

LO1 – Describe Sociological Theories of Criminality

Assessment Criterion	Content	Amplification
AC2.1 Describe biological theories of criminality	Biological Theories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> genetic theories physiological theories 	Learners should have knowledge of a range of genetic theories, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jacobs XYY study twin and adoption studies Learners should have knowledge of a range of physiological theories, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lombroso Sheldon

CESARE LOMBROSO

- KNOWN AS THE 'FATHER OF MODERN CRIMINALITY' – HIS USE OF SCIENTIFIC METHODS IN CRIMINOLOGY ARE STILL USED TODAY. HE WAS SEEN TO BE THE FIRST CRIMINAL PROFILER.
- AFTER READING CHARLES DARWIN'S 'ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES' LOMBROSO CAME TO THE ASSUMPTION THAT CRIMINALS WERE A DIFFERENT/SEPARATE SPECIES – ONE THAT WAS BETWEEN MODERN AND PRIMITIVE HUMAN.
- HE ARGUED THAT SOMEONE WHO WAS 'BORN CRIMINAL' COULD BE DETERMINED BY THE PHYSICAL SHAPE OF THEIR HEAD AND FACE.
- CRIMINALITY WAS INHERITED AND THOSE WHO COMMITTED CRIME HAD PRIMITIVE (**ATAVISTIC**) FEATURES.



WILLIAM SHELDON'S THEORY

William Herbert Sheldon associated body types with human temperament types. He claimed that a body type could be linked with the personality of that person. He says that a fat person with a large bone structure tends to have an outgoing and more relaxed personality while a more muscular body-typed person is more active and aggressive. A slim or scrawny person with thin muscles is usually characterized as quiet or fragile. He split up these body/personality types into three categories called somatotypes.

PHYSIOLOGICAL THEORIES

Physical Features Relating to Crime

How Does This Theory Explain Crime?

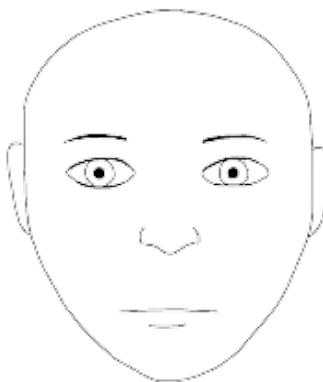
Strengths/Limitations of This Explanation

Atavistic Features Identified by Lombroso:

- High cheekbones
- Flattened or upturned nose
- Low, slopped forehead
- Large ears and a large jaw
- Long arms when compared to lower limbs

He believed you could tell what type of crime a person will commit due to the way they look. For example, a murderer had bloodshot eyes and curly hair whereas sex offenders had thick lips and ears that stuck out. Lombroso also suggested there were other aspects of a 'born criminal' including being insensitive to pain, using criminal slang, having tattoos and being unemployed

Label this face with atavistic features



Sheldon carried described the following types:

- **Endomorphic** (fat and soft) tend to be sociable and relaxed
- **Ectomorphic** (thin and fragile) are introverted and restrained
- **Mesomorphic** (muscular and hard) are more aggressive and adventurous.

Sheldon argued that both mesomorphs were much more likely to commit crime. This is because they were impulsive and natural risk takers.

Label these figures



UNIT/YEAR	BULLET POINTED RESPONSE
<p>MAY 2017</p> <p>One theory of crime was based on the physical measurements of Italian prisoners compared with those of Italian soldiers. This theory proposed that criminals had been born with specific features. Another key theory argued that an individual's body shape is correlated with becoming a criminal</p>	<p>With reference to the text above, describe the main features of one physiological theory of criminality. [6]</p>
	<p>Sheldon's theory suggests that a person's body shape can be linked to their likelihood of becoming a criminal. He identified three main body types:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ectomorphs: These individuals are thin, fragile, and often introverted. They tend to be shy, quiet, and avoid risky or adventurous situations. Ectomorphs are typically more restrained and self-conscious, making them the least likely to engage in criminal behaviour. 2. Endomorphs: Endomorphs are rounder and softer in body shape. They are often described as sociable, relaxed, and good-natured. This friendly and easy-going personality makes them less prone to criminal behaviour compared to other body types. 3. Mesomorphs: Mesomorphs are muscular, hard-bodied, and physically strong. They are often seen as adventurous, bold, and aggressive. Sheldon believed that mesomorphs were the most likely to commit crimes because their confidence, dominance, and willingness to take risks could lead to impulsive or reckless actions.
	<p>Describe the one weakness of the physiological theory described [6]</p>
	<p>One major weakness of Sheldon's physiological theory is that it assumes a person's body shape, or somatotype, is fixed throughout their life. This is not true, as people's bodies can change due to factors like age, exercise, diet, or health conditions. For example, someone who starts off as an ectomorph (thin and fragile) might later develop into a mesomorph (muscular) through exercise or physical work, or even become an endomorph (softer and rounder) due to changes in lifestyle or ageing.</p> <p>Sheldon's theory doesn't explain how these changes might affect personality or behaviour. Would someone who becomes more muscular automatically develop more aggressive or adventurous tendencies? Similarly, if a mesomorph became less muscular, would they become less likely to engage in crime? The theory doesn't address these questions, making it overly simplistic and less reliable in understanding the complex relationship between body type, personality, and criminal behaviour.</p>
<p>MAY 2018</p> <p>Jimmy, aged 22, has suffered from verbal and physical abuse for most of his life. This is because he has large ears, a large jaw, and very long arms. Jimmy never knew his father and lived with his mother and her succession of boyfriends. Jimmy has recently undergone some medical tests which have revealed he has an extra Y chromosome. He has also been hanging around with local criminals and is due to appear before a local magistrates' court on a second charge of grievous bodily harm.</p>	<p>(a) Describe one physiological theory of criminality.[5]</p>
	<p>Lombroso's physiological theory of criminality proposed that criminals are biologically distinct from non-criminals. He argued that criminality was inherited and that certain physical features, known as "atavistic" traits, were signs of a "born criminal." These traits were thought to be evolutionary throwbacks to primitive humans. Examples of such traits included low, sloping foreheads, prominent jaws, receding chins, twisted noses, large cheekbones, monkey-like ears, and long arms. According to Lombroso, these features suggested that some individuals were naturally predisposed to commit crimes. His work was based on studies of Italian prisoners, comparing their physical characteristics with those of soldiers. He believed these differences showed that criminals were less evolved and more primitive than law-abiding citizens.</p>
	<p>(b) Analyse how one genetic theory of criminality may account for Jimmy's criminal behaviour.[7]</p>
	<p>The XYY syndrome theory suggests that criminality can be linked to a chromosomal abnormality. Most men have XY chromosomes, but Jimmy has an extra Y chromosome, making him XYY. Research by Jacobs et al. (1965) found that XYY males are more aggressive and overrepresented in prisons, with 15 in every 1,000 prisoners having the condition, compared to just 1 per 1,000 in the general population. This suggests that Jimmy's genetic makeup may have contributed to his violent behaviour.</p> <p>Jimmy is also charged with grievous bodily harm (GBH) for the second time, which supports the idea that he may have higher aggression levels, a characteristic linked to XYY syndrome. However, his genetic condition alone may not fully explain his criminality. Other factors, such as his difficult upbringing, physical appearance leading to bullying, and influence from criminal friends, could have contributed to his violent behaviour. This shows that while genetics might play a role, environmental factors are also important in shaping criminal actions.</p>