



The Martin Institute PRINTS is an undergraduate peer-reviewed academic journal that aims to support and promote the scholarship of Stonehill students in the fields of Anthropology, Criminology, Political Science, and Sociology.

### **PRINTS 2025 Editorial Staff**

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*Many thanks to our Faculty Advisor: Katie Currul-Dykeman, Chair of Criminology and Director of the Martin Institute*

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# Meet the Editorial Staff

Adam Ammirata

Editor-in-Chief



Adam is a junior pursuing a double major in Criminology and Psychology with a minor in Political Science. He is a Moreau Honors Scholar passionate about the interaction of mental health and criminal justice. Adam's interest lies in prisons and the treatments provided to offenders while incarcerated. After Stonehill, he hopes to earn his Ph.D. in clinical psychology and provide essential services in correctional facilities. Adam is an active member of the Criminology Club and has completed internships in domestic violence, corrections, and criminological research. Adam is also Chair of the Honors Advisory Council, on the Student Conduct Board, a Campus Ministry Retreat Coordinator, and a Resident Assistant.

Helen Cotrupi

Editor

Helen is a graduating senior from Moultonborough, New Hampshire with an Arts & Visual Culture and Political Science double major. She is a member of the Pi Sigma Alpha, Lambda Epsilon Sigma and is the 2025 Stonehill Scholar for Studio Arts. Serving as the president for the Gaming Club for two years and a captain for the Super Smash Brothers Ultimate team for three, she has a presence in leadership on campus. Helen has also been a member of the chapel choir and instrument ensemble, serving as first chair flute for all four years. She has also volunteered with My Brother's Keeper, a local Christian ministry in Easton. Helen intends to pursue freelance illustration after college and work closely with others helping to tell their stories and perhaps her own through visual art.



Melena Karolemeas

Editor

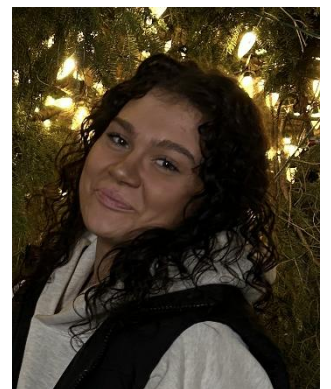


Melena is a junior from Brockton, Massachusetts with a Criminology major and a Political Science Minor. She is a Moreau Honors Scholar and a member of the Criminology Honor Society. Melena is the upcoming treasurer of Criminology Club and an active member in the St. Thomas More Pre-Law Society. She also works at the Martin Institute where she helps organize and plan events. While at Stonehill she has developed a passion for the criminal justice system and working with those who may be directly involved. Melena has had several internships including the Plymouth County District Attorney's Office and the Massachusetts Parole Board. Melena has also directly worked with juvenile defense attorneys and bar advocates. After graduation, she plans to attend law school and pursue a career in criminal defense, where she hopes to provide committed legal representation to those who may face complex challenges.

Caroline Nerich

Editor

Caroline Nerich is a member of the Stonehill Class of 2026 with a double major in Criminology and Sociology. As a recipient of the Trooper Gary E. Magee Scholarship, obtaining Deans List, and a member of both the Criminology Club and Pre-Law Society, she hopes to pursue law school after graduation. Throughout her years at Stonehill, she has interned with the District Attorney's Witness/Victim Advocates, Department of Children and Families, Lynn Police Department, and different District Courts around Massachusetts. Caroline also dedicates time each month to feed the Homeless population in Brockton, MA with the LYNN Ministries organization.



Alexandra Trantos

Editor



Alex is a graduating senior political science major with a minor in psychology and critical race and ethnic studies. While at Stonehill, she has explored topics pertaining to disinformation, information warfare, and emerging technologies. In addition to academics, she has demonstrated a commitment to community engagement by planning an open mic night for undocumented week, a panel on Donald Trump's executive orders, and the Center for Race, Ethnicity, and Social Justice's third annual conference. Beyond campus, she has presented at the International Studies Association conference and the Northeastern Political Science conference and served as a correspondent for the Organization for World Peace and policy director with the Committee to Elect Josh Tarsky. Alex is committed to promoting civil rights and liberties and often attends demonstrations and forums in and around Boston.



## Molly Buckley

Molly is a graduating senior criminology major with a double minor in psychology and dance. She is the president of Criminology Club, and previously served as the secretary. She is an employee of the Stonehill Admission Office, where she has worked as a tour guide for the past three years. During her time at Stonehill, Molly interned at the Norfolk Advocates for Children, where she participated in various trainings, such as mandated reported and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) trainings. After graduation, Molly hopes to work in a child advocacy center and get her master's degree in criminology.

### **Prevention of Domestic Violence Against Women**

Domestic violence, sometimes referred to as intimate partner violence, is a crime characterized by any type of violence (physical, mental, emotional, etc.) carried out upon a spouse, partner, or family member. While the terms “victim” and “survivor” are often utilized interchangeably when referring to domestic violence, many people experiencing domestic violence may identify as victims while still enduring the abuse, and those who have escaped or overcome it may prefer to be called survivors. Domestic violence is one of the most prevalent gender-based crimes around the world. For instance, according to the 2022 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), around 1.3 million women are victims of domestic violence every year in the United States. Unfortunately, domestic violence crimes are usually charged as misdemeanor offenses rather than felonies, even for repeat offenders (Ciccarelli & White, 2014). Due to this, the victims of these crimes are not getting the justice they deserve. To combat the ever-present predicament of preventing domestic violence crimes, various support programs for victims have been created. By examining the Violence Against Women Act in the United States, the Global Survivors Fund in South America, Africa, and Asia, and the effectiveness of these programs, it becomes clear that stopping the spread of domestic violence against women is substantially possible.

#### **The Violence Against Women Act**

The Violence Against Women Act was created in 1994 to provide women who were victims of domestic violence with federally funded subsidized housing. This aid helped to decrease the likelihood of victims becoming homeless. VAWA administers grants to towns in the United States to assist victims directly following a domestic violence incident (VAWA, 2023). If the victims of domestic violence get a positive response from law enforcement when they call, they are far more likely to continue to call the police if they are involved with crime,



especially another domestic violence incident. This program differentiates itself from other gendered intimate partner violence prevention programs in the United States because it is accessible to all victims, no matter how long ago the domestic violence occurred. VAWA makes a point to provide everyone who applies for protection aid, no matter their sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or gender (VAWA, 2023).

The Violence Against Women Act is of utmost importance because it actually does the job that law enforcement agencies claim to do but fall short of doing – protecting women. Society perpetuates the myth that by calling law enforcement officers, victims of crimes will be given aid and justice will be served. However, this is far from the truth. Law enforcement officers do not always provide victims of domestic violence, especially female victims, with protection. This may result from legal barriers, such as lack of probable cause, or inadequate police response. The Violence Against Women Act aims to combat this complication by providing women with a safe space to go to. This legislation protects women in ways that law enforcement and the criminal justice system should but do not.

VAWA also includes provisions for LGBTQ+ individuals and Native Americans. Those who identify as LGBTQ+ experience domestic violence at a rate of 25-33%, which is similar to other community groups, such as Native Americans and African Americans. It was not until 2013 that VAWA provided any sort of protection for the LGBTQ+ community but has since made an immense effort to provide them with resources specific to their needs (Modi et al., 2014). Those who identify themselves as bisexual or homosexual will require different resources than those who identify themselves as heterosexual. One of the resources found within VAWA's provisions is a nondiscrimination clause; this states that no woman can be turned away from a shelter merely because of her sexual orientation (Modi et al., 2014). This clause provides queer women with an extra sense of safety because they know they will have an equal chance of finding shelter. Similarly, there are provisions to aid Native American women, who are victims of domestic violence at more than two times the rate of other races (Modi et al., 2014). A 2013 VAWA provision stated that tribal court prosecution of the domestic violence of Native American women by non-Natives was permitted (Modi et al., 2014). Providing this protection for Native American women tailors toward their specific needs, such as ensuring safety from abusers on reservations, and perpetuates inclusivity. Tribal courts operate independently of the United States government, and implementing domestic violence reforms within these courts ensures that Native American women receive the same protections as non-Native American women (Modi et al., 2014). The provisions implemented by VAWA guarantee women from all different racial backgrounds and sexual orientations can seek refuge. VAWA also prohibits discrimination based on biological sex (Modi et al., 2014). If a person identifies as a woman, they are given shelter without the fear of being turned away.

### **The Global Survivors Fund**

Located in over twenty countries, the Global Survivors Fund provides reparations for survivors of domestic violence. They operate through three key systems: acting, advocating, and guiding. Through acting, the Global

Survivors Fund supports both survivor networks and civil society organizations. These two systems act together to create interim reparative measures for survivors of domestic violence. Additionally, the fund advocates for duty bearers to fulfill their function of reparation. To guide survivors, the Global Survivors Fund identifies the best forms of compensation through knowledge sharing. The fund hosts various events for survivors from around the world to share their stories and pose ideas regarding reparations (Global Survivors Fund, 2023). This program differs from other programs around the world because it was created in collaboration with survivors of domestic violence. Nobody knows what reparations domestic violence victims need better than themselves. They offer an invaluable insight that cannot be found anywhere else.

The Global Survivors Fund is integral to aiding all survivors of domestic violence, especially women and those of diverse racial backgrounds. The fund aims to alter societal norms and, in turn, put a stop to gender-based violence (Global Survivors Fund, 2023). The fund, which is co-run by survivors of domestic violence, provides the advantage of sharing real-life experiences with society. Expressing their stories and the reparations that are needed to assist them allows the Global Survivors Fund to change society's perceptions of domestic violence victims. The multitude of programs hosted every year, such as roundtables, online conferences, and events with the UN General Assembly, proves that this fund effectively collaborates to rehabilitate female survivors of domestic violence (Global Survivors Fund, 2023).

In general, when society thinks of domestic violence, they think of a man physically assaulting a woman, not a man being the victim. Societal portrayals of men as strong, self-reliant, and powerful create a narrative in which seeking help or support conflicts with traditional notions of masculinity (Hine et al., 2022). Additionally, society stereotypes victims and offenders of domestic violence and oftentimes perpetuates the idea that the woman provoke the violence subjected to her and that the offender is not white. The Global Survivors Fund alters society's perceptions of domestic violence victims, especially those who are female. Again, the stereotype of females doing something to warrant domestic violence comes into play. The fund makes a point to end gender-based stereotypes and, in turn, gender-based violence. They also make a point to dismantle the false notions regarding those of different races. Each race around the world holds stereotypes about other races, but by expunging these stereotypes, it will change the way society views all survivors of domestic violence, regardless of race. The Global Survivor Fund has implemented reparation programs to aid victims of domestic violence. For instance, in Türkiye, they have partnered with the Association of Detainees and Missing of Sednaya Prison (ADMSP) to stop conflict-related sexual violence (Global Survivors Fund, 2023). Additionally, in Ukraine, the GSF has launched a pilot project providing interim compensation to sexual violence victims and survivors during the ongoing conflict (Global Survivors Fund, 2023).

### **Effectiveness of Each Program**

The Violence Against Women Act is one of the most effective pieces of legislation passed to support women in the United States. What makes it so effective is its ability to give women a safe space to escape to so

that they do not have to endure abuse. After VAWA was passed, the rates of domestic violence against females decreased by 53%; the rates went from 9.4 to 4.3 victimizations per 1,000 females (Modi et al., 2014). Just by this statistic alone, it can be determined that VAWA's goal of protecting female victims of domestic violence has been effective and will continue to be successful. Giving them a place to escape from their abuser when they may not have anywhere to go is what differentiates this legislation from other gender-specific legislations, such as The Women's Health Protection Act.

In theory, this program works because females leave their abusers and look for safe housing. Unfortunately, this is not always the case because it is extremely difficult for victims of domestic violence to leave their abusers. Finances, children, or pets may make it difficult for women to leave. The Violence Against Women Act does not account for a woman's inability to leave her situation. Furthermore, VAWA only tailors to women. If a man was victimized and needed somewhere to go to escape their abuser, VAWA would not be able to help him. The resources they have pertain to women and their experiences with domestic violence, so they cannot effectively aid men. In order to combat this issue, a male-specific domestic violence housing program needs to be implemented. Research shows that males are far less likely to be victims of domestic violence than females (Modi et al., 2014). Presently, there are very few resources for male victims of domestic abuse. By implementing a males-only housing program, they can gain the resources they may not be able to get anywhere else.

The Global Survivors Fund is effective because it has survivors of domestic violence working with them. The survivors provide a perspective that is invaluable to the program and cannot be replicated. These people can act as mentors to new survivors who are just being exposed to the program; their personal anecdotes drive the program in the direction of creating effective reparations. The fund also places an emphasis on long-term rehabilitation, which is not something other similar programs tend to do. The program does not want to just aid victims in the moment, they want the effects of the reparations to last for the rest of their lives (Global Survivors Fund, 2023).

Ideally, the Global Survivors Fund supports domestic violence victims worldwide, but in reality, its reach is limited. While it operates in over twenty countries, women in regions without access to the fund may have nowhere else to seek help. In developing nations, women that struggle financially may be affected the most by this because they cannot afford to leave their abuser and become rehabilitated. To make sure all women have access to domestic violence rehabilitation services, the Global Survivors Fund needs to have relationships with many more countries. This way, they can reach all kinds of women all over the world more easily than they can now. Currently, they have relations with countries such as Columbia, Sudan, Iraq, and Cambodia.

## **Conclusion**

Efforts to address the impact of domestic violence are making significant strides through initiatives like the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Global Survivors Fund, which together offer hope for a brighter future in combating this issue. Both organizations demonstrate that one effective approach to preventing domestic

violence is the development of specialized programs for both men and women, with an emphasis on expanding these initiatives globally. A closer examination of VAWA and the Global Survivors Fund reveals that other countries are more successful than the United States in rehabilitating female survivors of domestic violence. While VAWA provides essential shelter for survivors, the Global Survivors Fund focuses on reparative measures to promote safety. To more effectively curb the spread of domestic violence against women, the U.S. government must prioritize the creation of housing and reparative programs.



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## Mia Bartlett

Mia is a rising senior at Stonehill College from Portsmouth, Rhode Island majoring in criminology. She is passionate about social justice issues and assisting underrepresented populations in the criminal legal system, especially women who are survivors of domestic abuse. Mia has completed an internship with DOVE (Domestic Violence Ended) in Quincy, MA, and will be an intern with Bardorf & Bardorf this summer in Newport, Rhode Island. Upon her graduation in 2026, Mia will be attending law school in the hopes to become a prosecutor. When Mia is not in class, she can be found in the admissions office working as a member of the Lux Et Spes Society, as well as choreographing and performing with the Stoneworks Dance Company.

### **Solitary Confinement in the American Prison System: Review of the Literature**

Solitary confinement is a defining feature of the American penal system, widely recognized as a frequently used form of punishment in prisons. It looms as a constant threat for anyone entering the system. While its implications are far-reaching, how much do we truly understand about solitary confinement and its effects? According to Penal Reform International, 80,000-100,000 prisoners are held in solitary confinement in the United States, which is generally defined as “the physical isolation of individuals who are confined to their cells for 22 to 24 hours a day, and allowed only minimal meaningful interaction with others” (2013). This literature review will discuss the psychological effects of solitary confinement on prisoners, its implications for reintegration into society, and its constitutional legality. This discussion is critical because of the profound and long-lasting mark that isolation can imprint upon individuals. By examining existing research, we may begin to discuss alternative methods to solitary confinement that may be more practical, ethical, and humane.

#### **Psychological Effects of Solitary Confinement**

Extensive academic literature explains how the stressors of solitary confinement take a toll on the mind; but, to best understand the psychological impact of isolation, one must look at the effect over time. Federica Coppola, a highly acclaimed criminal lawyer, researcher, and professor specializing in neuroscience, discusses the damage extreme isolation can inflict on the human psyche. Suicidal thoughts, PTSD, increased aggression, and feelings of social rejection are just a few examples of documented issues occurring when people are put into solitary confinement (Coppola, 2019).

The Eighth Amendment of the United States Constitution protects constituents from cruel and unusual punishment and comes up often in arguments about solitary confinement. Regarding psychological effects, the

Supreme Court has yet to recognize solitary confinement as cruel and unusual. Mental pain is taken less seriously because it is not as visible or tangible as physical pain, and the system often overlooks “social interaction as a basic human need” (Coppola, 2019). Coppola’s research, along with countless other neuroscience-based studies, demonstrate how mentally anguishing it is for humans to go without one another. It is an understatement to say that a lack of social interaction as devastating as solitary confinement can destroy the mind.

*Johnson v. Wetzell* recognized that isolation, if instituted harmfully, can manifest as stress and even act as physical torture for an inmate (Coppola, 2019). According to Coppola, various empirical studies noted in legal and neurobiological literature have displayed how the need for belonging is a fundamental requirement for humans to survive and thrive. Social pain can also manifest as a form of physical pain; vast amounts of literature have shown that social pain can trigger physical discomfort, heightened aggression, emotional trauma, and more. Coppola’s research demonstrates how isolation in an incarceration setting has significant psychological impacts and is a violation of human nature.

Although countless studies document the negative impacts of solitary confinement, there is little research studying the long-term effect of this negativity. A study done on the West Coast interviewed just under 200 inmates over the course of two years to more deeply understand the effects of solitary confinement on the psyche (Reiter et al., 2020). The interview consisted of 96 questions and the Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale (BPRS), a well-documented tool used by psychologists to assess mental health symptoms and severity, especially in prison settings. Consistent with the aforementioned research, they found that the emotional toll and social isolation of solitary confinement devastatingly impacted the mental health of inmates, including depression, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide (Reiter et al., 2020). They also found that loss of identity and increased agitation were strong feelings of those who had spent time in solitary confinement. One prisoner testified to the dim reality of isolation saying, “I’ve been in the hole so long that it defines the person. If you’ve been in the box for so long, you can’t play well with others...we’re so confined in that box. It’s like a safety blanket” (Reiter et al., 2020). This research was consistent with the finding that solitary confinement is generally worse for the human mind than being part of the general population in prisons, and that solitary confinement agitates psychological distress in most inmates. In their limitations, the authors recognized that the Washington Department of Corrections has taken extensive steps to improve mental wellness in their prisons, but the results of the research reiterate that even when mental health is addressed, solitary confinement has a negative impact on the inmates’ mental wellbeing (Reiter et al., 2020).

### **Solitary Confinement, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration**

To truly understand the long-term effect of solitary confinement, it is imperative to look deeper into its impact on rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners. Sharon Shalev and Netanel Dagan summarize the complexity of the justice system perfectly by saying, “nevertheless, ‘punishment’ and ‘rehabilitation’ are, at least arguably, contradictory terms, and nowhere is the tension between the two more evident than in prison segregation or solitary confinement units” (2023, p. 1). They also note that historically, solitary confinement was

seen as a beneficial practice that prevented inmates from recidivism and allowed them to repent for their crimes. Social isolation, albeit contradictory research, has become a way for prison administration to keep prisoners at bay and, for lack of a better phrase, keep them out of sight and out of mind. Shalev and Dagan's study seeks to determine whether solitary confinement helps with rehabilitation of inmates, with the findings indicating that the deprivation of socialization, access to prison programming, and contact with family can irrevocably damage the psyche of prisoners and lead to irreversible impacts on their ability to be rehabilitated (Shalev & Dagan, 2023). Perhaps most importantly, they explain that there is no positive correlation between solitary confinement and crime reduction (Shalev & Dagan, 2023). Overall, the research indicates that there is no rehabilitation without socialization, components of everyday human life that are ripped away by solitary confinement.

Indeed, it seems as though solitary confinement is used much too often as a blanket solution to problems in prisons that should be solved otherwise. Researchers in a 2020 study discussed isolation and recidivism in order to discover how solitary confinement impacts recidivism rates (Luigi et al.). In the critical findings section, researchers noted "inmates exposed to [solitary confinement] were at greater risk of future violent offenses" (Luigi et al., 2020, p. 9). Solitary confinement does nothing to improve a prisoner's chances of staying away from the penal system once released. On the other hand, programming such as educational and vocational projects, jobs, case management initiatives, and improved mental health counseling do improve chances for prisoners upon release (Luigi et al., 2020). These programs allow for connection with others, forming and strengthening social ties, and the ability for prisoners to productively dedicate their time to something that will rehabilitate them (Duwe & Clark, 2014). Luigi et al. (2020) also acknowledged that solitary confinement not only impacts recidivism rates but heightens the likelihood of aggressive behavior and other negative actions that could impact the way prisoners treat others both in and out of prison. It is evident within the literature that solitary confinement stunts rehabilitation efforts in the penal system and does not assist in preparing prisoners for a successful reintegration into society.

### **Constitutional and Moral Considerations: The Eighth Amendment**

The controversial topic of solitary confinement is often brought up in the context of the Eighth Amendment, which prohibits the government from inflicting cruel and unusual punishment upon constituents. Organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the International Committee of the Red Cross have been vocal critics of the practice, and believe solitary confinement counts as cruel and unusual punishment. Many are calling for drastic change in the practice or its altogether removal from the penal system.

Robert Johnson, a professor of justice, law, and criminology at American University, writes about how death row prisoners who are in solitary confinement until their execution essentially die twice due to the process created by the penal system. He cites the bleak, often gruesome conditions on death row saying, "'The place was a dungeon,' he said, 'full of men who are as good as dead'" (Johnson, 2016, p. 5). These prisoners leave their cells for maybe an hour a day, and never without shackles and chains, only seeing correctional officers and others on

death row. They are deprived of any meaningful interaction with others and essentially become walking corpse. These prisoners are shells of who they once were, and the devastating impact cannot be understated. Johnson describes the first death experienced by prisoners in solitary confinement on death row as “their suspension in a stark, empty, tomblike setting, a sort of dead zone that is utterly indifferent to basic human needs and desires... with the resulting ‘emotional emptiness and death’ that is a hallmark of dehumanization” (Johnson, 2016, p. 9). Surely this description alone is enough to contend that solitary confinement is cruel and unusual: prisoners on death row in solitary confinement feel the “death of their soul” and identity while they are alive and then are physically executed by the state to finish the job (Johnson, 2016). Others have added that another violation of the Eighth Amendment is how long prisoners wait in solitary confinement to be executed (Johnson, 2016). Johnson’s research and writing poignantly portrays the hollowness and monotony of solitary confinement, the dehumanizing “first death” that certainly brings into question the constitutionality of the practice.

Solitary confinement is also unethical and immoral for the general population in prisons, and its dehumanizing effects can most certainly be seen within its historical roots. In the book *Prisoners’ Rights*, Sharon Shalev makes the interesting point that solitary confinement is one of the few remaining practices from the prison systems of America’s past. The prison system, referred to by scholar Michelle Alexander as “the new Jim Crow”, has always tended to disproportionately affect men of color and isolation is no exception (Shalev, 2017). According to a study done by researchers on prison populations and solitary confinement, Black men are 8 times more likely than their white counterparts to be placed in isolation by the time they reach the age of 32 (Pullen-Blasnik et al., 2021). Shalev goes on to discuss the new era of solitary confinement in supermax prisons across the country, which are additions to the prison system that house incarcerated individuals completely separately from one another. They are housed in plain, sterile “pods” that completely isolate them from having any contact with other prisoners, and rare contact with correction officers. There is no programming in supermax prisons and extreme limitations on what activities or recreations prisoners may do with their time (Shalev, 2014).

Shalev also details many of the historical legal cases concerning the ethics and legality of solitary confinement and concludes that there is no universal agreement about what is in violation of the Eighth Amendment (Shalev, 2014). For example, in *Madrid v. Gomez* (1995), the court found that the conditions of solitary confinement in a prison in Northern California, while distressing, were not egregious enough to be in violation of the Eighth Amendment (Shalev, 2014). On the other hand, the exact opposite can also be true, and conditions of isolation in prisons can arguably violate not only the Constitution, but other international codes and ordinances the United States is a part of.

One example Shalev notes is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a 1976 international legal document that contains information and legislation on various human rights issues and conditions (Shalev, 2014). Multiple prisons in the United States, such as Red Onion State Prison in Virginia, have come under investigation by the federal government for their conditions. Solitary confinement in supermax



prisons violates certain sections of the ICCR concerning deprivation of humanity and proper conditions for punishment but is still used in full force by many prison administrations in the United States (Shalev, 2014). It can be seen clearly from this review that the literature extensively proves that solitary confinement, when used carelessly by penal system employees as a form of punishment and detention, can fall under cruel and unusual punishment for incarcerated individuals. Shalev's research unfortunately proves that the United States creates a detrimental environment with solitary confinement and the ethical issues that accompany its presence as a part of the penal system.

## **Opposing Viewpoints**

Some scholars believe that solitary confinement has the potential to make a positive impact, specifically on populations of prisoners who may need to be in protective custody (PC) or who perpetrate violent incidents. In a paper published in the *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, researchers suggested that isolation units are the safest for both prisoners to live in and guards to work in (Mears et al., 2021). These researchers also found that solitary confinement can be used to control gang violence in prisons when used in a way that is incapacitating and deterring to inmates who participate in violence or cause behavioral problems (Mears et al., 2021). Many participants suggested that extended isolation can be helpful in dealing with staff shortages and other administrative shortcomings.

It is important to note that this is not a popular opinion. Most of the literature detailed in this review clearly demonstrates that solitary confinement does more harm than good, especially concerning minorities and the mentally ill. An example of the dangers and tragedy of solitary confinement is the story of Kalief Browder, shown in the Netflix series *Time: The Kalief Browder Story* (Weinstein & Carter, 2017). Kalief lived in New York City and grew up in a poor home, witnessing gang violence and drug abuse. He was 16 years old when he was wrongfully accused of stealing a backpack with valuables in it and sent to Rikers Island, an infamously violent prison in New York. During his detention at Rikers, he spent over 800 days in solitary confinement. Kalief attempted suicide multiple times in prison and was even taunted and cheered at by the guards to kill himself. He was eventually released when the Bronx DA's Office dropped his case after not having enough evidence to go to trial. Two years later, Kalief hanged himself at the age of 22. Kalief's story is just one of countless others that end in tragedy with the impacts of solitary confinement on his health and wellbeing indisputable. The United States has a duty to punish people for wrongdoing, but also an ultimate mission to do right by the Constitution and its constituents. Solitary confinement, in its very nature, goes against these fundamental principles and the heartbeat of our country.

## **Conclusion**

This literature review serves the purpose of briefly detailing the impact of solitary confinement in the areas of psychological pain, rehabilitation efforts, and constitutionality. Indeed, solitary confinement causes damage far beyond what the eye can see. Solitary confinement psychologically harms inmates to the point of torture,

increases recidivism rates, and can blur the line of constitutionality. It is important to not lose sight of the fact that the practice of isolation in U.S prisons affects real people who are not just statistics. An unbelievable number of inmates are impacted by isolation, and the scale on which it is used by the United States is nothing short of alarming. Prison, at its core, is about punishing people for the crimes and wrongs they committed and eventually attempting to successfully reintegrate them back into society. In order to accomplish this goal, prisons must do away with the dangers and harms to prisoners caused by solitary confinement and either radically improve the solitary confinement system or abolish it altogether. We have a responsibility to do better and punish in a legal, ethical manner.

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## Sophie Garcia

Sophie is a junior who has a Criminology Major and Psychology and Political Science minors. She was accepted into Stonehill's 3+3 Program with Villanova Law, where she will pursue her Juris Doctorate in the Fall of 2025. While at Stonehill, she has been inducted into the Moreau Honors Program, the Edwin Sutherland Criminology Honors Society, and Lambda Epsilon Sigma, and has made the Dean's List each semester. She has also served as administrative chair for the St. Thomas More Pre-Law Society for two years, has maintained her membership in Criminology Club, and has served as both a Honors Orientation Leader and Peer Mentor. Sophie has participated in internships at the Brockton Law Department and the New Bedford Juvenile Court. This summer she is set to participate in the SURE program on a project titled Virtual Chains: Gender and the Disinformation Machine in the Middle East and North Africa. Sophie plans to finish law school and start her career in criminal procedure, constitutional law, or juvenile law.

### Rehabilitative Collaboration in Juvenile Court

Rehabilitative collaboration, which is defined in this paper as the collective effort of a variety of stakeholders to reduce recidivism and promote juveniles' prosocial behavior, is an essential element of the Massachusetts Juvenile Court. The Court's mission is "to protect children from abuse and neglect and promote opportunities for children to reside in safe, stable, permanent family environments whenever possible, to strengthen families when their children are in need of services, to rehabilitate juveniles, to protect the public from delinquent and criminal activity while holding offenders accountable and addressing the harm suffered by the community and the victim, and to decide all cases fairly and impartially with dedication, integrity and professionalism". Rehabilitative collaboration allows the Juvenile Court to achieve each of the goals it lists in this mission statement and achieve real change in families' lives. The literature outlines it in four main ways. First, it investigates the effectiveness and necessity of collaboration in Juvenile Court. Second, it determines the relationship between rehabilitation and collaboration, birthing the term rehabilitative collaboration. Third, it identifies the impact rehabilitative collaboration has on case outcomes. Finally, it discusses challenges that prevent collaboration and/or render it ineffective.

#### Effectiveness and Necessity of Stakeholder Collaboration

The necessity of effective collaboration between juvenile court stakeholders is well-noted in the literature. In fact, it is noted as far back as 1982 (and even earlier) by author Marie Weil. Weil (1982) focuses particularly on the need for effective collaboration between lawyers and social workers in juvenile cases, but her arguments are applicable elsewhere. Weil notes the importance of understanding the roles of different court actors and

certain legal processes for effective participation in court proceedings. She also emphasizes that the importance of shared responsibilities, shared goals, and the determination of common and conflicting interests are key to successful collaboration, a theme that is present in a lot of literature. Finally, Weil emphasizes that collaboration is necessary in order to achieve high quality legal and social services for juveniles. Weil's findings are supported by Nelson et al. (2010), whose study focused on the impact of collaboration on at-risk and adjudicated youth. These authors highlight the problems of a lack of collaboration, namely duplication of services, cancelling services, financial costs, and decreased effectiveness, but also find that youth need a seamlessly implemented plan. Plans can only be seamless if effective collaboration occurs. Heather Clark and Deanne Unruh (2010) also come to similar conclusions in their correctional facility research. They argue that correctional facilities can implement transition teams, advisory boards, interagency agreements, joint professional development, and career fairs not only to help youth transition back into the community but to coordinate with stakeholders such as parents, schools, the community, and employment agencies. In order for these implementations to be successful, collaboration between such stakeholders is necessary.

Alonzo DeCarlo (2012) builds on these conclusions by creating a model for effective collaboration between agencies. DeCarlo focuses on the collaboration between mental health and juvenile justice interventionists, but his model can be applied universally. The model is referred to as the control governance framework and focuses on agenda, interpretation, application, and evaluation. In the agenda phase, DeCarlo finds that agencies collaborate to create a plan. He argues that different agencies must agree on the scope of their collaboration so they can effectively integrate their resources and expertise equally. For interpretation, agencies must agree to understand their strategy in the same way. This avoids complications down the line of disagreements over what something insinuates. In the application phase, the agencies collaborate to implement their agreed-upon intervention. Finally, in the evaluation phase, the agencies must update their agenda based on the results they gather. These four steps exemplify DeCarlo's (2012) emphasis on cooperation as the core of collaboration. They also align with his definition of collaboration: a process in which all participants share responsibility of the four steps. Finally, DeCarlo's model demonstrates the importance that scholars place on collaboration in the courtroom.

Researchers also define non-interagency collaboration. Liana Pennington (2015), for example, highlights collaboration between parents and courts when studying parents' opinions of the juvenile court after interactions with it. She found that parents had a desire to engage in court proceedings, and many believed they would serve an important role during their children's court cases. After being offered no meaningful participation, they became frustrated and harbored negative feelings towards the court. In her study, Pennington (2015) investigated these opinions under a legal consciousness framework, which investigates how a person's beliefs and behaviors can impact the outcome of their case. When parents began to view the court negatively, the outcome of their cases began to change. Pennington suggests that to avoid this negative atmosphere, courts should involve parents and create shared goals and values. With this, effective communication can increase, and the negative results of ineffective collaboration can be avoided.



## The Impact of Collaboration on Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is defined extensively in the literature. In *The Meaning and Nature of Punishment* by David Shichor (2006), rehabilitation is described as a focus on changing an offender's attitudes to promote law-abiding behavior. This theory of punishment arose from new values placed on universal humanitarian and human rights. It seeks to get rid of harsh punishments and replace them with mental and spiritual persuasion. In practice, In this way, the offender's intent, mental capacity, prior history, trauma, culture, and peer influences, among other factors, are studied. Personal problems, rather than societal "justice," are focused on creating individualized conditions for the offender that will help them end their criminal behavior. Collaboration is a necessary aspect of rehabilitation as mental health agencies, community agencies, probation, schools, families, and more can all come together to create the most effective treatment for the offender.

Gloria Danziger (2003) outlines the connection between rehabilitation and collaboration in the juvenile court. Firstly, she notes the rehabilitative purpose in creating the juvenile court, with the founders seeking to promote the child's best interest through a focus on protection, rehabilitation, guidance, and healing (a therapeutic court). The court was envisioned to help both juveniles and their families by addressing their needs (Danziger, 2003). To do so, courts focused on information gathering and problem-solving rather than adversarial court proceedings. They are expected to collaborate especially with families, who serve an important role in preventing delinquency by modeling legal behavior, providing physical and social control, and supporting rehabilitating juveniles. One way in which collaboration is promoted under this rehabilitative court is by centralizing court processes. All of a family's cases are assigned to one judge so that the judge can keep in mind the family history and prevent duplicated or ineffective services. The collaboration of different actors to achieve this goal causes deeper understanding and rapport that can allow the judge to come to more effective solutions.

Danziger (2003) also identifies the impact of collaboration on rehabilitation when describing the Court as a "service coordinator." Juvenile courts are increasingly expected to collaborate with different stakeholders and agencies while also monitoring the services they implement. This role is crucial as the court is a central meeting place for different parties and can act as an impartial arbiter of services. Juvenile courts also force actors to coordinate on a much deeper level than promoting efficient court proceedings, as they are required to bring each other into the conversation and offer solutions they think will be best for the child. Danziger demonstrates the importance of this by writing, "it is a way of conducting business that renders the court inextricably linked to agencies and the day-to-day actions of those agencies" (Danziger, 2003, p. 390). A final way Danziger (2003) presents this relationship is through her explanation of judges using different resources and interests to inform their decisions. In assessing cases, juvenile court judges look at information like records, documents, and files related to the juvenile's background, their family dynamics, and the family's place in the community. They also consider the effect that different interests and institutions like schools, peer groups, religious organizations, and clubs have on juvenile behavior. Finally, they consider different disposition/service options like assessments,

evaluations, counseling, outreach, probation, diversion, detention, and community service (Danziger, 2003). These factors are not considered in traditional courts and are only assessed because of the rehabilitative perspective that gives rise to collaboration between actors like judges, attorneys, caseworkers, social workers, Guardian ad Litem (GAL's), court clinicians, and probation. All of these contributors have their own opinions about what would best suit the juvenile in the case and will work together to collaborate and offer their different suggestions.

### **The Impact of Rehabilitative Collaboration on Juvenile Case Outcomes**

Rehabilitative collaboration opens the door for a greater variety of case dispositions that can more uniquely address the needs of juveniles. Danziger (2003) explains that rehabilitative collaboration, as the basis of juvenile law, requires that unique solutions are provided in each case to address underlying problems, prevent recidivism, and effectively help juveniles. By taking on this mission, the juvenile court necessarily looks to alternatives to adjudication which more often provide services to juveniles who need it. It also looks to intense collaboration between stakeholders to identify juveniles' needs and the most effective strategies to address them. Danziger (2003) identifies a key strategy to prevent criminality: early intervention. Early intervention effectively prevents recidivism by relying on collaborative services that address causes of delinquency and by incorporating parents as part of the solution, especially since they play such a vital role in preventing delinquency. Even after contact with the court system, most informal cases are dismissed and juveniles often agree to conditions that suit their needs better than adjudication. Danziger (2003) thus conceptualizes the court as a "service coordinator" which enforces and monitors collaboration between different stakeholders to ensure services are being completed and are effective for the juvenile's needs.

The effect of rehabilitative collaboration is also noted in studies by Melissa Lefas and Junko Nozawa (2016), Clark and Unruh (2010) and Nelson et al. (2010). Lefas and Nozawa (2016) focus their study on rehabilitation for juvenile violent extremist offenders (JVEOs). They note strategies such as psychosocial intervention to facilitate personal change, counseling services, mentorship, deradicalization programs, educational programs, vocational training, and extracurricular activities as possible forms of alternative treatment for JVEOs. They also emphasize the importance of collaboration in maintaining post-release support so juveniles do not recidivate and can effectively transition into the community. Clark and Unruh (2010) focus on the treatment of juveniles with emotional and behavioral disabilities. They emphasize similar services like counseling, educational opportunities, work, social skill training, mental health treatment, drug treatment, housing services and family involvement. While these authors focus on services after incarceration, Nelson et al. (2010) support Danziger's claims about early intervention. They note educational programs and the prevention of duplicated services in addressing juvenile delinquency. What these authors, as well as Danziger, demonstrate is that the rehabilitative perspective, innately tied with collaboration, offers alternatives to adjudication because service agencies are involved and the best outcomes for juveniles are prioritized.

## Challenges of Collaboration

Finally, the research defines challenges to collaboration and the negative consequences of a lack of collaboration. Hellriegel and Yates (1999) first describe the challenge of a non-rehabilitative approach and its negative impact on collaboration. These authors found that high collaboration between probation and middle schools was achieved when school administrators supported probation programs and were willing to engage in positive communication unrelated to disciplinary issues. However, in elementary and high schools, school administrators focused on labeling juveniles as criminals and encouraged their staff to do the same (Hellriegel & Yates, 1999). This created an environment where faculty solely communicated through written weekly reports and rarely shared information with probation, leading to an inability to effectively respond to problems.

Weil (1982) also identifies challenges to collaboration with a focus on the impact of misunderstanding roles. She found that lawyers and social workers rarely understood the other's role, leading to competition over certain tasks. Each felt the other was unnecessary and that they could handle all responsibilities. This led to significant problems with the quality and content of interprofessional work. DeCarlo (2012) similarly identified problems between social workers and law enforcement. He found evidence of strained relationships, especially in the context of competitive and institutional pressures from organizations concerned with their own sustainability and rapport. He argues that this devalues the children, which should be the center of conversations, and renders help extended to them less effective. Nelson and his colleagues (2010) focused less on the cause of ineffective collaboration and more on the problems it creates. They identify that services become duplicated, cancel each other out, cause a financial burden, are less effective, and disrupt the implementation of a seamless plan.

Since these challenges to collaboration pose glaring impacts on the children involved, Hellriegel and Yates (1999) and DeCarlo (2012) make some recommendations. Hellriegel and Yates (1999) advocate for shared goals, links between public schools and human services and correctional agencies, timely information sharing, rapport, and both formal and informal communication at the administrative level. DeCarlo (2012) argues that it is most important to center the conversation around children, ensuring their voices are heard. He also argues that interdependency between the community, juvenile court, education system, and law enforcement needs to be established as it is essential to creating intervention and prevention for minority urban youth in at-risk environments. While this advice is mainly shaped by the specifics of the authors' studies, it can also be applied in other contexts in juvenile court.

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## Benjamin Lipman

Benjamin is a graduating senior of Stonehill College, where he earned a degree in Political Science, and studied Middle Eastern Studies and Philosophy. With a strong foundation in political theory, history and international relations, Benjamin is passionate about leveraging academic research and diplomatic engagement to promote peaceful resolutions to global conflicts. He aspires to continue his work at the intersection of scholarship and diplomacy, dedicated to advancing constructive solutions to complex political challenges.

### **The Morality of the Office: Dirty Hands and Ethical Stewardship**

The morality of elected officials is something that has been debated, sanctified, and ignored since the inception of political philosophy. There are those that argue that our political leaders must be held to the same standard that all men are, or else politicians will be liable to abuse their power with impunity. There are also those that argue the opposite; that without certain powers or small immoralities, princes and presidents would not be able to perform their job effectively. And there are those, such as myself, that suggest that in order to govern and be governed effectively, politicians must be held to a different morality altogether, one based on their role as an embodiment of state authority. This essay will argue that while political leaders must be held to a strong moral standard, an act that might be necessary for a prince to take in the interest of the country may not line up with traditional morality, and actions that may be considered moral if taken by a layman may not carry the same virtue if taken by an elected official. Elected officials must be held to a separate ethical standard than the general people; the morality of the *office*, not of man.

While political leaders must *of course* be held to ethical standards, these standards *must* take into account the nuances of their position and be flexible enough to allow politicians to act in the best interest of the state and its people. This is necessary even if these actions are generally considered immoral. When an individual takes the reins of power, they are no longer acting as a private citizen, but as the office itself, and therefore must make decisions based on what is moral as the state, not as a person, and must be held to account by the same standard. To address this issue properly, it is important to study the existing theories and place them within a framework. For the question of whether or not to hold political leaders to a separate moral standard, there are three possible answers: yes they should be held to the same standard, no they should *not* be held to the moral standard, or yes they need to be held to a moral standard but *not* the same one as laypeople. To explore these possibilities, we will discuss the scholarship and moral theories of Kant, JSM, Walzer, and Machiavelli.



Niccolo Machiavelli, in his writing “The Prince” famously argues that leaders must sometimes carry out immoral actions, even resorting to deceit and subversion to maintain the stability and security of the state. He sums up his belief in the quote, “a prince...cannot observe all those things for which men are esteemed, **being often forced, in order to maintain the state, to act contrary to fidelity, friendship, humanity and religion.**” (Machiavelli, 1903). In summary, while a prince may (and should) be a noble man, he will at some point in his duties be *forced* to act against his values or traditional morality to bring about the best outcome for the state of which he is steward. Machiavelli's perspective emphasizes the brutal reality of 0 sum politics and presumes that the moral calculus for people in power is often different than that of ordinary people. If political leaders were constrained by the same standards of social morality as the layman (as well as the legal mechanisms that back them), they would be unable to provide stability and the state will shortly be beset by enemies on all sides.

Machiavelli's ideological foil is Immanuel Kant. Kant argues for something called *deontological ethics*, or the idea that actions should be judged by whether they are inherently right or wrong, regardless of their impact. Furthermore, these ethics are universally applied; actions are either right or they are wrong, regardless of who, when, where, why, or how they are made. He states that a moral man must “act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law” (Kant & Schneewind, 2002). In other words, that an action can only be moral and good if it would *still* be considered good if everyone else were to make the same action. For example, stealing is an act that would be considered an immoral act, because if every person were to decide to steal, our society would likely unravel rather quickly. Conversely, if our example of a man decided to take a day off from breaking windowpanes and instead volunteered at a soup kitchen, that would be a definitively *good* action, because if all men showed such kindness we would all undoubtedly be better off.

These two positions are rather extreme, and modern political philosophy typically revolves around the shades of grey between them. One such shade is **Utilitarianism**, a theory of moral philosophy that judges the morality of an action based on its consequences, regardless of its inherent nature. Under Utilitarianism, all men, including political leaders, can and should violate traditional morality *if the act brings about the greatest amount of good for the largest amount of people*. In short, “the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others” (Mill, 1867). The double-edged sword of utilitarianism is that it allows for traditionally immoral acts to be perpetrated against people as long as they are for the greater good.

With traditional morality, no morality, and ‘greater good’ morality all coming up short, we are left with our final theory, and the one of which this essay argues in favor: Michael Walzer's “Dirty Hands” Morality, or “Role-Morality”. This theory of justice offers a sort of isthmus between the waters, acknowledging that political leaders may need to violate traditional moral rules for the greater good, but that they should still bear the moral weight of their actions. In a bead of literary amber Walzer writes “here is the moral politician: it is by his dirty hands that we know him. If he were a moral man and nothing else, his hands would not be dirty; if he were a politician and nothing else, he would pretend that they were clean” (Walzer, 1973). This theory recognizes the

moral complexities of leadership, while also holding politicians to an ethical standard.

Having read the scholarship and considered the subject, I argue that in order for politicians to best carry out their stewardships they should be held to ethical standards that take into consideration their status as the embodiment of state authority. This approach would recognize the unique positions an agent of the state could be placed in, while also considering the additional legal and moral responsibility that such an actor would possess. Notably, this would *not* exempt leaders from ethical judgment. Just as there are situations where a political leader should be allowed to make a decision that is traditionally immoral, there are situations where a traditionally moral action would be immoral if made by someone wielding state authority. The powers and responsibilities of political office come with distinct moral obligations, including the obligation to err on the side of being *more* moral than the average person. The actions of a politician are not merely the actions of a man, but of the state, and the moral standards used to judge the politician need to be those that are used to judge the state. If a politician lies about having an affair, he is not merely someone trying to squirm out of the hot seat, but a *government official* attempting to act with impunity and must be punished as such. On the other hand, if the same official were to personally lie to every reporter in the country about a military operation, thus catching the enemy by surprise and resulting in a success, then he will have performed his function admirably; for telling the truth would have resulted in a failed operation for the state.

When determining the morality of an action taken by an elected official, we must consider 3 things: the potential *consequences* of telling the lie and truth, the *motivation* behind the lie, and whether the same goal could have been achieved without the lie. If the consequences of telling the truth are significant or if lying was the only way of acting in the state's interest, then the politician acted morally and ethically in being dishonest, even if the man has soiled his hands. This is not, however, *carte blanche* for twisting one's tongue as one wished. Trust is crucial in the relationship between a government and its people and all lies, even moral ones, erode public trust in a politician's word. When politicians lie with regularity or impunity, it leads to a cynical environment and the flagging of political participation. Therefore, even *given* role-specific ethics, politicians have an additional ethical responsibility to strive to uphold the highest moral standards and to be as honest as possible. They should reserve the tool of deception for exceptional circumstances, where national interest *clearly* outweighs the cost of a lie.

While political leaders must be held to ethical standards, these standards *must* also take into account the nuanced stewardship that is modern political office. This approach recognizes that sometimes the demands of the office may diverge from the path of traditional morality, and sometimes governing ethically requires being unethical. Critics argue that this conscientious approach is susceptible to abuse, where a slippery slope and disinterest among the constituency could lead to a system where the government is not beholden to its people. To that I say without active and consistent political participation, a political system will be lost, regardless of the details of its morality. The factors needed to maintain the health of a nuanced system of ethics in politics are those without which no democracy can survive. As soon as they are lost, the threat becomes not ethical but existential.

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## Charlotte Fiske

Charlotte is a member of the Stonehill Class of 2026 with a Criminology major and a double minor in Psychology and Sociology. She is a member of the Edwin H. Sutherland Criminology Honor Society, Best Buddies, and Criminology Club. Charlotte is also the secretary for the Stonehill chapter of the Pinky Swear Pact which aims to assist families financially as their child undergoes cancer treatment. She recently completed an internship with the Bristol County District Attorney's Office in a victim witness advocate position, working specifically with domestic violence survivors. Charlotte is passionate about helping others and plans to continue exploring the field of Criminology throughout her senior year with a focus on working with victims of crime.

### **The Impacts of Solitary Confinement: Review of the Literature**

Solitary confinement, often referred to as “segregation” or “isolation,” has become a widely used method of inmate discipline and management within correctional facilities around the world. This practice typically involves placing individuals in small cells alone for up to 23 hours a day which severely limits their social interactions and outdoor activities. Although it is often justified as a means of maintaining order and managing dangerous inmates, this form of punishment has come under significant scrutiny due to its physical, psychological, ethical, and legal implications. Critics argue that extended isolation can intensify mental health issues and lead to long-term harm, while others believe it is a necessary control measure. This literature review will examine the effects of isolation in prison settings, including its impact on mental and physical health, ethical concerns surrounding its use on vulnerable populations, and legal debates about its constitutionality. It will also explore potential reforms such as behavioral incentive programs and mental health interventions that offer more humane and effective alternatives to solitary confinement.

#### **Psychological Effects**

The psychological effect of solitary confinement on an inmate's psyche is a well-studied and documented area of research. Haney (2018) provides a comprehensive review of research on the negative psychological effects of prolonged solitary confinement. The research indicates that symptoms such as depression, anxiety, paranoia, and psychosis are very common among inmates who have suffered long periods of isolation. Haney's findings suggest that sensory deprivation and social isolation contribute to these symptoms because solitary confinement creates a unique situation in which human beings have little to no mental stimulation. Haney also highlights that inmates who serve fifteen or more days in solitary confinement show more severe symptoms than inmates who

serve smaller sentences. This supports a correlation between the length of time an inmate is isolated for and mental health deterioration (Haney, 2018).

Grassian (2016) expands on Haney's argument by examining the psychological effects of solitary confinement on inmates who already had existing mental health conditions. His study revealed that isolation can heighten symptoms of mental disorders such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, leading to increased paranoia, self-harm, and suicide attempts. These intensified symptoms highlight the vulnerability of mentally ill inmates and raise serious concerns about the sufficiency of mental health care in correctional settings. In many cases, solitary confinement restricts or completely removes access to therapeutic services, meaning that those most in need of support are often left without it. This lack of access further heightens the psychological distress experienced in isolation. Both studies emphasize not only the severe mental toll solitary confinement inflicts, but also the system's failure to properly support inmates with pre-existing conditions.

### **Physical Implications**

In addition to psychological harm, solitary confinement has clear consequences on an inmate's physical health. Reiter et al. (2019) explores the physical health issues that are commonly associated with solitary confinement, such as sleep disorders, muscle deterioration, and a weakened immune system. Their research exhibits that the restricted movement and poor physical conditions within isolation cells greatly contribute to muscle atrophy - the wasting or thinning of muscle mass - and chronic pain (Reiter et al., 2019) Furthermore, in solitary confinement, inmates have limited exposure to natural light. This has been linked to vitamin deficiencies and disrupted circadian rhythms – when your body's internal clock falls out of sync with the environment - which leads to increased insomnia and heightened stress levels.

Another study by Strong (2020) specifically focuses on the cardiovascular health of inmates in solitary confinement and observes that the high-stress environment can lead to elevated blood pressure and an increased risk of heart disease. Strong attributes these conditions to the constant psychological strain and lack of physical activity that often accompany long-term isolation. While supporters of solitary confinement argue that it is a necessary tool for controlling violent inmates, the evidence suggests that the physical toll it takes may ultimately do more harm than good. Rather than ensuring safety, prolonged isolation contributes to a cycle of both psychological and physical decline. The physical effects not only impact inmates during confinement but can also persist long after release which raises concerns about long-term health outcomes. Strong's findings demonstrate that the physical consequences of solitary confinement warrant just as much concern as its psychological impacts, which reinforces the argument that isolation is detrimental to an inmate's overall health.

### **Ethical and Legal Considerations**

The question of constitutionality regarding solitary confinement has become a more recent debate, particularly in the context of the Eighth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits "cruel and unusual



punishment.” Ethical and legal discussions surrounding solitary confinement have sparked disagreement among scholars and human rights advocates, especially in relation to how it cruelly affects prison populations. Metzner and Fellner (2010) argue that prolonged isolation crosses the threshold of “cruel and unusual punishment.” This concern is echoed globally through the United Nations’ Mandela Rules which recommend limiting solitary confinement to no more than fifteen consecutive days due to the severe psychological and physical harm it can cause. These rules, adopted internationally, emphasize that prolonged solitary confinement undermines basic human dignity. For example, in 2013, Norway passed legislation that limits the use of solitary confinement to a maximum of fifteen days. While the U.S. continues to debate the constitutionality of isolation, countries like Norway have taken a progressive approach by accepting the idea that solitary confinement may violate fundamental human rights.

The constitutionality of solitary confinement has become a focal point in legal discussions, especially regarding its impact on inmate health and well-being. One significant case, *Madrid v. Gomez* (1995), challenged the conditions of solitary confinement in California’s Pelican Bay State Prison by arguing that they inflicted psychological harm on inmates. While the court’s ruling did not abolish solitary confinement, it highlighted the psychological damage that isolated inmates were suffering, which prompted some states to reconsider and limit its use (Metzner and Fellner, 2010). The ethical and legal complexities surrounding solitary confinement continue to influence prison policies as human rights advocates press for federal regulations to restrict its usage. These debates persist because of concerns over the inhuman treatment of prison populations who are disproportionately impacted by isolation.

### **Alternatives and Reform Efforts**

In response to the growing evidence of solitary confinement’s negative effects, researchers have begun to investigate alternative approaches to punishment that prioritize rehabilitation and reduce reliance on prolonged isolation. Kupers (2013) examines the effectiveness of behavioral incentive programs as an alternative for solitary confinement. These programs suggest that positive reinforcement can help manage inmate behavior without the detrimental effects associated with prolonged isolation. The study highlights programs where inmates earn privileges through good behavior and participating in organized activities (Kupers, 2013). Kupers notes that these programs have shown promise in reducing disciplinary incidents and improving inmate morale. Behavioral incentive programs offer a proactive approach to behavior management and demonstrate that disciplinary goals can be met without having to resort to solitary confinement.

Mental health interventions have also gained notice as a potential substitute for solitary confinement. DeVaux (2013) discusses a program that incorporates counseling and group therapy for high-risk inmates to best address the root causes of aggressive or disruptive behaviors. According to DeVaux’s findings, this approach not only reduced violent incidents, but also supported the inmates’ mental health and led to a decrease in the number of inmates placed in solitary confinement. By providing inmates with mental health resources, these programs

encourage rehabilitation and self-improvement. Inmates are taught how to build healthy coping skills and how to deal with conflict in a non-destructive and aggressive manner. The success of both of these alternatives suggests that there are ways for prisons to achieve safety and order without solitary confinement, proposing a path towards humane and effective correctional practices.

## **Conclusion**

The literature on solitary confinement highlights a range of negative effects, from severe psychological and physical health impacts to significant ethical and legal concerns. Studies from Haney (2018) and Grassian (2006) demonstrate that prolonged isolation is extremely harmful to an inmate's mental health, often worsening existing symptoms and leading to lasting psychological effects. Additionally, research conducted by Reiter et al. (2019) and Strong et al. (2020) reveal the physical health issues associated with solitary confinement, including cardiovascular problems and muscle atrophy. Ethical and legal challenges, as studied by Metzner and Fellner (2010), exemplify the human rights implications of solitary confinement, especially on vulnerable populations. Alternative approaches like behavioral incentive programs and mental health interventions, studied by Kupers (2013) and Deveaux (2013), offer various solutions to reduce solitary confinement and prioritize inmate rehabilitation. It is clear that solitary confinement, while often viewed as a necessary method of discipline, poses significant risks to both individual well-being and society at large. The evidence suggests that solitary confinement is not only ineffective at addressing the root causes of an inmate's behavior but also intensifies the very issues it is attempting to control. By implementing alternative rehabilitation methods and reforming solitary confinement practices, there is a potential to create a more humane and effective correctional system.

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## Abigail Boyle

Abby is a graduating senior of Stonehill from Medford, Massachusetts. She loves to travel, watch Celtics games, and go to concerts with friends. At Stonehill, she was a Sociology major and was involved with Campus Ministry. She was a member of Relay for Life and a student ambassador for Lux et Spes Society. She has participated in the Disney Leadership Experience as well as a H.O.P.E service immersion trip to Canto Grande, Peru. Stonehill has supported her greatly in her academic journey, and she is very appreciative of the opportunities she had to share her research on adoption. Being a Chinese adoptee herself, this project is deeply meaningful to her. She brings a unique perspective to the topic, and she feels that recognizing Asian adoptees' lived experiences and supporting them can give them a stronger sense of identity and belonging.

### **The Racialization of Asian Adoptees in the United States During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

The lived experiences of Chinese adoptees before and during the Covid-19 pandemic are the main topic of this thesis. Curiosity led to investigating how they navigated their Asian identity along with their identity as an adoptee. It was crucial to look at the relationship and intersection between adoption, identity development, and anti-Asian racism that existed before the pandemic and perpetuated at a worse rate during the pandemic. The racism and racial discrimination against Asians in the United States comes with a long and complex history. Several historical events and social factors have sustained anti-Asian racism, including 19th-century immigration and labor, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Japanese internment during World War II, the model minority stereotype, and cultural representation in the media. More specifically, Asian Americans have been scapegoated and blamed for bringing diseases to the United States such as the Yellow Peril in the 19th century, the Bubonic plague outbreak in San Francisco in the early 20th century, and most recently the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a concerning rise in racism and prejudice directed towards individuals of Asian heritage. Because the virus originated in Wuhan, China, misinformation and scapegoating have been major contributors to the rise of xenophobia, which mostly targets people of Asian descent. While studies have highlighted the challenges, discrimination, hardships, and other forms of hate that Asians and Asian Americans faced during the Covid-19 pandemic due to their race, research has yet to closely examine a specific subgroup of Asians: adoptees.

While Asian adoptees may experience the same racism as other Asians or Asian Americans, their experience is different. Some adoptees have to grapple with the ambiguity of not knowing who their birth parents are. Some struggle with their identity because they have never felt like they truly belong with the community of their racial identity or the community of their parents' racial identity. They may ask themselves, "am I Asian enough?". Asian adoptees have to navigate a unique identity; however, the violence they faced during the

pandemic highlights the racialization of placing them in a racial category that faces discrimination. They are targeted even though they may not feel different from their white parents, family members, or friends, and may not see themselves as “Asian enough.” They may become torn between their adoptive culture and their ethnic heritage. (Lim et al., 2023).

In some adoptive families, there may be a well-intentioned but misguided approach to race that attempts to create a color-blind or race-erased environment. This approach often stems from a desire to emphasize love and unity within the family, regardless of racial differences. Three main themes emerged from a study taking a qualitative approach to parental representations of internationally adopted children. Some parents maintained no association with the child’s birth country and culture. Another group of parents maintained regular associations with the child’s birth country and culture. A final group of parents adapted their associations with the child’s birth country and culture according to the child’s questions and interests (Harf et al., 2015). If we choose to ignore or minimize racial identity, it can inadvertently lead to a lack of awareness or understanding of the unique challenges faced by adopted children of different racial backgrounds, including Asian adoptees. A color-blind approach may work well in sheltered environments where racial issues are not explicitly addressed or acknowledged. However, when major events in the larger political or social landscape--such as the rise in anti-Asian sentiment during the Covid-19 pandemic--bring issues of race to the forefront, it can serve as a wake-up call for adoptive families. Suddenly, the reality of racial discrimination and prejudice becomes impossible to ignore, and adoptive families may realize that they haven't fully integrated discussions about racial identity and cultural heritage into their family dynamics. This realization can be jarring and may prompt families to reevaluate their approach to addressing race and ethnicity within the family unit.

This project aims to analyze, through literature review and interviews, the way a Chinese adoptee navigated their identity during the rise of anti-Asian hate during the Covid-19 pandemic. We will explore the following research questions: 1) What are Chinese adoptees’ experiences with being adopted? 2) How have Chinese adoptees developed their racial and ethnic identities while growing up with white adoptive parents? 3) What were their experiences during the rise of anti-Asian hate amid the COVID-19 pandemic? 4) How did the rise of anti-Asian hate influence their perceptions on color-blindness and security in both micro and macro social environments?

Following this introduction, this paper will review the historical context of anti-Asian racism in the United States, examine adoption narratives and identity development, and consider color-blind parenting models in a literature review. The research methodologies used to gather data will be discussed. The interview findings will be presented, along with an analysis of the adoptees’ experiences and thoughts. Finally, the conclusion will summarize key insights and suggest areas for future related research.



### Historical Context of Anti-Asian Racism in the United States

The history of anti-Asian racism in the US is long, complex, and includes issues of cultural stereotyping, economic scapegoating, and exclusionary policies. A precedent for legal discrimination against Asians was established by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first federal statute that restricted immigration based solely on race (Ngai, 2004). The cultural narratives that depicted Asians as permanent immigrants were reinforced by this legislation, which firmly established and institutionalized racism. Racial prejudice and exclusion were further ingrained in the public consciousness during World War II when Japanese Americans were forcibly relocated to internment camps (Daniels, 1994). The historical basis for enduring anti-Asian animosity was established by these incidents.

This narrative was further complicated by the post-World War II “model minority” stereotype. This concept portrayed Asian Americans as industrious and hardworking yet socially alien (Lee, 2015). Despite its apparent positivity, this label downplayed Asians’ difficulties and reduced them to a meritocratic narrative. It created division and concealed systematic racism by disguising underlying discrimination and portraying Asian Americans as different from other oppressed groups. Because the coronavirus is said to have originated in Wuhan, China, the Covid-19 pandemic more recently revived xenophobia, specifically targeting Chinese Americans (Gover et al., 2020). Misinformation was spread by social media which intensified discrimination and encouraged violent attacks against Asians and Asian Americans.

Historically, public health crises have also amplified racial scapegoating. Fears of contamination were heightened in the 19th century by the “Yellow Peril” narrative, which connected Asians to illness outbreaks such as the San Francisco Bubonic plague (Shah, 2001). A lens for understanding how societal systems and structures perpetuate racism and prejudice in times of health crises is offered by theoretical viewpoints such as Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The historical cycle of marginalization and exclusion shows how deeply ingrained anti-Asian racism is in national culture and consciousness. Following the pandemic, there was a resurgence of activism, with groups like Stop AAPI Hate recording hate crimes and pushing for policy changes. This historical background highlights the pressing need for systemic change by demonstrating how Asian American communities are still impacted by recurrent patterns of racial scapegoating.

### Racial Identity Development in Chinese Adoptees

Forming a unified racial identity presents special obstacles for Chinese adoptees that were raised by white families. Unlike Asian Americans who grew up in ethnically similar communities, adoptees must navigate two identities, one based on their ethnic origin and the other in the culture of their adoptive family (Lee, 2003). The actions of the adoptive parents are important as, according to research using the Ethnic-Racial Identity framework, adoptive families who take a color-blind approach may interfere with identity formation, which

involves examining and affirming one's racial and ethnic background (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014).

The way parents handle racial socialization has a big influence on how adoptees construct their identities. Harf et al. (2015) found three parental techniques: adaptive engagement motivated by the child's interests, consistent cultural integration, and non-engagement with the child's birth culture. Families that promoted cultural ties helped reduce identity confusion while those that ignored them sometimes left adoptees unable to deal with racial discrimination. According to research, adoptees who participate in meaningful activities that affirm their culture, such as celebrating cultural holidays, feel more like a part of the community and can combat these instances of racial discrimination (Lee et al., 2006). Lack of cultural exposure, on the other hand, might cause adoptees to struggle with racial identity and feel alienated from both their adoptive and ethnic communities.

Personal accounts from adult adoptees also highlight how crucial it is for adoptive families to have open and honest conversations regarding race during childhood. Adoptees reported feeling more resilient and confident in navigating a racially divided environment when their parents acknowledged racism and shared proactive coping mechanisms (Smith, 2021). This implies that deliberate, continuous exposure to cultural heritage can help adoptees face prejudice in society.

Adolescence is a crucial time for self-discovery, and adoptees may experience their identity changing during this time. Peer approval and outside validation are especially important throughout this period as they impact identity development. According to research, teenagers who are not culturally socialized may experience emotions of "otherness," especially when they are subjected to overt racism or microaggressions in education environments (Smith & Juarez, 2016). Openness from parents regarding adoption and race helps lessen these difficulties and foster a more unified identity. Adoptees' self-perception is also influenced by cultural narratives in the larger society. For adoptees navigating bicultural realities, media portrayals of Asians as either perpetual foreigners or model minorities can skew self-perception and intensify identity issues. Promoting more inclusive narratives in the media and in the classroom is crucial to helping Asian adoptees develop their identities in a more positive way.

## **The Impact of Color-Blind Parenting**

In an attempt to promote family togetherness and unity, color-blind parenting downplays racial distinction between family members, which frequently has unexpected repercussions. Despite its good intentions, this method may not adequately educate adoptees on racism in society. Studies have shown that ignoring race within the family reinforces an adoptee's sense of alienation when they experience racism outside the family and prevents meaningful discussions about discrimination (Pinderhughes & Brodzinsky, 2011). Although adoptive parents may believe that minimizing racial distinctions creates a welcoming atmosphere, adoptees may be unprepared to handle rejection in larger social settings. The lived experiences of adoptees and their family's perception of race may become disconnected as a result of color-blind parenting.

Asian adoptees' presumptions of racial neutrality within their families were called into question when they reported firsthand experiences of racial violence during the Covid-19 pandemic (Lim et al., 2023). Adoptees were exposed to previously unheard-of levels of public discrimination shown by a spike in reports of racial slurs, physical assaults, and verbal harassment. Some adoptive families were forced to address racial issues they had previously avoided as a result of this abrupt exposure, which led to strained family relations and some emotional anguish for adoptees. Despite growing up in predominantly white neighborhoods and environments, adoptees now struggled with social rejection which led to feelings of betrayal, identity confusion, and loneliness.

Adoptees who grew up in colorblind households frequently complained about their parents' failure to recognize or comprehend racial discrimination. Smith (2021) discovered that in order to process their experiences, many adoptees had to individually create coping strategies and frequently turned to peers or Asian American communities for support. Furthermore, studies show that adoptees who had their parents provide them with racial-conscious guidance were better able to deal with prejudice and handle bias. Adoptees were more able to comprehend and fight back against racial stereotypes thanks to deliberate conversations about race, media portrayal, and advocacy efforts. This illustrates how adoptees develop better, healthier identities when their parents actively participate in racial issues.

## **Research Methods in Adoption Studies**

Qualitative interviews, mixed-methods research, and longitudinal studies are the most commonly used methodologies in transracial adoption studies. These approaches enable researchers to study the changing dynamics of identity development over time while capturing the complex experiences of adoptees. To investigate identity formation, Lee (2003) conducted in-depth interviews with transracial adoptees, yielding insightful, narrative-driven information. Participants were able to offer personal narratives in their own words thanks to this method, which made the data especially useful for comprehending individual viewpoints. Harf et al. (2015) gathered information on various parental approaches to cultural integration by combining surveys and interviews with adoptive parents. While the interviews produced more in-depth information on how parents understand and implement cultural engagement tactics, the survey component offered quantitative data on typical parenting behaviors. By combining personal accounts with numerical patterns, the mix of approaches escalates the study's conclusions.

The growth of adoptees has been monitored by longitudinal studies, which provide information on how racial identification changes over time (Grotevant et al., 2006). By combining qualitative descriptions of lived experiences with quantitative assessments of psychological adjustment, mixed method approaches enhance this research. Through this approach, researchers were able to evaluate long-term identity outcomes and track how adoptees' self-concept is shaped over decades by early parental practices and social experiences.

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2017), Critical Race Theory-driven research frequently employs

narrative inquiry, highlighting adoptees' individual stories within society. This approach draws attention to structural injustices and shows how institutional racism affects people's experiences. Researchers can discover how institutional racism influences individual experiences by placing adoptees' personal narratives into larger socio-political contexts, highlighting the interaction between systemic and personal factors.

As more researchers see the benefits of integrating qualitative insight with quantitative information, mixed-methods research is becoming more and more popular. A thorough image of the adoption experience is produced by combining in-depth interviews that dive into personal histories with surveys that, for example, gauge adoptees' psychological health. Researchers may more precisely and thoroughly examine difficult issues of identity, family dynamics, and societal influences because of this methodological diversity.

### **Research Methodology**

To explore the experiences of Chinese adoptees, this thesis used a qualitative research method centered around interviews. The interviews took place with participants who are Chinese adoptees, between 18 and 35 years of age, raised by white American parents. This strategy aimed to investigate their lived experiences, specifically in relation to the formation of their racial identities and their experiences with anti-Asian racism during the Covid-19 pandemic. A qualitative method was selected because of its strength in capturing complicated social dynamics, emotional nuances, and personal narratives.

### **Participant Recruitment**

The major participant recruitment method involved posting a recruitment flyer to social media pages and networking sites. Some of the interview participants were also recruited through my personal network using snowball sampling. In the recruitment message, the research goals and questions were described. The recruitment message included contact information for those who were interested in participating in this study. All the participants expressed their willingness to participate in the interviews. When adoptees contacted me, they were given further instructions about how to participate in the study. They were also provided with an informed consent form. I was able to interview five Chinese adoptees who were adopted by white American parents. One was a peer in my class at Stonehill. Another was that peer's friend. Two were Stonehill alumni. The final one works with my mother.

### **Data Collection**

For the participants who volunteered to be interviewed, I used a prepared list of thirty-eight interview questions that covered topics such as participants' experiences with being adopted, their relationship with adoptive parents, racial and ethnic identity development, and experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of the questions were: How do you think being adopted has influenced becoming the person you are today? How has

being raised by White parents influenced the formation of your Asian identity? Can you describe the trajectory of your racial and ethnic identity formation from childhood to adulthood? How did you navigate your Asian identity along with your identity as an adoptee during the height of the pandemic? All the interviews took approximately one hour. The interviews were conducted through Zoom or Apple FaceTime. The interviews on Zoom were audio-recorded with the participant's consent.

### **Potential Risks and Benefits**

There were only minimal potential risks for the participants. There might have been some inconveniences due to the time it takes to participate in the research and emotional or psychological stress as a result of talking about personal experiences. There were also possible benefits for the participants who participated in the interviews. Telling their life stories can help participants look back at their experiences and better understand themselves.

### **Debriefing Procedure**

As the researcher, I drew every interview to a close by giving the respondent an opportunity to discuss any topic further. I stated the following to participants at the end of the interview: "Thank you so much for your time and for participating in this research. Is there any topic that we didn't cover but you'd like to talk about? Is there anything you would like to ask about the study now that we have concluded the interview?"

## **Findings**

Several themes emerged through my research from interviews with five Chinese adoptees raised in White American families. The findings can be categorized into four major subtopics: Adoption Awareness and Growth in Confidence, Forced and Unforced Identity Formation, Looking versus Feeling Asian, and Vulnerability During Covid, or Not. Each theme highlights distinct aspects of the adoptees lived experiences.

### **Adoption Awareness and Growth in Confidence**

At various points in their lives, the participants talked about being conscious of their adoption status, which was frequently impacted by social settings and peer interactions. Most adoptees mentioned how they never had a sit-down talk with their families but had always known for as long as they could remember. When participants were asked, "When was the first time that you understood the meaning of the word "adoption?", the twenty-year-old said:

"I grew up just knowing I was adopted. That's how my parents raised me. There wasn't really an introduction to it."



Other adoptees also expressed how their parents were very open and transparent about adoption and how they did not try to hide anything. Some were intentional about telling their child they were adopted and attempted to embrace their culture. It did not come as a big deal to adoptees.

A different story came to light for one adoptee who pointed out a specific time in first grade.

“I didn’t really find out I was adopted until the first grade. Someone told me, ‘Your mom’s not your real mom.’ And I’m like, ‘Oh, what do you mean?’ And she said, ‘You’re adopted.’ And I was like, ‘I don’t know what that means.’ So I went home, and I told her what happened and she was furious and she told me, ‘This is what adoption means.’

While most adoptees said that they could not pinpoint an exact time, this adoptee had a specific story to tell. This experience in first grade was probably a shock to her. It was never fun in elementary school to be bullied or told you were different. This adoptee also mentioned later in the interview how talking about adoption with her family was not really a “normal thing.” The trend of her parents not bringing the topic up to her first led her to have to ask about it instead.

Most adoptees mentioned that they grew up in predominantly white neighborhoods and schools. There were only a couple other Asians in their elementary school class. They did not meet more adoptees until high school or even college. One adoptee made a connection in gymnastics class because there was another girl who was adopted. They decided to be friends then and are still friends to this day. Another adoptee thought it was cool to know other adoptees at a young age because it was someone else they could relate to.

One adoptee in particular, whose answer was different from the others, grew up in a town with a broad Asian population which therefore allowed for more representation in school for her. She mentioned how there were other children, knowingly adopted as well, who she and her sister became friends with. Specifically, there was a set of brothers who they could relate to on so many levels because they were from Guatemala, about the same age difference as she and her sister, and who also had two moms. Having this connection early on may have helped this adoptee feel more stable in her adoptive identity growing up. There were other kids who could strongly relate to her and her experience. She may not have felt as alone compared to an adoptee who was the only one in her grade.

As they got older, most adoptees confidence with their adoptive identity and Asian identity grew and got stronger. For one adoptee, she talked about how her Asian-ness helps her feel more motivated going for job interviews.

“When I am going in for a job interview, I feel like I have a step up just because I’m Asian. Not that we’re superior or anything but people are about like, ‘we need a diverse community.’ And in a school full of white teachers, if a school hires an Asian teacher, then it’s a more diverse community. It gives me confidence to get a job. I don’t know if that’s actually true. I’m not banking on that but it is a plus.”

Instead of holding her back, this adoptee felt as if being Asian was a step forward for her when going into the field of teaching. She acknowledged how her diversity is an asset to her and not a hindrance. She was a bit unsure if she truly believed this, but she recognized how being different can be a benefit. Her thoughts demonstrate how racial identification can be a source of self-doubt as well as confidence in a professional context in society.

### **Forced and Unforced Identity Formation**

Identity formation was found to be both situational and purposeful. Some participants talked about actively seeking out cultural experiences, such as attending Chinese New Year celebrations, taking Mandarin classes, or joining Asian student organizations in college. One adoptee in particular talked about how she used to date an international student from China. This is the same adoptee whose parents did not bring up adoption in her family. Her experience with learning more about her culture came mostly from dating the international student, not from her family. She was never forced to attend an event or be a part of an organization with other kids from her adoption group. It was all by her own doing and motivation. She found that dating a Chinese guy connected her more with her Asian heritage. They spent time eating authentic Chinese food and going to Chinese New Year festivals and parties. She also felt connected when she joined the Asian student organization at her college. It was a way to find comfort in other people that looked like her. For this adoptee, her Asian identity and connectedness to it was formed willingly by her own choices. Similarly, another adoptee took Mandarin in school from seventh to twelfth grade. She chose to take the language, and she enjoyed learning it. This was another way of embracing her culture.

For other adoptees, a voluntary approach was not the case. One adoptee, twenty-nine years old, shared her experience of attending groups with other adoptees who were in the same adoption group as her and everyone's parents.

“My parents wanted to expose us to other kids from our group. The groups were the other adoptees but parents as well. I went along with it for a little bit, but honestly, I felt like we barely had anything in common. I appreciate it now that I got the chance to expose that side of myself. But truly, I didn't want to go. I remember at a certain point I told my parents, ‘I'm not going. You can.’ It felt like it was more for the parents to connect with other parents. I feel like if I was shielded from it, I would be resentful as well. But I felt like I had nothing in common with these other girls besides the obvious. I guess I would've been mad either way.”

This adoptee felt forced to be a part of these groups. Her parents were the ones taking control of her identity formation when she was a child. She recognized her parents' attempts to promote cultural exposure through the adoption groups; however, her resistance to go emphasizes how initiatives like these may come across as forced or unauthentic. She did not find a strong connection whatsoever with the other girls. They looked similar and were adopted, and that was it for her. During her reflection, she also pointed out that she would have been resentful if

her parents had not made her go to these groups because, as a child, she would not have gotten the exposure any other way. She understands why her parents made the effort, but it was not successfully pulling her towards her heritage.

Similarly, another adoptee, twenty-two years old, named some examples of how she felt forced to embrace her Asian culture.

“When I was growing up, my mom tried to make me learn Mandarin. It didn’t work. I refused, apparently. And growing up we went to Chinese New Year in Boston and Chinese festivals once in a while. But as I got older we didn’t really do any of that stuff. I don’t think they really cultivated my Asian culture very well.”

The cultural experiences of attending Chinese New Year celebrations or taking Mandarin classes can be forced options instead of intentional ones. This adoptee did not have a personal connection or motivation to do these activities. All things considered, both adoptees highlighted difficulties in forming a cultural identity. Even well-intentioned efforts of parents may be unsuccessful. If the activities become inconsistent or if they are seen as involuntary, the adoptees lose interest. Instead of depending solely on the occasional attendance of Chinese festivals, we see the impact and significance of a parent’s consistent, meaningful effort to engage their adoptee culturally and cater to their changing identities.

### **Looking Versus Feeling Asian**

A very prominent and recurring theme was the disconnect between looking versus feeling Asian. Due to a variety of factors such as family upbringing and their peers, most adoptees described feeling culturally White and American yet being viewed as Asian by society. When asked, “Was there ever a time in high school when you questioned your Asian identity?”, the twenty-two-year-old adoptee answered:

“In high school? Maybe. I also can’t pinpoint a time. I feel like I didn’t really figure out who I was until college. In elementary school, you want to fit in. You want to be like other people, and then in high school, it’s like you’re awkward. You don’t know what you want, and you don’t know how you should feel because other people are telling you how to feel. Where in college, you don’t care what other people think... You grow up in college. You surround yourself with people that make you feel good for you and not make you question yourself. In high school, I definitely did question my identity. I kind of had an identity crisis. I feel like there’s an invisible tug-of-war between those two identities because I don’t have a direct tie with my Asian culture. I’m not educated on it. I don’t practice normally. Am I Asian enough to be Asian?”

This narrative of reflection highlights the internal struggle that many Asian adoptees experience while juggling two identities in largely white settings. The phrase, “Am I too White to be Asian, or am I too Asian to be White?”

sums up the experience of living between two identities without feeling completely rooted in either. This adoptee recognized her growth in understanding her identity and how social pressures can play a role. College was the turning point for her. She was in a supportive social environment that fostered positive identity development. Other adoptees also struggled with their feelings of fitting in. They looked like the other Asian kids, so it would be normal talking to them. However internally, they felt like they could relate so much more to the White kids. The invisible tug-of-war metaphor demonstrates the conflict of how adoptees may feel trying to navigate their identity of looking Asian but feeling White. Their internal feelings and outward appearance collide.

The twenty-nine-year-old adoptee, who is married with two children, explained how she perceives her identity.

“Physically, I am Asian. I’m Chinese. But I think I’m more white than my husband. I have Asian characteristics, but I was raised in a White family. I identify more as Caucasian.”

She continued later in the interview talking about how her Asian identity is not very strong. Growing up, she noticed that many of her Asian peers naturally gravitated towards her. She appreciated learning about her culture organically through friends; however, she still felt as if she could relate more to the White kids. This adoptee recognized the separation that many adoptees have between their inward versus outward identity. Overall, the experiences of both adoptee participants demonstrate how the identity formation of transracial adoptees is multi-layered and complex. Their experiences serve as a reminder of how identities can be affirmed by surroundings but also challenged. They also show how adoptees deal with changing identities throughout their lived experiences.

### **Vulnerability During Covid, or Not**

Chinese adoptees had particular difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic, ranging from increased vulnerability to little personal impact. Because of the rise in hate crimes and anti-Asian prejudice, some participants expressed how they felt nervous or how others felt nervous for them. One adoptee described their experience when answering the question, “How did you feel when you saw acts of violence and racism towards Asians on television or social media?”

“It was honestly kind of scary. It was crazy that people believe a certain race carried that disease. You can’t just look at someone and assume. Going out and getting dirty looks... I remember going to the grocery store and hoping that no one looks at me like that, that I’m the problem.”

Another adoptee was asked the same question and said:

“I felt nervous. I didn’t know what people would think or say about me behind my back. Especially, being in a predominantly white high school. It made me insecure. I didn't know if I was being looked at differently because it started in Asia. Seeing all the stuff happen to other people, it made me think, ‘Is this going to happen to me or when is this going to happen to me?’”

These responses show Asian adoptees' vulnerability and anxiety during the height of the pandemic. The adoptees felt nervous and scared to be around others because of their race. They were anticipating the hate and discrimination before they had encountered it directly. Incidents like the pandemic may force transracial adoptees

to face a societal perception of themselves that they may not be ready to confront. This is another challenge of navigating their racial identity.

For the other three adoptees, people other than themselves were scared and worried for them during the heightened anti-Asian hate in the pandemic. The twenty-nine-year-old said:

“My loved ones got more offended for me than I did. My husband was concerned for me. I don’t feel like I identify as Asian. I was more concerned about my kids dealing with that. I didn’t like seeing people mistreated.”

The twenty-four-year-old adoptee who had just transferred colleges had a professor reach out to her saying he was there if she needed someone to talk to. Her parents did not want her going out anywhere. Another adoptee said that the pandemic did not affect her as much. Her mother made sure that she felt safe, but since she did not feel that strongly about her Asian identity, she felt like nothing was tying her to the issue.

These adoptees did not have a strong affiliation with their Asian identity which made them experience the Covid anti-Asian hate differently from the adoptees who had a slightly stronger affiliation for their Asian identity. All together, these narratives show how adoptees reactions to the violence and racism towards Asians were influenced by social perceptions, family, and personal identity. They highlight the significance of identity formation in situations where race becomes a focal point in macro social environments as external factors can either contrast or amplify adoptees’ internal sense of self.

## **Discussion**

My study offers insightful, new information about the complex process of racial identity formation in Chinese adoptees who grew up in White households and how this affected them during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. The stories shared by adoptees highlight the intricate interactions between individual experiences, family dynamics, and social surroundings. According to the participants, racial identity among Asian adoptees is influenced by a variety of social factors, including racism, cultural norms, public crises, and personal upbringing.

Research has shown us that, despite their good intentions, color-blind parenting might leave adoptees unprepared for racial discrimination in the real world (Pinderhughes & Brodzinsky, 2011). The interviews revealed that some adoptees felt disconnected and separated from their Asian culture because of the limited cultural engagement or the forced attempts from parents. We heard from one adoptee in particular whose parents' attempts to expose her to her culture through groups with fellow adoptees resulted in resistance and unwillingness, rather than genuine involvement. Adoptees frequently struggle with cultural socialization efforts



that are viewed as forced or unauthentic, which is a tension that is reflected in Lee's (2003) research. According to other research, adoptees who participate in meaningful activities that affirm their culture, such as celebrating cultural holidays, feel more a part of the community (Lee et al., 2006). Through the interviews, however, we saw how forced cultural celebrations would only make the adoptee feel less like a part of the community. They could not speak the language or relate as much compared to their Asian peers.

Smith and Juarez (2016) describe how adolescence is a crucial time for self-discovery. Adoptees may undergo changing identity experiences during this time. We clearly saw from one of the adoptees how high school was a key turning point in figuring out her identity. We can take another look at the question that she stated, "Am I too White to be Asian, or am I too Asian to be White?" High school was a challenging time for this adoptee to navigate how her Asian appearance contrasted with her feelings of Whiteness due to her upbringing and surroundings. Once again, this narrative reveals how limited exposure to culture during childhood may leave adoptees to navigate their identity formation on their own during adolescence. This adoptee's reflection emphasizes the vital role that supportive social settings and individual choice play in forming a strong racial identity.

The adoptees' thoughts on the Covid-19 pandemic offer a particularly powerful example of how external circumstances in macro environments may influence racial identity formation. A weak affiliation to Asian identity caused some adoptees to feel disconnected from the events of anti-Asian hate and violence, while others expressed increased insecurity and nervousness. According to Critical Race Theory, societal structures foster racial awareness even when people may not personally identify strongly with their race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This disparity demonstrates the variety of identity awareness and connectedness.

Interviewing adoptees on their feelings and ties to their own racial identity, how they perceive their identity formation, and how all of this was affected by the pandemic was an eye-opening experience. I hoped that hearing firsthand accounts of the experiences of Asian adoptees and expressing them in this thesis would foster empathy and awareness among the broader public. My ambition was for this entire narrative to help challenge stereotypes, increase understanding, and promote dialogue about issues of race, identity, and adoption. I wanted my engagement with this research to give Chinese adoptees, like myself, a voice in the conversation.

## **Future Research**

Later studies could investigate several other aspects of identity formation and adoptee experiences. A deeper understanding of how racial identity changes over time would be possible through longitudinal studies that follow adoptees from adolescence to adulthood. Furthermore, studies looking at the intersections of other identities, including gender or socioeconomic status, may shed light on how adoptees' experiences are impacted by even more layers of identity. It may also be beneficial to conduct further research on how public events, like pandemics, affect adoptees' development of racial identities, especially in order to comprehend how these circumstances alter racial consciousness.

More research on mental health outcomes of adoptees, specifically how identity formation affects psychological well-being, would also be significant. Research might examine how adoptees deal with emotions of inclusion and exclusion at various stages of life. Again, utilizing a longitudinal study would give researchers the chance to track mental health outcomes over time. The Covid-19 pandemic especially brought to light how racialized experiences can be made worse by public crises. It would be influential to see more research on the impact of social and political events on transracial adoptees' mental health. We could see how outside factors, such as public opinions, interact with personal identities during times of trial. Future studies in any of these areas could result in more extensive mental health support networks, which would help adoptees become more resilient and feel more secure in their identity.

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## Briana Smith



As a member of the Class of 2027, Bree is majoring in Criminology with minors in Political Science and Communications. She is a Moreau Honors student and is on the Honors Advisory Council. Additionally, Bree is Co-Vice President of Flyover, a communications club at Stonehill, and has a Seal of Biliteracy in French. Her love of French culture led to achieving the seal and fueled her writing of this specific piece. After Stonehill, Bree wants to combine her curiosity of the criminal justice system with her passion for communications by potentially working in community outreach or crisis communication.

### **Combatting Human Trafficking in France: Policy Recommendations**

France, located in Western Europe, boasts historical significance and modern influence on the world stage. France is one of the most powerful countries in the world, serving as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and driving the Francophone cultures of five overseas territories: Mayotte, Reunion, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). While France is a dominant economic power in the twenty-first century, it also has inherent social flaws and weaknesses, as any other state does. Many states, like France, endure challenges in the sphere of combating crime, such as human trafficking, or the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, to exploit them for profit” through “forced labor” or “commercial sex acts” (United Nations, 2024). To fully combat human trafficking through governmental intervention, France’s governing bodies must examine all relevant cultural influences that may “push” or “pull” potential victims into trafficking schemes.

Primarily, France is defined by a range of “push factors” such as discrimination against their minority religious populations and high substance expenditures. However, France also boasts about the “pull” factors that draw migrants in, like their enduring, agricultural-based economy, stable democratic institutions, and acceptance of international refugee populations. While these “pull” factors may entice potential migrants, they also can serve to amplify the population of likely trafficking victims. The “push” and “pull” factors attributed to France increase the prevalence of human trafficking and an individual’s chance of victimization.

This paper will begin by providing background on France, its demographic, as well as the “push” and “pull” factors that contribute to making certain populations more vulnerable to human trafficking. After, the prevalence of human trafficking in France will be explored through relevant statistics, followed by an analysis of current human trafficking policies in France. Policy recommendations will then be drawn to create a proposed policy for combatting human trafficking in France with a victim needs prioritized approach.

## France's Demographics

As of 2024, France had a total population of 68,374,591, broken down into 49% of the population being male sex at birth and 51% being female sex at birth (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). The population is generally middle-aged, with 60.7% ranging from ages 15-64 years of age and a median age of 42.6 years. The French population has a large majority of French natives with citizenship through birth or naturalization. However, France also has North African, Celtic, Slavic, Indochinese, and Basque minorities (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). In terms of religion, 47% of the population identifies as Roman Catholic, however, Muslim, Protestant, and Buddhist minorities are also present (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). Urban areas continue to grow in popularity, with 81.8% of the general population indulging in French city life and culture. Arguably, just as influential is the French agricultural sector, which constitutes 52.7% of France's land as opposed to its urban centers 18.1%, driving up the French economy through valuable exports such as grains, milk, and grapes. France's most valuable export is wine grapes, which goes hand in hand with its high alcohol consumption rate (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). These demographics, when investigated further, can explain why migrants may be "pulled" toward France. However, some of these demographics are a double-edged sword based on France's cultural atmosphere, serving both as "pull" and "push" factors.

### "Push" and "Pull" Factors Defined

"Push" and "pull" factors are specific circumstances that, when present in a society, can increase the likelihood of victimization in crime, like human trafficking. A "push" factor is defined as a circumstance or experience that catalyzes the departure of a person from one experience to another. For example, domestic abuse in the home can "push" a child to spend more time at school rather than at home. These factors are severe and unendurable, which then forces those who experience them to leave behind their current situation to find one that satisfies their unfulfilled needs. On the other hand, a "pull" factor is defined as a circumstance that motivates someone to seek a new situation. For example, a "pull" factor could be when someone accepts a job offer due to a significant signing bonus, as it entices them to commit to a new environment. The "push" and "pull" factors of France are inherently linked to French demographics, with some demographics serving a dual purpose.

### France's "Push" and "Pull" Factors

France has various "push" factors that increase the vulnerability of certain populations for human trafficking, including high poverty rate, high substance use expenditures, and discrimination against religious minorities. As of 2023, 7.32% of France was unemployed, and in 2021, the most recent figure, 15.6% of the population, was defined as below France's poverty line (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). Additionally, in both 2019 and 2020, France was ranked the 8<sup>th</sup> highest country for alcohol consumption based on liters of pure alcohol consumed and 19<sup>th</sup> highest in tobacco use, with 33.4% of the population using tobacco (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). The financial hardships of unemployment, poverty, and high levels of substance use in France



converge in that these demographics make people desperate to find stable sources of income to provide for their families or addictions. As a result, those suffering from financial hardship are more likely to be victimized in France than others because traffickers can prey on their needs to recruit labor trafficking victims.

France also accepts many refugees each year with its liberal border policies, constituting a large percentage of the unemployed and impoverished populations (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). Refugees primarily come from Western Africa and the Middle East, with a newer influx coming from Ukraine in the wake of the conflict with Russia (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). A majority of refugees from Afghanistan are Muslim and have contributed to the growth of France's Muslim population from 4% to 8.8% in recent years, making France the European country with the largest Muslim population (Dille, 2024).

However, while France boasts of being a “non-secular country,” which is a “pull factor” for religious refugees, French culture is dominated by a 47% plurality of Roman Catholics who are predominantly French nationalists (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). French nationalists have marginalized Muslim women by banning their headwear and using derogatory comments, limiting their legitimacy in French society (Dille, 2024). Therefore, Muslim populations are extremely vulnerable to marginalization in the job sector due to their perception in French culture, which may “push” them to look for alternative sources of income. They are then ideal victims for traffickers with false claims of job stability and income.

France's “pull” factors go hand in hand with some of its “push” factors, such as its “non-secular” classification and open border policies. With the dual nature of these factors, specific populations, such as migrants, greatly increase their probability of victimization. Refugee populations will feel enticed by the openness of France's borders and the anticipated acceptance of all religions. Still, as mentioned before, they will most likely be met with marginalization and economic hardship. France is also a well-known democratic country with enduring and legitimate institutions, making France an ideal haven for refugees seeking democratic protections from authoritarian regimes, making for another “pull” factor (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). The desirability of France's robust democratic institutions and open border policies, when coupled with the marginalization of migrant populations due to France's cultural climate, creates the perfect opportunity for traffickers to find victims, as migrants move to France due to its desirable features, and then are faced with economic hardship, marginalization, and discrimination.

France's biggest “pull” factor is its formidable, export-based economy. As discussed previously, the French economy derives its strength from traditional agricultural exports (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). The agriculture-focused nature of the French economy allows for a high demand for labor, enticing migrants to come to France as they believe they can obtain a stable flow of income from an agricultural job. French tourism also fuels its economy and demands large quantities of laborers in regions such as Paris, making France a suitable country to find employment (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). The constant need for labor in France's dominant economy can be highlighted as a “pull” factor for migrants; however, with this constant need comes equal opportunities for labor exploitation, which can later turn into trafficking schemes. France's economic

richness is both a “push” and “pull” factor in that it draws migrants in but can make them easily manipulated when looking for steady income.

“Push” factors such as the marginalization of religious minorities, poverty, unemployment, and substance usage, when coupled with France's “pull” factors that draw migrants in, such as its prosperous economy, democratic, non-secular government, and acceptance of high quantities of refugees, greatly increases specific populations probability of victimization. If migrants aren't careful, the very factors that enticed them to migrate to France may very well be “push” factors in disguise, such as France's high demand for labor in its prosperous economy and marginalization of religious minorities despite being categorized as non-secular. The “push” and “pull” factors attributed to France thus far are useful in explaining the prevalence of human trafficking in France.

### **Statistics and Prevalence of Human Trafficking**

In 2023, the Organized Global Crime Index ranked France 58<sup>th</sup> out of 193 countries based on its prevalence of human trafficking. France was also ranked 9<sup>th</sup> of 44 European countries and 1<sup>st</sup> among all Western European countries (ENACT, 2023). The French government, alongside Interpol, Europol, and other international organizations, identified 362 victims of human trafficking and 993 cases of “commercial sexual exploitation” in 2022. Of the 362 cases, 43 were minors, constituting almost 12% of the human trafficking caseload (U.S State Department, 2024). In 2023, due to France's launch of a cyber-investigation unit to aid investigation efforts online, 2,801 victims were identified (U.S State Department, 2024). Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) within France identified at least 4,363 other victims, broken down into 76% sex trafficking, 15% labor trafficking, 7% “forced criminality,” and 2% “forced begging,” (U.S State Department, 2024).

When assessed closely, certain trends emerge among the victim population in France. For sex trafficking, it was found that a strong majority of victims are adult females; however, a steady rise in female children is apparent (ENACT, 2023). The French government also “estimates the majority of the 40,000 to 50,000 individuals in commercial sex in France, about 90% of whom are foreign nationals, are likely trafficking victims” (U.S State Department, 2024). As seen in Figure 1, the majority of victims of labor trafficking in France ranged in citizenship, including Chinese, Polish, Brazilian, and Moroccan (United Nations, 2009).

### **Evolving Human Trafficking Policies**

The rising prevalence of human trafficking in France has facilitated a growing concern as to whether the French government is doing enough to advance its investigation efforts. Human trafficking was officially criminalized by France in 2003, carrying a sentence of up to seven years of imprisonment for adult offenders with the addition of a fine of 150,000 euro (United Nations, 2009; U.S Department of State, 2024). If the trafficking involves minors, the fine for offenders increases to 1.5 million euros (U.S Department of State, 2024).

With this, the U.S Department of State believes “the government of France fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking,” classifying it as a Tier 1 country in human trafficking prevention

(U.S State Department, 2024). However, there has been a rise in sex trafficking prevalence over the last few years in France. It has been reported by the State Department that “although the government meets the minimum standards,” over the previous four years, France has “initiated fewer investigations, prosecuted fewer suspected traffickers...and convicted fewer traffickers,” resulting in a call for new legislation to aid in French sex trafficking prevention (U.S State Department, 2024). In March of 2024, 30 representatives of various French government agencies engaged in a round-table discussion to outline goals for a “Third National Plan on Combatting Exploitation and Human Trafficking” (Council of Europe, 2024). The plan would include “increased identification and assistance to victims” as well as improved investigative effectiveness and revised current laws to implement a “non-punishment legal provision” for victims (Council of Europe, 2024).

Another current policy regarding human trafficking is the French government’s reliance on NGOs to aid in addressing cases of human trafficking. NGOs handle more cases than the French government and provide a wide array of services to victims that address psychological, employment, immigration, and legal assistance (U.S Department of State, 2024). In 2023, the French government allotted 611,050 euros to NGOs (U.S State Department, 2024).

NGOs also assist victims with housing; however, due to their limited budget, most victims are referred to the government for assistance and are then sent to homeless shelters (U.S State Department, 2024). This is concerning given the victims’ profiles and traffickers preying upon economically unstable individuals. This is reflected by a recent investigation that states that “authorities noted a significant increase in children exploited in commercial sex over the past five years with traffickers targeting girls in government-run children’s shelters” (U.S State Department, 2024).

### **Policy Overview and Proposed Improvements: Objectives, Target Audiences, and Necessity**

Based on the shortcomings of France’s proposed plan, improvements can be made to prioritize victims’ needs after human trafficking cases have been investigated. (Council of Europe, 2024). This section will outline recommended improvements to France’s new “Third National Plan on Combatting Exploitation and Human Trafficking” to maximize its efficiency in addressing victims’ needs by addressing the relevant “push” and “pull” factors of human trafficking in France. (Council of Europe, 2024). The proposed policy improvements are targeted at audiences including the victims themselves to policymakers, and NGOs, given their major role in assisting victims after their cases have been processed by French investigators (Council of Europe, 2024). Additional review, such as these improvements, is critical given that the plan was newly adopted by the French in late 2024. This is a desirable time to implement these recommendations (Council of Europe, 2024).

The revisions suggested in this paper are necessary in that they will address the current weaknesses highlighted in the “Third National Plan on Combatting Exploitation and Human Trafficking in France” (Council of Europe, 2024). As explained previously, this action plan takes significant steps to address legal issues regarding victims’ protections, such as its new “non-punishment legal provision,” which will protect victims from being

prosecuted for prostitution (U.S State Department, 2024). This is a step in the right direction, as France lacks a legal protection provision for victims, making them vulnerable to “being inappropriately penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a result of human trafficking”, such as soliciting prostitution, which is currently illegal in France (United Nations, 2009; U.S State Department, 2024). From a victim's services approach, it is necessary to protect victims from being wrongly prosecuted for crimes they didn't consent to commit. By criminalizing “soliciting prostitution” for everyone in French society, the French government is indirectly increasing the prevalence of sex trafficking as buyers cannot acquire their desired services through voluntary means and instead must turn to trafficking schemes for supply (U.S State Department, 2024). Therefore, the necessary next step would be to decriminalize “soliciting prostitution” in France (U.S State Department, 2024). This change will provide more concrete provisions in favor of victims.

Another major shortcoming of the plan is its continued reliance on NGOs to handle human trafficking cases in all relevant fields, including investigation, victims' services, and addressing “push” factors that make victims more vulnerable to trafficking schemes (U.S Department of State, 2024). Therefore, it is necessary to implement the policy recommendations described below, such as increasing funding for NGOs so they can work at optimal efficiency if the French government were to continue to rely on them to facilitate the handling of human trafficking cases (U.S Department of State, 2024).

These recommendations are also necessary because by adopting a victim-centered approach for combating Human Trafficking, France as a regional and global economic power, can set the standard for other countries in their responses to human trafficking. According to the article “Labor Trafficking in Portugal: Victims Perceptions of Formal Support, Post-victimization, and Impact”, victim-centered approaches for addressing human trafficking have many upsides, including the empowerment of victims, the prevention of re-traumatizing experiences, and assistance in the gradual processing of emotions (Fernandes et al., 2021). Therefore, a victim-based approach is appropriate for fostering an environment that aids and supports victims, which will result in a natural defiance towards trafficking schemes and the issue of human trafficking together. These policy recommendations for the “Third National Plan on Combatting Exploitation and Human Trafficking”, guided by a prioritization of a victim needs-based approach, are necessary for combating human trafficking both globally, regionally, and locally (Council of Europe, 2024).

While advancing investigations and revising legal doctrines is valuable for France, the current proposal fails to address one of the most instrumental players in the fight against human trafficking in France - NGOs (Council of Europe, 2024). Also, the proposal addresses some services offered by the French Government, but not victims' support services. The two most important policy revisions that can be added to the “Third National Plan of Combatting Exploitation and Human Trafficking” in France are the increase in funding for NGOs as well as improving the security of its government-sanctioned victim services, such as homeless shelters.

The French Government primarily relies on NGOs to investigate and support victims in human trafficking cases but only provides limited funding (U.S Department of State, 2024). If NGOs are expected to carry the

highest caseload regarding victims' services involving economic, housing, legal, and medical aid, how can they do so effectively with only just above 600,000 euros? This is equivalent to only about \$630,000 U.S dollars, which is not a lot to support the hundreds of human trafficking victims helped by French NGOs every year (U.S State Department, 2024). To achieve peak efficiency in the proposed "Third National Plan on Combatting Exploitation and Human Trafficking," more money should be allocated to NGOs if the French government plans on having them handle a majority of their human trafficking caseload. This increase in budgeting could also help other vulnerable populations, which in turn decreases the chance of economically vulnerable populations being victimized and thus minimizes the "push" factor present in French society (Council of Europe, 2024).

Another provision that could be added to the "Third National Plan on Combatting Exploitation and Human Trafficking" in France would be to increase the security and quality of French homeless shelters if they are to continue to be used to aid victims with housing insecurity. Due to the limited budget allocated by the French government, NGOs do not have enough money to provide each victim with a private residence, which often results in NGOs situating victims in French homeless shelters (U.S State Department, 2024). Traffickers tend to prey upon individuals with economic hardships and housing insecurity, a prominent "push" factor previously analyzed. This issue prompts the need for increased security and quality care in French government-funded homeless shelters.

For implementation, this would have to be added as a provision to the current proposed "third" action plan, and then that action plan would have to be approved by the French parliament and the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2024). If the plan were to be approved, the best course of action would be for an outside organization, such as the United Nations, come to objectively assess the quality of care in homeless shelters. A report would then be issued to the French Parliament on the findings. Further action will be taken pending the results, but since there is no up-to-date information to go off, no further implementations can be made at this time.

## **Conclusion**

France has experienced a rise in the prevalence of human trafficking over the last few years, with traffickers looking to capitalize on France's large immigrant population, their economic instability, and their culturally informed recruitment methods. The culmination of research in this paper has presented specific policy recommendations for the French government to implement, such as legally protecting victims and increasing funding for NGOs to stimulate more effective prevention of trafficking. France's "Third National Plan on Combatting Exploitation and Human Trafficking," implemented in late 2024, is still newly operating, with little data to present on its efficiency. While implementing these recommendations as soon as possible would be ideal for all target audiences, policymaking is well-known for being a long and complex process of negotiations and advocacy. Thus, as more data on the successes of the new national plan become available, these recommendations will become more and more relevant. They may highlight potential shortcomings not addressed by this current plan and could potentially be implemented in a future "fourth" national plan on combatting human trafficking.



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## Interview with Guillermo Caballero

Assistant Professor of Political Science

By: Alexandra Trantos

In the fall of 2024, Stonehill College was privileged to welcome a new faculty member to the political science department—Professor Guillermo Caballero, better known as Dr. G. His employment to the college came after the Center for Race, Ethnicity, and Social Justice initiated a cluster hire with the goal of cultivating spaces for students to intellectually engage with themes of identity, power, and systemic injustice.

Dr. G's academic journey began at Wheelock College in Boston, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies. Following the completion of his BA, Dr. G spent time working in the nonprofit sector before receiving his Ph.D. in Political Science from Purdue University, where he studied the power and resistance of Black women lawmakers in the legislature.

Although Dr. G has only been at Stonehill for two semesters, he has quickly become a familiar and friendly face throughout the halls of the Martin Institute. With his open-door policy, students frequently visit his office, whether that be to talk about coursework, plan campus events, or simply grab a snack and talk about life.

To illustrate his activity on campus, Dr. G provided valuable insights for a panel on Donald Trump's executive orders, contributed to an All Things Politics discussion focused on democratic systems, and more recently, helped students plan a successful open mic night for UnDocu Week.

### **What does your research focus on?**

Dr. G's research interest focuses on Black women lawmakers and the ways in which they navigate the legislature. His research is crucial in examining what their lived experiences tell us about power and resistance. More importantly, his work adds to the literature by forcing political scientists to reinterpret longstanding legislative theories that inherently prioritize the perspectives of wealthy, White, straight men. In doing so, he

has been able to take a unique approach in analyzing how legislators with marginalized identities defy institutional norms in order to advance their goals.

In line with these themes, his other publications highlight intersectionality in political science, gender inequities in the discipline, and the behaviors of American political actors, among many other topics essential for challenging the traditional assumptions that have dominated the political science curriculum.

### **What classes do you teach?**

Dr. G teaches a wide variety of classes, including American Politics, Latinx Politics, Black Politics, Women in Politics, the United States Congress, and Research Methods. In the near future, he also plans to develop a class on social movements.

As an educator, Dr. G believes in the importance of helping students interpret the political world through a critical lens by incorporating theories from Black feminist scholars, queer scholars, and critical race scholars. By adopting these frameworks into his courses, students are encouraged to use evidence-based analysis to critique the status quo in ways that address pressing social issues.

### **What are your hobbies?**

Outside of his work at Stonehill, Dr. G is also a Boston-based spoken word artist. His powerful storytelling abilities enable him to flawlessly discuss topics pertaining to love, oppression, politics, and positionality. Additionally, he enjoys listening to genres including R&B, hip hop, UK garage, pop punk, dancehall, and Latin music. Along with good tunes, Dr. G likes to pass time chilling on Boston stoops in the summertime. The interview would not be complete, however, without mentioning his “firstborn”—his dog Kilala, a Pitbull mix. Long walks with Kilala are another way he likes to relax in his free time.



## The Martin Institute Presents: Crime Journalist Bob Ward

By: Helen Cotrupi

On Thursday, March 6th, Crime Journalist Bob Ward visited the McCarthy Auditorium to shed light on crime reporting and talk about his most memorable assignments. With over four decades of experience working with local and federal criminal cases as well as starting the acclaimed television series “New England’s Unsolved”, Ward is a seasoned reporter in New England and regarded as one of the best crime reporters in the area. He was honored with the Gold and Silver Circle award which is given to broadcasters who have worked with television for at least twenty-five years in December of last year, further cementing his place as a prominent newscaster. At the panel, he shared behind the scenes stories following the Challenger Incident, the New Bedford Highway Killings, the murder of Theresa Corley, the Boston Marathon Bombing, and the infamous Gardner Heist.

### **Chronicling Bob’s Career**

Bob Ward got his start in the news when he was twenty-three years old at the New Hampshire news station WMUR. He is a native New Englander from Franklin, Massachusetts and a graduate of Emerson College’s class of 1983. He was made an assignment editor and worked his way up to becoming a news anchor for a handful of programs before eventually producing a full newscast. The creation of New England’s Unsolved in 1999 propelled Ward’s career and helped make him the renowned crime reporter he is today. He has since covered hundreds of high profile cases, has received recognition for his efforts by the FBI and state police and has been honored by every law enforcement agency in the state of Massachusetts for his work in the world of crime reporting. Awards received by Ward include the FBI Director’s Community Leadership Award, the Mass State Police Superintendent’s Commendation Award and most recently the Gold and Silver Circle award in late 2024.

### **New England’s Unsolved**

In 1999, Ward started what would eventually become “New England’s Unsolved”. The driving factor behind starting this television series for Ward was to keep the unsolved cases of New England alive in the public consciousness to provoke conversation, further investigation, and eventually get justice for these cold cases. “I like to hear these stories that don’t get on the news.” he told the audience when expressing the importance of reporting on smaller scale cold cases. Larger and more sensational stories across the country tend to remain in the public consciousness, making it important to keep the smaller scale stories in mind and helping to propel efforts

of getting justice and closure for the victim's families. "New England's Unsolved" seeks to do just that with its reporting and Ward continues to act as a central figure in maintaining that mission.

Ward's personal ambition for the work done through this program was strengthened in the case of Teresa Corley, whom he had a personal connection with at the time of her untimely death in 1978. The story was covered on "New England's Unsolved" years later after the case ran cold and as a result of the program, further efforts to find her killer were made with modern technology decades after the crime was committed. Such efforts on such a small case may never have happened had it not been for the program covering it, lending credence to the work done through Boston 25 News and WFXT.

### **The Challenges of Reporting Crime**

The techniques employed for actively unfolding stories as opposed to those revisited years later vary tremendously. In cases such as the Boston Marathon Bombing and the Challenger Disaster where suspects were actively being pursued and events occurred on air, the need to remain level headed and suspicious of information is critical. "Dead air is horrible on television." Ward expressed when retelling his experiences with the Challenger Disaster in 1986. The shock of an actively occurring tragedy should not register on the reporter's face or result in an inability to speak, which was what briefly occurred in this instance. In the case of the Marathon, Ward received numerous tips ahead of his reporting superiors from myriad sources, some of which proved to be inaccurate and were reported on by other news agencies, leading to critical failures in reporting. He himself fell victim to this and a chain of misinformation amidst news agencies started, creating uncertainty in the situation and making it difficult to arrest the true perpetrators of the attack for quite some time.

His work with live events was contrasted with that of his work done for "New England's Unsolved" which chiefly works to inform communities of local cold cases to reinvigorate efforts to solve them. Such work is able to operate at a more refined and accurate pace as the situation is not actively occurring, allowing for more detail and certainty to come through in reporting. Ward's discussion of the local cases concerning the murder of Teresa Corley and the New Bedford Highway Killings explored this side of reporting more fully and offered a compelling contrast to the high intensity and sensational stories of the Marathon and Challenger.

### **What is it All For?**

Each story that Ward shared with the audience was infused with a personal element he picked up during his time working with the case. "It's part of the job...you are actually stepping into people's lives." he said when talking about his time interviewing Christa McAullife of the Challenger disaster. Despite his role as a reporter of facts, Ward's personal connections to each and every case he worked on helped to test and strengthen his ambition for reporting crime and bringing justice to those deserving. Over forty years, each case has shaped him into who he is today and has curated a unique perspective on news reporting and the world of crime. Whether the case is actively occurring or has been cold for decades, each one concerns the lives of others and creates a personal connection, speaking to the incredible strength of Bob Ward in his continued work done in the world of crime reporting.





## Criminology Club: Project Youth at MCI Norfokk

By: Caroline Nerich and Melena Karolemeas

Throughout their time at Stonehill, Caroline and Melena have learned much about the criminal justice system. From the courts and police departments to probation and parole, they have had dozens of opportunities to work with individuals who may be involved in the system. In April of 2025, the pair was introduced to a side of the criminal justice system that is often overlooked: corrections. Caroline noted that she hadn't seen a correctional facility before and was excited to get a glimpse into a prison. When students heard that the Criminology Club was going to Norfolk Prison to participate in its Project Youth program, attending was a no-brainer.

Upon arrival, correctional officers greeted students and one by one they stood waiting to be properly searched in order to gain access into the prison. After going through the pat down, metal detector, and high concrete walls, students walked through the first part of the facility into the visitation area. Caroline describes her reaction as...

I was honestly shocked at how the prison's layout kind of looked like our quad back at school. As we walked by the grass area to enter the next building, we could see some of the incarcerated people playing basketball and even walking around to get some exercise.

Melena continues with her reaction to the experience...

Unfortunately, we were only allowed to be processed six at a time. Eager, I volunteered to go in with the first group. As we entered the visitation center where the presentation was held, I was immediately greeted by a young man. He portrayed not only a sense of excitement but welcomed us joyfully. As the others began to trickle in, I began to realize that the man was actually a part of the program.

Once the students settled in, they were greeted by a panel of five young men and asked to check out various posters with tragic new stories. After checking out the posters, students heard from the individuals who described the small decisions that completely changed their lives forever. Their stories involved some of the darkest times in their life. From dealing with abuse, sexual assault, gang affiliation, and substance abuse disorder, all the men were open to explaining what lead them to incarceration. Melena listened intently to their stories and said...

I could only think to myself how much strength and courage it took for each of them to speak about some of the worst times of their life. What I found to be most important was the accountability and remorse that each individual had. Not only that, but each panelist reminded us that one wrong decision can lead to very bad consequences. Two of the members emphasized how their gang affiliations led to horrible

violence. Another relayed how his recklessness caused him to drive while under the influence. One of the panelists explained how his parents gave him a good life, but peer pressure led to him joining a gang. In the end, I learned that these men each had a different story that influenced their actions in many ways.

Of the stories, this in particular stood out to Caroline...

Hearing from two individuals who were in gangs was very insightful due to my interest in gangs. I had previously taken a class on American Street Gangs with Professor Pamerson Ifill so hearing two individuals talk about what led them to join gangs and what gang activities they participated in left me speechless and even more passionate. These stories really stuck with me and I continue to think about how many people are eventually forced into gangs. This trip emphasized the information I learned in class and brought the real-life opportunity of hearing directly from people who have been through the struggles, abuse, addiction, and loneliness that led them to the decisions that put them in prison.

After hearing from the prisoners, the students were allowed to ask questions. Students asked about their experiences while in prison, or about some of the programming that was offered. After realizing that many said their interactions with the court system were not the best, Melena asked “What is one thing you wish your lawyer could have done for you that would have made the entire process a little bit easier”. Each panelist relayed that there was a lack of communication and often compassion. They felt like “just another case” to their attorney. This was an important perspective for an aspiring lawyer like Melena to hear as she wants to one day show compassion and understanding to future clients with hopes that they may feel a different way.

Caroline reflects on her experience with this trip, saying,

For when I become a defense attorney, I learned how important it is to try and know the person I am representing and make sure they understand every part of the legal system. This experience also showed me how no matter where you end up in life, whether you’re living in a mansion, on the streets, middle class or in prison, every person has a story, and it doesn’t make them worth any less than you or I.

Melena offered additional reflection...

One of my takeaways is that there are many things that can lead to incarceration. Many of the individuals dealt with adverse childhood experiences, peer pressure, and other factors that influenced their actions. The system is not perfect, and maybe it never will be. But one of the most important things that I learned when navigating it is to shut up and listen. Listen to those who may not have the same life experiences as you so we can learn from each other and find ways to make the system just a little bit better!

Before wrapping up, a panelist insisted that everyone explain their majors and future careers. It was an awesome feeling to know that one day, any one of the students could make a difference. Not only on improving the system but making the experience better for those who may interact with any part of the criminal justice system.

