

CRIMINOLOGY SEMINAR SERIES 2017

Gauging desistance from crime: Employers' perspectives on the 'what' and 'how' ex-offenders job applicants signal their desistance from crime.

Suzanne Reich, School of Law and Justice, University of Southern Queensland.

When deciding whether or not to hire a job applicant with a criminal record, employers report a number of risks as cause for possible concern. These risks relate to reoffending, relation between the crime and the job being applied for, and the safety of staff and customers. Perceptions about these risks are generally associated with features of the ex-offender's criminal history as well as their socio-demographic characteristics. Whether or not the ex-offender applicant poses these risks forms part of the employer's subjective assessment of the applicant's likely desistance from crime and suitability for employment. To examine whether hiring decisions are associated with perceptions of desistance from crime, this study aimed to assess what particular signals of desistance are most valuable to employers. In addition, how employers recognise these signals as it relates to the way by which ex-offenders demonstrate their own desistance from crime. A two-phase mixed methods design was applied to this study, consisting of an online quantitative survey (n=367) and follow up face-to-face interviews (n=43) with employers from Toowoomba, Australia. This seminar series presentation encompasses some of the integrated results from this study and highlights a few of the broader implications emerging from this research.



Suzanne Reich currently manages the Criminal Justice studies major at USQ and is based in the School of Law and Justice. She has a Bachelor of Arts (extended major in Sociology, single major in Criminology), as well as Honours (First Class) in Criminology from the University of Queensland. Suzanne is currently in the final year of her PhD. Her thesis examines whether and why employers will hire job applicants who have a criminal record with a particular emphasis on the beliefs employer's hold about the capacity for ex-offenders to change and desist from crime, and how desistance from crime is recognised by employers. Suzanne's previous employment includes working with at-risk young people in the community as well as in detention. Later on, she worked in the Offending Behaviour Programs sector within the adult prison system in both Australia and England, working specifically with serious and violent offenders.

**Monday 23 October, 1-2.30 pm, Room N402
Menzies Building, Monash University Clayton
RSVP to: anna.eriksson@monash.edu**