Biological Explanations of Crime

- Lombroso
  - The born criminal
    - but, three main strands later considered
      - biology
      - environment
      - psychology
    - criminaloid
      - opportunist
  - Separate species or atavism
    - narrow brow, large jaw, high cheekbones, large ears, extra nipples and fingers etc
      - useful for the wild, but not for survival in civilised society
      - no morals
      - no remorse
      - no feelings
      - can't form relationships
    - view of female criminals as worse morals than males
      - different physical features
      - much nastier psychologically
  - Methodological challenge
    - no control group
    - seen as too dogmatic, softened views
      - not all criminals seen as atavistic
      - some were suffering from mental abnormalities
    - Goring (1913)
      - 3000 convicts
      - 3000 non-criminals
      - no significant differences in features
- Sheldon
  - three body shapes (somatotypes)
    - ectomorph
      - thin, fragile
      - solitary, restrained, self-conscious
    - endomorph
      - fat, soft
      - relaxed, pleasure-loving, outgoing, gregarious
    - mesomorph
      - muscular, hard "athletic"
      - Criminals
        - high pain tolerance
        - no regard for others
  - critical research by Cortes and Gatti (1972
    - subjective definition of delinquency
      - reclassified (Sutherland 1951) into legal definition and no significant difference between types
    - effect of social & environmental factors
      - differences may be due to (possibility that poverty may be related)
        - diet
        - social class
        - upbringing
        - hard manual labour
      - effect on others
        - psychological effect of being tough looking
          - used to getting your own way
          - bullying
      - any research on somatotypes and soft crime?