



Evaluating genetic theories

You are learning how to...	In the context of...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate genetic explanations of psychological disorders • Write effective commentary/evaluation in essay answers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schizophrenia

Read the example evaluation paragraphs below. How effectively has each student presented their evaluation? What are the features of effective evaluation? What sorts of error detract from the quality of evaluation?

Example 1

Some psychologists believe that schizophrenia is genetic. Evidence to support this is Gottesman (1991), Kety et al (1968) and Tienari (1994). These studies also support that the environment is important in schizophrenia, so the genetic theory is only half right.

Example 2

Some psychologists believe that schizophrenia is genetic but the sample sizes in twin studies are too small to generalise. This disproves the genetic theory.

Example 3

Family history and twin studies suggest that genes influence schizophrenia. Gottesman found a correlation between genetic relatedness with a schizophrenia patient and the chance someone would have it. DZ concordance was 17% and MZ was 48%, supporting a genetic influence but because the MZ concordance was not 100% the environment must also play a role. A problem with these studies is that closely related people also live in similar environments, so it might all be due to the environment.

Example 4

Some psychologists believe that schizophrenia has a genetic influence. Gottesman found that the more closely related you are to a schizophrenic the more likely you are to have it. Kety et al (1968) found that 30% of the biological relatives had schizophrenia but only 2% of the adopted relatives, which shows that you inherit it from your biological family.

Example 5

Some psychologists believe that schizophrenia is genetic. It has been found that identical twins are more likely to get schizophrenia than non-identical twins, which supports the genetic theory. However, the sample sizes were very small. Also, adopted children are likely to get it.

Use your insights from these evaluation paragraphs to write your own evaluation of the genetic hypothesis. Try to include the valuable features whilst avoiding the errors.