

## 2017 Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium

### Social Work

Moderator: Jennifer Crowell, MSSW, Ph.D.

April 20, 2017, 2-5 p.m.

Inman 211

2:00 p.m. – 2:20 p.m.

#### **SB 0378 and HB 0345**

Braxton Foster, Kristina Mertz, Sinclair Olin, & Cameron Zein-Eldin

Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell, Ph.D.

Senate Bill 0378/House Bill 0345 are sponsored by both, Senator Richard Briggs and Representative Andrew Farmer. As introduced, this piece of legislation prohibits the death penalty as punishment for defendants suffering with severe mental illness, prior to committing a first degree murder offense. Lest, the death penalty is an unethical policy, rooted against the concept of restorative justice. Moreover, it is especially intolerable in specific cases wherein the defendants have accumulated a history of mental illness. In the Tennessee prison system, there are currently 29,565 incarcerated individuals, leaving one out of five TN prisoners to have been diagnosed with some form of a mental disability. This statistic represents a call to action for those involved in criminal justice and healthcare, as these prisoners have subsequently been prescribed psychotropic medication at the TN Department of Correction, with very little oversight or check-ins from medical professionals in Behavioral Health Services. Above all, proponents of this key piece legislation believe that it is a violation of the Eighth Amendment to execute an individual with a history of severe mental illness. This analysis acknowledges that it is vital to protect the mentally ill from execution, and further recommendations will be explored based on the limitations and strengths of this legislation. Consequently, the values of social work will also be explored as the authors delve into historical consequences that inmates have been subjected to, including how this policy might impact our current political landscape as well as the lives of those with mental illness in Tennessee.

2:20 p.m. – 2:40 p.m.

#### **A Policy Analysis of HB0108/SB244**

Izzy Attenborough, Aden Drolsum, & Georgia Hiatt

Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell, Ph.D.

In 2011, 45% of nationwide pregnancies were reported as unintended according to the Guttmacher Institute. Nearly half of women who experience an unplanned pregnancy will seek an abortion. An estimated 1 in 3 women will receive an abortion in their lifetime. HB 0108 / SB 244, co-sponsored by Representative Micah Van Huss and Senator Mae Beavers, reads as follows, “Prohibits abortions from the point a fetal heartbeat is detected. Requires an ultrasound to determine the presence of a fetal heartbeat. Creates exceptions for medical emergency.” Since the 2014 passage of amendment one, which revoked Tennessee constitutional protection of

abortion access on the grounds of a woman's privacy rights, restrictive legislation regarding abortion services has gained momentum and sociopolitical support. This presentation will address the limitations of this proposed legislation, including anticipated consequences for all women, especially those belonging to otherwise marginalized communities. We will suggest recommendations for a more comprehensive legislative approach to women's autonomy and healthcare, as well as discuss the implications of "The Heartbeat Bill" for Social Workers in their practice.

2:40 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

### **The Drug Treatment Instead of Incarceration Act**

Max Hamond, Ashley Lewis, & Kenneth Moss

Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell, Ph.D.

The United States incarcerates more individuals than any other nation with 2.3 million people currently behind bars according to the Prison Policy Initiative. Of these 2.3 million, non-violent drug offenses account for approximately 105,000 individuals at the Federal level, 376,000 at the state prison level, and an additional 115,000 at the local jail level. The nation is also currently facing an opiate epidemic. In Tennessee alone there are more opioid prescriptions than people, placing the state second in the entire nation as it relates to this crisis. As social workers, we recognize the shortcomings within the criminal justice system and the fact that non-violent drug offenses disproportionately affect minorities, tarnish the dignity and worth of the individual, prevent individuals from receiving necessary treatment for addiction, and places these individuals on the margins of society upon their reentry. The "Drug Treatment Instead of Incarceration Act" attempts to divert non-violent drug offenders to rehabilitation facilities as an alternative to serving a prison sentence. This bill would provide individuals with the resources necessary to properly and humanely treat their substance use by making available a variety of options including outpatient treatment, counseling, and drug education/prevention courses. The research will examine the strengths and weaknesses of this legislation as well as suggestions for improvement. The values that guide our social work are evident in the proposed policy which works toward the ultimate goal of a system of second chances for a better life free from addiction.

3:00 p.m. – 3:20 p.m.

### **HB 0380 and SB 0326: Prohibiting Solitary Confinement in Juvenile Detention across Tennessee**

Krista Joy Harrell, Megan Pharr, Ada Suarez-Blash, & Shay Turner

Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell, Ph.D.

Within the last year in Tennessee, the Department of Children's Services implemented a policy which places restrictions on the use of solitary confinement in state juvenile detention centers. This policy was implemented in response to research which demonstrates that solitary confinement is linked to an increased risk of suicide, social and educational deprivation, and recidivism among juveniles. According to the U.S Department of Justice, in 2009, over fifty percent of suicides among youth in juvenile detention occurred while placed in solitary

confinement, and over sixty percent of youth who committed suicide while in detention had histories of being placed in isolation. Studies conducted within the last ten years demonstrate that youth who are placed in isolation may be denied access to educational services, recreational opportunities, and social interactions with fellow inmates and loved ones. Deprivation of services has been demonstrated to impact a youth's ability to successfully reintegrate into society and form positive relationships. The use of solitary confinement runs counter to Social Work's core values, particularly the values of competence, social justice, the importance of human relationships, and the dignity and worth of individuals. In order to address this harmful practice, House Bill 0380 and Senate Bill 0326, sponsored by Representative Love and Senator Harris, seek to codify the prohibition of solitary confinement in juvenile detention centers in Tennessee by amending TN Code Title 37. This paper will explore the main components of the proposed legislation; the strengths and weaknesses of the policy; and identify important recommendations for change.

3:20 p.m. – 3:40 p.m.

### **Pornography Addiction and Prostitution: Correlations and Implications**

Krista Joy Harrell

Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell, Ph.D.

This is an exploratory, one-group design study proposal intended to examine the hypothesis that addiction to pornography contributes to heterosexual males soliciting prostitutes. Cluster sampling will be used in order to gather a sample from various districts and neighborhoods across Nashville. Participants in the sample will receive a mailed survey consisting of demographic questions and a mixture of standardized and unstandardized measuring instruments designed to assess the independent variable, pornography addiction, and the dependent variable, prostitute solicitation. Data will be analyzed using Chi-square analysis procedures in order to detect correlation between the variables which are measured on nominal and ordinal levels. The Substance Use Disorder criteria found in the DSM-5 is used as a conceptual lens through which addictive qualities of pornography are examined. Because pornography appears to be an addictive pursuit, as evidenced by an examination of literature to date, a plausible implication of addiction to pornography could be the solicitation of prostitutes, which may be a contributing factor to the demand and, therefore, pervasiveness of sex slavery across the globe. In order to engage in a comprehensive battle against modern-day slavery, it is key to examine contributing factors to the purchasing of sex slaves.

3:40 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

### **Printing "Alien" on Temporary Identification: An Analysis of Senate Bill 0272 & House Bill 0222**

Grace Mederich, Esperance Ndayizeye, Helen Watson, & Kira Wells

Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell, Ph.D.

Senate Bill 0272 and House Bill 0222, sponsored by Senator Beavers and Representative Ragan, requires the Department of Safety to print "NON U.S. CITIZEN" or "ALIEN" on the temporary driver licenses, permits, or other identification of those who are not U.S. citizens or lawful

permanent residents. This presentation will address the population that will be most impacted by the legislation, as the proposed bill would undoubtedly create a separatist system that will negatively impact a large number of people. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of Immigration Statistics, in 2015, 76,638,236 nonimmigrant admissions were granted in the U.S., 3,722,543 of which were for temporary workers and their families. Current temporary identification for non-permanent residents is already clearly designed differently than those of permanent residents, rendering the bill unnecessary. This analysis will discuss the limitations of the proposed bill, including its economic impact. Tennessee was ranked number one last year on job creation from direct foreign job investment and many of the executives visit on temporary work and travel visas. Governor Haslam has fears that this bill could deter foreign companies from continuing their business in Tennessee. This analysis will also address how printing the language “NON U.S. CITIZEN” or “ALIEN” on identification violates Social Work’s core values of dignity and worth of the individual, social justice, service, and importance of human relationships. To conclude, we will explore possible recommendations based on our research to ensure safety and security of the residents of Tennessee.

4:00 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.

**HB0888 and SB077**

Gabbi Choate, Hannah Doyle, Darby Janss & Kyle Stockard  
Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell, Ph.D.

In 2015, North Carolina passed a bill that required people in schools and public agencies to only use the bathroom of the gender marked on their birth certificates. Intended to ostracize transgender people, the bill received widespread attention from both the general public and the federal government. In response to the harmful impacts of the bill, Then-President Barack Obama and Then-Secretary of Education John King, Jr. issued guidance outlining protections for transgender students under Title IX. However, President Donald Trump recently reversed these guidelines. In response to this reversal, a number of states have re-introduced discriminatory bills regarding who can use which bathroom. In Tennessee, HB0888/SB077 were introduced in the 110<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. These bills would mandate that students in public schools use the bathrooms and locker rooms of their assigned sex as designated on their birth certificates. The bills were introduced by Senator Mae Beavers and Representative Mark Pody. The bills have been taken off notice once and failed to move forward in the Senate after their subsequent re-introduction. This presentation will outline the potential impact of these bills, both financially and socially, and propose further legislative solutions to protect transgender students. We will also explain the ways in which these bills are in direct opposition to social work values and ethics and why social workers should advocate for transgender students.

4:20 p.m. – 4:40 p.m.

**The Necessity of Paid Maternity Leave**

Rena Booker, Mary Kristen McKenney, Elizabeth Mondt, & Courtney Pitsinger  
Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell, Ph.D.

Paid maternity leave has significant impacts for individuals, families, and organizations. Over the last twenty years, research has suggested that dedicated time for parents to be with their children in the early months of life offers significant benefits to the child's overall health and development. In 2014 there were 81,609 births in Nashville, TN. However, most new mothers are not afforded the opportunity to enjoy time with their baby because under the Family and Medical Leave Act, a new mother is guaranteed paid time off only if she has worked for a company for a year and that company has more than 50 workers. The U.S. is one of two countries, along with Papua New Guinea, that does not require some paid maternity leave. While New York and California have implemented paid leave programs, Tennessee is among the majority of states that have not. Senate Bill 1141 and House Bill 1184 would require that all employers give their employees at least six weeks of paid leave for adoption, pregnancy, childbirth, or nursing an infant. This analysis will demonstrate how the lack of paid maternity leave negatively affects families across the state of Tennessee. We will then explore the economic and societal impact that passing a bill in support of paid maternity will have. As social workers, we believe that supporting this legislation runs parallel with supporting the NASW code ethics. The presentation will conclude by discussing the role social workers can play in support of this policy.

4:40 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

### **HB1840 and SB1556**

Sydney Holofcener, Annalee Heneghan, Sloan Strickland, & Kawal Jooma  
Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell, Ph.D.

SB1, filed by Williamson County's Sen. Jack Johnson, updates and expands last year's HB1840 and SB1556. Jackson successfully sponsored controversial legislation during last year's assembly that allows counselors to reject clients who hold beliefs differing from their own. SB1 is proposed as a follow-up bill, revoking the current code of ethics for therapists, which was developed by the American Counseling Association, and allowing for creation of alternative codes. As social workers we recognize that this bill is creating confusion within the profession as well as ignoring the Code of Ethics that counselors and therapists chose to abide by when entering into this profession. This legislation blatantly neglects section A.4.b of the ACA Code of Ethics that states counselors cannot let their own beliefs interfere with their professional life. While the bill's supporters believe it is protecting the counselor's first amendment rights, we have found that it is in clear violation of the ACA Code of Ethics. This policy analysis will discuss the strengths and limitations of the proposed bill, populations affected by the legislation, and the bill's connection to social work core values as listed in the NASW Code of Ethics. We recommend that legislation provide equal access for vulnerable populations to needed care while upholding the established ACA Code of Ethics. In conclusion, there were no problems with the code of ethics in the first place, therefore by altering the standards, vulnerable individuals seeking therapy are endangered, and the ethics of counseling professionals as a whole are jeopardized.