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Presenter	Research Title	Research Field
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JADEN CHO	Why Animals Need Legal Rights, Not More Welfare	Law & Rights
HYUNWOO JANG	The Philosophical Analysis of Incarceration and its Alternatives	Public Policy & Social Justice
WOOBIN PARK	The Ethics of Instrumented Mouthguards in the NFL: A Structural Ethical Dilemma	Philosophy & Ethics
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The Pitch Clock and Bullpen Fatigue:

A Difference-in-Differences Approach to Consecutive-Day Appearances

Daniel Hwang

Headstart Researchers Conference

The Pitch Clock and Bullpen Fatigue

Did MLB's 2023 pitch clock make back-to-back relief outings more tiring?

Daniel Hwang



BACKGROUND

What is the pitch clock?

15 sec

to start the pitch when the bases are empty

20 sec

with runners on base (cut to 18 seconds in 2024)

THE CONCERN

The worry: less rest, more fatigue

1

Less time between pitches

2

Less recovery during an outing

3

More tired the next day?

4

Higher injury risk?

EARLIER RESEARCH

What earlier studies found

Overall injuries: no increase

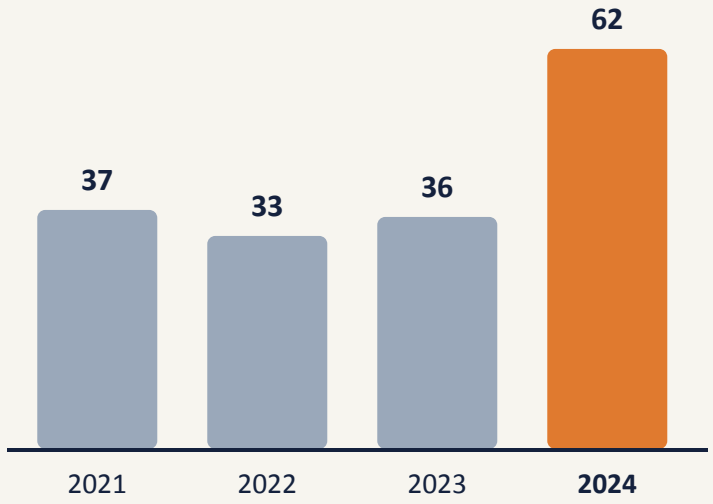
Puga et al., 2024; Lavi et al., 2026

Elbow (Tommy John) surgery: no change

Mastroianni et al., 2025; Card et al., 2025

But forearm injuries jumped in 2024

Puga et al., 2025



Flexor tendon and forearm injuries per season (Puga et al., 2025)

THE GAP

Zoomed out vs. zoomed in

Earlier studies

- One number per pitcher per season
- Count injuries, which are rare
- Can miss small, early warning signs

This study

- Every single outing, one by one
- Measures how the pitches themselves change
- Catches tiredness before it becomes injury

RESEARCH QUESTION

Did the pitch clock make pitching on back-to-back days more tiring for relievers?

WHY THIS ANGLE

Why relievers on back-to-back days?

Relievers pitch often

Many short outings packed close together, with little time to recover.

Tiredness peaks the next day

Leftover fatigue is biggest the day after pitching and fades about half each day.

So that's where to look

If the clock adds fatigue, it should show up when a reliever pitches two days in a row.

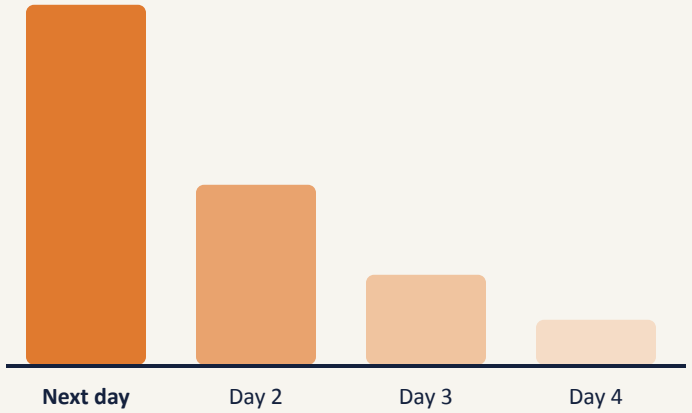


Illustration: leftover fatigue halving each day (Bradbury and Forman, 2012; Burris and Coleman, 2018)

THE DATA

Every pitch, 2021 to 2024

289
relief pitchers

18,824
outings analyzed

4
seasons: 2 before, 2 after

Zero starts (true relievers) → At least 20 games that season → No injured-list stint that season

Sources: MLB Statcast pitch tracking (via pybaseball), Baseball-Reference, MLB Stats API. Data pulled July 19, 2026.

MEASURING FATIGUE

Four clues that an arm is tired

Velocity

(release_speed)

How fast the pitch is. Tired arms throw slower.

Side-to-side movement

(horizontal movement, pfx_x)

Shows how consistent the grip and release are.

Up-down movement

(vertical movement, pfx_z)

Depends on spin, which fatigue can reduce.

Expected batting average

(batting average against, xBAA)

How hard hitters make contact, ignoring luck and fielders.

*** Only Four-Seam Baseball.**

THE METHOD

Comparing the gap: "difference-in-differences"

Before the clock (2021–22)

Rested outing vs. back-to-back outing

Gap A = back-to-back penalty

After the clock (2023–24)

Rested outing vs. back-to-back outing

Gap B = back-to-back penalty

Gap B − Gap A

FAIR COMPARISONS

Keeping the comparison fair

Each pitcher vs. himself

A flamethrower is never compared with a soft-tosser. Only changes within the same pitcher count.

Each season vs. itself

League-wide changes, like a new ball or new rules, hit every outing that year and cancel out.

A steady trend before

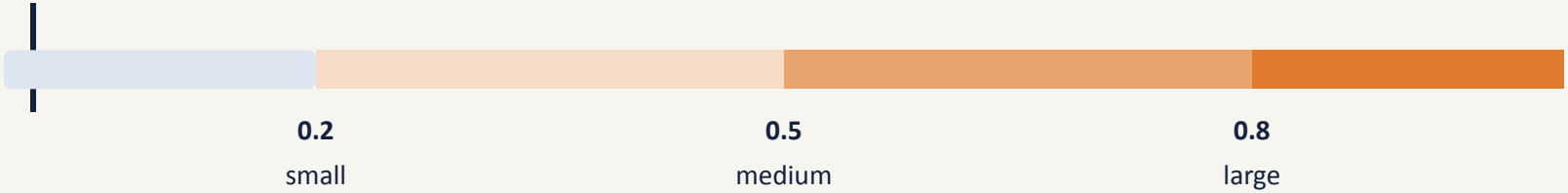
The back-to-back gap was the same in 2021 and 2022, so the "before" baseline is trustworthy.

ONE COMMON RULER

How do you compare mph to inches?

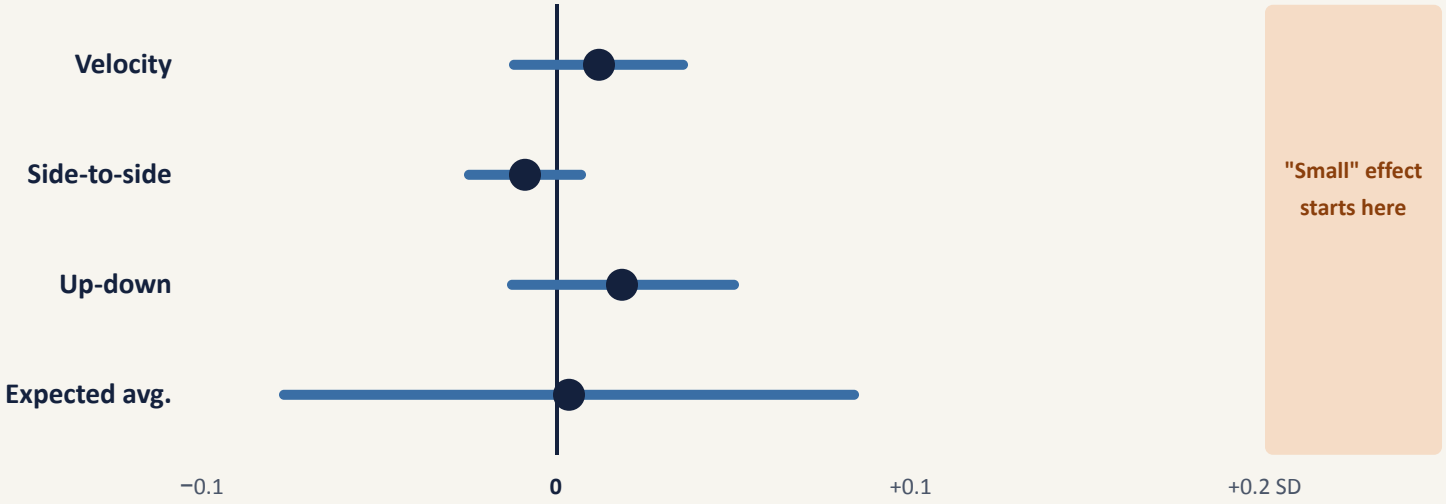
Convert everything into **standard deviations (SD)**: how much each measure normally bounces around from one outing to the next.

Our largest result: 0.019 SD



MAIN RESULT

All four effects sit right next to zero



Dot = best estimate. Bar = 95% confidence range. None is statistically significant (p = 0.27 to 0.93).

ON THE RADAR GUN

The worst case is about 0.1 mph

Rested outing

95.0

mph

vs.

Extra clock effect, worst case

94.9

mph

STRESS TESTS

Testing it three more ways

Check	What changed	Result
Steady trend before?	Compared 2021 with 2022	No difference
Count recent workload	Outings in the last 3 days, not just yes/no	Still no effect
Keep injured pitchers	33,252 outings from 462 pitchers	Still no effect

With the bigger sample, velocity even flipped sign: a sign it's just bouncing around zero, not a hidden effect.

BEING HONEST

Two near-misses in 2023, still tiny

Velocity (p = 0.071) and up-down movement (p = 0.059) came close to the usual 0.05 cutoff.

Velocity: at most 0.064 SD



About one third of the way to a "small" effect (0.2 SD)

Up-down: at most 0.083 SD



Less than half of a "small" effect (0.2 SD)

INTERPRETATION

Why might the clock not matter?

Teams adapted

15–20 seconds may be enough

Fatigue fades fast

(Lab study: Yang et al., 2016)

THE BIGGER PICTURE

How this fits with earlier research

It agrees

- No rise in overall injuries or elbow surgeries
- Pitchers handled more pitches before elbow injury
- Now: no rise in back-to-back fatigue, outing by outing

One open puzzle

- Forearm injuries still rose in 2024
- Maybe pitchers change their motion to keep velocity up
- Performance looks fine while tissue strain rises; this data can't test that

LIMITATIONS

What this study can't tell us

Other 2023 rules

Shift ban, bigger bases, pickoff limits. None should affect the back-to-back gap specifically.

Clock got stricter in 2024

20 seconds became 18, but 2023–24 were treated as one "after" period.

Fastballs only

Sliders, curveballs and other pitches might show fatigue differently.

CONCLUSION

The pitch clock did not meaningfully raise the cost of pitching on back-to-back days.

An informative "no"

Not just "nothing found": even the worst case is under half of a small effect.

Why it matters

Reassuring for teams planning bullpens and for leagues considering a pitch clock.

Thank you

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Why Animals Need Legal Rights, Not More Welfare

Jaden Cho



A CASE FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS

Animals need legal rights, not more welfare

By Jaden Cho



What is the problem?

Every year, more than 120 million animals in the United States die as a result of human activity.

How does society respond to this crisis? By increasing animal welfare protections, hoping that better treatment will be enough to solve the problem.

But what if we are addressing the symptoms rather than the root cause?

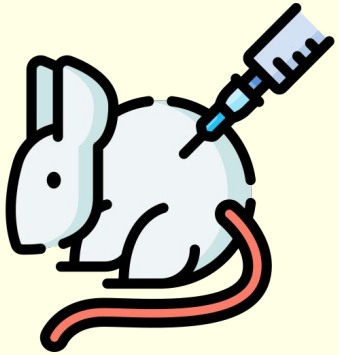
In Animal Rights: Time to Start Unpacking What Rights, Kotzmann and Pendergrast argue that legal rights offer a stronger alternative for protecting animals. Instead of simply improving how humans treat animals, legal rights can establish enforceable protections against the harm humans are permitted to inflict upon them.

In this essay I will...

1. Examine three key arguments presented by Kotzmann and Pendergrast in Animal Rights: Time to Start Unpacking What Rights. These arguments highlight the fundamental limitations of animal welfare protections, which seek to improve the treatment of animals without necessarily preventing the harmful practices that cause their suffering.

2. Demonstrate how legal rights can establish stronger protections, hold humans accountable for violating those protections, and challenge the assumption that animals should be harmed whenever doing so benefits humanity.

Argument 1: Welfare protections still leave suffering negotiable



Animal welfare aims to remove suffering judged “unnecessary,” meaning necessary suffering still pertains.

That standard can still treat pain as acceptable whenever humans call it beneficial. Examples of “beneficial” suffering are when it is utilized for technological advancement, healthcare testing, and food



Legal Rights Wouldn't Face This Issue

Legal rights would deem animals as individuals whose interests and rights deserve legal protection, rather than prioritizing human interests over animal well-being.

By requiring humans to respect animals' rights instead of merely minimizing their suffering, legal rights could establish stronger protections that challenge the assumption that animals can be harmed whenever doing so benefits humanity.

WHO GETS HEARD

Argument 2: Recognized interests are easier to advocate for

Without rights

Groups without recognized interests are easier to ignore. A group uncared for won't be accepted as rights holders.

With rights

Animal advocates have a stronger position when human and animal interests conflict. Rights would give humans that reason to care about animal advocacy.

As stated by Kotzmann and Pendergrast, "The attribution of rights ... enables more effective advocacy" for marginalized groups.



An Example of how Rights Impacted Advocacy

1. Lack of rights: African Americans were historically denied rights and treated as property.	2. Legal rights helped recognize African Americans as individuals deserving protection.
3. Connection to animals: Animals' lack of legal rights allows their interests to be overlooked.	4. Welfare limitations: Welfare laws reduce suffering but still allow harmful practices.
5. Shifting priorities: Animal rights would give animals' interests greater consideration.	6. Legal rights prevent animal interests from being easily overridden by human interests.

The Objections...

Limits on technological and scientific advancement: Giving animals the right to life could restrict animal experimentation, potentially slowing medical discoveries and technological progress.

Negative effects on human society: Protecting animals from being killed could affect food production, human diets, the economy, and the management of certain animal populations.

Animals as a means to human progress: Animals should not have the same rights as humans because they are viewed as resources that contribute to human development, particularly in science, technology, and food production.

Counterargument

Alternatives to animal testing: Computer models, cell cultures, and tissue studies can advance science without harming animals.

Humans also hinder progress: Humans interfere with each other's advancement, yet we still recognize everyone's right to legal protection.

Rejecting the objection: Potentially slowing progress does not justify denying animals rights, especially when alternatives exist.

Argument 3: The three principles that would strengthen protection



Dignity

Recognize animals as beings with inherent worth.



Accountability

Require governments to enforce rights and respond to violations.



Participation

Make animal interests representable in decisions that affect them.

- By giving animals rights, they acquire these three principles
- It would boost animal position in society
- The principles would...
    - Dignity: Recognize that the animals have inherent self worth
    - Accountability: Require governments to physically stop violators of animals' rights
    - Participation: Allow the holder of the right to become involved in/defend the decisions concerning those rights

Objection

1. Inability to participate: Animals cannot speak human languages or directly defend their interests in court.

2. Challenge to animal rights: If rights require participation in legal decisions, animals' inability to participate independently may seem to prevent them from having rights.



Counter

1. Legal representation: Animals can meaningfully participate through human representatives or lawyers who defend their interests in court.



2. Infant comparison: Just as human infants receive rights despite being unable to speak for themselves, animals can have representatives who advocate for their rights and interests.

Possible Critiques

Part 1: Human Superiority

- Objection: Animals lack human abilities like rational thinking and autonomy.
- Counter: Some humans lack these abilities but still have rights. Animals also possess unique abilities, so differences shouldn't determine rights.

Part 2: Animals as Property

- Objection: Animals cannot have rights because they are legally considered property.
- Counter: Groups once treated as property later gained rights. Animals' current status doesn't prevent them from gaining rights in the future.

Closing

In conclusion, legal rights offer stronger protections than animal welfare laws because they recognize animals as individuals with inherent worth and interests deserving of protection, rather than prioritizing human interests. Through examining the limitations of welfare laws, the effectiveness of legal rights in advocacy, the applicability of the three principles of rights to animals, and counterarguments against animal rights, this paper demonstrates why animals deserve legal recognition and protection.

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The Philosophical Analysis of Incarceration and Its Alternatives

Hyunwoo Jang

The Philosophical Analysis of Incarceration and its Alternatives

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01

What are ATIs?

What exactly are Alternatives to Incarceration?

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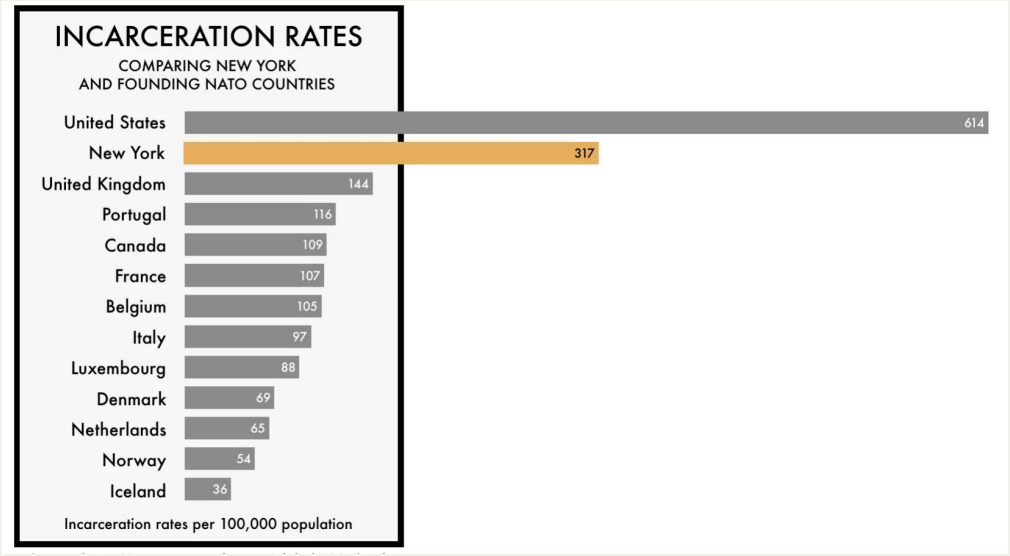
Incarceration

- Incarceration is the traditional method of punishment in New York.
- Prison Policy Initiative: 317 per 100,000 people incarcerated per year. [1]
- Main purpose: Make society safer and reduce recidivism while also turning people into law-abiding citizens (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime). [2]

1. Initiative, Prison Policy. “New York Profile.” Www.Prisonpolicy.Org, www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/NY.html. Accessed 10 Oct. 2026.
2. Muriel Jourdan-Ethvignot. UNODC’s Support to Foster Prisoners’ Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration Into Society. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2019, europris.org/wp-content/uploads/ep_library/141119-UNODCs-work-in-prison-rehabilitation.pdf. Accessed 10 Oct. 2026.

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Incarceration Profile per 100,000 people[1]



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1. Initiative, Prison Policy. “New York Profile.” Www.Prisonpolicy.Org, www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/NY.html. Accessed 10 Oct. 2026.

The Alternatives

- Established by The Pathways to Public Safety Division in the Manhattan District Attorney's Office with New York Executive Law Section 13-A.[3]
- Address the root causes of the crime. [4]
- Allows patients to maintain family relationships, property ownership, and employment ties. [4]
- Lower recidivism rates compared to incarceration. [5]

3. "NYS Open Legislation | NYSenate.Gov." Nysenate.Gov, 2025, www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EXC/A13-A. Accessed 10 Oct. 20
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5. "Legal Action Center." Legal Action Center, 2020, www.lac.org/major-project/ny-ati-reentry-coalition. Accessed 10 Oct. 2026.

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02

Are ATIs a form of punishment?

Can these programs be considered a punishment?

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What is Punishment?

- Established Philosophical Definition: [6]
  - Unpleasant consequence(s)
  - Violation of the legal system
  - An offender who is facing the charges
  - Applied through a legal authority
  - Administered through a human action

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6. Ryberg, Jesper. The Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Punishment. Oxford University Press, 2024, books.google.com/books?id=ePjTEQAAQBAJ. Accessed 10 Oct. 2026.

Why ATIs meet these requirements

1. House arrests, probation, fees, etc
2. Violation of New York's laws
3. Does have a patient / offender who will face charges
4. Administered by the government
5. Decided by human judges [4,6]

4. Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI). Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, 2025, criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/MOCJ-ATI-book-interactive-1.0.pdf. Accessed 10 Oct. 2026.
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03

Philosophical Outlook

The Philosophical Analysis and Comparison of Incarceration and it's Alternatives

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Framework

- Antony Duff's Restorative Justice
    a. Repairs the relationship between the offender and victim
    b. Promotes safety in the community
- Both are required [7]
- Should create **repentance**

7. Duff, Antony, and Zachary Hoskins. "Legal Punishment (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)." Stanford.Edu, 2021, plato.stanford.edu/entries/legal-punishment/. Accessed 10 Oct. 2026.

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Repentance

- Repentance is defined as:
  - Acknowledgement
  - Genuine remorse
  - Rjecting the wrongdoing
  - Resolving not to repeat that same behavior in the future [8]
- Repentenace requires **communication**

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8. Capes, Justin A. “On Repentance.” The Philosophical Quarterly, July 2025, https://doi.org/10.1093/pq/pqaf061. Accessed 10 Oct. 2026.

Communication

- Communication is done through **Victim-Offender Dialogus (VODs)**[9]
  - Meetings that are requested by the victims
  - Allows the victim(s) and offender(s) to have a private interaction
- Does not create **REPENTANCE**

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9. “Office of Victim Assistance.” Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, 2026, doccs.ny.gov/office-victim-assistance. Accessed 10 Oct. 2026.

Behavioral Changes

- ATIs create behavioral change (lowered recidivism) [5]
- Does **NOT** mean it influences repentance
- More research required on this topic
- **Abductive reasoning**

5. “Legal Action Center.” Legal Action Center, 2020, www.lac.org/major-project/ny-ati-reentry-coalition. Accessed 10 Oct. 20

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Two Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

- ATIs indirectly increase repentance
- Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) [10]
  - Job training
  - Transitional employment
  - Placement services

Hypothesis 2

- ATIs directly increase repentance
- Moral Reconation Therapy [11]
  - Must abandon rationales and excuses
  - Provides treatment after abandoning rationales

10. “Our Model.” CEO, www.ceoworks.org/our-model. Accessed 10 Oct. 2026.
11. Rutter, Lindsay. “What Is Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT)?” ICANotes, 31 Dec. 2024, www.icanotes.com/2024/12/31/what-is-moral-reconation-therapy/. Accessed 10 Oct. 202

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Abductive Reasoning: Conclusion

No Contrast

- Does not disprove each other
- Builds on each other's argument

Moral Reconation Therapy[11]

- Directly impacts repentance
- Provided in incarceration and the alternatives

CEO[10]

- Indirectly approach
- Not provided to the incarcerated (only pardoned)
- Provided in ATIs

10. "Our Model." CEO, www.ceoworks.org/our-model. Accessed 10 Oct. 2026.
11. Rutter, Lindsay. "What Is Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT)?" ICANotes, 31 Dec. 2024, www.icanotes.com/2024/12/31/what-is-moral-reconation-therapy/. Accessed 10 Oct. 202

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04

Counterargument

Counterargument and Rebuttal

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Not unique.

- Restorative Justice
- Imprisonment = implement
- Does not make ATIs unique
- Impact of Crime / Victim Awareness Classes[12]



12. “Victim Impact: Listen and Learn Curriculum | OVC.” Office for Victims of Crime, 2016, ovc.ojp.gov/library/publications/victim-impact-listen-and-learn-curriculum. Accessed 10 Oct. 2026.

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Not effective.

- Does not maintain connections and relationships
- Requires change in structure, system, and modeling
- Diminished version of ATIs

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05

Conclusion

Concluding Argument

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Conclusion

- ATIs are more morally just
- Restorative Justice = 2 key ideas
- ATIs promote repentance; Incarceration doesn't
- "Could implement restorative" = not possible without change in structure
- Lack of empirical data and evidence
- Not to argue incarceration = bad; ATIs are more morally right under Restorative Justice

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06

Works Cited

Acknowledgements and Bibliography

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Research & Writing Institute

The Ethics of Instrumented Mouthguards in the NFL:

A Structural Ethical Dilemma

Woobin Park

Instrumented Mouthguards in the NFL

A Structural Ethical Dilemma

Woobin Park

The Technology

- Sensors inside mouthguards measure the force, direction and location of head impacts
- NFL program since 2019; built for safety, not performance
- Used to change the kickoff play and the preseason ramp-up period

Nothing takes the player off the field

No alert in the NFL program removes a player from a game. World Rugby's does. In the NFL the device only records.

Three Ethical Concerns

Privacy and autonomy

Unequal access

Coercion

Who controls data taken from a player's body?

Who owns it?

The player, or the club that collects it

Who can see it?

Medical staff, coaches, researchers, the league

What can be done with it?

Care, practice planning, or valuing a contract

The three answers come apart, and the agreement answers each one differently.

Are Players Protected?

What it gives	What it leaves
You own your sensor data §14(h)	You cannot stop anyone seeing it
Club staff get access §14(h)	“Members of the Club staff” is one category, with no purpose limit
It cannot be cited in contract talks §14(i)	It can still shape the club's private valuation
Complaints and arbitration §14(g)	Reports stay confidential §14(g)(iii)

Each protection exists. None of them reaches the point where a player could tell whether he is protected.

Proposed Solution

Tier access by identifiability

Named readings to licensed medical staff. Team-level aggregates to coaching and performance staff.

Publish enforcement annually

Complaints filed, complaints substantiated, clubs named. Player identities stay confidential.

§14(h) already separates identifiable club access from aggregated league access.

Is this technology doping?

Technology doping

Equipment that gives an athlete an advantage he has not earned through training or ability.

The Cost-Based Argument

Expensive technology gives richer teams an edge, and competition starts to track budgets instead of athletic ability.

Is Access Unequal?

1. **What kind of advantage?**
   Informational. It makes nobody faster. The same family as better coaching.

2. **Is access unequal?**
   Ten clubs in 2021, four in 2022, never described as league-wide. Cost is not the barrier.

3. **So what follows?**
   Distribute, do not ban.

The 2021 and 2022 club figures may describe different research groups. They establish only that the program has never been universal.

Ban vs Distribute

Ban

When the technology substitutes for athletic ability. (i.e. high-tech swimsuits changed what was being measured)

Distribute

When the benefit is not positional. One player's safety costs no other player anything.

Who Decides?

The standard definition

A threat: worse off unless you comply. The test is what happens to the one who declines.

Fails to apply

The agreement never states what happens to a player who declines.

Anderson's account

Coercion is one party's power to enforce decisions about what another will do.

The question is no longer what was threatened. It is who decides, and the agreement answers that directly.

Consent

§14(b)	The league may require all players to wear sensor equipment in games
§14(f)	Clubs may mandate any committee-approved sensor in practice
§14(b), (k)	Consent is required for helmets and for use outside games. Both clauses name the union.
§14(h), (g)	The player appears as owner of his data, and as complainant. Never as someone who must agree.

Whenever this agreement wanted consent, it named someone other than the athlete

The League’s Case

The league's case	What it costs a player
Head injuries are severe, cumulative, often undetected	The device does not protect its wearer
Data identifies which situations produce the worst impacts	The benefit is collective, and it arrives later
Research needs breadth, not volunteers	Player bears the cost now, on their own body

Coercion is presumptively wrongful, so the burden sits with the league, not with the player who objects.

What Remains

Lee's objection

Coercion is wrong when it makes people do what they already have good reason to do. The stronger the safety case, the harder compulsion is to justify.

Power Imbalance:
They say nobody threatens anyone. But a threat is only needed when refusal is possible. Here it never was.

Body, not conduct:
They say it is an ordinary condition of employment. But a practice schedule governs conduct at work. This records his body, and follows him out of the building.

The league still owes an account of why persuasion would not have worked.

A Right to Refuse

Amend §14 so an individual player may decline instrumented mouthguard monitoring without losing playing time, roster position or contract value.

§14(b) already requires the union's consent for helmet sensors. I name the player instead.

Objection	Participation falls, and the dataset that justified the program collapses.
Answer	If the safety case is as strong as the league says, its job is to make that reason visible.

The Limit Case

A player on a one-year contract, or competing for a roster spot, has reason to keep playing through an injury rather than generate a record that could sit him down. He can see the benefit. The data can also take him off the field.

The reply

My own privacy reforms remove his reason to refuse. If named readings never left medical staff, his fear would shrink.

Why it does not close

Being held out of play is the outcome he is avoiding, and that decision belongs to medical staff, who keep access under my own proposal.

Structural Dilemma

INDIVIDUAL CONTROL

A player may refuse

Protection is uneven.

EQUAL PROTECTION

Coverage reaches everyone

Consent is ignored

Neither can be dropped without abandoning a conclusion already defended

Why the conflict is structural

1. **The benefit is collective and delayed**
   The cost is individual and immediate: his own body now, a share in later changes.

2. **The research needs breadth**
   Refusals that cluster in particular positions damage the data where it matters most.

3. **The decision belongs to the wrong person**
   The one who may refuse is the one whose interests diverge most from the program's purpose.

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

Woobin Park

QUEST
Research & Writing Institute

Re-evaluating Adolescent Social Media Use and Emotional Adjustment in Lockdown

Eunbyeol An

RESEARCH PRESENTATION · EMPIRICAL PAPER REVIEW

Re-evaluating Adolescent Social Media Use and Emotional Adjustment in Lockdown

Questioning the Negative Impact of Social Media on Adolescent Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic



Reviewing Spiekerman et al. (2023) · Eunbyeol An

The intuitive hypothesis

Social media use ↑ during COVID-19 → **linked to worse mental health** → **Adolescent mental health must have suffered**

Daily screen time among youth rose about 84 minutes a day (+52%) across 46 studies

Prior research: linked heavy adolescent social media use to higher rates of depression, anxiety, and loneliness. (Ivie; Keles, 2020)

Expectation: use increased, so adolescent mental health should have suffered.

→ *So did social media harm adolescent mental health in lockdown?*

Madigan et al., 2022; Nagata et al., 2020; Ivie et al., 2020; Keles et al., 2020

HOWEVER,

One study points the other way.

Spiekerman and colleagues (2023) : adolescents who used **more digital communication** to connect with friends during pandemic lockdowns showed **better emotional adjustment**

Roadmap

1. The study
2. The Results
3. The Researchers' claims
4. Critical Examination

Spiekerman et al., 2023, Children

Study Snapshot

168
adolescents studied

11–20
years old (M ≈ 15.7–16.8)

51.4%
female participants

April 2020
U.S. stay-at-home orders

Sample composition

- Predominantly White, non-Hispanic (58.1%)
- Median household income: $70,000–$99,999
- Majority of parents highly educated
- 89% of U.S. adolescents owned a personal device (Rideout & Robb, 2018)

Spiekerman et al., 2023, Children

How Communication and Well-Being Were Measured

6 ways to connect → 2 categories

Synchronous (real-time)

Video calls · Voice calls · Social gaming · Texting

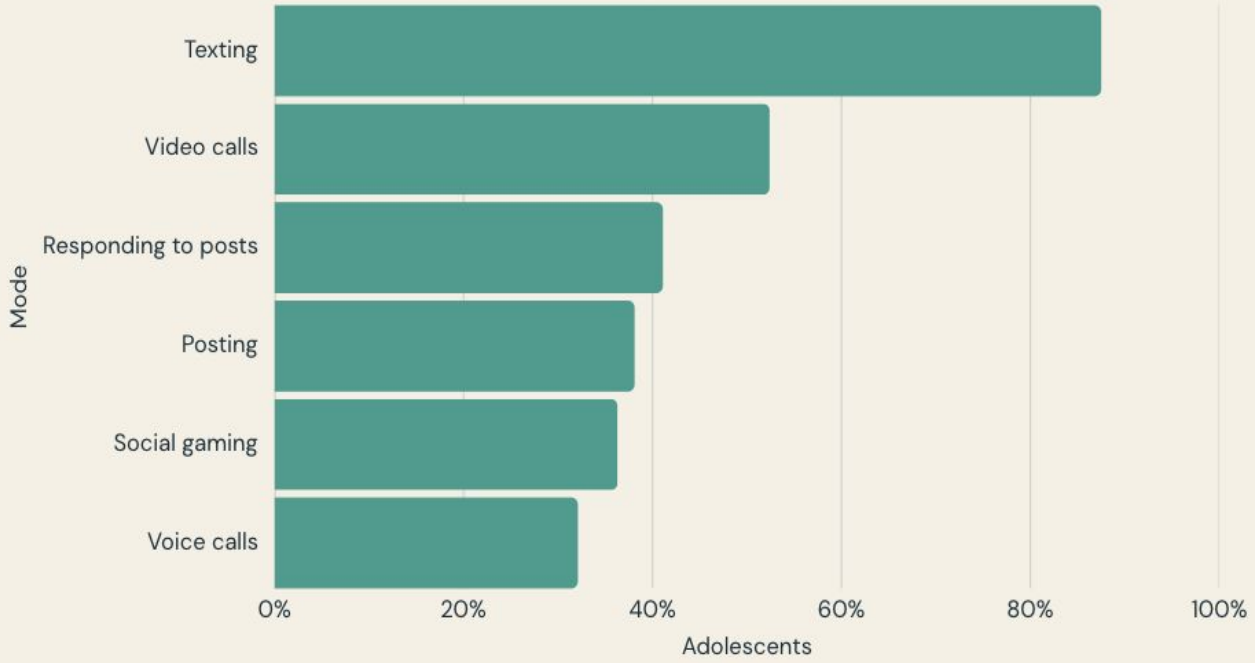
Asynchronous (delayed)

Posting on social media · Liking / responding to friends' posts

3 validated outcome scales

1. **Depressive symptoms**
   CES-D (Radloff, 1977)
2. **Loneliness**
   UCLA Loneliness Scale v3 (Russell, 1996)
3. **Flourishing**
   Diener et al. Flourishing Scale (2011) — 8 items

Texting Dominated — But Teens Used a Mix



SYNCHRONOUS

Video • voice • gaming
Real-time reciprocal exchange

ASYNCHRONOUS

Posting • responding
Texting can function as either

What the data showed

Depressive Symptoms

Video calls → lower symptoms
Other forms: no significant effect.

Loneliness

Video calls & social gaming → lower loneliness
Texting → lower loneliness for ages 14 and younger.

Flourishing

Video calls & texting → higher flourishing (texting strongest for ages 16 and younger).

Asynchronous Form – No Effect

Posting and responding on social feeds → no significant benefit, no significant harm

Spiekerman et al., 2023

The Authors' Conclusion

Technology is not inherently harmful. Its effect depends on the mode of interaction.

Guidance for parents: encourage real-time, reciprocal peer connection rather than blanket restriction.

What This Study Gets Right

Beyond blunt metrics

Distinguishing synchronous from asynchronous use is a real improvement over prior studies that relied on aggregate “screen time.”

A sharper question

Moves the field from “Is technology good or bad for teens?” to “Under what communicative conditions does it help?”

Actionable guidance

Supports realistic parenting advice — guiding how teens use devices, rather than imposing blanket bans.

Correlation Is Not Causation

The data show that synchronous communication and positive adjustment occur together — not that one causes the other.

A plausible alternative direction

Well-adjusted, socially confident teens

may simply be more likely to seek out real-time contact

⇄

Distressed or anxious teens

may gravitate toward passive, asynchronous use instead

The authors themselves flag this reverse-causation possibility under "Limitations and Future Directions."

Does This Really Hold “Beyond the Pandemic”?

The authors claim their findings apply “even beyond the pandemic”. But the pandemic context may be doing a lot of the work.

During lockdown

In-person contact was prohibited. Synchronous digital communication was the closest available substitute for face-to-face connection — so of course it helped.

In normal life

In-person interaction is available. Digital communication could displace — rather than supplement — face-to-face time, which could weaken or reverse the effect.

Unmeasured Confounds & a Narrow Sample

1

Screen time itself was never measured

Prior research ties overall screen time — not just its form — to adolescent well-being. This study can't rule that out.

2

Broader pandemic stress wasn't controlled

Family conflict and sudden lifestyle disruption — both linked to mental health — were acknowledged in the paper but not accounted for.

3

The sample is narrow

Predominantly White, middle-to-upper income, U.S.-based. It says little about teens without device access or outside stay-at-home contexts.

Limits of the Measurement Itself

1

All outcomes are self-reported

Depression, loneliness, and flourishing scores may be over- or understated.

2

No data on relationship quality

Chatting with a best friend and a casual acquaintance are treated identically.

3

Only familiar-peer interaction was studied

Anonymous or stranger contact on social media — tied to greater exposure to harmful content — wasn't captured.

It would be too hasty to conclude that social media use is broadly harmful — or broadly benign.

Synchronous digital contact was likely the closest available substitute for in-person connection during lockdown — that is not the same as proof it can replace in-person connection.

What's needed next

1. Longitudinal studies tracking the same teens over time, to establish direction of effect
2. Replication under normal, post-pandemic conditions — when in-person options exist
3. Data on relationship quality (best friend vs. stranger) alongside communication type