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**INDIVIDUALS  
AND POPULATIONS**

Phil Gadd  
*Principal Lecturer in Biology,  
St Mary's College, Twickenham*



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# Preface

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The function of the reproductive system is to ensure the survival of the human species. As with any other organism births occur in excess of those needed to maintain a stable number in the population. During the evolution of the present human race, selective forces have acted on the large number of individuals produced, so that only the fittest survived. However, modern medicine and social conditions have now removed many of these selective forces. This highly desirable increase in the number of safe births, has produced a highly undesirable problem of population growth. Thus, existing human reproductive patterns and behaviour are producing many major social problems associated with overcrowding as the world's population grows at an explosive rate.

The male reproductive system is concerned with the formation of genetically dissimilar gametes (spermatozoa) and placing them into the female genital tract. The female reproductive system also produces gametes (ova) which fuse with the male spermatozoon during fertilisation. Additionally the female protects and nourishes the developing foetus until childbirth.

Many of our reproductive processes and developmental stages are controlled by hormones. Certain of these hormones in the human species ensure a strong urge to procreate. Sociologists are well aware that these sexual urges create many social problems and that various customs have developed to accommodate them.

Consequently, the social biologist must ensure that the processes of reproduction and development are understood sufficiently, for an appreciation of the numerous allied social problems. These include problems associated with contraception, care during pregnancy, birth, care of the young, growth, changes at adolescence (including sexual desire and behaviour), senescence and ageing.

Finally the population explosion and its relationship to human reproductive habits presents a world-wide social problem of enormous difficulty. These are the topics to be considered in the succeeding chapters.