

## Life in Our Overpopulated Future?

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No-one wants to face an overpopulated present, let alone an even more overpopulated future. I am frequently warned by other writers that this topic is poison. However, I ask you to join me in addressing what life in our overpopulated future might look like? Don't we owe it to future generations to make some predictions, in order to adjust our lifestyles and manage our natural resources to assure our off-spring a healthy future? All we really need to make an educated guess about our lives in an overpopulated future are these two assumptions: that current population growth will continue, and that we can make educated guesses about projecting current health trends forward in time. Currently we increase our worldwide population by 212,000 humans net per day, or about 80,000,000 (eighty million) per year. We lose about 56,000,000 (fifty-six million) of our fellows annually but about 136,000,000 (one hundred and thirty-six million) new humans are born every year. Thus, we are adding 212,000 new souls to our current worldwide total of 7,450,000,000 (seven billion, four hundred and fifty million) every day. Demographers tell us that we are still in the upward growth section of the widely agreed upon population growth curve, and that we may not reach a levelling off of that curve until 2,100. Need we point out here that this inevitable levelling off may well be due either to an increasing die-off or increasing infertility, which would allow

the number of new births to equal the number of deaths? What evidence do we have that this scenario may actually come to pass? Numerous animal population studies have been conducted over the past 70 years that demonstrate this reproducible population growth curve in several mammal species. There is good evidence that human population trends will follow a similar trajectory. What does this mean for our future and the future we are choosing to bring our children into?

Currently, in Western urban and suburban populations, public health statisticians are reporting increases in the incidence and prevalence of the top ten fatal “diseases of civilization”, in spite of our ever more costly and necessary high-tech medical interventions. A dramatic comparison may bring home this point: British physicians examined 238,851 rural subsistence living Kenyans in 1932 and could not find a single case of heart disease, but heart disease is the number one killer of modern Western urban and suburban citizens. There is almost no evidence of any of our “diseases of civilization” among clan living hunter-gatherer or pastoral peoples in a wide variety of ecological contexts all over the earth today. Why? As all humans living today have 99.9% of the same genes, and only differ by 40 of the 40,000 human genes in our genome, we must conclude that some environmental factors are responsible. Could lifestyle and population density be major contributors to our vulnerability to these Western diseases? There is a considerable volume of

experimental evidence from animal and human researches that suggests exactly this conclusion.

Thus, it is not too outlandish to suggest that we may continue to see increasing cases of these diseases of civilization in the future, and predict that our offspring will suffer from an ever greater disease load as well. Some will say that our increasing technological medical interventions will doubtless overcome this increased disease load, but what about the cost in money and human suffering? Now, do you understand the true meaning of that levelling off of the human population curve by 2,100?

Our total population is predicted to reach over 10,000,000,000 (ten billion) by 2,100 but a higher proportion of us will be sick, dying, and dependent on ever greater medical assistance in order to just survive. As nearly 20 percent of our GDP in America is currently being spent on medical care, what will the cost be in 2,100? Who will pay for all this increased medical care. Will we be forced to consider euthanasia due to exhausted financial resources? This may not be a pretty picture, but how long can we afford to look away from an otherwise inevitable conclusion, if current population growth continues unabated?

Is there any good news, you may be asking? Well, those same 20<sup>th</sup> century animal researchers cited above also discovered built-in population regulation mechanisms within us mammals, doubtless evolved in order to prevent our

overpopulating our earth's capacity to support our species. It is not too outlandish to consider our increasing load of the diseases of civilization as just such a mechanism, however painful it may be to face the fact that nature seems to be attempting to limit our numbers through increasing disease. Ecologist John J. Christian, PhD, was the first to make this revolutionary suggestion in 1963. He was pretty much ignored, as was psychologist Jeffrey Gray when he made a similar suggestion in 1971.

More recent researches have gone further to uncover another endocrine mechanism which lowers fertility in crowded mammals undergoing increased population density stress, which increases the two master stress hormones, CRH and cortisol. Both of these stress hormones inhibit fertility and, eventually, turn off all further reproduction in crowded animals. Some investigators argue that social disruption and an inability of parent animals to protect their newborn offspring, is the primary cause of these massive die-offs. Whether increased diseases, lowered reproduction, or social chaos is the main cause in the inevitable extinction of crowded animal populations is academic. The bottom line is that crowded animals overpopulate to a point of extinction in these experiments. Is that where we in our crowded cities and suburbs are headed? Is that the future our scientific tea leaves are predicting?

A recent review of infertility in the US revealed a 100% increase in infertility over the past 34 years: 8% in 1982, but 16.7% in 2016. A university research group in Tel Aviv, Israel, found a 50-60% decrease in sperm counts in Western men and warned of a potential extinction of our species in the not too distant future, as early as 2,100, if my math is correct. Certainly, as women are more educated and find more satisfying employment opportunities, they may choose to delay reproduction or even avoid it all together. Many decry this phenomenon, but, in fact, it may be a trend that will pull us back from the brink of disaster.

Do I need to point out the dire predictions of overpopulation fueled environmental collapse, of oceans depleted of fish, of global famine, of shrinking forests worldwide, of clean water shortages, of increasing wars, of global warming, of rising sea levels and inundation of coastal population centers, of natural resource depletions, of shrinking fossil fuel reserves, of social disruptions and mass shootings, etc.? When will we open our eyes to the true driving force behind all of these ominous warnings of a dystopic future: human overpopulation? What future will we choose for ourselves, for our children, for our grandchildren, for our greatgrandchildren. Promoting one-child families and “degrowth” economic solutions are the only way this dire prediction of an otherwise truly horrible near future can be avoided. There is no time to waste.

For anyone interested in a greatly extended explanation of the assertions made in this essay, please Google “Stress R Us” and go to the MAHB (Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere) website homepage. Re-enter the title in their “library” search and download a free PDF. Good hunting and help us write a new scenario for a more optimistic future for us all and all our future fellow residents of our finite earth.

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