Positivism: Can criminals be differentiated from non-criminals?

**Biological Positivism:**

- The term positivism was first coined by Auguste Comte in the nineteenth century (Burke 2010). Positivism is based around scientific evidence and the assumption that social relations and events can be studied scientifically using methods derived from natural sciences. The main aim for positivists is to find measurable cause-and-effect relations. Positivism is split into three, biological, psychological and social (Burke 2010).

- Positivists assume that a distinction can be made between criminals and non-criminals. They seek to find scientific proof that crime is a result of an individual's features or their environment.

- Positivists also reject the Classical notion that people have free will and that criminals choose to commit a crime, rather they argue that people's behaviour is determined due to biological and environmental conditions. Lombroso, founder of the Italian positivist school, delivered a more scientific approach to criminology. In his book, *L'uomo Delinquente* (Criminal Man 1875), he argued that criminals have certain physical features that differentiate them from non-criminals.

- These represented a form of evolutionary throwback by suggesting that criminals are atavistic.

- The so-called signs of criminality are large ears, twisted noses and sloping foreheads. Lombroso's methodology used to identify the differentiating physical features is seen as primitive and limited, having used simplistic statistics.