

## New perspectives on adolescent risk behavior

Leading scholars of adolescent risk behavior present the most recent ideas and findings about the variety of behaviors that can compromise adolescent development. The volume emphasizes new perspectives on development and on person-centered analysis.

The book is divided into six sections. The first section focuses on development, with a comprehensive chapter by Robert Cairns and his colleagues. The second section covers problem behavior (including drug use and risky driving), and the third section focuses on early sexual activity. The fourth section deals with psychopathology, with a chapter on depression, and the fifth section focuses on social role performance (covering school disengagement and adolescent work). In the final section, John Hagan and Rainer Silbereisen provide integrative chapters.

This important volume, providing a broad overview and reflections on the development of the field, is crucial for all professionals involved in the social psychology of adolescent risk behavior.

Richard Jessor is Director of the Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado, Boulder. His research interests include adolescent and young adult development, the social psychology of problem behavior, and psychosocial aspects of poverty. He has been awarded fellowships by the National Institute of Mental Health, the Social Science Research Council, and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford. His most recent books include *Ethnography and Human Development: Context and Meaning in Social Inquiry* (editor), *Beyond Adolescence: Problem Behavior and Young Adult Development*, and *Perspectives on Behavioral Science: The Colorado Lectures* (editor).

# New perspectives on adolescent risk behavior

*Edited by*  
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## Preface

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This volume is the outcome of a remarkably stimulating conference on “New Perspectives on Adolescent Risk Behavior” held in Los Angeles on June 28–30, 1996. The conference was an effort to capture and consolidate the pervasive changes that were taking place in the way in which adolescent risk behavior was being studied at the close of the century – changes in conceptualization, in research design, and in analytic methods. The contextualization of risk behavior, its embeddedness in life-span developmental process, and the new explanatory concern with protection as well as risk were only a few of the ways in which contemporary inquiry had been transformed from its earlier orientations.

An interdisciplinary group of distinguished scholars whose own work had contributed to the transformation was assembled for 3 days of presentations and intense interchange. Each scholar had been charged with the tasks of identifying new trends in the field in which he or she was working, considering empirical exemplifications of those trends, and reflecting on their implications for future research. The chapters in this volume, all extensively revised in light of the conference discussions, are the final product. Together they limn the outlines of an agenda for inquiry about adolescent risk behavior at the opening of a new century.

The idea for the conference and for a subsequent volume was conceived during the editor’s 1995–1996 tenure as a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford. That superb context of intellectual and collegial support facilitated the planning of the conference, and the committed and unstinting assistance of Ms.

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Nancy Pinkerton of the Center staff ensured its successful realization. Personal support during the Fellowship year was provided by the William T. Grant Foundation (950 30 128) and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (8900078), and I am grateful to both. I want also to acknowledge the deep influence on my thinking about adolescent risk behavior that has come from my experience on the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development and from a decade as chair of the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Successful Adolescent Development among Youth in High-Risk Settings.

The conference itself was organized with extraordinary grace and efficiency by the Youth Enhancement Service, a division of the Brain Information Service of the University of California at Los Angeles, directed by Professor Michael H. Chase. Funding for the conference was provided to the Youth Enhancement Service by the Anheuser-Busch Foundation, and its support for this endeavor is very much appreciated.

The task of processing draft papers and their revisions into final chapter drafts and, ultimately, into a book manuscript once again fell to Marilyn Sena of the Institute of Behavioral Science here at the University of Colorado. Her dedication and competence in this regard have been celebrated before, but my appreciation and indebtedness grow with each new accomplishment. She has been a long-time, indispensable collaborator.

My hope is that readers of the chapters in this volume, scholars and students alike, will gain a new appreciation of the promise of further work on adolescent risk behavior – and will be spurred to pursue it.