

## PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR – EYSENCK'S THEORY – AO1

- Eysenck developed theory based on idea that character traits tend to cluster along three dimensions:
  - Extraversion**-Introversion – Extraverts characterised as outgoing and having positive emotions but may get bored easily as nervous systems under-aroused
  - Neuroticism**-Stability – Neuroticism is tendency to experience negative emotional states rather than positive emotional states due to over-reactive response to stress
  - Psychoticism**-Normality – Psychotics are egocentric, aggressive, lacking empathy and are generally not concerned about the welfare of others which may be related to higher levels of testosterone
- Each of dimensions normally distributed – 68% of any population would fall within one standard deviation of the mean
- Eysenck proposed criminals have high levels of all three variables
- Personality test developed by Eysenck known as *Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ)* or *Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI)*
- Eysenck suggested each trait has a biological innate basis – Claimed 67% of variance for each trait due to genetic factors
  - Extraversion determined by overall level of arousal – Person's nervous system – Person who is under-aroused requires more stimulation than if over-aroused
  - Extraverts seek external stimulation to increase arousal – Introverts are innately over aroused and seek to reduce to avoid stimulation
  - Neuroticism determined by level of stability in sympathetic nervous system – Neurotic person is someone slightly unstable who gets upset quickly whereas a stable person remains calm under pressure due to unreactive nervous system
  - Psychoticism is related to higher levels of testosterone – Men more likely to be psychotic than women
- Link between personality and criminal behaviour can be explained in terms of arousal:
  - Extraverts seek more arousal and engage in more dangerous activities
  - Neurotics are unstable and prone to overreact to threats – Explains criminal activity
  - Psychotics are aggressive and lack empathy – Leads to criminality
- Eysenck also explained criminality in terms of interaction between innate personality and socialisation – A person born with certain personality traits but interaction with environment is key to developing criminality
- In a normal person wrongdoing is avoided because of previous punishment – Conditioning by punishment
- Eysenck claimed people who were high in extraversion and neuroticism were less easily conditioned – Don't want to avoid antisocial behaviour

## EVALUATION OF EYSENCK'S THEORY OF PERSONALITY – AO3

### Supporting Evidence

- Eysenck and Eysenck (1977) – Compared 2070 male prisoners scores on the EPI with 2422 male controls – Controls sub-divided into age groups ranging from 16-69 years
- Prisoners recorded higher scores than controls on measures of psychoticism, neuroticism and extraversion
- Farrington et Al. (1992) – Reviewed several studies and reported offenders tended to score highly on psychoticism but not extraversion or neuroticism
- Eysenck provides support for the criminal personality

**Personality is not Consistent**

- Theory assumes personality consistent over time
  - E.g. A person who is lively or anxious will be like that all the time
- Number of psychologists support the situational perspective – Someone's behaviour will change depending on the situation they are in
  - E.g. Someone may be quite relaxed at home but quite neurotic at work
- Mischel and Peake (1982) – Asked family and friends to rate 63 students in a variety of situations finding almost no correlation between traits displayed
- Notion of criminal personality flawed as people don't simply have one personality

**Idea of a Single Criminal Type**

- Moffitt (1993) – Proposed several distinct types of adult male offender based on the timing of first offence and how long offending persists
- Digman (1990) – Proposed the five factor model of personality suggests that alongside extraversion and neuroticism there are additional dimensions of openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness
- From Digman's perspective multiple combinations of criminal behaviour are available – High extraversion and neuroticism don't mean offending behaviour inevitable

**Cultural Bias**

- Bartol and Holanchock (1979) – Studied Hispanic and African American offenders in a maximum security prison in New York and divided them into six groups based on their criminal history and nature of their offence
- Revealed all six groups were found to be less intelligent than non-criminal group
- Bartol suggested this was because sample was very different cultural group in comparison to group investigated by Eysenck – Questions generalisability of criminal personality

**Support for Link Between Personality and Behaviour**

- Research comparing personalities of criminals and non-criminals in order to identify link between personality traits and criminal behaviour
- Dunlop Et. Al. (2012) – Found both extraversion and psychoticism, as well as lie scales were good predictors of delinquency and assessment of offences in previous 12 months
- Dunlop supports in part the idea that personality characteristics are related to criminal behaviour
- Van Dam et al. (2007) – Only a small number of male offenders in a juvenile detention centre had high scores on three of Eysenck's variables
- As some offenders didn't have high scores in any of the variables there must be other reasons why people offend
- Eysenck's theory can't account for all criminal behaviour – Link between personality traits and behaviour inconsistent and limited

**Biological**

- Eysenck's theory recognises personality may have a genetic basis – Fits well with other biological explanations
- Supported with research into anti-social personality disorder (APD) suggesting offenders cold, calculating and lacking empathy
- Theory may be seen as reductionist and deterministic if all behaviour down to genes

**Research on Genetic Basis of Personality**

- Key element of Eysenck's theory was personality types have a biological basis
- Zuckerman (1987) – Compared MZ and DZ twins on personality type
  - +.52 correlation for MZ twins on neuroticism compared to +.24 for DZ twins
  - +.51 correlation for MZ twins on extraversion compared to +.12 for DZ twins
- Even though there is a considerable genetic component it is only about a +.50 correlation – 40% of variation due to genes
- Figure may be slightly higher for MZ twins as they are treated more similarly – More likely to have similar personality types
- Some factor involved in personality traits – Correlation not as high as Eysenck suggested