

# Hypothesized Relationships between Subtype Arenas

by Susan Rhodes, Jan. 2007

## INTRODUCTION

My experience with the enneagram subtypes leads me to think of each of the three categories of self-preservation, sexual, and social primarily as arenas of activity. They are the three spheres in which we function in daily life.

According to enneagram theory, for each of us, one of these arenas is of more interest than the other two. This is known as our subtype. Usually when people speak of subtypes, they're speaking of a specific combination of type and subtype arena (e.g., self-preservation Six or social Three). So when I want to talk about the three areas of activity without reference to type, I call them subtype arenas.

When I do this, I notice that for some individuals, one subtype arena is really dominant while, for others, two arenas are particularly influential. I'm not the first to notice this, of course—Riso & Hudson have been writing about the idea of a subtype “stacking order” for some time.

If we think of either one or two subtype arenas being dominant, there are six subtype combinations possible:

- Self-preservation
- Sexual
- Social
- Self-preservation & Sexual
- Sexual & Social
- Social & Self-preservation

On the following page are potential profiles for each category. Each profile is brief, because it's just a sketch. I call the profiles hypothetical because they're still tentative.

# Hypothesized Relationships Between Subtype Arenas

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SELF-PRESERVATION ARENA	SEXUALITY & INTIMACY ARENA	SOCIAL ARENA	HYPOTHESIZED CHARACTERISTICS
HIGH	LOW	LOW	Strong emphasis on the self: independence, self-sufficiency, creating and conserving resources. Work orientation and ability to focus on details. Not particularly oriented too much to outer relationships, either intimate or sociable. There's a tendency toward directness that may appeal to SX types (and seem rude to SOC types). May be in "survival mode," focusing only on acquiring and maintaining the basics necessary for life.
LOW	HIGH	LOW	Strong emphasis on intimacy and/or creativity: fascination, passion, intensity, and sexuality. Totally "caught up" in or impassioned by whatever draws their attention. May have a hard time taking care of life's necessities or in adapting to social custom. May be extremely magnetic to others, and so attract all sorts of personal attention. Tend to be attracted to very intense, exciting relationships with others of a similar type, so the combination can be explosive and hard to maintain.
LOW	LOW	HIGH	Strong emphasis on outer life and relationships: sociability, networking, making connections, and group focus. Look at everything in terms of the group—how to look at it, to participate in it, how to move it, how to avoid being left out of it. Keenly aware of group dynamics and patterns. Tend to be drawn to public life as leaders, facilitators, or active participants. May seem superficial to SP types or boring to SX types.
HIGH	HIGH	LOW	Emphasis on creativity as an expression of the persona (SP-SX) or on the creative impulse somewhat curbed (or grounded) by a latent cautiousness (SX-SP). This combination may bring the desire to work intensively on a project in small groups or with one other person (or to work with a romantic partner). The lack of SOC focus can mean a disinterest in public affairs or belief that it's not necessary to adapt to social norms.
HIGH	LOW	HIGH	Emphasis on social responsibility & public service (SOC-SP) or on public service as an outgrowth of personal success (SP-SOC). Here we may find social activists and humanitarians, people energized by what they do in the public arena. The lack of SX focus can mean a certain emotional flatness and difficulty in focusing on subtle aspects of intimacy or creativity.
LOW	HIGH	HIGH	Emphasis on the creative aspects of social life, with either creativity (SX-SOC) or social life (SOC-SX) predominating. With SX-SOC, we'd expect more rawness and intensity. With SOC-SX, we'd expect more awareness of the need to adapt to social circumstances. The social & public arena become the place where creative work & intimate interactions takes place. Here we might see "Lifestyles of the Rich & Famous" or other action that's both creative and high-profile. The lack of SP can mean an attempt to "ground" in the group (instead of in the self).