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CN English

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The Disastrous Environmental Effects of Overpopulation

As humans have gone from small, isolated civilizations to large planned societies the jump from small to large has historically come with many plights. Since the beginning of time humans have coexisted together in small groups, the advantage of choosing a smaller body over a larger one has been for the sole purpose of food and survival. As people began to settle down among river valleys, their aim was to expand their boundaries and find a reliable source of water to potentially expand their circles. Shifting climate, technology, and unpredictable vegetation have all been factors that have influenced human population growth or decline. Evidence today suggests that as we enter a drastic period of population growth, the environment and the resources around us will quickly diminish if a specific regimen isn't imposed.

Throughout the last few hundred years the decrease in warfare and the strengthening of medicine have aided the human population in select areas through a demographic transition. Studies today indicate that "the human population is growing at about 1.5% annually, equivalent to an additional 80 million people per year" (Lerner). With growing industrialization and urbanization in many countries, the child birth rate has decreased in areas like the United States and Europe, stabilizing the population. On the contrary, developing countries like India are experiencing a higher amount of crude death rates and an even higher number of childbirth rates,

in an effort to replace those lost. Due to its continuous growing size “India’s population is expected to grow to 1.8 billion before stabilizing around the middle of this century, if sufficient measures are taken” (Lohar). The increasing population will be likely to create adverse effects in the environment by reducing natural resources and increasing agricultural practices. This snowballing population is also likely to affect the health and wellbeing of people if definite steps are not taken.

With more people than the planet can support, resources and nonrenewable sources of energy are becoming scarce and non dependable throughout the world. According to *Our World in Data*, “Between 1900 and 2000, the increase in world population was three times greater than during the entire previous history of humanity—an increase from 1.5 to 6.1 billion in just 100 years” (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina). A drastic increase in the human population can be attributed to an increase in technology, unsustainable farming practices, decrease in warfare and shifting progressions between socioeconomic groups. Recent growth projections by the IIASA demonstrate that “the world population [will] increase to 9.4 billion in 2070, and then begin a slow decline to reach below 9 billion by the end of the century” (Ortiz-Ospina and Roser). At a rapidly expanding 7 billion it is predicted that as we reach carry capacity at around 9.4 billion we will the experience a rapid die-off stabilizing the population at about 9 billion people. Water scarcity is also a posed threat with U.N bodies stating that, “By 2030, nearly half of the world's people will be living in areas of acute water shortage" (Effects of Human Overpopulation). The effects of population growth will be widespread and possibly life threatening. In some instances it has begun to pave the way to starvation and lack of water in some regions.

Overpopulation has impacted society and any approach to aid the problem, that does not include the reduction of people is simply not feasible. Up to present time, researchers have tried to find ways to the reduce the population. Most famously known is the “one-child policy” imposed in China:

By the late 1970s China’s population was rapidly approaching the one-billion mark, and the country’s new pragmatic leadership headed by Deng Xiaoping was beginning to give serious consideration to curbing what had become a rapid population growth rate. A voluntary program was announced in late 1978 that encouraged families to have no more than two children, one child being preferable. In 1979 demand grew for making the limit one child per family. (Pletcher)

This policy proved to be effective for thirty-five years, “The one-child rule has been estimated to have reduced population growth in the country of nearly 1.4 billion (estimated, 2017) by as much as 300 million people over its first 20 years.” Conversely, this policy had unintended effects when it motivated women to not have children at all even after the policy was removed. The increase in technology, education and family planning have reduced the child birth rate in China leaving a lasting legacy on China’s population and aging workforce. However, these population reducing actions were duly noted when it’s efforts put China’s population with many others embarking on their fight against overpopulation.

Solutions to this expanding problem have now become more ubiquitous. In recent years, the act of adoption has become a widespread way of helping reduce the population. Today

people have opted to choose a child that is in need over one of their own blood and flesh. Along with adoption, education and family planning are all strategies that have been used reduce the magnitude of the population. Providing people with a better education gives them an endless world of possibilities, where statements are reinforced with reason and logic. Education is a forum and also a gateway in which overpopulation, sex, abortion and sterilization could easily be talked about. The more people educated on safe sex, abstinence and birth control the more awareness could be spread. With 7 billion people currently on the planet awareness and education are some of the most powerful weapons in our arsenals.

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Reflection

In this explanatory paper I have taken on the feat of exploring overpopulation and its effects on humans and the world that surrounds us. This topic required some evaluation before I started writing. To even begin choosing my topic, I brainstormed several ideas I was relatively curious or educated in. My list began with abortion and marijuana but ultimately ended in overpopulation. Last year, I took an AP Environmental course in which we explored several topics. One topic I took particular interest in was overpopulation and the harmful effects such a large human civilization can have on both small and large scales. After mapping out this topic, I later branched out and focused on its effects particularly as child birth rate increased. This topic required a lot of exploring and research. Though thanks to my prior knowledge I was able to research this topic and synthesize it effectively.

My main objective with this paper was to answer the question: what is overpopulation? I wanted to create a paper in which I highlighted and defined overpopulation, whilst at the same time developing a theme using child birth rate. It was difficult in the beginning to choose a concept in which to build upon. I could have easily opted for simply explaining the causes of overpopulation or its effects, however, I chose to central on an idea that could be viewed through two different lenses. All in all this paper was difficult to execute because of the lack of commentary and depth of information that it required. I found myself short of things to write about that could circle back and relate to my theme of the effects child birth rate. Although

tedious to write it was easy to thread and interpret information into my own words. I think if a martian came down to earth they would at least get the gist of what I was trying to express.