

## Eysenck's Theory of Personality and Sexuality

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Although the number of empirical studies testing Eysenck's theory has not been extensive, the literature generally supports the main hypothesis of Eysenck's theory. Personality traits seem to be predictive of individual differences in sexual arousal and behaviour patterns. Extraverts, for example, are characterized by a more hedonistic outlook on sex and more active and varied sex lives. High P scorers have a more impersonal outlook on sex and are also characterized by more attraction to sexual aggression. Evidence supporting the association between high P scores and sexual aggression was provided in some new longitudinal data collected in Winnipeg, Manitoba by the authors of this paper. Eysenck's theory has also been frequently cited by investigators who are developing new evolutionary perspectives to account for individual differences in human sexuality. Recent research suggests that Eysenck's theory may also have important practical applications, particularly in helping us to understand high risk sexual behaviour patterns placing a person at risk for AIDS and understanding individual differences in reaction to AIDS education materials.

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At the time Eysenck's book on personality and sexuality (1976) first appeared it met with somewhat mixed reviews with one of the reviewers (Broadhurst, 1977) calling for replication and extension of Eysenck's work. What then is the status of this theory 20 years later? A scan of the Social Science Citation Index revealed that there were a total of 132 citations of Eysenck's book, with an average of 6 citations per year. In examining the articles that have cited Eysenck's theory two things become evident. First, it seems that there have still been relatively few empirical studies conducted that have actually collected empirical data to directly test Eysenck's theory. The second thing that becomes evident in reading these papers is that Eysenck's theory is still a very comprehensive and respected theory in the area of personality and sexuality. Empirical studies that have been conducted have generally found support for the major tenets of the theory, and no rival theories seem to have been developed to supplant the theory. In fact, the newer theories that have been developed to explain individual differences in sexual behavior on the basis of evolutionary principles (e.g., Gangestad & Simpson, 1990; Rushton & Bogaert, 1989) are quite compatible with Eysenck's theory.

In this paper we will be trying to accomplish several objectives. First we will try to summarize briefly the main propositions of Eysenck's theory on personality and sexuality, second we will attempt to summarize some of the support that has been provided for the hypotheses in the empirical literature. In our review of the literature we will draw particular attention to Canadian research that has been conducted testing Eysenck's theory. It is interesting to note that the investigators who are most frequently citing Eysenck's book are Dr. Rushton at Western University in London Ontario, and Dr. Malamuth at U.C.L.A., who conducted much of his research while at the University of Manitoba. Third, we will present some new research based on longitudinal data that Dr. Malamuth and I have collected in Manitoba. Finally we will discuss some of the new directions that the research seems to be taking and some of the important practical implications that seem to be associated with Eysenck's theory.

The central focus in the Eysenck (1976) book is that previous work in the field of sexuality by Kinsey and others had failed to account for the huge individual differences in the patterns of sexual behavior. Based on his personality theory Eysenck (1976) postulated that extraverts, because of their weaker socialization and higher sensation seeking needs, would be more inclined to engage in a wider range of sexual behavior and be more active in this area than introverts. With regard to the Neuroticism dimension, Eysenck (1976) predicted that high N scorers would be more likely to be anxious about, and find certain aspects of sex to be disgusting. On the P dimension Eysenck (1976) predicted high P scorers would be more interested in impersonal sex or aggressive sex, and be more inclined to participate in socially disapproved acts.

In addition to predicting different patterns of sexual behavior based on personality, Eysenck (1976) also noted that differences in sexual arousal patterns would also occur. Eysenck (1976) cited an unpublished study by Nelson in which

Extraverts were shown to habituate more rapidly to sexually explicit material. Other important contributions in Eysenck's (1976) book included his development of a scale to measure sexual attitudes, his analysis of genetic contributions to differences in sexual behavior, and his analyses of gender differences in sexual behavior. In this paper we will be focusing primarily on the first two areas mentioned above including: 1) the association between personality and sexual attitudes and behavior, and 2) the association between personality and sexual arousal patterns.

### Personality and Sexual Attitudes and Behavior

In the Eysenck (1976) book the evidence pertaining to the relationship between personality and sexual attitudes and behavior was derived from three studies including a university sample survey, an adult sample survey, and a survey administered to patients from the Broadmoor hospital for the criminally insane. In the university sample survey data generally supported the theory with extraverts characterized by more promiscuity, high N scorers by lower satisfaction and more sexual problems, and high P scorers by promiscuity, an impersonal approach, and more hostility. Correlations between personality and sexual behavior were much weaker in the adult sample. In the prison sample E scores were positively correlated with sexual libido and sexual behavior, while N and P scores were negatively correlated with sexual satisfaction.

Efforts to replicate and extend the research by Eysenck (1976) on the relationship between personality and sexual attitudes and behavior have not been extensive. Bentler and Peeler (1979) examined the associations between the Extraversion and Neuroticism scales and scores on the Bentler (1968) Heterosexual Behavior Scale in a female sample. Results showed a positive correlation with Extraversion ( $r = .22$ ) and a negative correlation with Neuroticism ( $r = -.16$ ). In a German study, Schenck and Pfrang (1986) reported that the relationship between extraversion and having a more active sex life applied primarily in young unmarried men. Wilson and Gosselin (1980) collected data in Britain on a large sample of sexually variant men (including sadomasochists, rubberites, leatherites, transvestites and transsexuals) and a small sample of sexually dominant women. The variant groups were compared with controls matched for age and social class and the results showed that the male variants were primarily Neurotic Introverts, while the Female dominant women scored high on the Psychoticism dimension. A variety of interpretations were offered for these data including the possibility that the variant males, by virtue of their higher neuroticism and introversion, may have been more readily conditionable and susceptible to develop accidental associations with sexual arousal.

### *Canadian Research*

In one of the more extensive studies designed to directly test Eysenck's (1976) theory of personality and sexuality, Barnes, Malamuth and Check (1984a) examined the associations between EPO scale scores and a wide range of sexual attitudes and behavior, in a sample of 307 male Introductory Psychology students. Results generally supported Eysenck's theory with Extraverts being characterized by a hedonistic outlook on sex and more active participation in a variety of sexual activities. High P scores were found to be associated with more favourable attitudes toward and enjoyment of aggressive and less conventional sexual activities. Correlations between the N scale and sexual attitudes and behavior were generally quite weak in this sample.

In a recent Canadian study Bogaert and Fisher (1995) looked at a number of predictors of lifetime sexual partners and maximum partners in one month in a sample of Canadian college men. Sensation seeking was positively correlated with both of the sexual partner questions. The Eysenck P Scale was significantly correlated with the measure of the maximum number of partners in one month ( $r=.21$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and not quite significantly associated with the number of partners in a lifetime ( $r= .20$ ). These results are consistent with Eysenck's (1976) theory.

In another interesting Canadian study Jim Check (1985) looked at the effects of exposure to explicit sexual images that were dehumanizing or degrading on sexual attitudes including reported likelihood of rape and forced sex acts. Results showed that high P scorers were more strongly influenced than low P scorers by exposure to this type of hard core pornography.

The research by Barnes (Barnes et al., 1984a; Barnes et al., 1984b) was part of a larger program of research being conducted by Neil Malamuth at the University of Manitoba that focused primarily on sexual aggression against women and the possible predictors of this sexual aggression. In this program of research a number of studies were conducted in which the Psychoticism dimension was incorporated as one of the possible predictors of sexual aggression against women. Recently a longitudinal follow up study (for a description of the methodology used in this study see Malamuth, Linz, Heavey, Barnes and Acker, 1995) has been completed on a sample of 132 males that allows us to examine the associations between Psychoticism scores in young adulthood and patterns of sexual attitudes and behavior ten years later. The association between Psychoticism scores in early adulthood and sexual attitudes and behavior ten years later is of interest for several reasons. First, the data linking personality with sexual attitudes and behavior beyond early adulthood is quite thin. Second, as noted by Rushton, Fulker, Neale, Nias and Eysenck (1989), prosocial tendencies tend to increase with age while the opposite pattern holds for anti-social tendencies. Rushton et al. (1989) have speculated that hormonal changes may mediate these shifts in behavior. If men are maturing out of Psychoticism as they grow older, perhaps the linkage between Psychoticism and aggressive sexual attitudes and behavior will be weakened as well.

*Table 1:* Psychoticism as a prospective predictor of sexual attitudes and behavior

Time 2 measures	Psychoticism Time 1
Hostility Toward Women	.10
Sexual Aggression	.15*
Likelihood of Using Force/Rape	.24**
Power Tactics	.24**
Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence	.19*
Rape Myth Acceptance	.23**
Adversarial Sex Beliefs	.23**
Importance of Love as Sexual Motivation	-.24*
Sex Life Dissatisfaction	.24**
Sex Depression	.24**
Number of Sexual Partners	.09
N = 132	

In Table 1 some correlations are provided between Psychoticism Scale scores at Time 1 and a variety of sexual attitudes and behavior measured ten years later. First, with respect to the number of sexual partners, Psychoticism at Time 1 does not seem to be a good predictor of the number of sexual partners. Second, the Psychoticism dimension at Time One seems to still be a significant predictor for several measures of aggressive attitudes and behavior associated with sexual aggression at Time 2. High P scorers at Time 1 are more likely to report sexual aggression ten years later, and endorse a variety of attitudes connected with this behavior including: acceptance of rape myths, adversarial sex beliefs, and admitted likelihood for using force/rape. Consistent with Eysenck's (1976) results and some of our earlier findings (Barnes et al., 1984a) high P scorers seem to score lower on measures of sexual satisfaction.

### Personality and Sexual Arousal Patterns

In the book on personality and sexuality Eysenck (1976) describes an unpublished study by Nelson. Male subjects were classified into the four quadrants according to their scores on Extraversion and Neuroticism, and sexual arousal was monitored over a series of trials while subjects were presented with the same sexual stimuli. Results showed that habituation to the sexually arousing material oc-

curred most rapidly for the stable extravert group. This important unpublished study does not seem to have been replicated, although other studies have examined different facets of the relationship between personality and sexual arousal patterns. Farkas, Sine and Evans (1979) found that high N and high L were associated with reduced sexual responding. Kantorowitz (1978) looked at the relationship between personality and conditioning to sexual cues. Results showed that Extraverts showed greater conditioning to sexual cues in the arousal phase, while introverts showed greater conditioning to sexual cues in the post arousal phase. These results were interpreted as being supportive of the hypothesis that extraverts condition more rapidly under conditions of high arousal and introverts condition more rapidly under conditions of low arousal.

### *Canadian Research*

In the program of research conducted by Neil Malamuth at the University of Manitoba the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire P Scale has been utilized to predict sexual arousal patterns to violent and non-violent sexually explicit auditory tapes (Barnes, Malamuth & Check, 1984b). In the book on Personality and Sexuality Eysenck (1976) cited some results of unpublished research showing that sex offenders scored higher on the P scale. Based on this data and other data on the association between P scale scores and sexual attitudes and behavior, we predicted that high P scale scorers would be characterized by greater sexual arousal to rape depictions than low P scorers. Results of our research confirmed this hypothesis in that high P scale scores were associated with greater sexual arousal to the violent arousal story than low P scale scorers. These results applied whether the results were measured by self-reported sexual arousal or penile tumescence. What was interesting in these data was that the high P scale scorers showed a somewhat lower pattern of sexual arousal to non-violent stories than low P scorers, suggesting that the stronger arousal for high P scorers in the violence condition was not simply reflective of higher libido or sex drive. It seems as though in the High P scorers, the pairing of sex and aggression was a potent factor in producing a level of sexual arousal not normally produced by non-violent sexual stories.

### **Other Citations of Eysenck's work**

In the articles we reviewed that cited Eysenck's work several studies reported using the measure of sexual attitudes that was developed as part of the Eysenck book (Leigh, 1990; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991; Temple & Leigh, 1992). The gender differences in sexual attitudes and behavior described by Eysenck (1976) have also been replicated (Bogaert & Rushton, 1989; Purnine, Carey &

Jorgensen, 1994) with men generally reporting more sexual partners, higher permissiveness and higher erotophilia scores.

### New Theoretical Perspectives

A number of investigators have developed new theoretical perspectives to explain individual differences in sexual behavior patterns. These theoretical perspectives seem to build on the work by Eysenck (1976) without making predictions that run counter to Eysenck's (1976) theory. The most common type of new theory in this area seems to build on evolutionary perspectives (e.g., Bogaert & Rushton, 1989; Gangestad & Simpson, 1990; Malamuth, 1998). Thus, Bogaert and Rushton (1989) talk about r/K selection, Gangestad and Simpson (1990) about sociosexuality, and Malamuth (1998) about male reproductive strategies that are based on a divergent interest strategy or convergent interests strategy.

### Practical Implications of Eysenck's Theory

Although Eysenck's (1976) theory would seem to have a number of very important practical implications in areas such as the treatment and prevention of sexual dysfunction and sexual aggression, this theory does not seem to have been put to much practical use as yet, or at least not in the published literature. Recently, research linking the Eysenck personality dimensions with risky sexual behavior and responsiveness to aids prevention education has drawn attention to another important area where the theory may have practical applications. Fontaine (1994) reported that high P scores were associated with riskier sexual practices including having sex with intravenous drug users. McCown (1991) studied the relationship between personality and aids knowledge and responsiveness to aids education. Results showed that high N scale scores were associated with lower HIV knowledge. Among those that had received HIV education it was shown that higher P, N and E were all associated with unsafe sexual behavior.

### Conclusions

Before his death Eysenck had become the most frequently cited living psychologist. One of the primary reasons for this success surely lies in the fact that investigators who have used this theory to guide their research have usually obtained significant results, and had success in having their work published. Ey-

senck's (1976) theory of sex and personality is no exception. Attempts to replicate the theory have generally confirmed the theory, and the theory has been incorporated into important new theoretical perspectives in the field of personality and sexuality. It is somewhat disappointing however, that this theory does not seem to have been employed much as yet to help direct applied research that would help to alleviate some of the human misery associated with sexual perversions, sexual aggression and sexual risk taking behavior.

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## Ajzenkova teorija ličnosti i seksualnost

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Iako Ajzenkova teorija nije proveravana u velikom broju empirijskih studija, literatura uopšteno podržava osnovne hipoteze Ajzenkove teorije. Izgleda da se na osnovu crta ličnosti mogu predvideti individualne razlike u pogledu seksualnog uzbuđivanja i šema seksualnog ponašanja. Ekstraverte, na primer, odlikuje više hedonistički pogled na seks i aktivniji i raznovrsniji seksualni život. Osobe sa visokim P skorovima imaju izraženiji impersonalan pogled na seks, a i više ih privlači seksualna agresija. Dokazi koji potvrđuju vezu između visokih P skorova i seksualne agresije dobijeni su iz novih longitudinalnih podataka koje su prikupili u Vinipegu, u Manitobi, autori ovog rada. Ajzenkovu teoriju često su citirali istraživači koji objašnjavaju individualne razlike u ljudskoj seksualnosti razvijajući nove evolucione poglede. Novija istraživanja naglašavaju da Ajzenkova teorija može da ima i važnu praktičnu primenu, naročito kao oslonac u razumevanju visoko rizičnog seksualnog ponašanja (rizik od side), kao i u razumevanju individualnih razlika u reagovanju na edukativne materijale o sidi.

## Теория личности Айзенка и сексуальность

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Хотя теория личности Айзенка не проверялась большим количеством эмпирических исследований, в литературе, в общем, поддерживаются ее основные гипотезы. Предполагается, что индивидуальные различия сексуального возбуждения и схемы сексуального поведения возможно предвидеть на основании характеристик личности. Для экстраверсии, на пример, характерны гедонистическое отношение к сексу и более активная и разнообразная сексуальная жизнь. Индивид, обладающий высоким Р имеет более выразительный имперсональный взгляд на секс, его больше привлекает сексуальная агрессия. Доказательства, подтверждающие наличие взаимосвязи между высоким Р и сексуальной агрессией были получены на основании новых лонгитудинальных данных, собранных автором этой работы в Виннипеге, в Манитобе. Теорию Айзенка часто цитировали исследователи, изучающие индивидуальные различия в сексуальности человека, развивая новые эволюционные взгляды. Более новые исследования показали, что теория Айзенка имеет важное практическое применение, служив опорой для объяснения высоко рискованного сексуального поведения (риск от СПИД-а), также и в понимании индивидуальной реакции на обучающие материалы СПИД-е.