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## Problem behavior and psychosocial development: a longitudinal study of youth.

**Author:** Jessor R; Jessor SL

**Source:** New York, New York, Academic Press, 1977. xv, 281 p.

**Abstract:** This study is the 2nd phase of a long-term program of research on problem behavior. The approach to theory testing involves a longitudinal design. The study plots trajectories of change over time in personality, social environment, and behavior, and uses the theory to forecast important transitions--beginning to drink, starting to use marijuana, and becoming a nonvirgin. The book has 4 main sections: 1) an introductory chapter and a chapter describing problem-behavior theory and research design and method, 2) the cross-sectional findings and their bearing on the theory, 3) the longitudinal findings, and 4) studies of socialization and conclusions. Using adolescents and youths in American society in the late 1960s and early 1970s, this research represents a logical continuation of a long term interest in problem behavior and a recognition that what was going on among youth and in the student movement can be viewed from a problem-behavior perspective. This high school study began in the spring of 1969 with grades 7, 8, and 9; by the end of the study in 1972, these participants had all made the transition from junior to senior high school of grades 10, 11, and 12. Each year, each participant completed a 50 page questionnaire inquiring about their drug use, sexual behavior, alcohol drinking, and the problem behavior associated with excessive use of alcohol. Some of the major findings suggest that: 1) the prevalence of problem behaviors is

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oriented or peer-oriented are the most significant; and 5) the developmental changes most often measured in connection with growth trends are growth of independence, decline in traditional ideology related to achievement value and society as a whole, assumption of a more relativistic and tolerant morality, attenuation of conventional norms and religious beliefs, increase in peer influence, and increase in problem behavior itself. Overall, it would be an important step forward for prevention and control if problem behavior in youth came to be seen as part of the dialectic of growth.

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