people and for society. We fully know that specialist risk assessment and management approaches are also essential in some situations, but we believe – and hope that you will also believe by the end of this book – that generalist approaches with shared definitions and transferrable processes are just as essential within public sector risk working.

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*Jen*

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risk and risk management, including but not limited to its epistemology, i.e. how risk is perceived, what knowledge is valid within this sphere and how this knowledge is applied in practice. I would therefore like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people whose invaluable assistance helped me during this journey.

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*Ini*

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*Jen and Ini*

# ABSTRACT

*Risk assessment and risk management are essential across the public sector to improve processes and outcomes. However, there is little clarity over what this actually means. This lack of understanding leads to a wide variation in risk assessment and management practice and to miscommunications of risk across professions, creating further barriers to interprofessional practice and co-creation of value across the public sector. Despite these challenges, there is a concurrent expectation that risk assessment and risk management be carried out across the sector to the highest standard, developing high-quality interprofessional working in the field with more aligned public sector risk assessment and management practice.*

Conceptualising Risk Assessment and Management across the Public Sector explores concepts and applications of risk across the public sector to aid risk professionals in establishing a clearer understanding of what risk assessment and management is, how they might be unified across the sector and how and where deviations across professions are needed. This book addresses these issues through providing a theory-informed discussion on the conceptualisations of risk, risk assessment and risk management across the public sector, and through identifying where shared values and where differences exist across professions. Guidance on interprofessional risk practice and risk communication to overcome barriers is offered using a combination of theoretically underpinned approaches and exemplars from practice, presented to have broad applicability across the public sector rather than being siloed within a specific professional grouping or theoretical paradigm.