# Editorial

## *SACQ*: progress towards publishing excellence

Over the past five years *South African Crime Quarterly (SACQ)* has undergone a number of changes to make the journal a more reliable and credible source of practical and theoretical knowledge about violence, crime and criminal justice in South Africa. In 2011 the journal was accredited by the Department of Higher Education in South Africa, and it has recently been assessed by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), and accepted for inclusion in the Scielo index. Acceptance in the index is based on a thorough assessment of the journal, and on-going monitoring of indicators of excellence by ASSAf. The inclusion of *SACQ* in this index is thus a significant milestone for the journal. It also means that within the next three years the journal will have an impact factor based on the number of citations of articles published. In addition, *SACQ* is now available through African Journals Online (AJOL), a service that offers a growing collection of open-access African scholarly journals; through AJOL we are increasing our continental readership.

*SACQ* is currently the only accredited, open-access criminological journal in South Africa. We are deeply committed to retaining our open-access status, as we believe that this is essential to ensuring that the information and knowledge contained in the journal is accessible to practitioners, policymakers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that do not have access to university libraries; and to scholars at academic institutions that cannot afford the high costs of journal subscriptions. Accreditation by the Department of Higher Education has increased the attractiveness of the journal to authors from South African universities and thus the number of submissions received by the journal is steadily increasing. This is good news for readers because it ensures diversity both in relation to the subjects covered and in authorship. Despite the increase in the number of submissions from universities, we are committed to ensuring that the articles in *SACQ* remain accessible to our diverse audience.

The most recent changes to *SACQ* include the addition of Digital Object Identifiers (DIO) numbers for each article and the migration to a digital journal management system. *SACQ* is one of three South African journals to have been included in an ASSAf pilot to test an open-access online journal management system. This means that from the first edition of 2016 all articles will be submitted online and authors will be able to track the progress of their articles from submission to publication (or rejection). Through the system we are able to keep better metrics, which enables us to keep improving the journal.

Part of improving the journal is also ensuring that our policies remain relevant, appropriate and up-to-date. The most recent addition is a policy relating to how and when we use racial terms in *SACQ*. This is such an important matter that we have reproduced the policy in full at the end of this editorial, and urge readers and authors to take careful note of it. We also urge other journals to consider adopting similar policies.

Turning to this edition of *SACQ*, I am pleased to be able to offer readers an eclectic collection of articles on topical issues with which to end the year.

While readers of medical journals may already be familiar with the concept of obstetric violence, it is not a subject that has made its way into discussions about violence in South Africa. In her article Camilla Pickles argues that it is time to address the violence women often experience at the hands of health professionals while giving birth, and thereafter. She argues that the impact of this form of violence on mother and infant is such that it should be criminalised. Whether or not criminalising obstetric violence is indeed the most effective way to counter the problem may be debatable, but there can be little doubt that this has been a significant omission from the discourse around gender-based violence. I hope this article will increase the visibility of the issue and stimulate debate.

The March 2015 edition of *SACQ* was a special edition that focused on the prevention of violence through evidence-based primary interventions, such as those that improve positive parenting. In this edition Inge Wessels and Cathy Ward present a model for assessing the extent to which parenting programmes incorporate, or are based on, evidence. We hope this will be a useful tool both for NGOs that seek to implement parenting programmes and the state and non-state donors that support them.

The case note in this edition, provided by Carina du Toit and Zita Hansungule from the Centre for Child Law at the University of Pretoria, continues the child-centred theme by providing an analysis of judgements relating to the sentencing of children who turn 18 before they are sentenced, but who had committed the crimes in question while still a child (under the age of 18). The note centres on a Western Cape High Court judgement that found that such child offenders should be sentenced as children, and not as adults. This is an important and progressive precedent for upholding and protecting the rights of children.

In her article, Hema Hargovan draws on her vast experience of the practice of restorative justice in South Africa to offer a sobering assessment of the use of victim/offender dialogues as a factor in assessing offenders for parole. She argues that not enough is being done to safeguard the rights of victims.

Gwen Dereymaeker's article draws attention to the massive civil claims against the South African Police Service (SAPS). She provides an overview of the civil claims against the SAPS between 2007/8 and the current financial year, and navigates the complexity of claims versus settlements made by the police. She carefully assesses the potential drivers of civil claims and argues that unlawful police behaviour, particularly the use of violence by the police, along with an apparent lack of faith in the Independent Police Investigative Directorate, has an impact on these claims – which at the time of writing stood at well over R9 billion just for the current financial year.

Finally, Simon Howell and his colleagues from the Medical Research Council and the University of Cape Town contribute an article that presents select findings from a study to determine the change over time in the price of illegal drugs in Cape Town. While the study does not offer significant new insights into the illicit drug market, it does provide a basis for assessing price fluctuations in the future and thus an ability to assess market demand.

I hope you enjoy the read.

**Chandré Gould**

**Policy on the use of racial classifications in articles published in *South African Crime Quarterly***

Racial classifications have continued to be widely used in South Africa post-apartheid. Justifications for the use of racial descriptors usually relate to the need to ensure and monitor societal transformation. However, in the research and policy community racial descriptors are often used because they are believed to enable readers and peers to understand the phenomenon they are considering. We seem unable to make sense of our society, and discussions about our society, without reference to race.

*South African Crime Quarterly (SACQ)* seeks to challenge the use of race to make meaning, because this reinforces a racialised understanding of our society. We also seek to resist the lazy use of racial categories and descriptors that lock us into categories of identity that we have rejected and yet continue to use without critical engagement post-apartheid. Through adopting this policy *SACQ* seeks to signal its commitment to challenging the racialisation of our society, and racism in all its forms.

We are aware that in some instances using racial categories is necessary, appropriate and relevant; for example, in an article that assesses and addresses racial transformation policies, such as affirmative action. In this case, the subject of the article is directly related to race.

However, when race or racial inequality or injustice is not the subject of the article, *SACQ* will not allow the use of racial categories. We are aware that some readers might find this confusing at first and may request information about the race of research subjects or participants. However, we deliberately seek to foster such a response in order to disrupt racialised thinking and meaning-making.