Personality Lecture 8
Personality and Crime

Personality and Crime - History
- Cesare Lombroso - “Criminal Man” 1876
- Theory now discredited but 1st empirical attempt at investigating ‘criminal’ personality
- Argued that physical shape of head/face determined “born criminal”
- Lombroso studied Italian criminals and identified criminal “atavism” - physical features related to our early ancestors, apes, lower primates and early man
  - The atavist had large jaws, high cheekbones, large ears, extra nipples, toes or fingers and were insensitive to pain
- The criminal was viewed as separate special species that lies between modern and primitive humans
- Lombroso went further and argued there were physiological diffs between diff types criminal
- Murders: cold, glassy, blood-shot eyes, curly, abundant hair, strong jaws, long ears and thin lips
- Sex offenders: glinting eyes, strong jaws, thick lips, lots of hair and projecting ears

Somatotype and Crime
- Sheldon (1942) argued that an individual body shape (somatotype) was correlated with personality
- From study of 300 male body types he characterised 3 main types
  - ectomorph - thin/lanky - artistic, sensitive, apprehensive, introverted
  - endomorph - chubby - tolerant, relaxed, love comfort/luxury, pleasant, extraverted
  - mesomorph - muscular - courageous, energetic, active, dynamic, assertive, aggressive
- Mesomorph characterised as criminals, being aggressive, callous and mindless of other people’s feelings
- Sheldon stated rare for people to be pure somatotypes, instead, each individual would display a combo of each of the 3 personality traits according to their own somatotype
- Study 200 college students and 200 male delinquents, Sheldon rated a full-length picture of participants according to each of the three body types
- Pics given scores out of 7

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Build</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Delinquents</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>End</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ect</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mes</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
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</tbody>
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- Results indicated that the criminal delinquent group were sig more mesomorphic
- Appears to offer support for Sheldon’s theory - muscular physique = more prone to criminality
- Despite this finding, Sheldon’s study has been much criticised. Sheldon’s classification of the somatotype unreliable and didn’t use legal criteria to select delinquent sample
- When data reanalysed with legal criteria for delinquency, association not found

Some Alternative Explanations
- People with muscular build have learnt from early age that easiest way to get what they want is to behave in aggressive manner
- Muscular builds are recruited by gangs because of perceived use in criminal activity
- Criticised by the British Crime Survey which found that smaller body types usually carried out delinquent acts