The Ten Normal Human Genders and the Seven Variants: An Exercise in Geek-Deep Worldbuilding

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Human Gender Sliders

Back in 1991-1992, when I was building Arhel and writing Fire *in the Mist*, I worked out in detail the thirteen Hoos sexual preferences, and mentioned them as half a line in the Glossary at the back of the book.

Over the years, I received a **lot** of mail/email asking me about those thirteen sexual orientations.

Problem is, during a move, I lost all my Arhel worldbuilding, including my ton of notes on the Hoos and their ways of looking at sex.

Thing is, "What WERE the 13 Hoos sexual orientations?" still remains an interesting question—*I think anything related to how and why people have sex is an interesting question*—and because I was working on the **Create A World Clinic**, I decided to see if I could, using my **World Clinic** techniques, lay out

my set of worldbuilding rules and then working through them, replicate what I'd done before…or at least come up with a solid replacement.

It worked out well. I roughed out the basics of what I'd built before.

However—because I'm better at this now—when I was done, I'd ended up with more than orientations. I'd come out with the expected three sexual phenotypes (a phenotype is the physical expression of any genetic combination for a specific trait): male, female, and hermaphrodite.

I am, by the way, aware that the term *intersex* has become preferred to *hermaphrodisim* in general usage when referring to humans. However, *intersex* refers to human individuals with any form of ambiguous genitalia or genital mosaicism.

Because I need a biological term that refers specifically to an individual with two sets of working sexual organs, one male and one female, I am dropping back to the specific term *hermaphrodite,* used to refer to species without differentiated sexes, to refer to individuals capable of viable reproduction with any human sexual phenotype as a third, though rare, biological norm, and one with extreme biological survival value to any generalist species.

Beyond my three phenotypes, I also ended up with ten normal and biologically necessary human genders to go with them.

And I also ended up with seven variations to describe sexual engagement and self-identification. In my Hoos backgrounding, I'd mixed sexual engagement and self-identification in with orientations. Back then, I was still ambivalent about whether gender identification and phenotype attraction were hard-wired or learned, so I used the vague, squishy term "orientations".

I now think gender identification and phenotype attraction are hard-wired, and that *sexual learning* is what takes place when

people with socially difficult wiring learn how to keep the difficult parts contained to avoid risk of ostracism or death. So I've gone with the stronger term "genders" to make my meaning clear.

For Prospective Worldbuilders

The first part of this exercise shows me setting up the logic—the WHY.

The second part shows me playing with the results—the HOW. **If you're looking for a lesson in worldbuilding,** you need to read both parts, and you need to read them in order.

Here are the rules I set out:

1) Sex is life.

This is as simple, true, and inarguable as any worldbuilding rule can be. Without sex, complex species which rely on DNA recombination to create the necessary mutations for long-term survival die out in one generation.

2) The end goal of both the species and the individual is to survive.

All species, no matter how simple or how complex, reproduce themselves.

Specialist species—those species adapted to specific limited environment—can survive unchanged as long as they have access to unchanged environments (the alligator and shark are nice examples of species that have not needed to change.) Swamps and oceans are pretty much what they ever were.

Tough sons-a-bitches—species that can tough out any environmental disaster because they can live on next to

nothing, breed thousands or tens of thousands of offspring at a time, and can withstand any environment without modification. The cockroach is a fine example of a tough son-of-a-bitch species. These species remain unchanged for eons because there are zillions of them, and no matter what hits, a few of them will survive in a crack in the rocks somewhere and come out and make more when the dust settles.

Generalist species—those species that are NOT tough, but that have to survive in the same variable and uncertain environments as tough sons-a-bitches. These species need steady mutations to provide offspring that can adapt to changing conditions.

3) Humans are a generalist species.

We are **not** tough. We have tender skins; poor hearing, eyesight, and sense of smell; we have only one built-in weapon (our terrific brains), we are neither swift of foot nor sharp of tooth. Nevertheless, because we have terrific brains, we have adapted to, or CAN adapt to, any environment this planet throws at us—and have proven we can adapt to environments off-planet. Better yet, we can improve our environments to meet our preferences and comfort.

Generalist species have to try all possible options in making new people all the time in order to have some version of ourselves ready to go when the shit goes down…no matter what kind of shit it might be.

The alternative is extinction. The objective of a species is to prevent its own extinction. The objective of the individual is to survive, and if possible, to keep the genes that keep him or her alive in circulation.

Generalist species—those species that have to survive in variable and uncertain environments—**need steady mutations** to provide offspring that can adapt to changing conditions.

Hybrid vigor occurs when members of the same species with differing genetic mutations interbreed, allowing the best mutations from different groups to spread into a wider circle. Generalist species **need** better mutations, so crossbreeding between recognizable race and other groups is beneficial to the species as a whole.

4) To be considered a *normal* human gender, the variation must do no harm to the species or the individual.

This qualification rules out rape, pedophilia, incest, and bestiality as normal variations, moving them into the realm of biological aberrations and/or experience-induced deviance.

Rape (any nonconsensual sex) and *pedophilia* (any sex with pre-pubescent individuals) both do physical and psychological damage to the individual and can cause physical trauma that removes the victim from the genetic pool (even if not causing death).

Incest can cause the same damages as rape or pedophilia and also in cases where pregnancy occurs, can double lethal mutations into genetic lineages and introduce them into the larger gene pool over time.

Bestiality creates opportunities for persistent and potentially lethal zoonotic (animal-to-human) diseases to get a firm foothold in human populations.

5) Sliders work better than on-off switches if you want helpful mutations.

If the only two answers you **can** ever get to any question are YES and NO, you have no room for upgrades, sidegrades, or ways of improving or saving a species **WTSGD** (when the shit goes down).

But if the only two answers you can ever get are YES or NO, you have a **specialist species**, not a **generalist species**.

Here's an example of a basic *survival* rule:
Fruit of the thurka tree is food.

And here's the question that rule generates:
MUST the species in question eat the fruit of the thurka tree to survive?

If the species has a YES/NO switch for thurka fruit, then as long as the thurka tree survives, the animal can survive—but if thurka trees die out, then the species, unable to survive without the thurka tree, will die out, too.

If the species has a slider for thurka fruit, the answer will vary by individual—some individuals may be genetically wired to require the the fruit of the thurka tree to survive, while others others are genetically wired to be able to eat foods other than the thurka tree, and in some cases, individuals of the same species adapted for ranges that only border thurka tree growing zones may not even find the thurka fruit particularly digestible.

The human example for this would be:

- **Folks who can easily eat extra-species milk products:** cheeses, drinks and baked goods made from the milk of cows, sheep, goats, yaks, horses, etc., without suffering any physical harm from doing so;
- **Folks who can marginally eat extra-species milk products,** though these are not an optimal food for them, causing in them clogging of arteries, elevated cholesterol, unhealthy weight gain, and so on;
- **Folks who cannot eat extra-species milk products:** they are lactose-intolerant and suffer severe repercussions for eating products made from the milk of cows, sheep, goats, yaks, horses, or whatever happens to be available.

Here’s an example of a basic reproductive rule:
Members of the species mate for life.

And here are the questions that rule generates:
If one member of the pair bond dies, can the other member take a new mate?

If this rule and question are on YES/NO switches, when the answer is NO, the species loses an enormous number of possible beneficial mutations by wasting the reproductive viability of young widows/widowers. (I’m using the human term here, but we could be talking about Canada geese or any other species with a one-and-done mating switch as our example).

If this rule is on a slider, as it is with humans, then reproductively viable widows/widowers can find new mates with which to reproduce, keeping their genes in the gene pool.

If most of the members of one gender are wiped out, can the survivors take multiple mates?

When the answer to this question is on a YES/NO switch, then any disease or catastrophe that targets the members of one gender exclusively (war, disease, or other “when the shit goes down” scenarios) could cause the extinction of the species, even if there were enough survivors of the targeted gender to allow for harem rallying.

If the answer is on a slider, then some members of the species will not reproduce, and their lines will die out. But with harem rallying—where few viable males gather groups of many viable females together and reproduce with them, the species can gain ground and replenish itself, including bringing back through useful mutation variants of the species that pair bond for life.

Once I had my rules in place, I had to figure out the questions for phenotype.

Phenotype (as I noted earlier) is the physical expression of a genetic combination for a specific trait. Here's a simple example: If your genotype for eye color is "recessive/recessive," your phenotype will be "blue eyes."

1. How does humanity maximize beneficial mutations?
2. How do the expressions of our generalist species' need for diverse helpful mutations (upgrades) present itself in the human sex drive?

BUT ANYWAY…

Let's move on to humans, who are generalists as a species, and whose genotype and phenotype therefore operate to survive beyond WTSGD ("when the shit goes down", hereafter exclusively abbreviated as WTSGD).

Back to rule one. **Sex is life.**

To make sure a species which reproduces by choice, rather than by having a cyclical mating season, DOES reproduce, **sex needs to be two things:**

- **Obsessively compelling.**
- **And fun.**

To make sure *people will keep reproducing offspring that can*

themselves reproduce under all possible environmental changes, it needs to be a third thing as well:

- **Variable.**

And those variations need to be innate, not learned—meaning that individual people need to be born with their sexual sliders set to different variations (which can be overridden by choice) just to make sure the species keeps all its survival options open.

So with all of that in mind, here are the ten normal human genders I came up with, along with seven non-hardwired variations.

I posit my ten normal variations as *phenotypical expressions of genotypical hard-wiring*.

Meaning that people are born with their basic sexual desires set, so that when puberty kicks off the full-blown sex drive, individuals are pre-set to desire the gender or genders they desire, and would desire the gender or genders they do *with or without societal pressures.*

I posit that *desires* are pre-set.

I posit that genders exist independent of phenotype.

I note that *acting on gender* is a

matter of choice, *and that the ability to do so has very high survival value*.

GENDER ONE (G1): Asexual—No sexual interest or activity.

It might seem odd to have non-reproduction be the first variable, but the human generalist genotype operates on sliders, not switches. Therefore, the first normal biological answer to reproduction is NO. No way, no how, not interested, leave me alone.

(We could start at YES, but where humanity is concerned, YES is not the opposite of NO, and you and I have to walk through a lot of variations to get there.)

GENDER TWO (G2): Monosexual—Sex with or sexual interest in only the self.

This is a second normal, essentially non-reproductive, answer on the sliding scale. This variant in bi-functionally hermaphroditic individuals, who have working male and female reproductive sex organs, would result in cloning—in anyone else, it is sexual interest without offspring. But the drives that would allow for reproduction by individuals alone exists in the genotype AND phenotype as an option, if a rare one. In the case of WTSGD, monosex with fertility could preserve the species long enough for individuals to meet each other and engage in sex with other individuals that would allow for the return of natural DNA recombination.

GENDER THREE (G3): Unisexual A—Sex with

or sexual interest in only one person of one’s own gender.

Basic phenotype bonding: male/male, female/female, or hermaphrodite/hermaphrodite, but with just that pair bond only, ever. Again, **Unisexual A** and its most closely related variant **Polysexual A** appear as non-reproductive options for any but reproductive-capable hermaphrodites, but are necessary wiring variations in a generalist species. Neither is Unisexual A an exclusively human option. (link opens in new window)

If the pair bond is consummated, the Unisexual A individual will not search for an alternative if his/her mate is lost.

GENDER FOUR (G4): Unisexual B—Sex with or sexual interest in only with one person of one other gender.

Basic male/female, male/hermaphrodite, female/hermaphrodite pairing, but with just that pair bond only, ever. If the pair bond is consummated, the Unisexual B individual will not search for an alternative if his/her mate is lost.

GENDER FIVE (G5): Polysexual A—Sex with or sexual interest in more than one person of one’s own gender.

Male/male, female/female, hermaphrodite/hermaphrodite. This covers both serial and simultaneous pairings. This is the last of the simple genders.

Polysexual A individuals may attempt to replace lost mates.

GENDER SIX (G6): Polysexual B—Sex with or

sexual interest in more than one person of one preferred *other* gender.

Mostly male/female, and covering both serial and simultaneous pairings; however, is the first of the complex genders, since the individual's preferred gender could be one of the Unis, either of the other two Polys, or one of the three Pans.

This will not work out well for Unis or Poly As, but it is a broadly effective reproductive strategy for both male and female Poly Bs.

Polysexual B individuals may attempt to replace lost mates.

GENDER SEVEN (G7): Polysexual C—Sex with or sexual interest in multiple partners of multiple other genders.

The Venn diagram of potential partners for an individual Poly C is messy beyond belief, because along with the possibility of, for example, one woman wanting both one other woman and one other man, she could also want one woman alone AND more than one woman together, one man alone and more than one man together, only multiple women at the same time, only multiple hermaphrodites at the same time, only multiple men at the same time, both men and women at the same time, both men and hermaphrodites at the same time, only single serial relationships, but with either men, or hermaphrodites, or women…

Polysexual C individuals can choose from Unis of either gender, Polys of all three genders, and Pans of all three genders.

While a Uni/Poly C relationship would be devastating for the Uni, and a Poly A/Poly C relationship would be deeply unwelcome for a Poly A, they happen a lot.

Poly Cs are wired to look for variety across the board (a reproductive strategy that makes a lot of sense biologically). Those who do are unlikely to interact only with other Poly Cs simply because there are so many other alternatives, and chance brings folks together who may be both deeply compelled to pursue each other while being wildly incompatible.

GENDER EIGHT (G8): Pansexual A—Sex with or sexual interest in ALL genders.

This is YES, version one.

ALL possibilities may be equally enchanting, from pursuing and trying to "convert" asexuals to desiring all variants of multiple partnerings, serially or simultaneously or both.

Pansexual A is as interested and drawn toward appealing to individuals who have no interest in his/her gender as he/she is to those who do.

Any individual Pansexual A may prefer serial pairings to simultaneous separate relationships or group encounters, but Pansexual A is equally attracted to all both sexual phenotypes (male and female) and to all genders.

GENDER NINE (G9): Pansexual B—Sex with or sexual interest in ALL genders, but with the added compelling drive to act in other or all phenotype roles.

All things true for Pansexual As are true for Pansexual Bs. Additionally, however, Pansexual Bs may or may not have the necessary phenotype of two working sets of sex organs, **but they do have the desire** to act in both male and female roles. This wiring is reproductively irrelevant in non-hermaphrodites, but does make possible the slider that would allow Pansexual B hermaphrodites to rebreed a nearly extinct

species WTSGD.

For generalists, all potential variables MUST be in place and in production “Before the shit goes down,” because not even punctuated evolution, a.k.a. punctuated equilibrium can save a species from extinction if the basic mutations and the mechanisms for creating more are not in place beforehand.

GENDER TEN (G10): Pansexual C—Sex with or sexual interest in ALL genders, but with the added compelling drive to act in only phenotype roles other than ones own.

All things true for Pansexual As are true for Pansexual Cs. However, the Pansexual C individual ONLY wants to act out the phenotypical role for the gender or genders to which he/she does not belong.

This gender seems to me like a cruel trick on any of the three sexual phenotypes, but because I posited both A and B, I have to posit C as a normal variation. Under the rules for **Generalist Survival**, all possible variations will be tried, and all variations that do not cause harm either to the species or individuals will be normal.

The Seven Variations

These are short and don’t require much explanation. They are variations because they are ADD-ONS to the ten genders, coexisting with them but completely separate.

Variations of Self-Identification

Homopsychogenous: Individual identifies himself/herself mentally as a member of his or her own sexual phenotype.

Heteropsychogenous: Individual identifies himself/herself

mentally as a member of a sexual phenotype not his or her own.

Ambipsychogenous: Individual identifies himself/herself mentally as a member of both male and female sexual phenotypes.

Ochipsychogenous: Individual does not identify mentally as a member of any sexual phenotype.

Variations of Sexual Engagement

Genosexual: Engages in sexual acts solely as a means of reproduction.

Simposexual: Engages in sexual acts exclusively as a means of personal satisfaction. (Personal satisfaction can—but does not necessarily—include concern for the satisfaction of any partner or partners, since making sure partners are satisfied is in itself a form of personal satisfaction.

Ambisexual: Engages in sexual acts both as a means of reproduction and as a means of satisfaction.

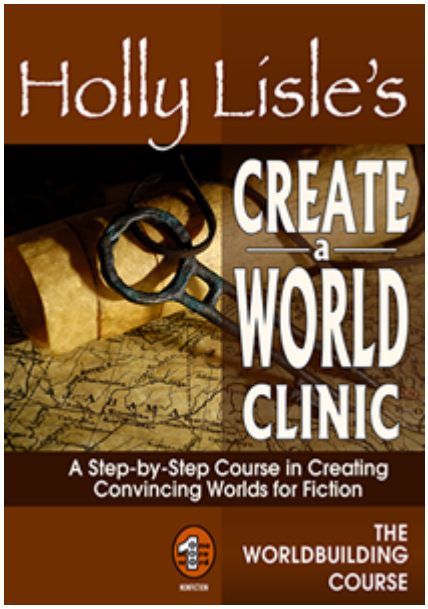
Finally, the outcome of the exercise.

First, I liked the details I obtained by working through this worldbuilding exercise enough that I'll be using it in my Settled Space universe. It fits nicely with a lot of the genetic and nanoviral engineering I've set up in the Cadence Drake novels. It also adds depth and logic to social worldbuilding I've done for both my Cadence Drake novels and upcoming Longview stories.

Second, I think what I came up with is a valid representation of real-world human sexuality. I may be missing some variants, I may have overlooked some options…but I think I'm on the right track here.

This is an example of **Geek-Deep Worldbuilding**, which takes up only about the last 25% of ***Create A World Clinic***.

While the first three quarters of this particular book are designed help anyone who writes ANY sort of fiction, the last part will be of deepest interest to SF and fantasy writers…though I used this particular example to demonstrate how the process can give you material applicable to stories set in the here and now as well.



Create A World Clinic is available now.

Questions and comments are welcome below.

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