

Prof. Dr. Katrin Höffler

## **Statement on the Article of the Year 2021:**

### **‘The Influence of Differential Peer Associations on Delinquency Varies Depending on the Combination of Unstructured Socializing and Personal Morals’**

by Florian Kaiser

Juvenile delinquency is a phenomenon that, in addition to its sheer empirical relevance – one only has to think of the ‘age-crime curve’ – also deserves special attention due to the considerable influence criminal acts and their sanctioning have on the further development of young people. Juvenile delinquency is thus a much-discussed topic whose wide variety of causes give rise to an equally wide variety of scientific approaches to determining and countering these causes. One aspect that has been identified as an important parameter when it comes to the likelihood of juveniles offending is the association with delinquent peers.

In his article ‘The Influence of Differential Peer Associations on Delinquency Varies Depending on the Combination of Unstructured Socializing and Personal Morals’, published in Issue 1/2021, pp. 72–99, Florian Kaiser makes a valuable contribution to further specifying the criminogenic effects of peer associations. In Wikström’s Situational Action Theory (SAT), he chooses not only one of the most acknowledged theories of action in criminology as his theoretical basis, but also one that can be effectively operationalised. In alignment with the SAT, he finds that criminogenic peer effects depend on both personal and environmental factors. He identifies one personal and one environmental factor, whose effects he then examines in further depth in relation to the criminogenic effects of peer associations, namely the personal morals of an individual and the degree of unstructured socialising. In addition to the topicality and relevance of his subject matter, his complex and well-structured methodological approach is particularly convincing. Kaiser formulates four clear, sequential hypotheses and gradually tests them, making his article accessible and highly readable. The ‘Crime in the modern city’ panel study, which is based on data collected since 2002 from 61 % of Duisburg’s seventh graders, forms the empirical basis of his work. The purpose of the study was to examine the causes and development of juvenile delinquency based on self-reports from young people, and it provides suitable data for Kaiser’s investigation. His valuable findings encourage further research, possibly with more up-to-date surveys: as he himself points out, the reality of young people’s lives has changed considerably in recent decades, for example due to social media, such that more recent surveys can be expected to yield further interesting findings.

With his methodologically excellent approach, Kaiser has gained beneficial insights that call for further research and thereby made a worthy contribution to the current international discussion. His article effectively demonstrates that criminological research can be hypothesis-driven fundamental research. The German-speaking members of the editorial board and the editorial team at *Kriminologie – Das Online Journal* | *Criminology – The Online Journal* have thus decided to name the paper our 2021 Article of the Year.

Kontakt | Contact

Prof. Dr. Katrin Höffler | Universität Leipzig | Lehrstuhl für Strafrecht, Strafprozessrecht, Kriminologie und Rechtssoziologie | [katrin.hoeffler@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:katrin.hoeffler@uni-leipzig.de)