

Eysenck's personality theory

You are learning how to...	In the context of...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment on psychological evidence • Evaluate psychological theories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Eysenck's theory of the criminal personality

Turn these statements and observations into criticisms

Rushton and Christjohn (1981) compared E, N and P scores with self-reports of delinquency in schoolchildren and students. They found that those who reported higher levels of delinquency also scored higher on E, P and N.

Farrington et al (1982) reviewed 16 studies of the relationship between E, N and P measures with criminal convictions. They found that in the majority of cases offenders scored higher on P and N but not on E. Hollin (1989) notes a similar pattern of findings: offenders generally show higher P and N scores but not necessarily higher E scores.

Research in this area relies heavily on the self-report measures of personality devised by Eysenck and colleagues.

Research in this area has made heavy use of comparisons between convicted offenders and the general population.

To measure P, respondents answer 'yes' or 'no' to a series of statements about whether they act aggressively and selfishly. Their scores on such scales are then used to 'explain' why high P-scorers act aggressively and antisocially.

Mischel (1968) argues that the apparent consistency in people's behaviour is an illusion that arises from the fact that we typically observe people in similar situations.

Eysenck's theory tells us that rapists and child abusers are extravert, neurotic and psychotic, but it does not tell us why they rape or abuse children.

Eysenck's theory suggests that the underlying tendencies that eventually manifest themselves as criminal behaviour are detectable in childhood.