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This essay is well written & draws on a range of relevant research, focusing accurately on the essay question. It places the essay within the context of the module to develop some of the key concepts of the assignment in more depth (see comments in body of the essay for examples). It was quite factual in places, & whilst this is fine, discussing more of the technical terminology & concepts could add more depth to analysis. But, overall, this is a good piece of work.	66%	[Signature]
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Fair H. W. 2004161

Does responsibility for action on the climate and biodiversity crisis

rest with individuals or with collectives, or both?

The climate and biodiversity crisis is a prevalent topic in the modern age. Young people, such as activist Greta Thunberg, have drawn attention to the issue. Recently, she took part in a "Fridays for Future" demonstration in Switzerland¹. Climate change has led to a decrease in biodiversity, it is estimated that there has been a decline of almost 70% in wildlife populations since 1970². This is why it is referred to as the climate and biodiversity crisis, as it takes into account the species living on this planet as well as the planet itself.

One of the most frustrating parts of the climate and biodiversity crisis is that the problem seems so huge that the actions that concerned individuals can take just do not seem effective. People feel overwhelmed and disempowered by the sheer size and complexity of the problem. It is obvious that we cannot hope to save the planet by simply recycling our waste and switching to paper straws. Strong leadership by governments and businesses in co-operation globally is required to make the radical changes needed. Individuals such as Thunberg are crucial in raising awareness and putting pressure on leaders for change, but ultimately there must be brave leadership, industry innovation, as well as public pressure and willingness to change.

Another issue is that living sustainably can be expensive, for example, vegan or sustainably farmed products are often more expensive than factory farmed animal produce. Other methods of living sustainably, for instance, buying a fabric bag to use when shopping, will end up saving a person money, but require a larger initial payment than less eco-friendly options that not everyone is able to justify. If morally sound choices are only available to the richest

¹ Paul Thornton, 'On Climate Change, Listen to the Rage-Filled Youth before Savvy Commentators', *Los Angeles Times*, 18 February 2023, section Opinion <<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/newsletter/2023-02-18/opinion-newsletter-climate-change-greta-thunberg-opinion>> [accessed 13 March 2023].
² Brooke Hirschmeier, '69% Average Decline in Wildlife Populations since 1970, Says New WWF Report', *World Wildlife Fund*, 2022 <<https://www.worldwildlife.org/press-releases/69-average-decline-in-wildlife-populations-since-1970-says-new-wwf-report>> [accessed 19 March 2023].

members of society, then it seems that we will not be able to make much progress.

Unfortunately, it is also the case that few people fully understand the severity of the climate and biodiversity crisis, due to a lack of education.

Therefore, it is imperative that people with influence, such as celebrities or

government officials, raise awareness for the cause. Education is also necessary for people to know the best way to help the environment.

Furthermore, some more sustainable options are inconvenient for people,

and do not consider the fact that different people have different needs. Many

companies replacing plastic straws with paper straws, for example, ignore the needs of people with sensory issues³. Additionally, even people who do not

struggle with this feel that paper straws are a poor substitute, and that the

replacement is a form of greenwashing.

Both individuals and collectives are responsible for the climate and

biodiversity crisis, though individuals on a lesser scale than collectives. While

we are all stakeholders in the planet, and therefore share equal responsibility,

money, power and influence are not equally distributed and therefore some

people have more resources than others when fighting the climate and

biodiversity crisis. It could be argued that those with the most power, such as

collectives and those with more influence and money, are morally required to

use it for the benefit of the many other stakeholders of the planet, including not

only humans but also non-humans and the environment. Despite this, everyone

who is able should work to protect the planet and combat the climate and

biodiversity crisis however and wherever possible.

*And you draw a
discussion of cosmopolit-
communism & capitalism
here?*

Global warming is one of the most widely covered parts of the climate and biodiversity crisis, partly because some people claim that it is a hoax, or that it

³ Erin Valley, 'Grasping at Straws: The Ableism of the Straw Ban - Center for Disability Rights' <<https://cdmrye.org/blog/disability-dialogue/grasping-at-straws-the-ableism-of-the-straw-ban/>> [accessed 13 March 2023].

is a natural part of Earth's cycle⁴. However, only a few deny this now, due to

scientists being able to provide more evidence on the subject⁵. Instead, a more prevalent view is that global warming is not only real, but it is the fault of humanity, and therefore preventable and hopefully reversible. If action is not

taken to combat the climate and biodiversity crisis, then the damage caused to the planet will lead to the death of all living beings, both sentient, such as humans, and non-sentient, such as plants. The World Wildlife Fund states that there is "no time to lose in securing a nature-positive society."⁶

Many governments have laws that attempt to protect the environment, such as local authorities' policies on recycling, and also how large corporations

dispose of waste. It is also the government's responsibility to decide how the general public's waste is disposed of – why is it the fault of a working-class

individual that their waste ends up in a landfill or the ocean when all they did was use an item? Consumers have very little say in the disposal of their waste.

In addition to this, governments also must have methods of punishing people who pollute the environment, such as fines for littering, and also rewards to give incentive for people to help protect it. Furthermore, as governments

control education, they are also responsible for educating the public on the

climate and biodiversity crisis through schooling. In the United Kingdom,

political parties must include their stance on the environment in their manifesto.

Moreover, only around 10% of the plastic from households is actually

recycled⁷. Contrary to popular belief, this is not because these households are

⁴ Ahmed Al-Rawi and others, 'Twitter's Fake News Discourses Around Climate Change and Global Warming', *Frontiers in Communication*, 6 (2021)
⁵ UN Chief: "Cold, Hard Facts" Should Guide Climate Policy, *AP NEWS*, 13 March 2023, section Politics <<https://apnews.com/article/climate-warming-un-guteres-ippcc-cop28-d24d2b541f6d56a078ebb61e80512637>> [accessed 19 March 2023].
⁶ Hirshmeier.
⁷ 'What Really Happens to Your Plastic Recycling?', *Greenpeace UK*, 2021 <<https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/plastic-recycling-export-incineration/>> [accessed 7 March 2023].

not recycling enough, but because there is such an excess of plastic waste that it must be burned, or even "dumped on other countries."⁸

There is an unequal distribution of wealth favouring the north-western hemisphere. It is also important to recognise that there is a serious global imbalance of wealth and power favouring the industrial Northern Hemisphere. Historical factors of colonialism still have most of the southern hemisphere indebted to the north and struggling to survive and develop. This unequal wealth distribution means that many countries do not have the resources to properly combat the climate and biodiversity crisis, and so it would be unfair to place the same amounts of responsibility on these countries as on more developed countries. Furthermore, the industrial north produces a massive proportion of the damaging carbon dioxide and pollution, with the south responsible for a much smaller fraction, and so it is rare that these less developed countries are as much to blame for the climate and biodiversity crisis anyway.

Attfield thinks that corporations are at fault, and that individuals cannot make as much of an impact. He notes that "capitalist corporations had an inbuilt drive to increase profitability,"⁹ which leads to the disregard of the environment in favour of profit. He also notes that fellow scholar "Salt took the view that capitalism victimizes both nature and people."¹⁰ Could you discuss this a little more to develop issue here? Factory farming has a large impact on nature, not only due to the effect that it has on sentient beings, such as the animals being farmed and those who consume their produce, but also due to its impact on the environment. The corporations involved in this industry tend to prioritise profit over having care for the environment, non-human animals, humans. Many of these factory farms produce chemicals that greatly damage the environment, such as methane and nitrous oxide¹¹. While more humanely run farms also produce these chemicals

⁸ 'What Really Happens to Your Plastic Recycling?'

⁹ Robin Attfield, *Environmental Thought: A Short History* (John Wiley & Sons, 2021), page 147.

¹⁰ Attfield, page 101.

¹¹ Jacky Turner, 'The Environmental Costs of Factory Farming', *COMPASSION IN WORLD FARMING TRUST*, 1999.

to a degree, they are produced on a much smaller scale, due to housing fewer animals. The masses of deforestation caused by this industry also reduces biodiversity in the area.

The substitution of plastic straws to paper straws is considered a form of greenwashing by many activists¹². Greenwashing is a term refers to "the process of conveying a false impression or misleading information about how a company's products are environmentally sound."¹³ While it may seem more sustainable at first glance, the production of paper straws requires far more energy than plastic straws¹⁴. Moreover, paper straws are not able to be recycled once they have been tainted by the drink¹⁵.

While some corporations boast using sustainable packaging, not all do. There are biodegradable alternatives to common forms of packaging, such as cornstarch packaging to replace bubble wrap and Styrofoam, or cellulose packaging as an alternative to some forms of plastic¹⁶. In addition to this, some companies use unnecessary amounts of packaging for their products. For instance, in many supermarkets, cucumbers are found in a plastic wrap, which many people consider to be needless. This is unnecessary waste, and even if placed in a recycling bin, it would be more environmentally friendly for it not to have existed at all. Therefore, swapping plastic products to 'biodegradable' replacements is not always a feasible solution, and more work needs to be done. Even aside from the unnecessary and unsustainable packaging that many companies use for their products, many corporations still pollute the environment through disposal of their waste. The transportation of products also leads to damage to the environment, as vehicles emit large amounts of

¹² 'Greenwashing: Straw Replacements', *The Center for Accountability in Science*, 2021 <<https://accountablescience.com/greenwashing-straw-replacements/>> [accessed 13 March 2023].
¹³ Adam Hayes, 'What Is Greenwashing? How It Works, Examples, and Statistics', *Investopedia*, 2022 <<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/greenwashing.asp>> [accessed 13 March 2023].
¹⁴ 'Greenwashing',
¹⁵ 'Greenwashing',
¹⁶ Francesca Nicasio, '9 Eco-Friendly Packaging Materials to Help Your Business Go Green', *NoIssue*, 2021 <<https://noissue.co.uk/blog/environmentally-friendly-packaging-materials/>> [accessed 19 March 2023].

carbon dioxide, as well as other greenhouse gases¹⁷. The emission of these chemicals contributes to one-fifth of the United States' total global warming pollution.¹⁸

In terms of other vehicles, recently statistics emerged showing how frequently private jets are used¹⁹. The carbon dioxide emissions from the trips taken in these jets are huge, as confirmed by environmental health professor DeCarlo, "The act of taking a huge piece of metal and putting it up into the sky is going to be an enormous carbon footprint that's really not necessary, especially for these kinds of short distances."²⁰ Using private jets for short distances is at a great cost to the environment, which could be avoided by making the same trip in a car for a longer amount of time.

Of all rich people, those in the public eye have a particular advantage when it comes to influence. One of the ways that celebrities can use their influence to help the climate and biodiversity crisis is by using media to draw attention to the crisis and encourage working class people to do what they can to combat climate change. Some celebrities will use their privilege to draw attention to the climate and biodiversity crisis. In 2019, Jane Fonda and Ted Danson, both attended a 'Fire Drill Friday' protest, which focused on the fossil fuel lobby and advocated for the "protection and restoration of our oceans"²¹. These two people possess an immense amount of privilege, being rich and white in the public eye, and are not likely to face the same repercussions as someone whose identities rest in different intersections.

Could you say a bit more here - maybe talk about

¹⁷ Jenny Green, 'Effects of Car Pollutants on the Environment', *Sciencing*, 13 March 2018 <<https://sciencing.com/effects-car-pollutants-environment-23581.html>> [accessed 19 March 2023].

¹⁸ Green.

¹⁹ Allyson Chiu, 'Celebrities Use Private Jets Excessively. It's a Climate Nightmare', *Washington Post*, 3 August 2022 <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/08/02/taylor-swift-kylie-jenner-private-jet-emissions/>> [accessed 13 March 2023].

²⁰ Chiu.

²¹ Daniel Kreps, 'Ted Danson Arrested Alongside Jane Fonda at D.C. Climate Change Protest', *Rolling Stone*, 2019 <<https://www.rollingstone.com/tv-movies/tv-movie-news/ted-danson-arrested-alongside-jane-fonda-at-d-c-climate-change-protest-904002/>> [accessed 9 March 2023].

Education is key for helping ordinary consumers make the best choices, and if people are unaware of the damaging effects of their choices, they will continue to make them. Often, people will want to make the right choices and will do so if it would fit into their budget, and so education on what the average person can do to combat the climate and biodiversity crisis is crucial if the planet is to be healed. Fortunately, there are ways to help the environment that are cost-effective. For instance, it is more environmentally sound to find new uses for items than to recycle them, as only a small amount of our waste gets recycled²². This is also more cost effective, as it saves someone from having to buy another item.

Living sustainably can, unfortunately, be expensive or inconvenient. An example of this is whether a person should travel by car, public transport, or walking or biking. While the most environmentally beneficial options, travelling by foot or bicycle, are also the cheapest, these methods take a much longer amount of time that many people do not have room in their schedules for. Public transport is more environmentally conscious than travelling in your own vehicle, as there is only one set of emissions, rather than one for each passenger. However, this can also be inconvenient as it causes a person to rely on the timetable of the bus or train, and strikes will also impair their ability to travel. While travelling in your own vehicle is the most convenient option, it also comes at the greatest cost to the environment.

Education is key to helping ordinary consumers make the best choices, as most people want to make the right choices and will do so if they can afford it. If they are ignorant of the damaging effects of some of their choices, they cannot act responsibly.

Even without doing any other work, individuals are responsible for the government officials that they elect, and their policies have a massive impact on the environment. Even if someone who is eligible to vote but they choose not to, the lack of action may place in power a government who does not place

a high enough value on combating the climate and biodiversity crisis. It is therefore important that we do not place the blame on others but work to help the situation ourselves also.

While individuals and collectives are all responsible for the climate and biodiversity crisis, individuals have less of an impact on this matter, and therefore shoulder less responsibility. An exception to this would be people with a lot of influence, whether this influence be from money or status, as these people possess more resources and therefore are able to make more of a difference to the environment.

Collectives tend to contribute the most to the climate and biodiversity crisis, as they have more resources. Governments are able to educate their citizens on the best ways to combat this crisis, and they are also responsible for the allocation of funds to helping the environment, as well as where their waste is disposed of. Corporations choose what packaging they use for their products, and how they produce these products or services, and typically favour profit over the planet.

On the other hand, individuals also play a part in the climate and biodiversity crisis. While working class people have less power and therefore contribute less to the crisis, rich people and people with influence are able to use their resources and power to help or hurt the environment. However, this is not to say that working class individuals are blameless in the matter, and everyone should do whatever they can to help combat the climate and biodiversity crisis. In closing, it is important that everyone does work to combat the climate

and biodiversity crisis, even though some entities, such as governments, may be able to contribute more than others. The average individual should try their best to save our planet and not be disheartened.

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