

# Biological Theories – Physiological Theories

## LO1 – DESCRIBE BIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF CRIMINALITY

Assessment Criterion	Content	Amplification
AC1.1 Describe Biological Theories of Criminality	<b>Criminal Behaviour</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Genetic Theories</li> <li><b>Physiological Theories</b></li> </ul>	You should have knowledge and understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Jacob's XY Theory</li> <li>✓ Twin and Adoption Studies</li> <li>✓ <b>Lombroso's Physiological Theory</b></li> <li>✓ <b>Sheldon's Type Theory.</b></li> <li>✓ Brain Abnormalities</li> </ul>

### LOMBROSO'S ATAVISTIC FORM THEORY

Cesare Lombroso wrote *L'uomo delinquente* (The criminal man) in 1876 setting out his view that offenders possessed similar characteristics to lower primates, and this could explain their criminality. He formulated his ideas at the time when Charles Darwin had recently introduced the theory of evolution. Based on this theory, Lombroso suggested that criminals are essentially throwbacks to an earlier species. He used the term atavistic to describe the physical appearance of criminals.

Atavistic Features Identified by Lombroso:

- High cheekbones
- Flattened or upturned nose
- Low, sloped 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. Lombroso concluded that these characteristics indicated that such people were more primitive in an evolutionary sense. He went on to say that such individuals were therefore not responsible for their actions as they could not be blamed for their innate, inherited physiology.

### LOMBROSO'S RESEARCH

Lombroso based his theory on his own research using post-mortem examinations of criminals and studying the faces of living criminals. Over the course of his career, he and his co-workers examined over 50,000 bodies. In one particular study of 383 convicted Italian criminals, he found that 21% had one atavistic trait and 43% had at least five.

### MORE MODERN RESEARCH

Wu et al, (2016) found that facial features do give criminals away. 1,856 Chinese men (half of who had criminal convictions) were added to an artificial intelligence programme which went on to identify 83% criminals with only 6% of all men being incorrectly identified.



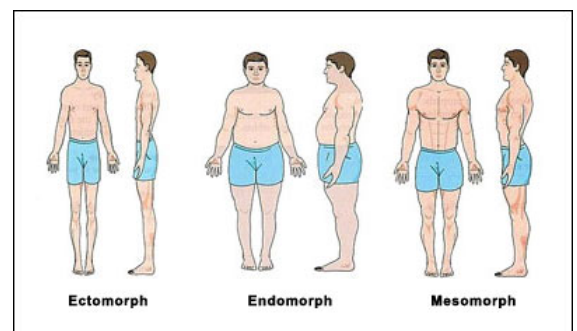
Examples of physiognomy of criminals illustrated from *L'uomo Delinquente* (Criminal Man), 1876, by Cesare Lombroso.

### WILLIAM SHELTON'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.

- **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.



### SHELTON'S RESEARCH

Sheldon carried out a study using photographs of nearly naked college students and a sample of juvenile delinquents. He rated each on how closely they fitted to the mesomorph body type on a scale of 1 – 7. The results showed that the delinquents scored higher on mesomorphy (4.6) than college students (3.8).

# Individualistic Theories – Learning Theories

## LO1 – DESCRIBE INDIVIDUALISTIC THEORIES OF CRIMINALITY

Assessment Criterion	Content	Amplification
AC1.1  You should be able to -  Describe Individualistic Theories of Criminality	Individualistic Theories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Learning Theories</b></li> <li>• Psychodynamic Theory</li> <li>• Psychological Theories</li> </ul>	You should have knowledge and understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Bandura's Social Learning Theory</b></li> <li>✓ <b>Sutherland's Differential Association Theory</b></li> <li>✓ Freud's Psychodynamic Theory</li> <li>✓ Bowlby's Maternal Deprivation Theory</li> <li>✓ Eysenck's Personality Theory</li> </ul>

## CLASSICAL CONDITIONING

Classical conditioning is learning through **association** and was first demonstrated by Ivan Pavlov. Pavlov found that dogs could be **conditioned** to salivate to the sound of a bell if that sound was repeatedly presented at the same time as they were given food. Gradually, Pavlov's dogs learned to associate the sound of the bell (a stimulus) with the food (another stimulus) and would produce the salivation (a reflex response) every time they heard the sound.

Animals learn new associations in classical conditioning



## ALBERT BANDURA'S SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Social Learning Theory proposes that we learn all of our behaviour from others. This theory can be used to explain all kinds of behaviour, including criminal behaviour.

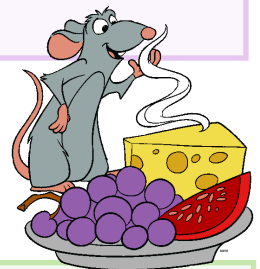
**Bandura (1961)** conducted a controversial experiment examining the process by which new forms of behaviour – and in particular, aggression – are learnt. The initial study, along with Bandura's follow-up research, would later be known as the Bobo doll experiment. The experiment revealed that children imitate the aggressive behaviour of adults. The findings support Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasises the influence of observational learning on behaviour.

Bandura also conducted a number of follow-up studies during the 1960s which examined how witnessing a third party being rewarded or punished for behaving in a particular manner can influence a bystander's own actions. He concluded that vicarious learning, as well as direct rewards and punishments, can impact on an observer's behaviour.

## OPERANT CONDITIONING

Skinner believed that the best way to understand behaviour is to look at the causes of an action and its consequences. In operant conditioning there are three types of consequences of behaviour:

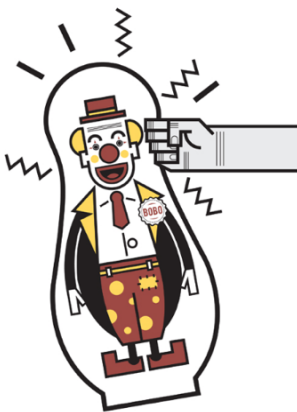
- **Positive reinforcement** is receiving a reward when a certain behaviour is performed; for example, praise from a teacher for answering a question correctly in class.
- **Negative reinforcement** occurs when an animal (or human) avoids something unpleasant. When a student hands in an essay so as not to be told off, the avoidance of something unpleasant is the negative reinforcement.
- **Punishment** is an unpleasant consequence of behaviour, for example being shouted at by the teacher for talking during a lesson.



Food is an example of a positive reinforcement for Remy the Rat

## ROLE MODELS

Role models are people that we look up to and respect, such as parents, older siblings, peers, and people and characters we see in the media. We go through a process of **identification**, where we decide we want to be like these people; we watch what they do and try to copy them. These are the processes of **observation** and **imitation**.



## VICARIOUS REINFORCEMENT

This is a type of learning that occurs when a person sees another rewarded for their behaviour. Vicarious means literally experiences through others. The important thing is that the reward is experienced by the person whose behaviour is being imitated.

## SUTHERLAND'S DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION THEORY

According to Sutherland (1939), if an individual experiences repeated attitudes which are positively associated with crime, rather than negatively – They are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour. The way in which a person becomes an offender is through:

- **Learned attitudes**
- **Imitation of (criminal) acts**

One strength of differential association is that it is compatible with other learning theories. People may learn positive associations with crime through others (**classical conditioning**); they may be positively rewarded for their criminal behaviour (**operant conditioning**) and they may see others being rewarded for their criminal behaviour (**social learning theory**).