

Talya Davis-Day

Senior

Criminal Justice

Pissing in a cup: Exploring attitudes toward drug testing in community corrections and beyond

Mentor: Dr. Kevin Barnes-Ceeney

Drug testing is prevalent throughout the criminal justice community. The use of individuals' hair, saliva, blood, and urine to investigate the "secrets of the body" (Aas, 2006) has been used for decades now to ensure individuals comply with parole or probation restrictions and are not partaking in illicit substances that could contribute to crime. In recent years, this concept has become increasingly common in the private sector, infiltrating workplaces and employees of large companies. The ubiquitous use of drug testing is suggestive of Foucault's (1977) "carceral archipelago", which outlines the idea that principles of surveillance and control begin to spread from prison walls into the broader, non-carceral society. The *Pissing in a cup* study examines people's experiences within the carceral archipelago. Specifically, we investigate individuals' attitudes and experiences with urine-based drug testing in the community corrections and non-criminal justice fields. This included drug testing as a method of deterrence, discussing individuals' experiences giving or observing drug tests, comparing and evaluating drug testing policies between agencies, investigating the impact of drug testing on power dynamics, discussing methods of evasion, and opinions on drug testing methods and policies.

Data was collected through a series of thirteen interviews with individuals willing to discuss their experiences with drug testing. These participants included parole and probation officers ("P.O.s"), parole and probation clients, and blue-collar workers. Each participant was interviewed in a private room in their workplace. The interviews were semi-structured and conversational in order to gain a rich understanding of the interviewee's experiences. A protocol was followed to ensure this, but served only as a guideline to keep the interviews as natural as possible. Interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and later transcribed. The researcher also maintained working field notes, collected urinalysis paraphernalia, took photographs, and wrote qualitative memos. The transcripts were coded line-by-line by at least two researchers, and first-level codes were categorized into second level themes. All participants were offered a \$20 Stop and Shop gift card as an incentive and a token of gratitude for their time.

Throughout the course of the research it became apparent that there is a generally limited understanding of drug testing and drug policies. Clients and employees did not often know why they were being tested or what drugs the tests were being looked for specifically. Probation and parole officers as well as employers often did not have a comprehensive view of their institution's drug testing policy. Interviews also indicated that there are discrepancies between private-sector and criminal justice drug-testing, as clients who test positive may be referred to clinics but employees may lose their jobs. Additional findings include the importance of employer and P.O. discretion, the limitations of drug tests, and methods of cheating that may impact results (see poster for more information on findings).

This November, the information gained from *Pissing in a cup* will be shared at the American Society of Criminology conference in Atlanta, Georgia. Publication is anticipated shortly afterward.

References

Aas, K.F. (2006). 'The body does not lie': Identity, risk, and trust in technoculture. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 143-158.