

The Epitome of Human Nature: 6-7

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Abstract

The newly established Generation Alpha has coined its first slang term, 6-7. The phrase became prominent enough for Oxford University to name it the 2025 Children's Slang Word of the Year. What do the two numbers mean exactly? No one knows, which is precisely the reason that many adults who have happened across it now hate the two numbers combined. Oxford Psychologist Isaac Winterburn has found great interest in this vernacular phenomenon as the term lacking a universally agreed-upon definition, paired with its rapid spread across digital and adolescent culture, has created a perfect parallel to Albert Camus' concept of the 'absurd'. The 'absurd' describes the conflict between humanity's search for meaning and the universal inability to find it. Humans consistently attempt to explain what they cannot through language, literature, religion, science, and philosophy. The question of the truth behind human nature can be answered by looking to the unanswerable; human instinct is to seek understanding in the face of fitfulness. This instinct is both the foundation of human civilization and the seeds of its destruction.

The Epitome of Human Nature: 6-7

“It is human nature to determine human nature.”

—Kylah Battershall, *The Epitome of Human Nature: 6-7*, 2026

The average adult asks 25-30 questions a day (Komlos, 2022). Why? Because humanity has the intrinsic need to explain the unexplainable. People have attempted to understand the world around them for centuries: Ancient Greeks and Romans created myths to understand science still yet undiscovered, officials in Salem named some witches to explain their paranoia, and modern science continues to search for the truths governing the universe (New World Encyclopedia, 2020). Yet, none have been fully successful. Uncertainty is the most defining, and constant, condition of human existence (Doherty, 2023). Humans are uniquely uncomfortable with the unknown; when faced with something they cannot fully understand, they instinctively attempt to assign meaning to it, from death to why the arm feels a bit funny by the elbow, everything must have meaning. The rise of the slang term “6-7” serves as a modern reflection of this idea. Although the phrase lacks any universally accepted definition, its widespread use, and the emotional reactions surrounding it, demonstrate humanity’s compulsive, and intrinsic, desire to decode the unknown (Spaeth, 2025). The discomfort many adults feel toward the term 6-7, does not emerge from the numbers themselves, but from the inability to fully understand them.

This conflict between humanity’s search for meaning and the inability to find a clear answer was described by Albert Camus as “the absurd.” According to Camus, humans endlessly pursue order and truth despite existing within a world that often offers none (Camus, 1942/2012). Rather than accepting the fact they don’t know, people construct explanations through different mediums to make existence feel more coherent (The Living Philosophy, 2024). This curiosity has allowed humanity to innovate and progress, discovering secrets never imaginable to

ancestors from years ago. But the curiosity and incapability to find the answer is where this instinct turns dangerous. When humans cannot understand differences between one another, they often replace understanding with fear, and fear evolves into systems of prejudice and control (Camus, 2025).

The Historical Perspective

Throughout history, racism, sexism, and homophobia have repeatedly been justified through political and legal systems that attempt to rationalize inequality (Jost, 2019). Laws enforcing racial segregation, restricting women's rights, and criminalizing LGBTQ+ people were often defended through distorted interpretations of perceived knowledge. Rather than accepting difference, societies created rigid categories intended to try to understand other's complexities. In many cases, legislation became a reflection of humanity's fear of what it could not fully understand (Bianchi & Saab, 2019).

These following examples demonstrate that prejudice is rarely rooted in logic, but emerges from fear of the unknown, demonstrating Camus' thesis (Conerly et al., 2023). However, it must be stated that there are ways to overcome this fear and remain loving. Social movements advocating for civil rights, gender fairness, and LGBTQ+ equality are examples of properly rationalizing for the benefit of humanity as opposed to separating homo sapiens into separate categories, in groups and out groups (Morris, 2021; McFeeters, 2021).

Humanity's instinct to seek understanding has both benefits and opposites as it has resulted in advancements for many centuries on the scientific standpoint as well as human unification in civil rights but creates room for misled logic behind racism, sexism, and homophobia (Wolford, 2024).

The Absurd in Race

One of the clearest examples of legislation born from lack of understanding can be seen in the history of racism (Smedley, 2024). Throughout history, racial prejudice has often emerged from humanity's attempt to categorize and explain differences between groups of people in ways that preserve existing social hierarchies (Morris, 2021). In the United States, slavery was defended through pseudoscientific racial theories that falsely portrayed Black individuals as inferior to white individuals, even using ideas such as natural selection to prove this 'superiority' (Gould, 1981).

The institution of slavery itself represented an attempt to impose social order upon human 'uniqueness'. Enslaved Africans were stripped of identity, rights, and autonomy, because white society constructed an ideology for what they refused to understand: race (African American..., 2021). Even after the abolition of slavery following the American Civil War, racial prejudice continued to evolve into less overt, but still controlling, legislation. The Jim Crow laws legalized segregation and continued to reinforce the idea that Black Americans should remain separate from white society. Segregation affected nearly every aspect of life, and it was all designed to maintain racial hierarchy (Fields, 2022). The concept of people who did not look like them was foreign to early colonizers and that novelty brought a sense of unknown and that sense of unknown brought fear. Fear drives new prejudice. Fear drove the racist legislation. Fear drives racism.

The lack of truth and the 'grasping of straws' when trying to escape absurdism is visible when examining the contradictions embedded within these systems. The United States publicly celebrated ideals of liberty, equality, and democracy while simultaneously denying those rights to millions of people based solely upon race and skin color (National Archives, 2018; African

American..., 2021). Scientific and religious institutions that claimed to pursue truth frequently participated in spreading racist ideologies that lacked scientific basis (Anthropology is..., 2002). The persistence of racism shows just how deeply humanity fears uncertainty and difference. Humans often seek stability by dividing society into categories of belonging and exclusion, even when those divisions are socially constructed (Morris, 2021). Throughout history, racial legislation has reflected humanity's desire to impose order upon a world that resists simplistic definitions (Hanna et al., 2020).

But history also reveals humanity's capacity for peace when patience and out-of-the-box thinking is exercised for understanding. Those against racism, abolitionists and civil rights activists challenged these systems, demonstrating that although humanity frequently responds to differences with fear, it also possesses the ability to confront the absurdity of its own contradictions and move toward greater understanding (American Psychological Association, 2022),

The Absurd in Sex

While racism is perhaps the largest example of absurdism used against others in legislation, sexism has also historically emerged from rigid assumptions about gender roles and a refusal to see women as equal to men. Almost every modern society has descended from patriarchy. Women have been frequently denied equal access to opportunity as most viewed male leadership as natural and female subordination as necessary for maintaining social order. These systems were reinforced through religious texts, pseudoscience, and male-led legislation, creating generations of institutionalized inequality (Le, 2025).

It was not until 1920 that women in the USA gained the right to vote via the Nineteenth Amendment (Smentkowski & Levy, 2010). This equal right was delayed for years due to the

belief that allowing women to vote would destabilize society for many reasons: because it would disrupt the nuclear family, change gender roles, or because women were simply 'not smart enough'. There was no true scientific backing, only anxiety from those scared of change, scared of the unknown. Once again, humanity bends towards the simplified and preexisting system as opposed to answers they do not know.

Throughout the 19th century to modern day, women's rights movements and four different 'waves of feminism' has sought to fight against misogyny, clearing the way for new legislation to permit freedom of speech, to education, to vote, to employment, and to bodily autonomy (History, 2019). The suffrage movement was one of the largest against sexism and reflected the ever-going struggle for female recognition as fully autonomous human beings and equal partners to men (Women's Suffrage, 2000). Later feminist movements addressed issues such as workplace discrimination, reproductive healthcare, sexual violence, and unequal legal protections.

However, despite some legal rights being given, sexism is still seen in society and the workplace. Most women experience the wage gap and pink tax on the economic side as well as sexual assault and workplace harassment on the social side (Bach et al., 2018; Peck, 2025). Modern debates continue to this day and have recently surrounded reproductive rights followed by the US Supreme Court overturning the previous ruling of *Roe v. Wade* with *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* in 2022 (Justia, 2019b; *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, 597 U.S. ____ (2022), 2022). Legislation has begun regulating access to contraception, abortion, and reproductive healthcare, which reflects the deeper ideological conflicts of, once again, the role of women within society.

Through the lens of Albert Camus' concept of the absurd, sexism can be understood as humanity's attempt to impose certainty and order upon identities that resist simplistic definitions. These 'definitions' were often established by cisgender, white, straight men - creating an in vs. out group type of psychology resulting in the aforementioned issues (Scalzi, 2012). Humans fear what disrupts familiar structures because uncertainty threatens systems of power that are predictable and predictable is not unknown.

The Absurd in Sexuality

While many, many options can be used as examples for the natural human instinct of fighting against the unknown, the third most notable behind racism and sexism is homophobia. While a much more modern issue, discrimination and prejudice still date back centuries. Queer people have been criminalized and condemned through religion and legal institutions (Human Dignity Trust, 2025). Rather than recognizing sexuality and the gender spectrum as a naturally diverse aspect of humans, most societies remain of the idea that romantic relationships are between a biological man and biological woman, and your gender is what is your birth certificate. Those who superseded those ideas were dubbed as immoral and unnatural. The legislation surrounding sexuality often reflected fear of ambiguity rather than objective truth.

In the United States, anti-sodomy laws criminalizing homosexual relationships remained active in multiple states until the Supreme Court's ruling in *Lawrence v. Texas* declared such legislation unconstitutional (Justia, 2019a). Yet, this was not the only hardship queer people had to face. On the social aspect, during the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s, these prejudices intensified dramatically (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Gay men in particular were frequently blamed for the spread of the disease, and many political leaders responded with indifference or hostility rather than the much-needed compassion and health

support (History.com Editors, 2017). Most media coverage named the AIDS epidemic a moral consequence instead of a humanitarian crisis (Frontline, 2006). The slow medical response led to the deaths of millions and showcased a large event in which marginalized groups could be dehumanized while everyone sat idly by. Fear and misunderstanding once again became institutionalized, demonstrating humanity's tendency to respond to uncertainty and difference with exclusion rather than empathy.

Other legislation and stigma included the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" within the United States military that forced individuals to conceal their sexuality in order to serve their country or the lack of legal recognition for same-sex marriage until *Obergefell v. Hodges* (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018; *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. 644 (2015), 2015)

Progress still hasn't been fully made on the aspect of transgender rights as many in society struggle to accept identities that challenge traditional understandings of sex and gender, viewing those outside of tradition as 'weird' or 'odd' (Quintana & Pfaus, 2024). Legislation restricting access to gender-affirming healthcare, participation in sports, bathroom access, and educational discussion surrounding gender identity continues the idea of transgender and nonbinary individuals remaining threats to public safety or social order despite evidence showing that such claims are largely rooted in misinformation and cultural anxiety.

Discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals reflects humanity's attempt to impose certainty upon aspects of identity that resist rigid definition (*Mapping Attacks on LGBTQ Rights*, 2026). Sexuality and gender exist across broad spectrums of experience and expression that challenge simplistic binaries, moving beyond the box of what most society feels 'safe' in, leading to what is known as homophobia and transphobia.

Absurdism in Science and Psychology

While there are clear patterns to be drawn in history to support absurdism being the driving force of human nature, there is also scientific data to back it up. From an evolutionary perspective, the brain is ill equipped to understand things in an abstract sense. In fact, all humans don't develop the skill of abstract thinking until late adolescence during the Formal Operational Stage, showcasing it is not essential to functioning, and often not well exercised (Piaget, 2022). However, one of the strongest points to support the idea of absurdism is cognitive bias.

According to psychology, humans are inherently inclined to have an unintentional bias to things that are familiar via the mere exposure effect (Eldridge, 2023; Nickerson, 2023). The brain also has tendencies to recognize patterns and create separate schemas to try and rationalize the world around them (Michalak, 2019). Neuroscience further supports this by showing that uncertainty will activate areas of the brain that are associated with threat response (Jacobsen, 2025). When individuals encounter situations, they cannot fully explain, the brain often responds in ways similar to how it responds to physical danger. This helps explain why ambiguity makes humans uncomfortable as it psychologically produces anxiety and frustration.

Beyond a biological psychological standpoint, absurdism plays a role in social psychology as well (Ellemers, 2024). Research in social psychology shows that humans naturally categorize others into in-groups and out-groups as a way of simplifying complex social environments (McFeeters, 2021). This tendency was thought to have evolved from survival-based group dynamics to preserve one's group and prevent species fighting but has since moved beyond that to justify a slew of discriminatory practices.

Answers in Higher Power

Alongside science and philosophy, religion represents one of humanity's oldest responses to uncertainty. While humanity has made leaps in bounds in modern times with discovering answers to the world, societies' ancestors were less fortunate. It was up to them to rationalize how the sun worked or how dolphins were created. Enduring across culture and historical time periods, religion has functioned as an endless supply of 'knowledge' to those in need. In this sense, religion can be defined as the human attempt to resolve the absurd (PEW Research Center, 2018).

Most religions begin with the story of creation (Long, 2019). The Christian, Jewish, and Islamic genesis is the seven days of creation and Adam and Eve, Greeks and Romans believed in Kronos and Zeus or the equivalent; these myths set the groundwork for framing the universe from a Christian or a Jewish or an Ancient Greek Perspective and the answers that followed. Religion reduces the existential uncertainty that follows all living humans. Instead of trusting in the absurd, religion offers the alternative of stability.

However, religion also illustrates the dual nature of humanity's search for certainty. In the United States alone it has fostered community and compassion but is also used as a justification for wrongdoing. Many pro-slavery officials utilized passages in the Bible regarding slavery as a sign to continue the practice and in modern times many queer folks are quoted verses promising destruction and death for being an 'abomination' (Hellie, 2018; Markham, 2012).

Religion is the ultimate showcase of the human need to understand existence. It shows the pure devotion humankind has to what is their perceived truth. From faith to science to

psychology to philosophy, humans are remarkable at searching every nook and cranny of logic to avoid the unknown.

The Growing Risk

Through all of the aforementioned topics, it is clear that humanity's aversion to absurdism is a double-edged sword. The same instinct that drives humans to search for meaning has allowed civilization to flourish through curiosity - creating technology, art, and much more. But the exact same instinct also repeatedly produces fear and violence whenever uncertainty threatens the established order. It creates boxes to put others in, labels such as "normal" and "abnormal," "acceptable" and "dangerous," or "us" and "them" (McFeeters, 2021).

In modern times, conflict has grown inexplicably dangerous because of new technology such as nuclear weapons, artificial intelligence, and mass surveillance. All of these are proof of just how rapidly humanity has accelerated but is incredibly dangerous given the fact that psychological development has not evolved at the same pace.

Nuclear weapons are one of the most explicit examples of this danger. Post World War II was a period filled with peak human intelligence and cooperation, yet the US and Russia engaged in a race for improvement and innovation of nuclear weapons, introducing the possibility of global total annihilation (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024). This pattern reflects absurdism directly: humans desperately seek beyond what is known and in turn creating potentially catastrophic consequences.

If human nature is truly defined by the pursuit of meaning, then humanity's survival may depend upon fundamentally reorienting that pursuit. Survival required adaptability as opposed to total understanding. The future of civilization may ultimately depend on whether humanity can mature psychologically as rapidly as it advances technologically (Gittleman, 2018).

Conclusion

The answer to the reality of human nature is simple: it is human nature to determine human nature. Humanity will always be defined by its relentless, remarkable pursuit of the truth and the side effects of that pursuit. Whether it is in addition to science, religion, social systems, psychology, or philosophy, humans will always attempt to transform the unknown into definition (Camus, 1942/2012). Humanity survives by creating narratives, structures, and beliefs that make existence feel understandable, even when reality remains infinitely complex.

The modern example of 6-7 is absurdism on a smaller scale (Oxford Psychologist Explains the Phenomenon of 67, n.d.). Even when no universal meaning is clear, people still attempt to define and assign any sort of meaning to rationalize what they process. While 6-7 is a trivial example compared to discrimination and prejudice, it represents the same psychological tendency that shaped all of human society.

The pattern has been apparent since the first neanderthals. Humans function off of two intertwined and competing forces: the desire to understand and the inability to fully resolve what is perceived. The desire produces humanity's greatest accomplishments: scientific revolutions, medical advancements, political systems, artistic achievement, and technological innovation. Without this intrinsic curiosity, humanity would not be. Yet, the ugly backside of curiosity is what produces humanity's darkest failures. Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, genocide, imperialism, war, and oppression all emerge from humanity's attempts to simplify complexity into rigid systems of certainty and control.

In the modern era, these competing forces have become increasingly significant because humanity's power has expanded far beyond its wisdom. However, despite the overwhelming evidence of humanity's destructive tendencies, human nature also contains the capacity for

reflection, adaptation, and reform. Curiosity allows humans to learn from their mistakes. The same intellect that humanity taps into to create systems of racism, sexism, and homophobia is the one that allows them to recognize the flaws in the system and themselves. The Civil Rights Movement challenged racism (Morris, 2021). The suffrage movement and the four waves of feminism fought against sexism and gender inequality (The, 2000). Stonewall and the broader Pride movement resisted the dehumanization of LGBTQ+ individuals. Even more modern movements such as Black Lives Matter and Me Too continue this tradition of confronting injustice and demanding social reform. These prove that humanity is not solely defined by fear, but also by the ability to evolve.

Humanity is not trapped by uncertainty as long as it recognizes that uncertainty is not a battle to be won. The absurd cannot be fully eliminated because existence itself contains ambiguity beyond complete human understanding. What matters is not whether humanity discovers absolute answers, but how it chooses to respond when answers remain incomplete. As philosopher Albert Camus suggests, meaning is not necessarily discovered within the universe itself but created through humanity's response to existence. Humanity's fate, therefore, will not be determined by whether uncertainty disappears. It will be determined by whether human beings can resist the temptation to transform fear into hatred. The future depends not on eliminating the unknown, but on learning how to coexist with it.

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