

Mario Bachmann

## Statement on the 2019/2020 Article of the Year:

### **‘Empirical Research on Excessive Use of Force by the Police in Germany – The KviAPol Research Project and its Method, Implementation, and Challenges’**

by Laila Abdul-Rahman, Hannah Espín Grau & Tobias Singelstein

German-speaking criminologists have long attested that the field is in a state of crisis, bemoaning a lack of awareness, especially among those responsible for criminal policy. There is certainly plenty of truth to these arguments. At the same time, it is crucial that criminologists (not just in the German-speaking world, but globally) confidently devote themselves to their research, engaging with current issues and enthusiastically contributing to the public debate by sharing their expertise. With a project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) titled ‘Körperverletzung im Amt durch Polizeibeamt\*innen’ (‘Excessive use of force by police officers’ or KviAPol), *Laila Abdul-Rahman, Hannah Espin Grau* and *Tobias Singelstein* have done precisely that, offering for the first time a systematic analysis of the controversial phenomenon of police violence as seen from the victim’s perspective.

In their article ‘Empirical Research on Excessive Use of Force by the Police in Germany – The KviAPol Research Project and its Method, Implementation, and Challenges’ (published in Issue 2 / 2019, pp. 231–249), the team delivers a committed and clear report on the opportunities and limits of research into the ‘hot potato’ topic of police violence. In their paper, *Abdul-Rahman, Espin Grau* and *Singelstein* also do not shy away from critical self-reflection.

The authors clearly struck a chord with readers of *Kriminologie – Das Online Journal | Criminology – The Online Journal*: their paper prompted a remarkable response and was accessed multiple times on our website. This might also be related to the Rhineland-Palatinate police university’s campaign-like, polemising criticism of the researchers’ methodology which was given in response to the publication of the project’s preliminary report in September 2019. This subsequently evolved into a dispute (documented on the homepage of the ‘Criminology in North Rhine-Westphalia’ network) in which the action taken by the police university was rejected, for instance, in an open letter signed by policing, criminology and criminal practice researchers together with others, as an attack on academic freedom as well as an attempt by the police to protect its institutions by discrediting external research. This shows that it is no exaggeration to describe police violence as a ‘hot potato’ issue and sadly demonstrates that criminological research encounters sometimes considerable resistance.

On the whole, it remains clear that *Abdul-Rahman, Espin Grau* and *Singelstein* have valiantly taken up and masterfully analysed a highly relevant issue and simultaneously sparked the interest of readers – an almost perfect list of achievements for an article that truly is out-

standing. The German-speaking members of the advisory board and the editorial team at *Kriminologie – Das Online Journal* | *Criminology – The Online Journal* have thus decided to name the paper our 2019/2020 Article of the Year.

*Kontakt | Contact*

Mario Bachmann | University of Cologne | Institute of Criminology | Mario.Bachmann@uni-koeln.de