Brief description: This is the final paper that I had to write for this class. This paper in particular was on the ethics of “Gun-Free Zones” and refuting the argument that Timothy Hsiao brought forward. This artifact shows that I was able to take the information on philosophy and different argument forms that I learned throughout the semester in order to apply them to my final paper. The date on this paper is December 4, 2018.

Ethics of ‘Gun-Free Zones’

Jace Frank, PHIL 308

This paper will cover the rights of gun owners and their use of carrying their guns outside their household. Of course, in today’s society, there are certain ‘Gun-Free Zones’ such as airports, government buildings, and schools to name a few. In this paper I will show that Timothy Hsiao argument about ‘Gun-Free Zones’ is incorrect. I argue that his argument that guns should be allowed to be on one’s person regardless of location is unacceptable and is a threat to public safety overall.

In this paper I will first unfold his argument down to his premises and put it into valid argument form. I will then look at the reasoning for why he thinks his argument is correct and provide arguments against them. He argues that it is a basic moral right to carry a gun derived from the moral right of self-defense. I plan to show how while self-defense may be a basic moral right, guns do not follow under that category and only serve as a means to violence. I will then conclude that his argument is incorrect due to carrying guns not being a basic moral right.

Before delving into the counterarguments and examples I will provide we have to unpack his argument. He states this in his paper, “The argument of this paper is that there exists a *moral* right to carry a gun…” (Hsiao)where in an earlier paragraph he says, “The basic argument can be summarized as follows: there is some prima facie right to carry a gun.” (Hsiao)These both argue the same thing overall but are stated in different ways. He then says that the state holds a certain responsibility to provide safety and if they cannot provide the safety equivalent to carrying a weapon then people should be allowed to carry weapons on their person in all zones and areas. His argument represented in logical argument form can be stated in modus pones form as followed:

If there is carrying guns is a moral right, then people should be allowed to carry guns everywhere.

Carrying guns is a moral right.

Therefore, people should be allowed to carry guns everywhere.

I will now delve into his reasoning for each premise. For his first premise he gives the reasoning of Suzanna Hupp, who was in a cafeteria when a gunman opened fire. She had put her weapon in her vehicle when entering the food establishment because it was a gun-free zone. His explanation was that if she had been allowed to carry a gun then she would still be alive today. This reasoning provides many faults. It shows a logical fallacy because you cannot assume that an outcome if it had not happened. There is no proof signifying that she would be alive today if she was allowed to defend herself. She could have used her weapon, but there is no saying whether if she would have then killed the gunman. Using this as his reasoning for premise one makes it false because he does not have strong enough reasoning to back up his premise. I believe her carrying of the gun would only serve to create more chaos in the grand scheme of things.

His second premise he pulls from an article from 2003 that states, “limiting the places where permit holders are allowed to carry their guns increases the number of murders, injuries, and shootings.”(Hsiao) There are many issues with his reasoning in this. First off, it is an outdated source of material since this article was written in 2016 and the proof he is trying to pull is over ten years old. There is no statistical backing in his explanation and is merely pulling from another paper who supports his argument. It is a mere opinion and cannot be used as a reasoning to try to back up his second premise.

His reasoning for his third premise includes the statistics that most mass shooting occur in gun-free zones. He gives the statistics that “99 % of mass public shootings occurred in locations where guns are legally prohibited.”(Hsiao) This is a fair point but does not show that gun should be carried everywhere. If guns were carried everywhere, that just means there are more areas where gun violence would occur. The destruction of gun-free zones does not serve as the destruction of gun violence as a whole as the author would lead you to believe. Being able to carry weapons does not decrease the amount of gun violence and if anything makes it so gun violence is more easily assessable to the general public. For instance, if a person were to be carrying a weapon it could get into the wrong hands very quickly. A person could disarm the person wielding the weapon and use it for their own acts of destruction. Therefore, premise 3 is false because people could be more seriously endangered by the open carry of weapons in all areas.

Another big argument he sets in this paper is the fact that carrying guns is a basic moral right because it is an extension of the moral right of self-defense. While it can be argued that self-defense is not a basic human right we will instead look at why carrying guns is not a basic moral right. He states that the constitution gives the right to bear arms, so it must be a moral right then. Yet, not everything in the constitution is a moral right. The bill of rights once prohibited the sale and consumption of alcohol nationwide. Is this a moral right? No. The constitution defines what is legal and what it is not but does not fully cover all moral rights. Nor is the constitution completely accurate to what moral rights should be granted. There are plenty of basic moral rights that are not included in the constitution that many people are fighting for each day. Not all laws are morally correct. An example of this is when slavery was legal. We can now all agree that slavery is not morally right, but the constitution then stated it as legal. His argument that the constitution stating it declares it as a moral right is incorrect and make his argument false.

In conclusion, Timothy Hsiao argument is incorrect to the realms of ethics. He argues that carrying guns is a basic moral right, but it he does not have true reasoning for his premises. Carrying of guns in all areas does not stop gun violence but serves as a means to easier access to the weapons to get into the wrong hands.

Work Cited

Hsiao, Timothy. “The Ethics of 'Gun-Free Zones'.” *Philosophia: Philosophical Quarterly of Israel*, June 2017, pp. 659–676.