

2013

A Question of Values: Overpopulation and Our Choice Between Procreative Rights and Security-Survival

Megan T. Latta
Claremont McKenna College

Recommended Citation

Latta, Megan T., "A Question of Values: Overpopulation and Our Choice Between Procreative Rights and Security-Survival" (2013).
CMC Senior Theses. Paper 746.
http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/746

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you by Scholarship@Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in this collection by an authorized administrator. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

Claremont McKenna College

**A Question of Values:
Overpopulation and Our Choice Between Procreative Rights and Security-Survival**

SUBMITTED TO

PROFESSOR ALEX RAJCZI

AND

DEAN NICHOLAS WARNER

BY

MEGAN TANNENBAUM LATTA

for

SENIOR THESIS

Fall 2013
December 2, 2013

Abstract

This thesis analyzes the beliefs of population theorist Julian L. Simon through the creation of a harm principle. It specifically analyzes his argument that we value our freedom to choose how many children we want above all other values in the context of overpopulation and environmental destruction. The developed harm principle is meant to give us a method to decide how to balance our personal freedom with our security-survival. I begin with an overview of Simon's work, as well as an exposition of other prominent population theorists. I then propose a principle that is a utilitarian alternative to John Stuart Mill's Harm Principle. I apply the principle to the situation wherein overpopulation causes such great environmental damage that we must choose between upholding procreative rights and our continued survival. I conclude that in most cases we will accept limitations on our procreative freedom in order to maintain our planet and ensure our security-survival.

Table of Contents	
Acknowledgements.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Chapter 1-Theories of Overpopulation.....	8
Julian L. Simon’s Theory of Human Ingenuity.....	8
Opposing Views on Population Control and Parental Rights.....	20
Simon on Population Control Strategies.....	30
Chapter 2-A Principle to Analyze Overpopulation and the Environment.....	36
How Do We Regulate Society?.....	43
Real World Examples of the Principle.....	50
Chapter 3-Applying the Principles to Simon’s Moral Claims.....	69
Application of the Principle.....	71
Conclusion.....	93
Bibliography.....	98

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to acknowledge and thank my family. You have all instilled in me intellectual curiosity and a respect and appreciation for education. I now look back at every assignment I did not want to do and realize how lucky I am to have received such a wonderful education. For that alone I am extremely appreciative. Without your constant support and assurance in my abilities I would not have the confidence that allowed for the ultimate completion of this work. Mom and Dad, you are incredibly selfless, caring and overall wonderful people who I am so grateful to have as parents. Thank you for teaching me what is important and for helping me achieve all of my goals. Caitlin and Ally, thank you for being the best role models and friends without whom I would be far less interesting and much more dysfunctional. You two constantly provide me with endless entertainment and support that I am not sure I could live without.

Second, I would like to thank Professor Alex Rajczi. Professor Rajczi, throughout this process I have been constantly amazed by your ability to make me want to do my best work. In moments of frustration you always provided the guidance necessary for me to continue improving while always making me confident that I would succeed. You have undoubtedly made me a better philosopher and student, and I am eternally grateful. Thank you for your impressive commitment to this work as well as my education as a whole. Thank you for being patient with me and for guiding me to create something of which I am proud. I feel lucky to have been your student.

Third, I would like to thank Michelle Brody who has made every day of this semester better from halfway around the world. Michelle, you are one of the most wise and delightful people I know, I do not want to think about writing this thesis without you. Thank you.

Finally, I would like to thank Professor William Meyer of Colgate University for inspiring the topic of this thesis and helping in the preliminary stages of this work, the Claremont McKenna College Resident Assistants of the Class of 2014 for keeping me laughing, and Katherine Jane Savard for the multiple Sunday boba runs that provided the majority of the energy used while writing this thesis. All of your support has not gone unnoticed or unappreciated. Thank you all.

Introduction

The study of Environmental Ethics explores human interaction with our natural environment and the morals and values with which we treat it. While this discipline explores many topics, this paper evaluates the issue of potential human overpopulation and its consequences for the natural environment.

In 1968, Paul R. Ehrlich published a book titled The Population Bomb. The work outlined his concern and certainty that in the following decades the world would experience excruciating overpopulation that would eventually lead to universal famine. Upon describing a trip he took to Delhi, India, Ehrlich demonstrates his first-hand experience with and fears about overpopulation:

The streets seemed alive with people. People eating, people washing, people sleeping. People visiting, arguing, and screaming. People thrusting their hands through the taxi window, begging. People defecating and urinating. People clinging to buses. People herding animals. People, people, people, people.¹

Ehrlich's work instilled fear in many individuals and started a serious conversation about the doom of overpopulation. Many individuals started dedicating research to this field hoping we could somehow avoid what Ehrlich believed were inevitable problems. Among them was Julian Simon. However, unlike many people who investigated the issue of overpopulation, early in his research Simon came across

¹ Paul R. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb*, (Binghamton, NY: Vail-Ballou Press, Inc., 1969), 12.

evidence that caused him to believe the “population bomb” theory lacked legitimacy.² While many argued population control was causing resource scarcity, after investigating trends in the prices of particular resources overtime, Simon concluded that in terms of economics, resources were becoming less scarce.³ Simon also believed that human ingenuity would allow us to continue procreating at whatever rate we desired because we would solve any problems that might arise due to what others perceived as overpopulation.⁴

In this paper, I focus specifically on this belief of Simon’s that regardless of what circumstances may arise we have the right to choose how many children we have.⁵ The main goal of this paper is to evaluate whether we would actually support the stance that procreative rights trump all others given that overpopulation may bring environmental and other ruin. Either we share Simon’s belief that we value procreative rights above all else, or we value some other phenomenon to a greater degree.

I begin the thesis by explaining Simon’s theory about resource scarcity and human ingenuity, and follow by outlining his different moral claims. I then explain the ideas of other population theorists and their moral beliefs in contrast with Simon’s. Specifically, I outline the ideas of Paul Ehrlich, Garrett Hardin and Amartya Sen, who each provide a unique viewpoint on how to deal with overpopulation should the issue

² Julian L. Simon, *The Ultimate Resource* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 9.

³ Ibid, 3-29.

⁴ Ibid, 345-348.

⁵ Julian L. Simon, *Population Matters: People, Resources, Environment, and Immigration* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 2.

arise. These theorists also provide alternative values we might consider over procreative rights given a population-caused environmental catastrophe.

In addition to analyzing these alternative environmental viewpoints, I provide an in depth exposition of an article written by Daniel Callahan which outlines how we should preference the three values he thinks we hold in the highest regard: freedom, security-survival, and justice. Callahan gives freedom primacy.⁶

In the next section I develop my own philosophy based on my assumption that the most controversy in deciding what to value will lie between freedom and security-survival. Based on this, I hypothesize a principle based in large part on the Harm Principle originated by John Stuart Mill that guides us to understand and decide when we accept the regulation of our personal freedoms.⁷ While Mill focuses almost entirely on harm as the catalyst for regulating individual rights, I argue that we focus on regulating harm unless the implications for security-survival drive other regulation. In other words, while Simon and Callahan argue for the primacy of freedom, I argue with a theory based off of Mill's Harm Principle which argues that while we value freedom, we willingly accept the regulation of our personal freedoms in order to ensure security-survival.

Finally, I apply the hypothesized philosophy to Simon's moral claim that we should maintain the right to have as many children as we wish given that such procreative rights might cause what I refer to as 'environmental degradation'. In the end, I hope to successfully answer whether in the circumstance where overpopulation causes

⁶ Daniel Callahan, "Ethics and Population Limitation," *Science* 175 (February 1972): 487-494.

⁷ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1859). Mill's Harm Principle includes many particulars, however, I use it as the basis for my philosophy because my initial inclinations in developing my philosophy led me to be concerned with harm.

environmental degradation we will justify and accept involuntary population control measures.

Chapter 1-Theories About Overpopulation

Julian L. Simon's Theory of Human Ingenuity

In his first analysis of population control, Julian L. Simon agrees with the popular beliefs originally conceived by Thomas Malthus in the late 1700's.¹ Malthus argues that the earth's finite level of resources can only sustain a certain level of human life—at a particular point human population growth will cease because mortality rates will equal fertility rates. We will reach this point when the earth's resources provide enough to sustain the living population and no one more. Unfortunately, according to Malthus, human population increases exponentially while the earth's resources only increase in a linear fashion. In addition to a few minimal alterations, Malthus' theory remains intact as one of the most followed philosophies regarding the environment and population control.²

As Simon researches this concept and evaluates data on "finite" resources, the validity of this popular and accepted theory starts to raise questions for him.³ In addition, as he reevaluates the issue of population control, he realizes there are many positive implications of rejecting Malthus' theory—most of all that if Malthus' theories are wrong, more people can live.

¹ Simon, *The Ultimate Resource* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 9.

² Clark Wolf, "Population," in *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Dale Jamieson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003) 362-366.

³ Simon, *The Ultimate Resource*, 9.

Simon takes an economic viewpoint in analyzing the environment because he thinks measuring the resources would best be done by evaluating their price. Thus, he believes Malthus' theory must mean resources become more expensive and scarcer over time. However, in his studies of population control, Simon discovers patterns that indicate resources we think are getting scarcer are actually cheaper than they used to be.

The data Simon finds contradicting Malthus' theory include the improvement of water and air quality in the United States, the increase in the Standard of Living in the United States, and the combination of an increase in resources and the decrease in their prices. While this paper does not attempt to verify or reject Simon's findings or his interpretations of data, it is important to understand that Simon believes his theories contain soundness and are founded in legitimate scientific fact. Whether Simon's findings contain legitimacy is mostly insignificant for the basis of this paper.

When Simon studies air quality he finds it improves in every type of living environment in the United States from 1968 to 1970 accordingly to the National Air Quality Index and the Extreme Value Index. Additionally, the national pollution trends in sulfur dioxide and total suspended particulates (two important indicators of air quality) decrease from 1970 to 1974.⁴ Similarly, Simon's research finds that indicators of poor water quality decrease between 1972 and 1982 in the U.S. as reported by the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, and that diseases contracted through water in developed countries decrease over time as well.⁵ Finally, Simon finds that mercury reserves increase

⁴ Ibid, 133-35.

⁵ Julian L. Simon, *The Ultimate Resource 2*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 250-54.

from 1905 to 1990⁶, and the price of copper in comparison to wages decreases from 1800 to 1980.⁷ All of these findings contrast with common opinion that natural resources have diminished while their prices increase. Finally, Simon makes the logical assumption that if all of these factors are improving, the standard of living in the United States must also be improving.

While most of Simon's evidence spans a few years, some of the trends Simon focuses on hold for decades if not centuries. In addition, Simon continues to study the same trends he originally researches as well as many others over decades and remains confident in his beliefs and prior findings.⁸ Lastly, many of these original examples do not completely sway him; rather they raise doubts for Simon about commonly accepted ideas in the population control debate.

While his counterparts remain concerned with human destruction and the potential disasters from population control, Simon focuses on the economics of population control and makes the population debate quantitative instead of qualitative. He uses values like the increase in income to measure quality of life instead of making immeasurable judgments about happiness. Simon does not reject that population increases. Instead, he states that the increase in life expectancy and decrease in infant mortality causes the increase in population—and if these two indicators of success

⁶ Ibid, 28-29.

⁷ Ibid, 25&33.

⁸ Ibid, xxxv.

concern us, then we interpret the world in a flawed manner. It should not upset us that more people have survived through medical and other advances.⁹

From his research and the patterns that indicate that increased human population and improved living situations occur together, Simon develops his hugely controversial theory. His theory states, “the ultimate resource is people—skilled, spirited, and hopeful people who will exert their wills and imaginations for their own benefit, and so, inevitably, for the benefit of us all.”¹⁰ Simon believes that the greatest human attribute is our ingenuity. The more people, the more ingenuity.

Humans, in Simon’s eyes, have a history of recognizing major problems and solving them with improved technology. These solutions usually also result in improved standard of living. For example, Simon often cites the case of England’s potential timber shortage in the late 1500s that causes a huge increase in the price of timber. People’s concern over the increased prices and the scarcity of timber leads to the development of coal energy, and ultimately petroleum.¹¹ Motivated by the desire to continue using energy, but also recognizing a place in the market for a new energy source, intelligent individuals create solutions through competing with one another. The result is the most advanced technology yet.

Most believe that an increase in population leads to depletion and shortages in resources such as timber, and therefore we should control population. Simon, however, argues that since human ingenuity overcomes all problems and human conditions are

⁹ Julian L. Simon, “More People, Greater Wealth, More Resources, Healthier Environment,” *Economic Affairs* 14, no. 3 (April 1994): 22-29.

¹⁰ Simon, *The Ultimate Resource*, 348.

¹¹ Julian Simon, “The War on People,” *Challenge* 28, no. 1 (March/April 1985): 51.

improving, having more people must be positive. More people bring more intelligence, motivation, and brilliance that allows for continued problem solving.

An increase in population causes an increase in demand for certain materials and goods. This causes the price of products to increase either in anticipation of shortages or due to actual shortages. However, Simon's research finds that more often than not, the anticipation and not actual shortages cause increases in prices. The anticipation and fear of shortages, as well as the increase in prices, cause humans to use their ingenuity to find other ways to supply their needs and desires. These new solutions to potential shortages often aim and succeed at providing less expensive and more efficient means of providing a material or product. In the end, humans benefit from a perceived shortage because their fears cause them to create better technologies that allow for more widespread consumption.¹² Simon's general understanding of resources becoming less scarce and their perceived scarcity actually causing improved technology causes him to question individuals who advocate for population control measures. Why, Simon presses, would we deprive anyone of life when everything seems to get better with additional people?

Critics claim that Simon's approach implies that solutions come easily and people do not and will not suffer with increased population. However, Simon recognizes this potential misunderstanding. A better future, Simon clarifies, "will happen because men and women will struggle against difficulties with muscle and mind, and will probably overcome, as people have overcome in the past."¹³ Humans have found the means to fix problems in the past and they will continue to find solutions in the future. While many

¹² Julian L. Simon, *Population Matters: People, Resources, Environment, and Immigration* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 2.

¹³ *Ibid*, 10.

criticize Simon for his overly optimistic outlook, Simon sees no contradiction between an optimistic and a realistic prediction.

Simon's Moral Arguments

In addition to creating an argument that says no resource shortages will occur, Simon also makes many claims that say we should agree with this argument because it supports certain morals we value. In other words, Simon believes we have certain moral values that will be upheld if we believe in his argument about human ingenuity and no resource scarcity. He also believes these moral values will be violated if we accept theories that claim we should support population control.

While Simon only mentions them briefly, he has clear opinions about the moral issues surrounding population control. The moral values Simon supports can be organized into three main categories: personal liberty, the value of human life and the potentially unjust expectations of humans.

The Value of Personal Liberty

When defending his controversial stance, Simon repeatedly vocalizes the importance of personal choice and states, "It must be said as loudly and clearly and possible: I believe that a couple's ability to have the family size the couple chooses is one

of the greatest goods of human existence. I believe in helping people get the number of children they choose. Personal liberty is my primary value.”¹⁴

When proponents of population control speak of the different reasons why population growth hurts the environment, Simon thinks they implicitly reject the personal freedom that people have fought to attain. To Simon it makes little sense that his fellow Americans could reject the right of freedom so easily. The only value with greater impact or importance might be the right to life itself, and if personal freedom compromises life then perhaps it should be reconsidered. However, according to Simon, population control proponents also reject the importance of human life, and therefore the decision to reject personal choice can never hold.

Additionally, while his opponents speak of the detriment of the earth and its resources that are caused by human behavior, Simon critiques them for their unjustified self-importance because they seem to believe they may place constraints on the life choices of individuals half-way around the globe. His opponents believe they can decide how other people should choose to live their lives. By telling individuals they should not procreate, Simon’s opponents imply they know better whether certain individuals should have children than the individuals themselves. Because pro-population control individuals would never want someone else to dictate to them their own life choices (especially how many children they may have), they imply the lives of their future

¹⁴ Ibid.

children are more worth living than the lives of individuals whose existence they attempt to stop.¹⁵

Simon's opponents often speak of population booms in places like India and claim under the current economic and social conditions that the lives of low-income individuals could not possibly be worth living. Simon replies, "based on their own life experiences, Indian couples are the best judges of whether the lives of their potential children are worth living. We feel our view is more respectful of persons, and therefore more moral, than is the pro-control view."¹⁶

While individuals hold the right to determine how many children they wish to have, no individual, Simon believes, may determine how another life ought to be lived. If the existence of one person harms the life of others then we may question their own right to life, but in the case of population control, Simon's research indicates that more people do not harm the lives of other individuals because life conditions have improved in the world. Of course, particular individuals make others' lives worse, however, as a whole,

¹⁵When individuals begin commenting on the value of lives apart from their own, the problem of eugenics and other selective breeding appears. While such notions have been clearly rejected by people especially in the most recent decade, when talking about the population control movement the problem must be acknowledged. If we decide we want some people to live but want to limit the overall number and also recognize that the number of desired children will exceed our desired number then we must decide how we will deny some of those desired lives. The chance exists that who gets to live is random, but one can imagine that in the current society with its intact power structures that is unlikely. For example, it seems unlikely that high profile politicians would allow their potential children to be denied from them while another life is given the chance to be lived. And yet, if we are having this conversation than we are acknowledging that some life should not be lived *and* putting ourselves on a moral high ground that allows us to believe we know who deserves to live. Both of these concepts bring many of their own moral issues that will be difficult to overcome, and Simon directly speaks about the former as morally wrong.

¹⁶ Ibid, 560.

increased population does not mean life becomes worse for others. This point leads into Simon's next moral argument, which considers the value of life.

The Value of Human Life

No argument, Simon believes, can undermine the value of a human life. Not only does he argue on a logical level that humans are our greatest resource and thus we should promote their existence with as great a population as possible, but he also argues that a life, no matter how unfortunate it may seem, is better for having been lived. For, as Simon presumes, poor people "must think their lives worth living, or else they would choose to stop living. Because people choose to live, I assume that they value their lives positively. And those lives therefore have value in my scheme of things."¹⁷ This argument, though basic, has merit. To deprive someone of life on the basis that his life may not seem "good enough" is immoral in Simon's eyes. Just as we cannot decide whether a parent can have a child, no one has the authority to decide what makes another person's life worth living.

In addition, the population control proponents' arguments concern Simon because he fears what the world may lose if we implement control policies. "If you value additional human lives, and some lives are unnecessarily prevented from being lived, that is an obvious loss," says Simon.¹⁸ Simon values human life more than he fears its potential consequences. He demonstrates this concern by sharing his feelings upon encountering an Iwo Jima memorial in Washington, D.C. Simon expresses:

¹⁷ Simon, *The Ultimate Resource 2*, 559.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 562.

There came to me the memory of reading a eulogy delivered by a Jewish chaplain over the dead of the battlefield at Iwo Jima, saying something like, How many who would have been a Mozart or a Michelangelo or an Einstein have we buried here? And then I thought: Have I gone crazy? What business do I have trying to help arrange it that fewer human beings will be born, each one of whom might be a Mozart or a Michelangelo or an Einstein—or simply a joy to his or her family and community, and a person who will enjoy life?¹⁹

This experience demonstrates Simon's belief that restricting our population restricts the possibility of new ingenuity and skill as well as the enjoyment of potential lives and the positive effects they might have on those around them. Simon values humans for the ingenuity he believes they introduce to the world, but he also greatly values the inherent happiness that occurs upon existing.

Unjust Expectations of Humans

Simon's final moral consideration involves the expectations that proponents of population control have placed upon people. Simon argues, "on the one hand, Homo sapiens is said to be no different than other species; on the other hand, it is the only species whom the environmentalists ask to protect other species."²⁰ According to Simon, humans have been called upon to save other beings and ensure their survival, but there is an inconsistency because now population control proponents (in this context, many environmentalists) ask humans to not protect themselves. When population control proponents argue that we should save the planet or other species, they basically say save other species by limiting human existence. Save other species, they say, even if it means fewer humans.

¹⁹ Ibid, xxxi.

²⁰ Ibid, 555.

Simon acknowledges the possibility that at a certain point a human life might be worth sacrificing for a particular population of another species, but he says that the specifics matter. If we want to say that a forest is worth protecting over a human life, we must decide how big or small the forest should be.²¹ Simon realizes humans have a certain level of power over the environment and the species around us, however, he also believes we ought to begin looking at humans as creators and not destroyers. We cannot make humans the villains in the story of the earth, especially if we expect humans to be the ones that eventually “save the planet”. This type of thinking is clearly inconsistent.

Finally, Simon finds that the entirety of the population control argument goes against one of our most elementary and intact beliefs. In response to his greatest, most well-known, and representative opponent, Paul R. Ehrlich, a conservationist advocate, Simon asserts, “the Ehrlich argument boils down to an inverted (or perverted) Golden Rule: Do unto others—prevent their existence—what you are glad no one did to you.”²² No one agrees they prefer to never have lived, and the notion that we want to treat individuals as we would never ask to be treated ourselves shows the population control argument lacks some moral standing. Not only does it neglect personal freedom, diminish the value of life, and ask too much of humans, but it also expects individuals to act in a way most would find inherently immoral. This ideology cannot possibly lead us to a productive future.

²¹ Ibid, 567.

²² Ibid, 562.

Should We Only Value Freedom?

Simon considers many moral issues, however, he most strongly supports the right to personal liberty, and specifically, the right to have as many children as one wishes. The right to personal freedom has great importance in the United States and the relentless way we value freedom might lead us to assume we should always protect it. However, while we highly value freedom, living in a society complicates the value because we must consider how our individual freedoms affect those around us. We know we cannot do whatever we please because doing so can have bad effects on other people.

In discussions of population theory, one of the most common controversies is how to balance our individual rights to freedom with how they impact our society as a whole. I will investigate this moral question in the following sections. First, I will compare Simon's opinion on this matter to those of other environmental and population theorists whose ideas demonstrate different ways to understand the same population control issues that Simon investigates. By understanding other perspectives, we not only see the moral values other environmentalists believe we support, but we can also recognize and have an increased appreciation for why Simon takes a certain stance on different issues. Specifically I will analyze the issue of parental procreative rights.

Opposing Views on Population Control and Parental Rights

Simon's belief that we should not violate parental choice contrasts many of his contemporary environmental philosophers. In fact, much of Simon's work reacts to what he thinks are harsh and immoral tendencies and opinions of others, in particular, Paul

Ehrlich. One of the reasons Simon initially studies population control is because, as previously mentioned, he decides to help combat the perceived problem. However, because of his initial findings, Simon changes his entire goal. In essence, his life's work attempts to break down what he considers to be myths about population growth. To better understand Simon's views of population control and parental choice, we must first better understand his opponents and what they consider in the population debate.

Paul Ehrlich's Population Bomb Theory

Paul Ehrlich's book, The Population Bomb, written in 1968, follows the work of Thomas Malthus. Ehrlich believes, in a way similar to Malthus, that population growth will cause the world to be overrun with people until universal starvation occurs.²³ Ehrlich also concerns himself with the prospect of environmental degradation due to population growth, and he notes that humans cause pollution of all kinds, which ultimately causing other irreversible issues.²⁴ Thus, Ehrlich's concerns are both anthropocentric (he is concerned about the effects on humans), but also ecological whereas Simon never exhibits concern for the physical environment beyond how it affects humans. Simon's issues with Ehrlich's philosophy do not stem from Ehrlich's concern for the environment. Rather, Ehrlich creates a national frenzy about an issue that never truly comes to fruition, and further, his mindset and solutions to this potential problem have unfortunate implications for what Simon sees as an inalienable right: the

²³ Paul R. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb*, (Binghamton, NY: Vail-Ballou Press, Inc., 1969), 13.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 39.

right of parents to choose the number of children they have. For Simon, Ehrlich's belief that population control must occur means that not all individuals will be able to procreate in the manner they so chose.

Ehrlich's solutions to the population problem include a few different strategies. First and foremost, Ehrlich believes the answer to controlling the world's population growth rests in the actions of the United States.²⁵ In addition to the United States determining its own population goals through strategies that Ehrlich outlines, he also believes the United States has a responsibility to assist other countries with lowering their fertility rates.

Ehrlich's solutions for the United States' high fertility rates include monetary incentives such as taxes for additional children after a certain decided upon number as well as higher taxes for child-rearing products like diapers or cribs. He also believes in positive monetary incentives for people who choose to have fewer or no children.²⁶ Those who have children will lose money and those who do not will earn money, creating a very large gap between those with and without children.

Ehrlich also advocates for the creation of a government sector he calls the Department of Population and Environment (DPE) that will "be set up with the power to take whatever steps are necessary to establish a reasonable population size in the United States and put an end to the steady deterioration of our environment."²⁷ Not only does this statement demonstrate that Ehrlich prioritizes population control, but it also implies giving some undeniable power to the DPE that includes decision-making affecting the

²⁵ Ibid, 119.

²⁶ Ibid, 123.

²⁷ Ibid, 124.

choice of parents to have their desired number of children. The goals of the DPE would include the following:

1. Investigate new birth control methods and develop mass sterilization agents
2. Further research sex determination in order for parents to have their first child mirror their exact desires
3. Increase sex education and legislation to help make birth control available
4. Create an image of sex that is separate from its role in reproduction²⁸

The first goal of the DPE demonstrates the serious and extreme manner in which Ehrlich considers population control. When speaking about the proposed plan to sterilize men in India, Ehrlich writes, “we should have applied pressure on the Indian government to go ahead with the plan...coercion is a good cause...We must be relentless in pushing for population control around the world.”²⁹ Ehrlich’s manner in speaking about population control shows that Simon’s arguments are against, as even Ehrlich admits, very coercive measures and not simply suggestions of fertility changes or education. Simon, as will be demonstrated later, believes less coercive measures are viable to change family planning, however he strongly disagrees with the very coercive measures proposed by Ehrlich.

The DPE would also enact certain educational measures as a means of lowering fertility rates, but the inclusion of strategies such as forced sterilization (which would be implemented after a man had fathered a certain number of children) bring Ehrlich’s

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 148.

proposal to a level of coercion that in Simon's opinion violates certain inalienable rights of people. The "population bomb" that Ehrlich predicts has yet to occur (and given his predictions, the disaster should have already occurred) adding further invalidation to his work. Neither his solutions nor his theories garner much validation from Simon.

In addition to suggesting domestic changes to implement population control, Ehrlich advocates that the U.S. and other developed countries assist less-developed countries in population control measures. The most coercive of these measures include having televisions in different regions that will give educational information and family planning suggestions to the inhabitants of different areas. These programs would be the only available content through the provided televisions and each program would be customized to the area where it is viewed.³⁰ To have such constant presence on the matter of population control could be construed as a means of real pressure from either one's own government, or in this case foreign governments, who impose ideas upon a certain group, to build a certain kind of family. Having a television constantly on and blaring information about how to plan a particular type of family is unquestionably coercive.

Ehrlich never specifically determines an optimal population for a country nor does he state the correct number of children to have. Rather, Ehrlich concludes the number of people "involves value judgments about how crowded it should be."³¹ Ehrlich acknowledges that the level of acceptable crowding depends on different cultures, which begs the question why he places so little value on the choice of parents to have as many

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid, 149.

children as they choose. He assumes people in a given society will share a definition of crowded, but that may not be the case and in that circumstance, where each individual has a personal idea of how crowded he wants his community to be, Ehrlich's concern with how crowded an area ought to be might be less important than a family's right to have as many children as it wants. In the choice between how much space an individual has and whether he can bring more life into existence, the latter might be more important.

In defense of Ehrlich, his ideas and policies grow from his belief that population will explode to the degree where simple survival necessities will be unavailable. His projection has yet to be realized and thus his policies are extreme, but had the population bomb occurred his drastic measures may have been considered necessary. Simon never believes the population bomb will occur to the destructive level that Ehrlich proposes and thus Simon will never agree with Ehrlich's policies. While Simon supports individual procreative rights above most anything, Ehrlich advocates for policies that ensure our survival—an idea that will be referred to throughout this paper as 'security-survival'.

Garrett Hardin's Theory of Tragedy of the Commons

Lifeboat Ethics

Another influential environmentalist who publishes his work twenty years prior to Simon is Garrett Hardin, whose concept of "The Tragedy of the Commons" greatly impacts the population debate. Hardin shares Ehrlich and Malthus' view that the earth contains a finite amount of resources that, if not properly managed, will disappear. Hardin's extremely controversial "lifeboat ethics", however, separates him from Ehrlich.

Hardin believes the world's carrying capacity will allow for the currently developed countries, where he thinks the standard of living is acceptable, to continue flourishing without depleting the necessary resources—these countries are on the lifeboat. To maintain that standard of living, however, Hardin believes we should restrict access to resources to more developed countries or, in other words, allow only them to board the lifeboat. While Hardin acknowledges that the earth, or lifeboat, has enough resources to allow for more individuals to survive than only those in developed countries, he thinks the decision as to who else besides citizens of developed countries, who will reap the benefits of the earth or board the lifeboat, is too difficult a decision to make and thus no additional individuals should take resources or be saved on the lifeboat. He understands the harsh reality of his model, however, he also believes it is the only way people can continue to inhabit the earth with a high enough standard of living.³²

The Tragedy of the Commons

Hardin also believes that given our access to free resources, such as air and water, people have little incentive to take care of the earth. The concept of “the tragedy of the commons” articulates the issue that if we all can freely use resources and using these resources proves advantageous, everyone *will* freely use them for fear of foregoing such an advantage to others. The individual who chooses not to deplete resources will be at a

³²Garrett Hardin, “Lifeboat Ethics: the Case Against Helping the Poor,” *Psychology Today* (September 1974): 38-40, 123-124, 126.

disadvantage. Thus, incentives exist for everyone to use free resources without limitation—this is the tragedy of the commons.³³

These two concepts that Hardin supports shape many of his thoughts about population control and the freedom to procreate. As made clear by his lifeboat ethics, Hardin believes the destruction of the earth is so inevitable with the increase in population that violating a person's right to have as many children as he or she wishes is justifiable. "Injustice," writes Hardin, "is preferable to total ruin."³⁴ Hardin fears that unrestricted procreation will cause society to suffer, however, he also believes procreative rights should be decided upon democratically. He supports coercion but only "mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon," meaning that as long as society finds population control necessary then society's opinion as a whole holds more importance than any particular individual's rights.³⁵

Hardin offers sterilization after a certain number of children to be the main means of population control.³⁶ Apart from believing the increasing population will cause destruction, Hardin thinks the right to have as many children as one wishes implies parents own their children, but given the qualities of biology and the cost to society of all children, this ownership has little basis.³⁷ Hardin understands people view procreative rights as inalienable, but he says we should not blindly accept that assumption without acknowledgement of its implications. He combats the notion that people may choose to

³³ Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162, no. 3859 (1968): 1243-1248.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1247.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Garrett Hardin, "Parenthood: Right or Privilege?," *Science* 169, no. 3944 (1970): 1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

have as many children as they wish by demonstrating the effects on community. He rejects this individualism and believes we must “dedicate ourselves to a new—and also very old—commitment to community.”³⁸

In Hardin’s mind decisions should be made by a community, but his lifeboat ethic also maintains that certain communities (particularly wealthier countries) can make decisions about whether others should be allowed to use resources or even exist. He places such emphasis on the rights of the community to flourish that it causes him to reject an unpromising community. Hardin either wants a mostly perfect community that discounts certain individual rights, or no community at all. Again, Hardin’s ideas demonstrate he values different rights than Simon, as he seeks to ensure a high quality of life for everyone surviving and believes that in order for that to be possible some people’s rights must be rejected. His view encompasses some interest in security-survival, but even more, Hardin values a certain standard of living.

Simon would reject nearly all of Hardin’s beliefs. Not only does Hardin base his beliefs on claims Simon disagrees with on a factual basis, but Hardin’s philosophy also violates what Simon holds to be universal human rights. Hardin, similarly to Ehrlich, fails in Simon’s eyes to see the importance of people and their rights to make decisions about their lives, and when Simon responds to such population control measures years after Hardin has published his most influential works, Simon rejects his ideas.

³⁸ Garrett Hardin, “The Feast of Malthus: Living Within the Limits,” *The Social Contract* 8, no. 3 (1998): 186.

Amartya Sen on Population Control

Because Ehrlich's predicted population bomb does not occur, individuals evaluate population control from a different perspective that considers how horrible circumstances must become before taking drastic population control measures. One of these individuals, Amartya Sen, agrees with Simon that coercion must not be used as a means to combat environmental growth. Sen focuses on China's One Child Policy, demonstrating its failures to lower the country's fertility rates without avoiding other suffering. "It is important to note," Sen articulates, "that the achievement of fertility reduction in China has been at some cost, including the violation of rights with some intrinsic importance."³⁹ Sen's recognition of the imperfections of China's policy implies that we highly regard the parental right to have children. He notes that the coercion and involuntary measures of China must be ill conceived because not only have they been relatively unsuccessful, but also in India, where the attempts to lower fertility rates have been through education and voluntary measures, the fertility rate has decreased by a greater margin.⁴⁰ Sen argues the difference between coercion and the personal choice to not have more children has a large impact on whether a country will see changes in its fertility rates. Without appealing to people's morality or their values, creating policy that truly works and has long-lasting and positive effects is difficult.

In addition to noting the ineffectiveness of the coercive programs, Sen questions whether coercion might have more severe impacts on a society than the feared increases

³⁹ Amartya Sen, "Fertility and Coercion," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 63, no.3 (1996): 1054.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 1056.

in population may have.⁴¹ It is possible the social reaction to such undesired policies create entirely new problems that result in regret by even the initial policymakers. Sen recognizes that if the population problem becomes too severe we may need to consider more coercive measures, but that is the *only* time wherein we might rightly justify coercion. Thus, “given the intrinsic importance of rights, including reproductive freedom, the problems would have to be very severe (and rather unmanageable otherwise) in order to justify coercive intervention in private life and in reproductive decisions.”⁴² Sen, unlike Simon, still considers the possibility that overpopulation and humans might become so destructive that population control will be necessary, however, Sen understands the decision to coerce people into changing their reproductive decisions could have severe consequences unrelated to the inherent violation of parental rights.

Again, Simon would disagree with Sen’s thoughts on potential coercion, however, perhaps if Simon considers the possibility of a population issue he would agree that coercion is better in the end than no people at all. Even this, however, might be rejected by Simon. Therefore, Sen highly values security-survival, but recognizes that in order to accomplish it, we must use methods that do not violate our beliefs about how our society should work and how the government should regulate our individual rights. He understands, very importantly, that in order for policy to work, those who it affects must accept and understand it.

Understanding the beliefs and policies of the individuals Simon opposes allows us to realize that while his theory might appear extreme manner, many of the policies he

⁴¹ Ibid, 1055.

⁴² Ibid, 1051.

fighters also take extreme views. In order to oppose their extreme measures he must attack them with equally polarizing theory. Additionally, understanding these other views illustrates what else we value apart from our freedom to choose the number of children we have—this becomes important later when deciding how we should balance these competing values and as Sen recognizes, policy might not be useful if it does not mirror what we actually believe.

Simon on Population Control Strategies

As previously acknowledged, Julian Simon's work largely results from both his realization that common understandings of population growth have little basis and from the works of individuals such as Paul Ehrlich. Simon's writings are a reaction to Ehrlich's. While Ehrlich strongly supports population control and disregards the right of parents to choose the number of children they have, Simon adamantly supports the rights of parents from the onset of his population control theories.

While his ideas could be misinterpreted as him believing everyone should freely procreate without any education measures, Simon believes in taking whatever steps necessary to give a person the number of children they desire. Perhaps most importantly, Simon rejects any regulations involving some type of coercion or pressure upon parents to have a certain number of children—such as those put forth by Paul Ehrlich and Garrett Hardin—and makes clear that our individual freedom to make such decisions should have primary importance.

Both Ehrlich and Hardin believe the world's resources decrease all the time and eventually will be unavailable to humans, and they base their work off this understanding of the world. Because Simon disagrees with this theory about scarcity, especially in relation to its implications for population control, he already rejects their population control strategies. That is, because Ehrlich and Hardin's theories rely on something Simon disregards as true, little need exists for him to even reject their population control strategies. However, even if Simon internalizes their concerns about scarcity and population, his work implies he still would reject their coercive measures.

When asked whether he believes population growth should increase globally (and not only in what he considers developed countries) Simon replies, "That depends, among other things, on what their values are...It's a matter of the value of life to them."⁴³ Simon states this in a mediated exchange between Simon and Hardin. Hardin further questions Simon about whether he would encourage India to reverse its population control policies in order to increase ingenuity and solve other problems. Simon responds that he does not know—his answer depends on their values, on their beliefs about children and happiness, and their personal desires and wishes for their families. Simon makes clear in his work that he values human life and more life must be good, however, he put the values and choices of a family first.⁴⁴ As greatly as Simon supports increasing ingenuity, he more strongly opposes coercion.

Ehrlich's opinion of the world's current state (that resources and overpopulation bring environmental and human destruction) causes him to think the United States should

⁴³ Simon, *Population Matters: People, Resources, Environment, and Immigration*, 393.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 394.

impart its knowledge, as well as resources, on less developed countries in order to help provide population control measures. Hardin, on the other hand, thinks developed countries should not give aid to developing countries because these countries either must save themselves or they will not live as maintained by his “lifeboat ethics”. Simon outwardly rejects or would reject both of these strategies.

While Ehrlich suggests directly influencing communities with the work of his proposed Department of Population and Environment and forced sterilization, Simon strongly disagrees with both measures. If population control is a simple matter we could easily encourage governments to make contraceptive information available and provide educational measures that might help people achieve their family goals. Simon would not oppose such strategies as his “approach to reproductive freedom is to respect everyone’s right to have as many or as few children as they wish, and to assist them with the knowledge of how to do so.”⁴⁵⁴⁶ Thus the purpose of control measures and education would be to inform individuals of their options, not in order to fix a population problem because according to Simon no such issue exists.

Simon also makes clear that educating people on their options differs greatly from imposing ideas and suggestions upon a society. Simon worries the proponents of population control “attempt to foist off upon other people their own desires that fewer people be born into the world. They pressure couples to have fewer children than the couples’s desire because the pro-controllers believe that will speed economic

⁴⁵ Ibid, 222-223.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 561.

development.”⁴⁷ Sterilization specifically, endorsed by both Hardin and Ehrlich, severely imposes upon procreative rights and thus Simon would oppose it. Similarly, the influence of the DPE would reach far past what Simon deems appropriate in terms of its plans to influence countries.

Strangely enough, Simon indicates he believes any aid given to other countries imposes upon their values. Simon thinks the only case wherein we should give help to other countries is when they clearly want aid. However, if a country truly wants family planning, especially coercive measures, Simon predicts the country itself rationally would reallocate other funds to attend to population issues before looking to other countries. The only times we should take such measures (those of reallocating domestic funds or looking to foreign aid) arise when population growth has deteriorated a country to a level that Simon does not believe possible, as he believes that population will never have such detrimental results. Therefore, foreign influence or imposition of family planning measures will never be necessary.⁴⁸ While this conclusion, to not provide foreign aid, is the same as Hardin’s, Simon’s reasons are far different and he does not agree with Hardin’s. Hardin bases his opinion of not giving aid on the scarcity of resources and the need to limit access of these resources to developed countries. If scarcity ever limits resource availability, Simon still will not agree with Hardin’s ideas because they completely reject the value of not only individuals in developing countries, but also the values the individuals hold.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 559.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 209.

In addition to disagreeing with Ehrlich's theories surrounding population control, Simon directs his frustrations towards certain pro-population control organizations including the United Nations (specifically the United Nations Fund for Population Activities) and Planned Parenthood, which Simon believes use coercive measures. Their goals in population control are not to help families achieve their goals, rather to achieve zero population growth through influence and pressure.⁴⁹ Much of Simon's qualms with these organizations are due to his understanding that the organizations encourage a particular image of a family.

Again, Simon has no issue with providing education and desired aid to individuals, however, as soon as unwarranted attempts to persuade individuals to have a certain sized family arise, Simon sees measures as coercive and violating. Simon clearly values our procreative rights above other things that individuals like Hardin and Ehrlich value, such as security-survival or a certain quality of life. Additionally, Simon never quite demonstrates how his ideas might impact the world or whether citizens of a given society might agree with his values.

Overview of Simon and His Opponents

Simon presents the argument that we will never encounter horrible environmental issues because human ingenuity will provide us with solutions to fix every serious issue we face. I have shown that many people oppose these factual arguments that Simon proposes, and I have demonstrated three alternatives to Simon with the examples of Ehrlich, Hardin, and Sen. Simon believes these individuals are factually wrong because

⁴⁹ Ibid, 223.

they predict that humans will cause irreversible environmental destruction whereas Simon, as stated above, does not think environmental destruction will ever occur.

However, I also make clear that Simon makes certain moral claims that he believes these other theorists reject. While Simon does make many factual arguments, I will focus on the moral claims that he makes. Specifically, I will focus on his moral claim about our freedom to choose the number of children we have.

A problem that we encounter when looking at Simon's moral claims is that they are merely assertions—he never actually supports his beliefs with any argument or explanation as to why we should agree with him. Therefore, in order to examine the stance that Simon so powerfully supports, I will evaluate the theory of another individual who, unlike Simon, attempts to fully outline the reasons why someone might accept the idea that we should value our freedom to choose more than we should value others things. This, hopefully, will provide the explanation to understand Simon's ideas because Simon does not provide himself.

Chapter 2—A Principle to Analyze Overpopulation and the Environment

As stated above, Simon makes a moral claim that we should be able to have as many children as we wish. However, Simon never explains why he believes this is the case. The purpose of this thesis is to see whether this claim that Simon makes will hold true in the case that we experience environmental destruction due to overpopulation. Answering this question would be easier if Simon had provided us with reasons to consider his moral claim, however, he does not give us such reasons. Therefore, I will now turn to another individual who also supports the claim that we should be free to have as many children as we wish in hopes that he will give us the explanation that Simon unfortunately does not.

The philosophy I will now evaluate is that of Daniel Callahan, a respected philosopher in the field of biomedical ethics. In Callahan's paper that I discuss, Callahan evaluates the very question I am trying to answer—whether certain circumstances might cause us to accept a violation of our freedom to choose how many children we have. Because he investigates this idea, I look at his work to see if he can provide the explanations about why we might so strongly support our freedom of choice that Simon does not provide.

Daniel Callahan: The Balance Between Freedom and Security-Survival

Among individuals who have investigated the question of procreative rights with regards to the conflicting population burden is Daniel Callahan. The reason to consider the work of Callahan is because he is a well-respected and important philosopher in the field that I am investigating. Daniel Callahan writes his article, "Ethics and Population Limitation," amidst the conversations going on about a potential population crisis. He argues for his case only three years after Paul Ehrlich publishes The Population Bomb, where Ehrlich explains the planet's impending doom as caused by overpopulation.¹ Callahan bases his arguments about parents' rights on the assumption that excessive population growth will result in problems for the environment, the economy, politics, individual liberty & welfare, and social life.² Thus his views oppose those of Simon in the aspects regarding whether there is a population problem.

However, while Callahan and Simon differ in their opinions about the threats of overpopulation, they both want to maintain freedom whenever possible in the context of population control. Julian Simon's assertion of the great importance of a couple's right to choose the number of children they have is one that Daniel Callahan strongly supports, however, Callahan recognizes that in certain situations we might need to limit freedom. Even though Callahan recognizes these potential limits on freedom, he believes supporting such limitations on freedom will be difficult without *very* convincing reasons. In other words, Callahan recognizes that circumstances might exist where we must limit

¹ Paul R. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb*, (Binghamton, NY: Vail-Ballou Press, Inc., 1969).

² Daniel Callahan, "Ethics and Population Limitation," *Science* 175 (February 1972): 487-488.

certain procreative freedoms, however, he would always prefer to have freedom than to not.³

In his work, however, Callahan fails to thoroughly explicate the motivations for this assertion. He explains his stance better than Simon, but he still does not present a complete explanation. In his work, Callahan outlines three values he believes encapsulate our potential issues with population control: freedom, justice and security-survival.⁴ We value freedom, Callahan asserts, because “it is a condition for self-determination and the achievement of knowledge.”⁵ While Callahan never specifically defines it, we will take freedom to mean the right to make decisions of our own volition, in particular the right to make decisions about the number of children we wish to have. He refers to justice specifically as distributive justice that we value because “it entails the equality of treatment and opportunity and an equitable access to those resources and opportunities necessary for human development.”⁶ In this context, this means that justice gains importance because it allows everyone an equal chance to reach a particular level of human welfare and growth throughout their lives. Finally, Callahan claims we value security-survival because without it we have no life and thus cannot appreciate any of life’s opportunities.⁷ Callahan provides no straightforward definition for security-survival and thus we will assume it refers to the commitment to ensuring that human life will continue and remain intact.

³ Ibid, 487-494.

⁴ Ibid, 488.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Callahan believes that in the discussions surrounding population control each of these three values must be taken into account. However, freedom will have primacy. Callahan bases this off the United Nation's acknowledgment of the importance of a couple's right to bear the number of children it wishes as well as the importance of freedom providing humans with dignity.⁸ There may be cases when freedom can be justifiably limited because an increase in the importance of justice or security-survival would increase human welfare and human values. However, given the choice between the three, Callahan chooses freedom as the ultimate value to uphold.

In order to investigate these situations wherein freedom may be limited in the pursuit of greater well-being, Callahan analyzes the actors involved in the practice of freedom, particularly individuals and governments. Callahan limits his discussion of individuals to readily defending their right to control their fertility, however, he believes they must "respect the requirements of the common good in their exercise of free choice. The source of these obligations is the rights of others."⁹ Thus, the situation wherein an individual's right to freedom should be limited would be when it imposes upon either the security-survival (the common good of others) or justice (the rights of others) of others in a given community.

Because he is concerned with potential governmental measures that may limit population growth, Callahan's explanation of the matter is far more complicated than his justification of individuals' freedoms. First, Callahan believes that governments have always intervened in individual procreative freedoms with even simple provisions such as

⁸ Ibid, 489, 494.

⁹ Ibid, 489.

marriage restrictions. Formal population control policies would indeed be a more complex and direct intervention into procreative freedoms; however, they would merely be an extension of already accepted government regulations.¹⁰

Callahan's Order of Preference For Control Methods

Callahan creates an order of preference of the measures the government should endorse in order to regulate population growth. The controls we should consider are those that are voluntary and hopefully give primacy to freedom such as family planning programs through education and the accessibility of particular contraceptive measures.

If and *only* if these measures fail and have been determined to be measures which will continue to fail, governments may then implement voluntary programs or regulations which use positive incentives such as payments for families that limit the number of children they have, or rewards for partaking in sterilization.¹¹ Callahan understands that while these measures may be less coercive than other options, they are still potentially quite coercive. For example, poor families might face such financial struggles that they forgo having desired children because the temptation of the positive incentives are too great—thus, these incentives do not really appear voluntary at all. In addition, Callahan acknowledges that these programs will affect poorer individuals far greater than their wealthier counterparts and thus the programs have implications for limiting certain levels of justice.¹² However, assuming that population control's overall goal is to protect

¹⁰ Ibid, 490.

¹¹ Ibid, 491.

¹² Ibid.

security-survival in some sense, the positive incentive programs will at least be respecting one of Callahan's three important values.

Finally, should these voluntary population control programs fail, Callahan argues then, and only then, can we turn to what might be considered highly coercive and involuntary population control measures. These could include involuntary sterilizations, forced abortions, fines and other punishments for having too many children.¹³ However, Callahan argues these last measures would violate so many values that they will never be permissible. It is clear that these negative and coercive measures would have great consequences for both freedom and justice. Both men and women would be susceptible to injustices as well as abuses of rights to their bodies through involuntary sterilizations and abortions. Additionally, issues of justice would arise given that certain individuals would not have access to the contraceptives that might eliminate the possibility of measures such as forced abortions. Others would not be able to afford certain monetary penalties that could be used to deter or punish unwarranted births.¹⁴ It appears the only value that we esteem that would be protected when these involuntary measures are in effect would be security-survival. Even then, however, Callahan questions whether the social effects of these programs might have unknown and potentially disastrous impacts on cultural and social life.¹⁵

While Callahan continuously emphasizes the need to balance the three values, he eventually concludes that our freedom to choose still holds primacy over justice and security-survival except in very particular and unique cases. "To give primacy to the right

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid, 492.

of free choice is to take a risk,” Callahan surmises, “The justification for the risk is the high value assigned to the right, a value that transcends simply utilitarian considerations.”¹⁶ Even with his considerations of justice and security-survival, Callahan remains convinced that we should ultimately assign freedom as the value of greatest importance.

A Note on Justice

While Callahan argues that justice is also an important aspect of the group, the question I am attempting to answer is not concerned with the value of justice. Therefore, in the remainder of this thesis I will not consider justice. The reason I do not need to focus on balancing justice is because the issue I am discussing is not dependent upon it.

The issue I discuss and attempt to resolve is what to do when overpopulation causes environmental destruction and we must decide whether to either limit population using coercive population control methods or risk our security-survival by not limiting procreative rights. I consider freedom and security-survival because this situation considers whether procreative freedoms can be limited in favor of security-survival. The decision we must make is one between these two values. Therefore, I am not concerned with potential problems for justice and will not be evaluating it. The choice we must make remains one between security-survival and freedom.

¹⁶ Ibid, 494.

Implications of Callahan's Order of Preference

In theory, Callahan approaches his order of preference in a logical and legitimate way to show how we should deal with population control, and it would be difficult to argue against the manner in which he ranks the different potential types of population control programs. However, we must consider that milder forms of control, especially the completely voluntary family planning programs, may not be feasible. Essentially, these voluntary programs to deter people from having children simply may not work—if they did, one would imagine there would be little concern about a population explosion in the first place.

Considering the potential failure of voluntary control programs, if we concede that coercive measures must be taken, we are faced with another issue: when given the choice between the highly coercive population control programs and security-survival on one hand, and freedom with a less certain level of security-survival on the other, what choice should we make? We must decide whether we value security-survival so greatly that we are willing to give up our complete procreative freedom or else risk a level of our ensured survival in exchange for the ability to choose how many children we can have.

How Do We Regulate Society?

Callahan's argument in favor of the primacy of freedom automatically appeals to our desire for liberty. Most people enjoy freedom and think it is something we should try to uphold. However, given that we probably cannot rely on voluntary population

programs to limit our population, Callahan's preference for freedom might not apply.¹⁷

While his argument has value in a circumstance where we can easily convince individuals to give up their right to procreative freedoms, the decision between security-survival and freedom will present us with a much more difficult choice when we either have complete freedom to procreate or extremely little because of involuntary population control measures. Callahan provides us with a solution to understand voluntary control measures, however, the circumstances where these measure work are not the ones that I am investigating.

In order to determine how we must balance security-survival and freedom in this difficult situation, some guidelines must exist that allow us to remain consistent and understand why we choose between security-survival and our freedom to choose.

Callahan correctly argues that we first and foremost wish to uphold individual liberty and the right to make choices about our lives.¹⁸ However, laws and regulations exist that greatly limit our individual freedoms with which we agree and justify. For example, while we value freedom, we do not think limiting the freedom to steal is bad—in fact, we want limitations to exist that prevent stealing. Therefore, while many of us believe in and agree with Callahan's preference for freedom at some level, we justify regulating individual freedoms because some regulations appeal to separate values besides freedom that we hold to a similar or greater degree of importance. Mainly, we sometimes demonstrate a preference for security-survival over freedom.

¹⁷ Daniel Callahan, "Ethics and Population Limitation," *Science* 175 (February 1972): 487-494.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

By evaluating the circumstances wherein we believe limiting personal freedoms is okay and then deciding *why* we think limiting these personal freedoms is okay, we can then determine whether we should justify certain population control measures or not. That is, by determining when we agree, encourage or accept regulation of our personal freedoms in the pursuit of security-survival we can decide whether we should justify other individual limitations of our freedom such as regulations that limit how many children we have. Otherwise, we might believe we should never allow regulations that limit how many children we have because it too greatly violates our right to personal choices.

In order to answer the proposed question about our procreative freedoms, I will now develop a principle to use to answer this question. We cannot just consider the issue at hand and arbitrarily decide we think one way or another about it—this is a poor way to make decisions and it inevitably will not survive any thoughtful critique by those who disagree with it. Instead, I have formulated a principle that will provide a logical and reasonable way to face certain issues that involve the issue of regulating personal liberty.

A Principle to Regulate Harm

I now propose a principle that tells us when we should we accept governmental regulations on our personal freedoms. I will analyze this principle for regulation by outlining both the circumstances wherein the government regulates our behavior as well as those in which the government does not regulate our behavior. This comparison will help us to understand what values we uphold when we do regulate our personal freedoms.

In the process of regulating individuals and their personal freedoms, I advocate for a harm principle that originates from the ideas of John Stuart Mill who determined that we do not allow certain behaviors because they cause harm to certain individuals.¹⁹

According to my harm principle:

The government may interfere in or regulate a behavior when the interference prevents an individual from unjustly harming another person. Unjust harm is when a harmful behavior makes the world worse off by lowering our security-survival than banning the behavior would.²⁰

For example, we can look at the case of rape in order to understand the principle. The government creates regulations that prevent rapes from occurring. According to my principle this would be because rape is an unjust harm. We know rape is harmful to the victim both mentally and physically. To decide whether this harm is unjust, we need to know if regulating rape makes the world better or worse. Rape causes victims a great deal of harm, and it is difficult to think of a way that rape improves the world. Therefore, because rape only adds negativity to our world, making our world worse off, we regulate it. This example shows how the principle might be applied.

Clarifications of the Principle

A few clarifications must be made in order to fully understand this principle. First, it is necessary to include both action and inaction in behavior that the government can regulate. While actions can clearly hurt individuals, there are times when individuals will passively ill effect others lives and we believe we should regulate the inaction to

¹⁹ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1859).

²⁰ Nils Holtug, "The Harm Principle." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 5, no. 4 (2002): 359-360. Nils Holtug explains that harm will be necessary, but not sufficient in determining our regulation. This idea was considered in the creation of the principle.

avoid unjust harm. For example, we do not believe parents should ignore their children's needs and thus we regulate their *inaction* through Social Services.

Additionally, it is necessary to include both actions that intend to hurt individuals and those which are not intentional but might or do cause harm to other individuals. For example, we require individuals to take a driving test to regulate the harm that can be inflicted while driving not because all drivers want to hurt others when they get behind the wheel but because driving introduces the possibility of harm.

The clause that states “when a harmful behavior makes the world worse off by lowering our security-survival than banning the behavior would,” demonstrates the balance we must strike between personal freedoms and security-survival. What this principle says, therefore, is that we do not allow harm when it results in lower security-survival because we think that a decrease in security-survival is worse than the harm caused by an interference or regulation of personal freedoms.²¹ My principle should suffice in explaining when we justify regulations of certain individual freedoms in pursuit of our security-survival.

As previously stated analyzing both regulations and certain non-regulation will further our understanding of the principle and also help show whether the principle rightly explains how we regulate our society. This is because while analyzing examples of regulations allows us to understand why we regulate certain circumstances, there are times when we do not regulate behaviors that are very similar. Such lack of regulation should be just as acceptable to us as instances of regulation but we need to understand

²¹ Holtug, “The Harm Principle”, 368. Holtug similarly discusses regulation to prevent loss of welfare.

why similar behaviors are not responded to in the same manner. In other words, we must understand why a particular behavior might be regulated but a similar one is not.

Limitations of the Principle

The purpose of the principle is to have a way to judge whether or not we should regulate particular behaviors. The argument for this principle is not complete and there are certain questions about the philosophy that will remain unanswered.

For example, the following principle fails to discuss certain issues such as that of paternalism wherein certain behaviors that do not cause harm to anyone except for the person carrying out the behavior are regulated. Common examples of such regulations are laws that require us to wear seatbelts—we do not harm others by not wearing a seatbelt and it is very difficult to argue otherwise. Another common example is that of requiring motorcyclists to wear helmets.

Regardless of the paternalistic law, the question of how to deal with such regulations will not be determined by my principle. However, given that paternalism does not affect the question I ultimately hope to answer (whether or not we should be allowed to have as many children as we wish), I will not discuss such issues, and I recognize that this may cause problems for my philosophy. This philosophy does not hope to analyze every regulation of the government because the question of procreative rights does not involve every type of regulation. The scope of questions we can answer with this principle is limited and this is purposeful. However, hopefully the principle does allow me to answer my question of interest—whether to regulate how many children we have or not given certain environmental circumstances. I do not intend to analyze all types of

government regulations and because of that, the limitations of the principle are acceptable.

The Method of Formulating the Principle

Applying and understanding the principle will be easier if we understand how to come up with such a principle. A simple way to decide how we believe the government should respond to particular circumstances is to first look at real life examples of government regulation. Most likely, there are underlying or implicit values in the regulations that we agree with but we might not recognize these values without stopping and looking for them. In this case, one would look at instances where the government limits our personal freedoms and then try to decide what the values underlying these regulations are in order to then formulate a principle.

For example, one might consider the fact that we regulate murder. While there are certain circumstances where this may not be the case, we can conclude that the main reason we regulate murder is because it causes unjust harm. In looking at this example as well as many others, one might discover that there are in fact many circumstances where we seem to accept regulation of behavior because it causes people harm. Therefore, preventing harm must be something that we value and because we value it, we support regulations that prevent harm. The principle must then include harm.

However, upon further investigation one might realize that we sometimes allow and accept unjust harm to occur. Therefore, there must be at least one other thing that we value in addition to preventing harm when we decide what behaviors to regulate. In the case of this principle, one could look at work such as Daniel Callahan's that implies we

value security-survival and then also look at real examples of government regulations to see if security-survival might be something else that we value besides freedom. If it appears security-survival is something we value, one might take into account that we sometimes allow unjust harm because allowing harm sometimes increases our security-survival. In other words, allowing harm might make the world a better place than it would be without a particular type of harm. Combining these two ideas of harm and security-survival, one would then reach a principle about regulating personal freedoms and harm such as the one I propose.

The next step, which this section will attempt to accomplish, is to then work through other real examples of government regulation in order to demonstrate the validity of the principle.

The benefit of using this method to create a principle is that instead of making arbitrary guesses about how we *might* regulate individual freedoms, we can analyze how we *actually* regulate individuals. Therefore the principle reflects our real world inclinations. This allows for a more precise principle that is hopefully more successful than it would otherwise be.

Real-World Examples of the Principle

Now that we have a principle, we can go through real-world examples to see if the principle works to explain why we regulate certain individual behaviors.

As stated above, there are circumstances where we do regulate harmful behavior as well as circumstances where we do not regulate harmful behavior. Therefore, in

demonstrating examples to evaluate my principle, I will divide the discussion into a section about regulated behaviors and a section about unregulated behaviors.

The Application of the Principle to Regulated Behaviors

First, I will analyze the principle through behaviors that we regulate as opposed to ones that we do not regulate. However, I believe we regulate behaviors for the following two reasons:

- I. Because regulating a harmful behavior protects or ensures our security-survival.
- II. Because regulating a harmful behavior improves or benefits our security-survival.

I. and II. vary in that I. avoids a certain or likely harm and allows a society to remain at a certain level of well-being whereas II. allows for the elevation of a particular society from a certain level of well-being to a greater one.

Regulation of Harmful Behaviors to Protect Security-Survival

The first type of analyzed regulated behaviors will be those of category I wherein we regulate a harmful behavior because it serves to protect security-survival of the greater good.

Many such examples exist, however the controversy of the examples varies. I will begin by demonstrating that certain uncontroversial examples exist. For example, we do not believe we should be allowed to kill someone in order to mug her and thus we regulate such behavior. The harm being regulated in this situation is the harm done to the mugged and murdered individual. We cannot justify murdering an innocent individual in order to gain the money or belongings carried by her. We regulate the behavior of both mugging and murdering someone because it harms some individual and does not make the world better off than it would be if we did not allowing the mugging or murdering.

While one might argue that the person who gains money or other benefits from mugging an innocent individual does see an increase in *personal* security-survival, these principles should be analyzed based on their application to a large-scale society. Thus, while the mugger may personally benefit from his behavior, if we permit everyone in society who wants to mug and murder without regulation to do so, the consequences to society will not be ones that make us better off by increasing our security-survival. We should assume that such a lack of regulation would result in a largely immoral and dangerous world that would not protect long-term security-survival of a particular society.

To decide whether such a regulation makes the world better off, we should consider what the world might look like without the regulation and decide if that world is better. In a world where everyone may freely kill and steal, every individual will probably be very scared for his or her safety a majority of the time. Additionally, people will not trust that their belongings are safe. Both of these consequences of allowing individuals to mug must be weighed against the negatives of not personally being

allowed to murder. I assume that we all prefer to generally feel safe more than having the right to kill for money. Therefore, murder and stealing make the world a worse place than it would otherwise be which makes the consequences of these behaviors unjust harms. Therefore, we regulate these behaviors.

This example demonstrates our acceptance of the principle and its application to regulating harms because murdering and mugging not only cause harm, but they also do not protect or ensure security-survival; they make the world worse off. Other less controversial examples include the regulation of stealing in general and many traffic provisions, such as speeding while driving.

Additionally, while these examples exemplify actions that we regulate, an example such as taxes shows that inaction can also be harmful and therefore regulated. When a person does not pay their taxes they are not, most likely, intentionally causing harm to another individual. The action is therefore passive, not active. Of course, taxes are accepted on one hand because they are a cost of living in a particular society and of receiving the benefits of that given society. Therefore, if an individual does not pay their taxes, they are not upholding the agreement into which they entered when they joined a given society and hoped to benefit from its advantages. However, this seems like a reason why everyone must initially *pay* taxes, but the principle also explains why we also regulate individuals who do *not* pay their taxes.

When person A refuses to pay his taxes he is doing unjust harm to every other person in society. This is because every other individual has paid their dues and is helping to make sure A can still benefit from a given society. The reason person A's actions count as unjust harm is because if A paid his taxes, society would be better off.

One way to know that society is better off when A pays his taxes is to imagine if no one paid their taxes. In this circumstance, maintaining civil society would be extremely difficult and given that we all choose to live in society, I assume that we believe society is preferable to living in the wild, for example. The difference for the rest of society if A personally paid his taxes would be limited, however, because everyone pays their taxes we benefit greatly. We limit individuals to paying their taxes because it has certain implications for society. Mainly, by limiting every person to paying taxes we make the world better off and increase our security-survival. Because the world would be worse off if we did not make people pay taxes, we know the wrongdoing individuals like A are causing is unjust and should be regulated. Thus, taxes demonstrate an example of when we regulate harmful inaction because it does not benefit or ensure security-survival.

These widely-accepted regulations cause us little angst (aside from the inconvenience they might add to our lives) because we recognize their societal benefits. However, more complicated and controversial instances of regulating harmful behavior in order to protect security-survival exist.

For example, smoking regulations regulate harm to protect and ensure security-survival, however, many individuals probably disagree with these regulations. I will now evaluate this example with the principle in order to demonstrate why we accept such regulations.

While not every place in the United States regulates smoking in public in the same way, as a society we accept that regulation of smoking in certain places is justified. Smoking causes detrimental effects for the individuals who themselves are smoking. More importantly for the purpose of the principle, smokers also cause harm to the people

around them through the consequences of secondhand smoking. Smoking is most often regulated in enclosed places such as restaurants, or other types of buildings and locations where close contact between a smoker and someone who does not wish to breathe in secondhand smoke is likely. Thus, smoking has a great possibility of making others' lives worse when it is allowed in the places where it is regulated because the harmful consequences are difficult to avoid. We do not, however, regulate smoking in places where an individual's smoking does not *directly* affect others—the unjust harm seems to end when a person can easily avoid secondhand smoking.

If smoking is regulated, then my principle should say the harm it causes must be unjust and harming to our security-survival. We do not justify harmful actions when they ill-effect the security-survival of society and this should be why we regulate smoking. To determine whether smoking causes unjust harm, I must evaluate whether the world is better off because we regulate it. When a single person smokes inside a restaurant, for example, it ill-effects the health of many people around him. When we do not allow individuals to smoke in restaurants, individuals who to smoke must either wait until they leave the restaurant to smoke, or get up and relocate themselves so that they can smoke. The negative in the circumstance where we allow smoking is that the health of many people is involuntarily compromised. In the situation where we do not allow smoking, the negative is that a smoker must either wait to smoke or get up and walk outside in order to smoke. Therefore, the choice is between protecting the health of individuals or making a person have patience or relocate himself for a few minutes. Choosing to protect many persons' health makes the world better off because by protecting our health we improve

our security-survival. The harm caused by smoking is therefore unjust and we regulate smoking accordingly.

Apart from causing harm to individuals who are breathing in secondhand smoke, we may also regulate smoking because it poses a problem for our environment. Excessive smoking may have bad enough impacts on our air that would cause harm to other individuals in a more long-term way than merely direct secondhand smoking. In determining whether the principle applies, we must see if the world is worse off without the regulation given what smoking means for our long-term air quality. If we allow smoking, then we are giving certain individuals the personal freedom to smoke, but also causing *everyone* to be at a health risk due to the smoking. Because the freedom allowed through smoking only applies to certain individuals (and the benefit is not a necessary benefit in order to survive) and the harm affects everyone's health, smoking causes unjust harm and makes the world worse off. Therefore, we regulate smoking.

Neither reason for regulating smoking, neither that smoking causes negative effects via secondhand smoke nor its harmful impacts on the environment, results in a benefit to the security-survival of the greater good. Therefore we justify the regulation of smoking as predicted by the principle.

If we regulate smoking because it makes others' lives worse due to secondhand smoke or because it creates an environmental issue, we must consider similar phenomena that cause the same types of issues but which are not regulated, in particular, cars. Cars demonstrate an example of an issue that we can easily compare to smoking. However, because the similar harm caused by cars goes unregulated, the discussion of this example will appear later in the section that acknowledges such unregulated issues.

Regulation of Harmful Behaviors to Promote Security-Survival

In addition to the regulations of individuals to avoid harm that will hurt security-survival, we also regulate certain individual behaviors in order to promote security-survival. These regulations vary from those I have previously discussed because they do not necessarily avoid harm. Rather they attempt to improve a circumstance.

Anti-trust laws demonstrate this type of regulation. These types of laws limit the rights of businessmen because they do not allow any type of business agreement to take place, even ethical agreements that do not cause explicit harm. By limiting companies with anti-trust laws, we increase other positive things such as market competition, which improves security-survival because it continuously allows for improvement through development.

As a side note, Julian Simon would agree that such laws would have a very positive benefit on society because they ensure that we are continually challenging ourselves to improve instead of relying on monopolies that can retain power without much growth. While a lack of growth may not explicitly hurt security-survival, allowing competition and thus innovation benefits us greatly. There could be harm to the companies that we limit, however, we justify these limitations because they benefit our security-survival. We know that anti-trust laws make the world better off by looking at what might occur if they did not exist. In a world without anti-trust laws, we would expect to have a few very powerful monopolies.

While there are many consequences of monopolies, one simple result is that monopolies control the market or industry in which they exist. If a monopoly gets too

powerful then it has the ability to raise the price of its commodity above a reasonable market level. This means that in a world without anti-trust laws where monopolies exist, people are also paying too much for their goods. The monopoly makes more money, but every consumer pays too much. Either every consumer pays more, or a monopoly makes a little less. I argue, and the principle and current anti-trust regulations back up this belief, that the world is better off when the monopoly does not make quite as much and everyone else is better off. In addition to society benefitting from anti-trust laws because they prevent people from paying too much for commodities, anti-trust laws also encourage competition. As explained above in my discussion of Simon, competition improves technologies. I argue the competition has effects that make the world better off than it would be without anti-trust laws. Therefore, because anti-trust laws make the world better off and thus avoid certain unjust harms, we regulate the economy through anti-trust laws.

Taxes demonstrate another example of regulation in order to improve security-survival. While the previous example of taxes used the inaction of not paying taxes, I will now use the action of paying taxes to show that certain limitations of our rights do not attempt to limit harm, but instead their implementation seeks an improvement that leads to greater security-survival.

When we pay taxes, the government limits our individual choice to use our money as we wish and also our right to our earnings. While these taxes do pay for regulating bodies, such as the police force, they also fund projects for improved infrastructure. As a whole, even while considering aspects like the police force that attempt to avoid harm, taxes seek to achieve a better society through improved public works, education, and the

employment of individuals who assure us that society will run as well as possible. If we did not pay taxes we would lack the necessary infrastructure to make society work, which would result in a worse off situation for society than we currently have with taxes. Because we would be worse off and have a lower security-survival without taxes than we do with taxes, we accept that the government regulates our personal freedoms with taxes. By providing the necessary elements with which to have a functional society, taxes harm the individual, however, they add a huge benefit to society as a whole and to security-survival. The principle adequately explains why we accept individual regulation in the form of taxes.

Other examples of this kind exist, such as that of education, which limits the right of parents to choose exactly how to educate their child yet appeals to the greater good of society because it promotes an educated population. These examples show that we accept regulations, whether in order to avoid harm or to promote a good for security-survival, that appeal to the principle.

The Application of the Principle to Unregulated Behaviors

While the principle explains our reasons for justifying certain behavior, we must also realize that we do not regulate other, possibly very similar, behaviors. If we strongly believe that we should regulate individuals from acting in harmful ways we must also justify why certain circumstances arise where behavior that seems harmful goes unregulated. I will now provide some examples of behaviors that demonstrate that we will not accept a principle that only deals with the regulation of harm because we also

agree with not regulating certain harmful behavior. This will help demonstrate that we consider more than just harm when we regulate certain behaviors.

In analyzing circumstances where we do not regulate behavior, we choose to not regulate for the following two reasons:

- i. Not regulating harmful behavior ensures or benefits security-survival.
- ii. Not regulating harmful behavior avoids the violation of another human right.

The unregulated categories consider both harmful behaviors and harmless behaviors. To simply say that we should regulate all harmful behavior would not suffice because there are some behaviors which are harmful and unregulated. However, generalizing that the only cases wherein we overlook harm are those that have the interest of security-survival might also be problematic because cases exist where we allow harm and it does not benefit or protect security-survival.

Non-Regulation of Harm to Ensure or Benefit Security-Survival

I will now return to the issue of allowing individuals to drive cars that arose earlier in the discussion of smoking. Cars undoubtedly have a possibility of causing harm (they are, in fact, quite dangerous) and they definitely pose serious threats to our natural environment. Yet, we still use cars and regulating their use would definitely cause mass uproar. The difference between cars and smoking, however, is that cars provide an indispensable benefit to the public—they demonstrate why we must consider the impact of regulation on security-survival. Cars have caused untold damage to the environment; however, there must be some belief that the benefit they have added to society outweighs the negative they have done to the environment.

Imagine a world without cars and surely one will realize that many people and societies would become dysfunctional. Without cars, we would be lacking a very important part of our societal infrastructure. People would have a hard time transporting themselves, especially in certain places, and this would cause society to become very inefficient. It is actually quite difficult to imagine how much we would have to change and fix in order to reach a point where automobiles were no longer productive or necessary to use. The alternative is the society that we live in where cars do cause pollution, however, we function productively. Currently, and this may not always be the case, the world with cars is better off than the one without them. While cars definitely cause harm to individuals and also cause damage to the environment, they also ensure security-survival and make the world better off, at least temporarily.

There might come a time when we regulate the use of cars and eliminate them, however, at that point there will inevitably be something that has replaced our necessity for them and covered their role in maintaining security-survival. One reason this example poses controversy is because at this point in time, we have difficulty deciding whether the security-survival provided by cars overpowers the security-survival benefits of not allowing cars to endanger our environment. One thing, however, is clear. We need something that adds to our security-survival in the manner that cars do. The question is whether we allow that something to continue hurting other security-ensuring phenomena. As they currently stand, cars provide an example of a time where we fail to regulate a harm because the harm ensures security-survival.

Additionally, while we do not regulate using cars outright, we regulate the ways in which they are built, with what materials, as well as how they are operated in order to

minimize the harm cars may cause. For example, we accept that speeding causes harm to individuals without making the world better off and therefore it is regulated. We also accept traffic provisions like stoplights because driving without them would result in a very unorganized situation that would be dangerous to many individuals without promoting security-survival. We do not eliminate the use of cars because they fulfill a role that improves the overall well-being and security-survival of society, however we do regulate issues associated with cars that do not provide the same security-survival. Cars also present us with a very good example because they show that while we are okay with regulating personal freedoms surrounding cars, we do not give up the aspects that help our security-survival.

Another example wherein we do not regulate harm, or perhaps we even allow it because it allows security-survival is in cases of self-defense. If an individual threatens the life of someone else and the person under threat must take extreme action in order to protect their own life, we often justify these actions given that the self-defense does not inflict any unnecessary harm. The innocent victim incapacitating her attacker might benefit security-survival in the sense that a dangerous and harmful individual can no longer inflict harm upon other individuals in society, however, allowing the victim to protect herself has an even greater impact on society and not just in the instance of the individual criminal.

By allowing the victim to protect herself, we as a society state that we do not believe individuals have the right to unjustifiably hurt others. Living in a society that explicitly rejects causing undue harm to individuals clearly outranks a society that condones unjustifiably hurting individuals. Allowing self-defense improves the security-

survival of a society not only because it eliminates a certain level of violence, but also because it discourages the type of morals we want to eliminate from the society in which we live. Improved morals that encourage harmless and reject harmful treatment of one another must have a positive impact on the security-survival of a given society because in a world where people are encouraged to hurt others without consequence, we can imagine that more people would hurt others without restrictions. The world is better off when we regulate and discourage these personal harms. Therefore, in allowing self-defense we improve and benefit the utility and security-survival of a society, and thus the principle justifies it.

Circumstances also exist wherein we allow physically harming individuals in order to promote security-survival, but the harm does not include direct self-defense. For example, in a circumstance where an individual poses such a great threat to a society that killing them would increase security-survival, we may condone harm upon that individual. For example, few would argue that if a random individual had killed Hitler he should earn great punishment. Killing Hitler would have improved security-survival of an entire culture and made the world better off than allowing him to live, and thus we would justify his death.

Non-Regulation of Harmful Behavior to Protect An Alternative Right

I will now discuss situations where we allow harm to avoid violating another right. Adultery provides us with a clear example of this type of unregulated behavior. When an individual decides to have an extra-marital affair I assume he causes harm to his spouse. Thus, given the harm aspect of the principle, we should regulate affairs—the

world would surely be better off if people were faithful to one another as opposed to not. The government, however, does not attempt to regulate such behavior, and this can be explained because if we regulate the harm, we make the world even worse off than if we do not regulate affairs. In other words, regulating affairs would violate others things we believe are more important than the harm caused by affairs. Therefore, because regulating the harm makes the world worse off than if it is not regulated, we do not regulate the harmful behavior.

To understand why, we must consider what might occur if we regulated adultery. This would require certain measures that would inevitably impose upon certain rights to privacy. For example, regulating adultery would probably require extreme measures that include people monitoring our homes—this is surely something we do not want. We must believe that the world would be worse off and our security-survival would be lower if we tried to regulate adultery because it would mean giving up a certain level of privacy. While we do not want adultery to occur, we value having a certain level of privacy more than we worry about adultery. Because it demonstrates that we do not regulate all the time because regulating harm may not always result in higher security-survival, the example of adultery supports my principle.

Therefore, while we want to avoid harm, we must consider more than harm in our principle because certain situations that allow harm or even potentially cause harm increase our security-survival. Solely focusing on the issue of harm, while important, misinterprets how we actual think about our world and to what standards we hold our society.

Other examples exist where someone might be causing a person extremely minimal harm and thus we do not regulate them. For example, it would surely count as harm to an individual to have offensive slurs yelled at him publically. However, depending on the details of such an event, we might feel obligated to regulate someone or not.

Let's suppose one morning John walks out of his apartment and Robert, someone with whom John is not friends, decides to yell something highly offensive at John. No one can argue that John might not be mentally harmed by this interaction, however, few probably believe we should legally stop Robert from ceasing his comments because such a regulation would mean extreme limitations of our freedom of speech that no one wants. Thus, we do not choose to regulate small harms like that done to John because it would limit the benefit and right of freedom of speech in exchange for causing a very small reduction in harm. This small reduction in harm would make the world less well-off than allowing the continuation of our freedom of speech. We should not be concerned with the minimal harm John experiences as opposed to the great harm that limiting free speech would allow. This lack of regulation benefits our security-survival and thus supports the principle.

The use of examples of unregulated principles helps to elucidate our reasons for regulating certain behaviors and allowing others. While at first harm may seem to rule much of how we determine what should be regulated, through looking at these unregulated behaviors we can understand that regulations consider much more than simply who may be hurt by particular behaviors.

Summary and Application of the Principle

I began this chapter by evaluating the work of philosopher Daniel Callahan to hopefully find an argument for Simon's moral claim. Simon claims that we should value our freedom to have as many children as we want above everything else, however, he fails to explain why he believes this. In looking at Callahan, the goal was to see if Callahan could bring reason to Simon's argument. Going through Callahan's argument, we find that he values freedom above security-survival and justice, however, Callahan never deeply explores what we should do if involuntary population control measures are necessary.

Callahan's work is helpful because it illustrates that we also value security-survival and justice, however, he does not tell us how to choose between our freedom to choose and security-survival in the case where we may not live if we have as many children as we want. He says we cannot ever turn to highly coercive population control measures because they would violate too much, however, he never truly explains how the violation is more important than our ability to survive.

In order to understand this violation that Callahan never quite explains, I offer a principle to show us when we can violate personal freedoms. The principle I offer is a harm principle that states we do not allow unjust harm where unjust harm is harm that makes the world worse off—it harms our security-survival.

I explain that in proposing such a principle, one might look to real-world examples to see what we already think about when we regulate individual freedoms. In looking at these real-world principles, we can see that we value certain things and accept

regulations for certain reasons. After looking at many real-world examples, one can then create a principle based on the values the real-world regulations attempt to protect.

I initially demonstrate the example of rape and then go through many other examples of both regulation and non-regulation to show that the principle correctly demonstrates how we believe our world should be regulated. For example, I explain we regulate smoking because it causes unjust harm, and I show that we do not regulate private matters, such as adultery because regulating this type of behavior would cause an even greater harm. I also noted that while this principle can help us answer questions about harm, it purposefully could not explain every type of government regulation. The purpose of this principle is to balance harm in situations involving personal freedom and security-survival. I show that it can resolve such issues and therefore, can be applied to the greater question of this thesis.

By using this principle we can now determine whether behaviors that may not be issues of regulation yet, but that might need to be considered at some point, should be regulated. To clarify, the proposed principle should allow, for the purposes of this paper, for a clear decision about whether we can regulate how many children we have or not given an environmental crisis.

This question will be explored in the next chapter. I will evaluate a few circumstances that may arise in the future. The circumstances are all different ways that population may effect the environment and our livelihood. Julian Simon believes that we will never reach a population that will cause us to no longer use our planet, however, I discuss this possibility and see how strong his moral argument about our freedom to procreate is against it. The circumstances I will discuss are not meant to be predictions of

what is to come—they are merely possibilities that pose interesting philosophical questions about the balance between procreative freedom and security.

Chapter 3— Applying The Principles to Simon’s Moral Claims

In this section I will take the principle set forth in the previous chapter and apply it to potential future situations regarding the environment and population. Before this analysis takes place, however, I must explain a few presuppositions I make.

Presuppositions

Planning for Emergencies Can Only Help Us

First, no one can be certain what will occur in the future in terms of population and the environment. Because of that, it is necessary to imagine multiple possible outcomes and to also recognize that there are infinite possible outcomes—I could never address them all. However, by using this harm principle we will be able to evaluate a few of these potential situations.

Imagining potential outcomes and determining how we might respond to them is something we do often. Examples include simple planning like fire or earthquake drills, as well as more complicated planning like counter-terrorism strategies. We do this so that when a particular situation occurs we are *more* prepared to respond than we might have been without ever addressing the possibility of the situation. Preparation can avoid certain chaos in emergency situations, and the analysis of what we *might* do given certain population and environmental circumstances can help us in the future.

This paper provides an opportunity to examine circumstances we might face and to decide a potential course of action should given circumstances arise. This thesis attempts to accomplish a type of strategizing that societies use all of the time, and this exercise of planning is very useful.

We Do Not Want Coercive Family Planning

The second presupposition I will make is to clarify that it would be preferable to avoid coercive population control measures whenever possible. I advocate, barring extreme circumstances, we should only support voluntary population control measures. We must strongly consider the consequences of coercive measures before implementing them and do our best to avoid such measures at all costs. We must address this presupposition because even though the thesis attempts to analyze situations wherein voluntary methods will not suffice, we cannot forget that they are preferred.

However, given that presupposition, the situation that forces us to consider the difficult moral question of whether we can have as many children as we wish is the one wherein the voluntary methods are ineffective. I wish to consider the hypothetical situation where we encounter such serious issues that voluntary population control measures do not sufficiently control the population. In this circumstance, the choice we must make rests between either accepting highly coercive population control methods and an improved greater security-survival or the right to choose how many children we have with the understanding that such a freedom could severely impact our security-survival. It would be difficult to accept coercive measures when voluntary measures are

sufficient, and thus in addressing the situations where we might consider coercive measures, I assume voluntary ones have failed.

Application of the Principle

Before I continue with the analysis of the potential outcomes, I will outline, for reference, the formerly decided upon principle for the regulation of our individual choice. In analyzing particular circumstances, the principle will be most helpful if we use it as a guide for how to approach a given circumstance.

As such, the principle put forth in the previous chapter guides us to first determine whether a particular behavior causes unjust harm to other individuals.¹ We know harm is unjust when it makes the world worse off than it would be without the harm.

The way to decide whether harm makes the world worse off is to make what are called utility calculations. Utility calculations ask us to balance different possible outcomes and to decide which outcome best suits society as a whole. These calculations are very difficult to make because in many circumstances, people will not agree on what makes the world better off. One reason it is difficult in certain cases to have everyone agree upon a utility calculation (or to even explain one fully) is because many utility calculations are made using personal beliefs. The calculations are most successful when a personal belief is also widespread societal belief, however, that is not always the case. For example, it is a widespread belief that murder is wrong, and a utility calculation about murder is relatively simple. We can assume that most people agree murder does not

¹ As previously mentioned, this idea of Harm Theory comes from the ideas originally put forth by John Stuart Mill. See John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1859).

make the world better off. However, making a utility calculation about abortion is very difficult because people have different beliefs about whether it is wrong or not.

We must use these utility calculations and differentiate between harm and unjust harm because we do not consider certain harms to be unjust and therefore those harms are not regulated. This is based on the idea that in regulating individual behaviors, harm is not the only aspect of a behavior that might bother us. We are concerned with unjust harm because it is bad for our security-survival. The principle explains that in addition to caring about harm, we are also concerned with the overall implications of a certain behavior for society.²

Looking at actions and determining whether they cause unjust harm will tell us whether we can allow a particular behavior to take place without regulation. The principle, as understood above, will now be used as a guide to determine whether or not we should regulate certain individual behaviors. It will now be applied to potential circumstances involving environmental destruction and overpopulation through the use of utility calculations.

Potential Future Outcomes

I will consider two main potential futures for the environment and population control. As previously stated, I could never determine every possible outcome, and therefore I have decided to analyze two general, potential scenarios.

² Nils Holtug, "The Harm Principle." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 5, no. 4 (2002): 380-381. This is based on critique of Mill put forth by Nils Holtug who demonstrates a flaw in Mill's take on utilitarianism.

Both of these scenarios are defined relative to whether a large population causes environmental degradation. Environmental degradation refers to a situation where the world's potential carrying capacity has either been reached or surpassed, and we no longer have the ability to provide adequate resources to everyone living on earth. These resources can include water, food, air, resources required to provide necessary infrastructure (building material, space), and likely other entities that provide sufficient sustenance.

The first outcome is one where we have a very large population, however, this large number of individuals does not cause environmental degradation. In this case it might appear that we do not need to concern ourselves with evaluating whether we should have the right to as many children as we wish. However, even in this situation it is possible that the principles set forth still demand we regulate procreation because of other issues apart from environmental degradation.

The second circumstance is the one wherein a large population has caused a severely compromised environment. Given this possibility, we must decide if our personal freedom to choose how many children we have remains intact if it results in an unstable and threatened physical environment, or what I refer to as environmental degradation.

When No Environmental Degradation Occurs

First, I will consider and analyze the circumstances that support Simon's hypothesis—we have a very large population, however, no environmental degradation occurs. Within this circumstance, a few causes are possible.

Human Ingenuity Eliminates the Need for Population Control

The first simple possibility is that human ingenuity allows for people to have as many children as they wish. Innovation and intelligence provide the necessary solutions for any problems that either have or will potentially arise. People enjoy the right to as many children as they wish without any environmental consequence. In order to determine whether this circumstance requires regulation, we must ask if any unjust harms occurs. In this particular situation, I assume that no harm has taken place because no environmental degradation occurs. Therefore, we require no regulation of individual freedoms, and individuals must not choose between their freedom of choice and security-survival. In this case we can assume that humans have developed certain technologies that allow us to overcome any problems. As Simon says, reaching this point will require impressive problem solving and creativity. While this outcome will allow us to eventually have as many children as we desire, this circumstance will not be easily attained—we must work for it.³

Because in this case the world population grows to numbers Ehrlich or Hardin did not think possible without environmental degradation and people procreate freely without regulation, Simon's theories of population gain some standing. This does not completely vindicate Simon, however, his idea that we will never cause environmental degradation to the point where we must use coercive population control measures holds true. This is the optimal situation for Simon.

³ Julian L. Simon, *Population Matters: People, Resources, Environment, and Immigration* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 10.

Individuals Voluntarily Limit Their Procreation

The other situation that may cause minimal or no environmental degradation is when people naturally realize that an increase in population poses many risks to our livelihood, and they individually decide to minimize the number of children they have. In this case, people personally decide that the potential environmental degradation that they fear will result due to a large population overpowers their right to have the family size they desire. Note, the government has not yet infringed upon this right to procreate but individuals decide they must regulate themselves. The lack of environmental degradation is less due to human innovation and active problem solving and more a result of individuals understanding the limitations of their planet.

Again, as the principle guides us, whether harm occurs. Because this circumstance arises from individuals voluntarily choosing to limit themselves, it is not apparent that any harm takes place. This could result from only some individuals choosing to have fewer children in order to minimize environmental damage—some individuals may continue having children freely. However, because people voluntarily decide to forego their freedom to have as many children as they wish, then they technically still practice procreative freedom and maintain their procreative rights. No population control measures have been taken apart from those that individuals personally decide to take, and because they have chosen them without coercion, the limitation is neither unjust nor harmful. We do not require regulation of other individuals' procreative rights as outlined by the principles because their procreation does not cause harm.

Again, whether Simon's moral beliefs contain legitimacy lacks relevancy because we never truly need to decide whether individuals can continue to have as many children

as they wish. The issue of overpopulation never arises and thus formal regulation through government intervention is unnecessary.

Coercive Measures Are Taken Preventatively

The final other circumstance wherein environmental degradation does not occur results because coercive family planning measures are taken prior to any overwhelming environmental problems. Given that this would require quite certain circumstances in order to gain support, I will not analyze this situation and instead will rely on the analysis on when actual degradation occurs because of the environment in a later part of this section. If we choose to implement coercive control measures because we are so certain environmental problems will occur then we most likely consider the same moral issues we would consider if environmental problems were actually occurring. I will analyze this situation later. For the purposes of this paper, knowing environmental degradation *will occur* due to a large population should receive the same reaction as environmental degradation *occurring* due to too large a population. The analysis of certain degradation will be the same as actual degradation.

When No Environmental Degradation Occurs But We Should Still Consider Regulation of Individual Rights

Before writing off a lack of environmental degradation as a success that requires no regulation of our individual freedoms, we must consider the other potential problems that can occur even if the world can still physically sustain a massive population. Two potential issues might occur: the environment still sustains all life on earth, however, the

natural environment, or areas we consider “nature”, no longer exist, or the population reaches such a great number that it severely impacts other aspects of life.

Human Existence Harms Other Species and the Natural Environment

The first case wherein the earth can sustain the population but the natural environment that we consider nature disappears poses a few issues. To put this circumstance in different words, humans enjoy life, however, our plentiful and continued existence limits other biological life, such as plants and animals from existing. The animals that we do not domesticate go extinct and the outdoor environments that so many individuals appreciate and love no longer exist. Human inhabitation blankets the planet. We lose other species and nature in this circumstance. While the principles put forth do not analyze harm to other species, it is possible that animals are important enough to people that we should limit human population growth. We might deem regulation of our individual choice to have as many children as we want necessary. On the other hand, we might value human life so much more than other species that we continue to not regulate human procreation patterns.

The problem in this circumstance is that asking whether harm takes place might result in too much controversy. Whether we value the natural environment more than we value having as many children as we wish must be considered, however, I imagine there would be great disagreement about the answer to such a consideration. The principles set forth should not be applied to either this question or the question of the comparable importance of other species because the principles could not adequately resolve these problems. The principles examine the regulation of behaviors that directly affect other

humans' health. For the sake of this piece, I will assume the health of humans remains intact even with the loss of other species and the environment because in this particular situation the population flourishes. If the population flourishes without other species and the natural environment, we must not require either. However, I must acknowledge that certain other values might be greatly impacted by such losses and thus this circumstance requires further analysis that my principles cannot adequately resolve.⁴

While my principles do not allow us to find an answer to questions such as how to consider the moral standing of other species and the environment, one could use a similar strategy as the one I used in creating my human harm principle to decide how we might treat other species and the environment. The method would be to look at the different ways we currently regulate treatment of other species and treatment of the environment and then decide what underlying beliefs we use in the given regulations. We would then create principles based on these underlying beliefs and apply the principles to a given situation. This is to say that while I have not offered such a principle, we could use the method I used in creating my principles to create a principle for these different circumstances.

Human Existence Results In Overwhelming Crowding

The other potential problem that might occur even if we never reach a carrying capacity is one of unbearable crowding. While related to the problem discussed above, the effects would have a more direct impact on people than the loss of animal and natural

⁴ P Nils Holtug, "The Harm Principle." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 5, no. 4 (2002): 361. Holtug discusses the issues that arise for other species with a harm principle.

life. If the human population of our planet reaches a limitless level, I imagine that personal space would be greatly minimized. The actual crowding might not create harm, however, it creates circumstances that greatly increase the chances of harm. These circumstances would substantially limit certain personal freedoms, and health issues would most likely arise from these circumstances. Illness could easily spread, thus negatively impacting the security-survival of society. In addition, crowding might limit people's ability to easily move around and do what they wish—this would jeopardize personal freedoms and an individual's rights to choose.

Given both of these potential problems, the principles might lead us to regulate procreation because, if we look at whether the situation causes harm as the principles guide us to do, we might agree that harm exists. Sickness would cause many individuals unjust harm, and this harm would not benefit our security-survival. The inability to move freely would harm the right to freedom, and this would also not benefit security-survival because other problems, like the discussed potential sicknesses that result from the overcrowding, would cause unjust harm.

In deciding whether this harm benefits security-survival, we must determine whether the benefits of limiting harm from overcrowding outweigh the negatives of restricting our freedom to procreate given this overcrowding. Deciding between accepting the harm of overcrowding and regulating our personal freedoms provides us with a difficult task.

My interpretation of how we might balance these two choices is as such: allowing overcrowding would place most every citizen in a situation where sickness constantly poses a threat to not only an individual himself, but also to his loved ones. I imagine that

parents already instinctually spend their time concerned about the well-being of their children. So many harms exist in the world and parents can only protect their children to a certain extent. Adding an additional level of potential harm into the lives of their children, as well as everyone else they love, must add substantially more worry to their lives. One might argue this concern is less negative than an additional child is positive, however, most parents would probably prefer to have fewer healthy children with a greater chance of a healthy life than more children whose personal survival is at increased risk. Parents put so many resources into each of their children that it would make sense to increase their children's survival in every way possible.

Not only would having fewer children allow parents to personally accomplish a greater level of well-being for each of their children, but if everyone else also accepts having fewer children then that further increases their child's chances of a healthy survival. In other words, when a parent accepts that she can only have a certain number of children, she can put more effort into that child *and* can be reassured that because everyone else's procreation is limited, and thus crowding will be decreased, her children's chances of sickness are also decreased, ultimately leading to higher chances of a healthy life for her children. Parents' personal freedom to choose how many children they want will be minimized, but the benefit that brings to their children, loved ones, and everyone else's children exceeds the negatives of the procreative regulation.

The same argument can be made for overcrowding limiting personal freedoms. A parent probably wants to create a higher standard of living through more personal space than she wants to have many children with a lower standard of living. Therefore, the

limitation of personal rights to procreate is outweighed by the improved standard of living for everyone that fewer individuals would allow.

Neither potential consequence of overcrowding adds an overall good to society that outweighs its negatives. Therefore, because overcrowding causes unjust harm like sickness and limited personal space without benefitting security-survival, overcrowding allows for justified regulation of procreation as determined by the set forth principles.

While I have not provided the answers as to how to deal with certain issues that might arise given no actual environmental degradation, such as species loss and a lack of the natural environment, the example of crowding (and other examples and potential problem situations probably exist) demonstrates that while explicit environmental degradation may not occur, the chance of justifiably regulating individual procreative rights is not eliminated. While this paper focuses on the issue due to the claims of Simon that I have chosen to analyze, overpopulation could cause other problems and therefore, even though Simon believes he alleviates much of the population problem by explaining that environmental degradation will not occur, his theory might lack a complete enough understanding of potential threats.

When Environmental Degradation Occurs

On the other side of the spectrum exists the possibility that environmental degradation occurs—the earth's population exceeds a given carrying capacity and Simon's assumption that we can fix any problem proves false. The circumstance wherein environmental degradation occurs poses many issues for lots of individuals; however, I

will limit my analysis to four general problems that environmental degradation may cause.

Environmental Degradation Harms Individuals Who Lack a Certain Degree of Wealth

The first circumstance arises by asking who might experience the greatest level of harm caused by environmental degradation. While wealthy individuals may potentially overcome certain aspects of the problem of environmental degradation, such as minimal food or space, individuals who cannot afford to pay higher prices suffer far more consequences. While a degraded environment has many other negative effects, this issue alone poses many moral problems. First, we do not want to live in a world where only the wealthy have a chance of survival. As the principles guide us, let us determine whether harm occurs. The fact that a majority of the underprivileged population would be unable to survive at even the most basic level of sustenance demonstrates not only that harm would occur, but also that the harm caused by such a massive population would probably be unjust.

Again, in deciding whether this harm is unjust and should therefore be regulated, we must determine whether the benefit of allowing certain individuals to have as many children as they desire outweighs, in this circumstance, the injustice done to less wealthy individuals. Allowing those who can afford it to have as many children as they wish because they will be able to supply themselves with survival necessities might be considered fair to some individuals who believe the wealthy have earned their right to survive by having a certain amount of money. However, this then becomes a question of whether the simple phenomenon of wealth should be a deciding factor in whether a

person may enjoy having children or not. First, it seems unlikely that people will agree only allowing the wealthy to procreate will bring the greatest benefit to society. Yes, these individuals will be able to have as many children as they want, but an entire portion of society will also be deprived of this highly valued part of life. The disappointment and sadness experienced by individuals unable to have children probably outweighs the happiness wealthier individuals gain by being allowed to have *additional* children as well as the sadness of wealthy individuals to have more children. Said differently, wealthy individuals will probably be less upset that they must have fewer children than poorer individuals will be that they could not have any children at all. Therefore, limiting the procreative rights of certain individuals seems to bring more overall benefit to society than depriving certain individuals of having any children at all. This circumstance therefore justifies regulating personal procreative rights.

In addition, if only a certain number of individuals (the wealthy individuals) can survive in these circumstances, then the security-survival of society must be diminished simply because fewer individuals are actually able to live. This would lead us to have justification for regulating procreative rights given that such a regulation would greatly minimize the problem of compromised security-survival from an unjust harm.

While a regulation on procreative rights would minimize the individual choices of many people, spreading the limitation of rights across all individuals minimizes the level of injustice and ultimately dissatisfaction that occurs. This circumstance is preferable to one wherein the wealthy have a clear and extreme advantage. Additionally, as Callahan referred to in his work, the option of voluntary birth control methods would essentially be

involuntary for the poor and therefore voluntary birth control methods would create another degree of injustice.⁵

These voluntary programs would not solve the problems of environmental degradation without increasing other issues, such as injustice, and thus in order to attain fairness (or at least attempt to improve it), coercive procreative regulations might be necessary.

Perhaps, however, this circumstance requires greater analysis. For example, if the number of individuals who cannot survive due to a lack of sustenance is a minority, then we may need to reevaluate any harm occurring. We must still acknowledge that harm occurs, however, because the harm directly affects fewer individuals than it does not affect, we may need to reevaluate the impact on security-survival. If allowing harm to a minority allows for improved security-survival over a longer period of time, then the principles would suggest we should allow harm to a socioeconomically poor minority. As demonstrated previously, Garrett Hardin supports this stance and agrees that if all that must be done to continue supporting some individuals is to ignore the livelihood of others then we should support such injustice (although he does not call it injustice).⁶

In order to support Hardin's stance in accordance with the principles, we must first agree that this situation would actually benefit our security-survival in the long run, and I am not confident we can determine that is the case with absolute certainty.

Ignoring the livelihood of a poor minority might improve the instantaneous utility

⁵ Daniel Callahan, "Ethics and Population Limitation," *Science* 175 (February 1972): 491.

⁶ Garrett Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics: the Case Against Helping the Poor," *Psychology Today* (September 1974): 38-40, 123-124, 126.

of a majority of the population, but it probably will not improve the security-survival over time. If we live in a place where we justify allowing innocent individuals to suffer in exchange for the procreative rights of others, we do not set ourselves on a path to long-term societal success because this strategy lacks sustainability. It might lead us to continue discounting the livelihoods of small groups in so many instances that our population dwindles too greatly over time.

The reason we might agree that discounting certain minorities will lead to a future with a potentially compromised security-survival is because once we begin allowing a certain type of thinking and decision-making, it might makes us more inclined to continue practicing the same decision-making. Once one individual or group justifies the maltreatment of a certain group, it makes sense for other individuals to follow or agree with a similar maltreatment. Put into context, if we decide that a small portion of the population that lacks the resources to survive can be ignored and essentially wiped of their existence, it seems plausible that another group (especially if the environmental circumstance does not improve and resources continue dwindling) will eventually enter into the same type of poverty that will not allow them to survive. Essentially, there will always be a poorer group. If we allow ignoring the initially poor group's well-being, a better argument exists for treating the future poor group in a similar manner as we treated the initial group than an argument that says we will decide to change our morals and now consider the poor group. The wealthy individuals will probably not change too greatly between the two circumstances and it seems unrealistic to believe their attitudes will change either. Additionally, not only will individuals likely continue similar decision-

making patterns, but individuals are also probably more likely to make selfish decisions if those decisions are condoned by society.

This situation is problematic for two reasons. The first is that this type of thinking surely limits security-survival because it encourages ill-treatment of a minority that will always exist (as stated before, there will always be poorer individuals) and therefore a certain portion of the population's security-survival will always be in flux until they no longer exist and then another group will experience the same phenomenon. This could actually result in a very small portion of the population existing.

Granted, this small population *might* have a greater well-being. However, in balancing the choice between a small society with a few individuals who have an unsustainable security-survival and a society where everyone in society has limited procreative rights but much higher security-survival (and just survival alone), the second option seems to bring not only greater security-survival, but also greater immediate utility. More individuals will be able to live with a certain base level of well-being, and it seems that widespread base level has more merit than a very small number having a higher, less sustainable level. Therefore, initially limiting everyone's procreative rights in order to permit greater security-survival in the long run is justified in the circumstance where not limiting procreative rights results in only the wealthy surviving.

The second problem with allowing the wealthy to survive at the expense of the poor is the lack of morality it supports. I argue that a society that supports such morals will encounter far greater issues in the long run than one that chooses to limit the wealthy in the pursuit of creating a just society. Establishing justice does more to improve security-survival in the long run than eliminating the poor individuals because there will

always be poorer individuals, and the lack of care for these members of society demonstrates values that we do not want to support. Apart from the reasons discussed above for not allowing poor, immoral decisions, I also argue that we strive to be moral individuals for a relatively unexplainable intrinsic reason. Most people want to live in a society that encourages moral action because we believe that treating others morally makes us better individuals and adds a certain level of goodness to our lives.

I argue that the morality we gain by limiting certain individuals' procreative rights and helping other individuals to survive is worth the losses to personal procreative freedoms. In other words, I argue unjust harm is done when eliminating poor individuals in order to allow for certain procreative rights, and limiting this harm also improves security-survival because it helps us achieve a certain level of morality for which we constantly strive.

Therefore, even if the number of individuals suffering due to a lack of sustenance is not a majority, we cannot, in accordance with the principles, simply decide to let them suffer. If procreative regulations exhibit a more moral society, which I believe they do, then we can justify their implementation.

Of course, the opposite circumstance garners the same resulting regulation. If more people are unable to survive than those who can, our decision is far simpler but we still regulate procreation. Given that a majority of the population suffers, we must take extreme measures such as procreative regulations in order to minimize harm and ensure security-survival.

Environmental Degradation Causes Harm To Everyone

The second issue that likely arises with environmental degradation is that certain resources experience such damage that everyone suffers from their destruction. For example, everyone requires healthy air in order to survive and this resource could encounter serious problems with too great of a population. Water might encounter the same problems to the point where even filtration and similar systems do not suffice as means of providing us with the water we need to survive. If our planet's degradation reaches a point where air or water quality is so poor that people cannot attain proper oxygen or hydration, extreme measures might not be so extreme. Additionally, I assume these types of problems have reached a point where they cannot be combated with wealth—everyone experiences their consequences mostly equally.

In order to determine whether extreme measures such as coercive population control policies must be implemented, we must acknowledge that harm occurs. In this case, the high population definitely causes a serious level of harm to the *entire* population, *and* this harm in turn negatively affects our security-survival. The relevant harm is actual physical harm. Because this harm would cause everyone's health to be at risk, ensuring everyone's health must be more important than our individual rights to have as many children as we desire. When trying to balance the cost to us of limiting our procreative rights with the benefits of physical survival, I believe we value the benefits of physical survival to a higher degree than we lament the loss of our individual procreative rights. We would be worse off if we sacrifice our physical survival in exchange for procreative rights because we would be decreasing our chances of life. Limiting procreative rights would allow us to live at all. The reason it is important to decide which

decision would make us worse off is because that explains which situation is unjust. The situation wherein we allow unlimited procreation makes the world worse off and therefore it is unjust. Therefore, according to the principles and given that it would decrease environmental harm and improve our security-survival, we would justify limiting the procreative rights of the population.

Once again, while Simon would hope that individual rights to procreation would have preference over security-survival, we would not actually rely on or support this preference. Environmental degradation overpowers his values.

Environmental Degradation Causes Irreparable Damage to Our Planet

Similar to the second issue, the third issue takes into account not only the immediate implications for security-survival, but also its sustainability in the long-term. This scenario involves environmental degradation reaching a point where we indisputably limit future use of our planet. This issue creates a great deal of controversy, and environmentalists often focus on this issue when convincing individuals to “save the planet”. Given such circumstances, we definitely do harm to the environment and its citizens without protecting security-survival. If environmental degradation reaches a point where we will no longer be able to live on the planet (the inability to live would satisfy the necessary harm put forth by the principle), our security-survival reaches a minimal level. The decision in this circumstance would be between the ability to continue living on our planet at all and having procreative freedom. We must decide between these two options in order to decide which would cause unjust harm and would therefore need to be regulated as determined by the principle.

Of course, there exists little reason to care about procreative liberty if we cannot survive because then we have no means of practicing it. We would be worse off when choosing procreative freedom because we would be greatly damaging our chances of survival. Therefore, we would justify and accept regulation of our procreative rights given that it might be the only way to have security-survival.

I must note that some people believe we should not place such importance on future generations and instead focus more on current lives.⁷ This side implies that the freedom of an individual to choose how many children he or she wants has greater importance than the future of our human society, but the argument is somewhat self-defeating. We should not argue for the right to have as many children as we desire if those children will not have the ability to survive.

Additionally, we accept investing in future generations all the time with long-term infrastructure plans like those of public facilities and educational measures. The argument against investing in or considering future generations lacks validity—we accept such commitments every day. Additionally, these commitments to future generations further strengthen the principle's assumption that we tend to greatly value security-survival of humans as opposed to individual rights in the short term. This support of future generations in combination with the limitation of security-survival due to environmental degradation both leads us to allow regulation of individual freedoms that give us the rights to have as many children as we desire.

⁷ Callahan, "Ethics and Population Limitation," 492-493. Daniel Callahan discusses this issue and believes, as my principle eventually concludes, that we have some sort of obligation to not thwart future generations' enjoyment of what we ourselves enjoyed. In essence, Callahan disputes the offered argument.

Environmental Degradation Greatly Diminishes Our Quality of Life

Finally, the effects of environmental degradation might include certain phenomena that greatly impact and diminish the average person's quality of life. Combined, all of the issues already analyzed, in addition to others I have not considered, create a world where people might maintain short or long-term survival. However, the overall utility so greatly decreases that people do not enjoy or cherish life—we would certainly consider the damage that causes such feelings to be harmful. If individuals do not cherish life then the possibility that people no longer value security-survival exists. This alone would decrease security-survival because if people dislike life so greatly that they do not care if it continues on a societal scale then they certainly will not care to fight for its continuance. People will not consider security-survival as something to maintain—this would definitely negatively affect its long-term sustainability. At this point, we should support any measure or regulation that will create a more positive living environment in order to encourage valuing security-survival. Regulation of procreative rights certainly has justification. Regulation improves security-survival in this circumstance, and we must regulate procreation because it severely harms our security-survival.

Additionally, in these circumstances, we must balance the negatives of not enjoying life with the positives of procreative freedoms. This case raises a very difficult question because unlike the example above where I implied we should allow more people to live at a lower level of happiness by allowing the poor to survive, I believe in this situation the opposite is true. That is, if the level of happiness and enjoyment of life

reaches such a great point that limiting the number of lives will actually increase overall utility and enjoyment of life, perhaps we should regulate procreation. The problem with this circumstance, and with many of the others I have discussed in balancing the freedom to procreate with some other value, is that knowing what the right number of people will be is not calculable. In this circumstance we would need to probably survey individuals or find some other means to decide if people are unhappy enough or living at a low enough standard of well-being that procreative rights should be limited to create a greater overall happiness.

I cannot provide a satisfactory solution to decide when we have too many people in this circumstance, I can only assume that at a given point we might decide that limiting procreative rights brings greater overall well-being and security-survival than allowing people to have as many children as they want.

Summary

In applying the principle to hypothetical circumstances, we use utility calculations to show us whether a certain behavior does unjust harm. We need to know whether a harm is unjust because the principle determines if we should regulate harm based on whether or not it is unjust. In using these calculations we are able to decide how we might react to a potential circumstance or behavior.

This section also demonstrates that while Simon believes we cherish our personal freedom above everything, in practice we might not actually agree. The discussion of the implications of my principle for the moral claims that Simon makes will be in the following conclusion.

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis is to analyze Julian Simon's moral claim that we should never violate procreative rights. I wish to evaluate his moral claim in the circumstance where overpopulation causes severe environmental destruction. Part of this goal is to determine whether any of Simon's ideas have validity. In order to do so, I explain Simon's factual argument as well as his moral claims and compare them to other population theorists including Paul Ehrlich, Garrett Hardin, and Amartya Sen. I then analyze the work of Daniel Callahan in order to not only gain clarity on the reasoning behind Simon's beliefs, but also in order to gain assistance in the creation of a principle to use in order to answer my original question about procreative rights.

The principle I propose is meant to be a tool we can use to evaluate particular situations. Specifically, we are evaluating the situation wherein we may need to limit population through coercive population control measures in order to ultimately survive. The principle guides us to look at a given situation and determine whether unjust harm is taking place.

To determine whether harm is unjust or not, I use utility calculations. This means looking at the different potential outcomes of a situation and deciding which outcome is best for all of society. In other words, it means determining which situation makes the world better off for the greatest number of people. If unjust harm is taking place, the principle tells us we should regulate the behavior that causes the unjust harm.

In order to show the potential of the principle I put forth multiple examples of times when we regulate personal freedom including smoking regulations and anti-trust laws. These demonstrate that we sometimes accept regulations of personal freedom because it makes the world better off. I also give examples of when we do not regulate harm because regulating some harm might have negative consequences, such as the cases of adultery and automobile use.

After establishing the principle, I then apply it to the question at hand. The previous section demonstrates that given most situations when environmental degradation has occurred, allowing us to practice our freedom to choose how many children we have will make the world worse off. It will lower our security-survival and therefore we believe it should be regulated. In other words, Simon's belief that we value our freedom to choose is not one we agree with in practice.

Even in some cases where no environmental degradation has taken place, the principle tells us we must still regulate procreation due to overpopulation. Because the possibilities for what might occur in the future are endless, there is a chance that we will not need to limit procreation if we have a large population, but the chance is small. More likely, a relatively large population will have consequences that require limitations on our procreative rights even if there has not been environmental degradation.

Upon initially hearing Simon's claim that we value procreative rights over everything else, I imagine most people do not automatically reject the idea. There is something innate in the phenomenon of freedom that appeals to us—we want to believe we have the right to have as many children as we want. However, while that idea may appeal to us, when we look at how we actually regulate the world, we see that we support

government interference and regulations that oppose that freedom. Because we support certain interferences in freedom, we know that we value something more than we value our freedom. We may enjoy the *idea* of freedom, but the principle and real world examples demonstrate that we value our actual survival even more.

I attempt to evaluate Simon's moral beliefs to see if they bring merit to work that is otherwise quite dubious. In other words, I thought the one way Simon's arguments could gain legitimacy would be to show that he at least correctly interprets our moral preferences. However, using the principle I set forth, I analyze potential future outcomes, and Simon's moral claim does not hold. In addition to lacking a persuasive argument about the environment, Simon's moral ideas also do not accurately reflect our general feelings about freedom versus security-survival.

From the work of Simon and Callahan, as well as our own propensity for supporting freedom, we might think that our choices and the way we want our world to function demonstrates an inclination for personal freedom to choose. However, by analyzing the laws and regulations we support in our society, we find we value other things to a higher degree; specifically we value our security-survival more than we value our procreative freedom. Simon believes personal freedom to choose how many children we have will always trump. However, by analyzing future possibilities, we understand we must reevaluate his moral beliefs.

This thesis successfully provides an answer to the question of how we should react to overpopulation given environmental degradation. While analyzing the work of Julian Simon is the intended goal of this thesis, it also accomplishes a great deal more, as it goes beyond the scope of Simon.

While I do not create an absolutely original principle of my own (I work off of John Stuart Mill's Harm Principle), I do take a very basic principle and narrow it to a more precise, clear, and applicable principle. John Stuart Mill's Harm Principle provides us with a very valuable tool, but it is also so broad that it loses some applicability. Specifically, I reformulate the principle so we can use it to answer many questions about harmful behavior and the balance between personal freedoms and procreative rights. I adjust Mill's principle so we can solve very important and particular issues. In other words, this principle is valuable because it can be used beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze other problems about which we care. The principle can be used to answer future questions about personal freedom and security-survival and therefore, it makes an important contribution to philosophy.

In addition to creating a precise and applicable principle, I also apply this principle to an interesting circumstance. We may actually face the situation where overpopulation causes us to consider coercive population control measures. While the Harm Principle has been analyzed and applied to many scenarios, and the issue of overpopulation and environmental degradation has been extensively discussed, this thesis combines the two topics. In other words, this thesis is unique and important because it uses a very specific and well-formulated harm principle to analyze overpopulation and environmental degradation. Additionally, the principle is laid out in a manner so that we can all understand and hopefully agree with why we would react to a situation in a particular way.

Finally, this thesis is interesting and important because it challenges us to consider what we value. As I have stated, we might think that we want our freedom more

than anything else, but this thesis asks us to truly evaluate that assumption. Not only does it ask us to highly scrutinize our assumption about freedom, but it also gives us a relatively simple and intuitive method to do so. This thesis shows us that when faced with a particularly sensitive situation, we already have a method to react. My principle, as is the case with most philosophical principles, is not an attempt to say how we *should* think about the world; it is an attempt to tell us how we *do* think about the world and *why*.

Bibliography

Aligica, Paul Dragos. "Julian Simon and the 'Limits to Growth' Neo-Malthusianism."

The Electronic Journal of Sustainable Development 1 no. 3 (2009).

Callahan, Daniel. "Ethics and Population Limitation." *Science* 175, no. 4021 (1972):

487-494.

Conly, Sarah. "The Right to Procreation: Merits and Limits." *American Philosophical*

Quarterly 42 no. 2 (April 2005): 105-115.

Ehrlich, Paul R. *The Population Bomb*. Binghamton, New York: Vail-Ballou Press, Inc.,

1969.

Feinbeg, Joel. *Harm to Others*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Hardin, Garrett. "The Feast of Malthus: Living within limits." *The Social Contract*

(Spring 1998): 181-187.

Hardin, Garrett. "Lifeboat Ethics: the Case Against Helping the Poor." *Psychology*

Today (September 1974): 38-40, 123-124, 126.

Hardin, Garrett. "Parenthood: Right or Privilege?" *Science* 169, no. 3944 (1970): 31.

Hardin, Garrett. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Science* 162, no. 3859 (1968): 1243-

1248.

Holtug, Nils. "The Harm Principle." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 5 no. 4 (2002):

357-389.

Kates, Carol A. "Reproductive Liberty and Overpopulation." *Environmental Values* 13

no. 1 (2004): 51-79.

- Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. London: Longman, Roberts and Green, 1869.
- Ripstein, Arthur. "Beyond the Harm Principle." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 34, no.3 (2006).
- Sen, Amartya. "Fertility and Coercion." *The University of Chicago Law Review* 63, no. 3 (1996): 1035-1061.
- Simon, Julian L. "More People, Greater Wealth, More Resources, Healthier Environment." *Economic Affairs* 14, no. 3 (April 1994): 22-29.
- Simon, Julian L. *Population Matters: People, Resources, Environment, and Immigration*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1990.
- Simon, Julian L. *The Ultimate Resource*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- Simon, Julian L. *The Ultimate Resource 2*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Simon, Julian L. "The War on People." *Challenge* 28, no. 1 (1985): 50-53.
- Wolf, Clark. "Population." In *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, edited by Dale Jamieson, 362-366. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd, 2003.