

Delinquency in Emerging Adulthood: Insights Into Delinquent Trajectories of Young Adults

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Recently, the existence and salience of a possible adult-onset trajectory is debated among Development and Life Course criminologists. Studies analyzing data from longitudinal studies comprising the age periods of adolescence and young adulthood with group modeling techniques had difficulties to identify such a trajectory when using the entire panel, which is not surprising: after all, the overall tendency with increasing age is desistance. Therefore, this study focusses exclusively on the time period of emerging adulthood while also accounting for new opportunity structures to offend. Group-based trajectory models with four to five groups can be identified representing unobserved heterogeneity in patterns of delinquency reasonably well. In both solutions, at least one trajectory representing individuals with a very late onset of offending can be distinguished. The population under study are participants of the German panel study "Crime in the Modern City" (CrimoC) with annual and biannual surveys from 18 to 28 years of age. The following questions are addressed in the paper: Beside a general decrease of crime in late adolescence, can we identify also crime patterns with increasing delinquency? How does this relate to the opportunity structure changes in young adulthood compared to that of adolescence? Does late-onset derived by a modeling procedure based on a population of young adults correlate with non-offending in adolescence? What types of offenses are most likely associated with each trajectory group and how are alcohol and substance abuse distributed among these?