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KIDS

Teach, Empower and Enjoy Your Children.

Population Myths

The Roots of Population Control

Attempts to control population have harmed, not helped, the world.

Younger Children's Version:

The family is essential to society. In fact, it is the basic unit of society. Strong families mean strong societies.

A family starts with the marriage of a man and a woman as husband and wife. This husband and wife then have their own biological children or sometimes adopt.

Children are a blessing to societies. Children bring joy to their families and new ideas and strength to the workforce when they grow up. They also take care of the elderly in the society.

Watch how in this story one girl changed many people's lives.



WATCH:

Ordinary Mary and the Extraordinary Deed

By Emily Pearson

Resource Links:

[Stronger Families, Stronger Societies](#)

Older Children's Version:

In society today, people often worry about the environment, climate change, overpopulation, and the availability and accessibility of food. What's the solution? According to many sources, it's controlling the population. How? By discouraging couples from having babies.

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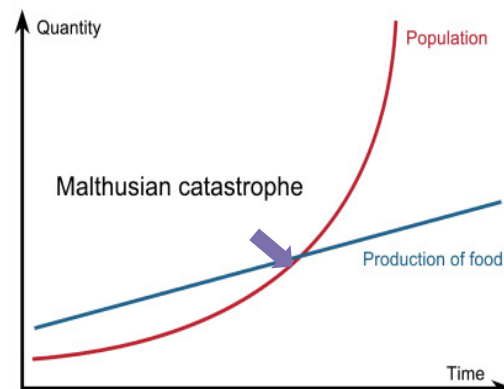
These ideas aren't new; they have existed for centuries. As early as 1803, Thomas Malthus was one of the first scientists to introduce the idea of population control. Malthus called for delaying marriage and having fewer children as a means of controlling the growing population. His concern as an economist was his perceived notion that the world was unable to provide enough food as more children would be born each successive generation. Known as the Malthusian Crisis, he theorized that if the population grows faster than food production, the result will be famine, disease, and war.

However, within Malthus' lifetime huge changes occurred as a result of the Enlightenment period and the Industrial Revolution.

Author Johan Norberg's [article](#) explains it this way:

"Malthus underestimated [humanity's] ability to innovate, solve problems and change its ways when Enlightenment ideas and expanded freedoms gave people the opportunity to do so. As farmers got individual property rights, they then had an incentive to produce more. As borders were opened to international trade, regions began to specialize in the kinds of production suited to their soil, climate and skills. And agricultural technology improved to make use of these opportunities. Even though the population grew rapidly, the supply of food grew more quickly."

This is a result of [specialization](#). Specialization is when a person focuses on making a few things really well. For example, a farmer might focus on growing just a few crops rather than twenty different ones. Writer Matt Ridley explains that embracing specialization increases human ingenuity and increases the possibility that more people "can live upon the planet in improving health, food security and life expectancy and that this is compatible with cleaner air, [and] increasing forest cover..."



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In fact Ridley explains further that the “reduction in specialization can lead to a population crisis even without an increase in population. The Malthusian crisis comes not as a result of population growth directly, but because of decreasing specialization.”

Despite history showing Malthus’ claims were faulty, 20th century environmentalists used Malthus’ theory. They stressed that the Earth can’t sustain the growing populations, and resources would run out unless population growth was under control. One man named Paul Ehrlich pushed these ideas in his book, *The Population Bomb* (1968). This book caused widespread fear among people from its claim that millions of people would starve to death because the world population was bigger than the food production.

However, yet again these claims were followed by great innovation; the 1970’s became what is known as the green revolution. New high-yield strains of wheat, rice, and other foods boosted harvesting, so food production kept up with the growing population.

Something to consider, in our current world, there is enough food to feed everyone on the planet. The problem isn’t having enough food, it’s in the delivery. Studies show that insufficient food supply for a population is the result of government corruption, war, and distribution problems - not the inability to feed a growing population as Malthus, Ehrlich, and many other proponents of population control would have us believe.



History shows again and again that there is no compelling support for claims to control the population. Malthus and Ehrlich and all the others were wrong about the need to restrict the population. They failed to account for the improvements in technology, innovation, and human ingenuity.

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As we continue to see potential problems in the world, *we need to keep in mind what Julian Simon, an intellectual opponent of Paul Ehrlich, said:*

“ Human beings are not just more mouths to feed, but are productive and inventive minds that help find creative solutions to man’s problems, thus leaving us better off in the long run.

Watch this video for a simple summary of that history (be sure to read through the Questions and Answers included with the video).

WATCH:
Overpopulation – The Making of a Myth



Resources:

<https://www.eh-resources.org/malthus-bibliography/>
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8553289/>
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4458312/>
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/302278980_Exploring_the_Relationship_Between_Corruption_and_Food_Insecurity_on_a_Global_Scale
<https://fee.org/articles/the-myth-that-the-world-is-facing-a-population-crisis/>
<https://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-26-2-the-debate-over-world-population-was-malthusright.html#:~:text=In%20his%20book%2Dlength%201803,work%2C%20especially%20among%20the%20poor.>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xw2mn40BVo0>
<https://www.cato.org/economic-development-bulletin/julian-simon-was-right-half-century-population-growth-increasing#methodology>
<https://www.independent.org/publications/tir/article.asp?id=1008>

Population growth figures: [World](#) [United States](#)