

Personal Research

Every single day, an estimated 210,928 people are added to the world's population. That's an additional 76,988,670 people every year.¹ These numbers are expected to exceed the carrying capacity of what resources the earth has to provide. This exhaustion of natural resources has caused dispute concerning how best to utilize resources and handle the increasing population. Although there is a major concern for the world as a whole (currently exceeding seven billion individuals), the real concern is overwhelming population numbers in specific areas.² Particular sites have become so dense they cannot sustain themselves and must rely on other areas that are maintained properly, such as many areas in Asia. This problem affects society in terms of economy, ethics, the environment, and the need for government intervention.

Overpopulation is such a large issue that the only group that can effectively handle it is the government. Locally in the United States of America, activists in organizations such as Zero Population Growth and the Population Press have been raising awareness among the American public's consciousness on population issues. These programs promote education towards this pressing issue. Although these organizations strive for a change, the actual government in the US has no formal policies that can assure population stabilization for the next several decades. However, they contain some progressing aspects of change, with funding towards education among society.³ On the global scale, delegates from various governments have met in

¹ IntMath. "World Population – Live Update." <http://www.intmath.com/exponential-logarithmic-functions/world-population-live.php>

² United States Census Bureau. "U.S. & World Population Clocks." Census Bureau Homepage. <http://www.census.gov/main/www/popclock.html> (accesses February 13, 2013).

³ Population Press. "Population Policy for the 21st Century." <http://populationpress.org/population-essays/population-policy-for-the-21st-century/>

conferences, such as the one in Cairo in 1994, to discuss population problems as a whole.⁴ It is the each government's responsibility to regulate actions among their societies for the greater good of the entire population, and it is then the government's responsibility to find a solution to overpopulation as soon as possible. Though we are currently able to sustain ourselves, population growth presents dire issues for the near future.⁵

Governments around the world have, in the past, tried to address this issue, both directly and indirectly with policies regulating child births on one end of the spectrum to the promotion of education of society on the other end of the spectrum. Many individuals have expressed minor arguments that if we reduced per-person consumption of use of land, water, and other resources, that there would be enough for all. This may be a slight factor of the problem, but has been proven a miniscule influence to our overall concern of exceeding the resources available to us. As more people join the world's population, fewer resources are available. This leading to the real significant factor of fertility rates. They are much more important in the scheme of the future of society. The only ethical solution in tampering with population numbers is to reduce our growth rate, as promoting a higher death rate is by all standards immoral and unethical. Examples of some direct addresses to overpopulation include China. In China, a one child per couple policy was implemented in 1979 with punishments including forced abortions and sterilization of women, violating human rights.⁶ Forcing such a harsh standard among society did not prove to better communities for the common good, not quite reaching their goal, and still bringing an extraordinary amount of stress among civilians. The real issue is still that their needs

⁴ NCIB "International population and development: the United Nations' Cairo Action Plan for women's health." <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8907668>

⁵ "Reflections on Sustainability, Population Growth, and the Environment." http://www.mnforsustain.org/bartlett_a_reflections_on_sustainabiltiy.htm

⁶ Facts and Details "ONE-CHILD POLICY IN CHINA" <http://factsanddetails.com/china.php?itemid=128>

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to be attention attended to of the number of unintentional births that occur, contributing to the high fertility rates. A surprising 50% of births in the United States alone are unintentional, and these numbers rise dramatically in less developed areas.⁷ If these unintentional births were dealt with, our birth rates would be more than cut in half, bringing in smaller generations to in turn make future populations decline. In order to intervene with these unintended births, family planning facilities need to be available worldwide. Funding for these operations need to be set aside from other projects by leading nations in order to promote a better world living standard.

Government funds should contribute to making the availability of birth control and sexual education more widespread. These family planning facilities will provide the essentials for responsible pregnancies and in turn responsible generations. The United States and areas in Europe are examples of regions who have promoted education for all congruent with the promotion of education among their own society. They have gone past their own populations, reaching out to less privileged countries. In the past, ancient civilizations have collapsed due to issues involving factors of overpopulation and growing beyond their food supply and resources. These empires include the people of Easter Island, the Mayas and the Mycenaean civilizations. At that point in time, many did not notice the problems of limited resources with high fertility rates until it was too late to save their community from crumbling.

Nowadays, we have the knowledge and ability to change our future. With new technology being introduced every day, the yield output of resources has increased, but only so much can be done to keep resources available to a large population before depletion of even more large areas of land occurs, such as many rainforests.⁸ Past civilizations crumbled because they did not have the global economy we do now as a safe net. So we need to use this global safe

⁷ Guttmacher Institute “Facts on Unintended pregnancy in the United States”
<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/FB-Unintended-Pregnancy-US.html>

⁸ Rainforest Facts “The Disappearing Rainforests.” <http://www.rain-tree.com/facts.htm#.UVE7RFctKVg>

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net to help more societies and to promote the education of future generations. Although this economy keeps communities going now, these communities need to be able to stand on their own and be self-sufficient also in the end. Until that happens, however, governments need to take charge and own up to their responsibility to their people, the people of the world, and generations to come.

This responsibility includes a progressive solution that targets the main contributor of overpopulation, the large amount of unintended births that occur. Mass birth control is the most discussed and effective solution to be suggested, including both coercive and passive methods. Coercive population control, as seen in China, has shown to be extremely unethical, thus leaving the option of passive methods. Passive methods lean towards the education of birth control and making birth control readily available, rather than forcing the birth control on people. This indirect method has not yet been widely tested as direct, coercive methods have, but in order for society to progress to a solution, this method must be tested and be put into action, to try to stop the catastrophe of mass overpopulation.

(1,124 words)

Reflection

The AP Cambridge Capstone Seminar class at North Central High School is filled with a group of intelligent and determined students. I am appreciative of the opportunity I have been given to not only work in a new upcoming AP class (an opportunity given to only a few hundred), but I am also appreciative of the great classmates I have been given the chance to work with and the teachers who have led us.

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When the team projects came around, we started off great. Groups were formed according to common interest among individuals. Right away, my group easily determined our topic for our team paper, overpopulation. We each took a different perspective: scientific view, environmental view, ethical view, cultural view, and political view. As individuals, we were each responsible for the aspect of overpopulation we chose.

Every member of our group started forming our individual papers to gather information to put in the group research paper. As time ran out, each group hurried to combine everyone's information. My group started with forming our introduction. Without any difficulty on our first day of putting our research together, we had a solid opening. The following weekend I went across our state with my family and All Star cheer team for a competition. My group planned to continue working together the following Monday, but unexpectedly my mother was rushed to the hospital before we were able to make it back home. We ended up in the hospital for the next week preparing ourselves for my mother's life changing heart operation. My group acknowledged the situation and continued working towards a well-formed essay. Over our online Google document, communication was easy and it contributed to completing our paper in a timely fashion.

While my mother recovered after the surgery, my parents sent me back home by plane so I would not miss anymore school. It was nice working with my group face-to-face, but I had trouble continuing my individual research. I was home alone for a week, and it was troubling dealing with my emotions and trying to get work done. My sister helped and suggested many

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online data sources for articles and this added to many opportunities to enhance my individual work, but I lacked the motivation and energy to complete more work. I was worn out emotionally which in turn wore me out physically. With the help and support of my classmates though, I was able to apply and express my research well. As our deadline drew days away, what was to be our final draft was near complete. We each critiqued the whole essay, finalizing our ending solution and formalizing our writing. Final citations were added and our work was reviewed just a day before the deadline. Our group met on the final day during our lunch period and agreed on our final copy to turn in.

We found that revisions needed to be done because many of our individual works mentioned many similar topics, so in order not to repeat ourselves, we had to recreate some passages. We also helped each other reform some diction and syntax errors, combining everyone's strengths for the writing. Most of this occurred online, with each of us being in separate places. I feel that it may have been easier if we met face-to-face more often to join our information. I think we took too much advantage of the ease the internet brought for us all to communicate because communicating of the internet is has its barriers that would have not been there if we were working together, next to each other.

I believe our paper was good, but could have been better. I wish that I could have contributed more to the group and I wish that I didn't strain our progress throughout the process. All our information was on the paper, how we communicated it could have been enhanced if the group's final revision had been completed sooner, so that our review of our work could have been better

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evaluated for an opportunity to gain a higher score that would have assessed a piece that was written excellently.

I learned through this experience how to push through tough situations. I could have easily just dropped everything and ignored my responsibilities, but I knew that things needed to be carried on and completed. I learned from my research the overwhelming numbers of human population consuming the globe's resources and how much the public is ignorant of this issue just because current generations won't be affected, but the thing is, future generations will soon be impacted greatly. If more people were invested in their community's future, more would have been done to reduce the impact of this issue. The key to solving this problem is to invest more of our population's interest in our future.

(800 words)

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