

Preface

This is the third and final volume in the series of my Collected Works. The selections in the first volume, *The Origins and Development of Problem Behavior Theory*, provided an overview of the theory's transformations from its initial formulation over a half century ago to its framing as currently employed in research across the globe. The second volume, *Problem Behavior Theory and Adolescent Health*, brought together writings that applied the theory to the large variety of behaviors that can compromise or enhance health, whether health is defined biologically or, in a broader sense, as social and personal and developmental well-being. The purview of the selections in Part I of this volume is the application of the theory to the social context, particularly the context of socioeconomic disadvantage. That focus is especially fitting since it was just such a context—a Native American reservation and, nearby, a small tri-ethnic community—that was the setting for the application of the initial version of Problem Behavior Theory.

Addressing the social context, the environment in which behavior and development take place, continues to be a problematic endeavor. How to constitute the social context, how to establish its perimeter and conceptualize its contents, remains a challenge for the social disciplines. The selections in this volume that apply Problem Behavior Theory in various disadvantaged settings all constitute the social context in a particular way, a way that reflects how the context is perceived or defined by the actor and that captures the meaning it has for the adolescent or young adult. That conceptual stance engages issues in the philosophy of science and in the methodology of inquiry, e.g., the role played by subjectivity in behavioral science explanation. The selections in Part II of this volume are those that articulate the philosophy of science perspective that has undergirded Problem Behavior Theory from its inception.

That this volume should have contexts of disadvantage as its focus should not be misinterpreted. That focus is not to be seen as the primary application of Problem Behavior Theory. Indeed, the selections in the two earlier volumes have already documented the application of the theory to the entire range of socioeconomic variation in samples drawn from the larger population. What has animated the particular

focus of this volume is the fact that much of the social problem literature has tended to concentrate on the domain of disadvantage, and it is important to demonstrate the relevance of Problem Behavior Theory to that domain, in addition to having demonstrated its more general applicability.

As was articulated most clearly in Volume 1, Problem Behavior Theory has sought to engage especially the disciplines of sociology and of psychology, the former the conceptual custodian of context and the larger social environment and the latter the conceptual custodian of the individual, the person, the adolescent in most of our studies. What is argued in this volume, in Chap. 1 and in the selections in Part II, is that a truly interdisciplinary behavioral science approach to explanation, even of the role played by the social context in behavior and development, requires engaging and conceptualizing the individual, the person, in that explanation as well.

Completion of this third and final volume in the series of my Collected Works stimulates more than the usual amount of reflection. It has been gratifying to look back over the decades of systematic inquiry about adolescent and young adult behavior, health, and development and to see that it has cumulated in a corpus of work with relevance for behavioral science and for human affairs. It has been a long journey, but I have had the good fortune of being accompanied by stellar companions—students and colleagues—who have contributed significantly to the larger endeavor and whose ideas and efforts are apparent in the selections in the volumes. It has been my enduring hope that this work of science—the findings of our research—will constitute a contribution, however small, to societal well-being.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge in this volume, as I have in the two published earlier, the enormous debt I owe to my students and my colleagues. Throughout my career, they have supported me, challenged me, and urged me onward. What has cumulated in these volumes could not have happened without them. I am indebted also to the director of the Institute of Behavioral Science, Myron Gutmann, for supporting the sustained effort required to complete all three volumes of my Collected Works. Deserving acknowledgement as well is the dedicated assistance of the staff of the Institute of Behavioral Science, most recently that of Ms. Lindy Shultz whose commitment and exceptionally diligent efforts have safeguarded the successful completion of this volume. The assistance of Tom Dickinson and Elisa Elvove is also gratefully acknowledged.

Finally, I have dedicated the volume to my wife and colleague, Jane Menken. Her support for the entire endeavor of gathering together my Collected Works has been unalloyed, and her encouragement has been unflagging. She has been stalwart and steadfast—and loving—throughout.

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Problem Behavior Theory and the Social Context
The Collected Works of Richard Jessor, Volume 3
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2017, XI, 286 p. 32 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-57884-2