

‘the cause of crime
lies within the
individual.’

[Politics](#), [Marxism](#)



'The cause of crime lies within the individual.' To what extent do sociological arguments and evidence support this view? (21 marks — 30mins) It can be argued that the genetic differences in ethnic minorities can lead to an individual becoming more likely to offend. This is evident in the work of Lombroso; he found that the majority of criminals had similar characteristics, for example, they had large jaws and were big boned. This therefore supports the view that the cause of crime lies within the individual as their big build made it easier for them to commit certain crime, for example, murder. This further proves the individual has an advantage that others cannot acquire. Nonetheless, it can be argued that even though an individual has biological features which make them more prone to commit crime they can choose to use their build for other purposes i. e. Preventing and stopping crime as the stereotype of a police officer's build is also 'big and strong'. It could be argued that society fails to meet the needs of individuals who fail in the education system, causing them to form retreatist subcultures and further commit crime. Merton argues that young working class boys come together and form these subcultures and rebel against the norms and values of society because society labels these individuals as failures. It is clear to us that Merton's argument goes against the view that crime lies within the individual, when society labels an individual as a 'failure' the individual forms subcultures as they are isolated from the rest of society and made to feel inferior they therefore use what Cloward and Owen calls 'illegitimate means' i. e. robbery of acquiring wealth and status. Likewise, Cohen argues that the lack of opportunity for working class individuals to achieve in society creates 'status frustration' whereby the individual becomes frustrated with

the idea that they have been labelled and therefore form subcultures to release the tension of being considered as 'failures' Psychological explanations have also been used to show how the cause of crime lies within the individual. Bowlby argues that an individual can become more prone to offend if they have been 'maternally deprived'. The mother being the 'expressive leader' is needed to support and love and care for the child. Therefore without this figure present in the family socialisation cannot be effectively enforced and established. This can be used as an example to show how without a stable upbringing an individual's likeliness to offend in later life is increased. Likewise, Murray argued that 'paternally deprived' families had no socialisation due to the fact that the 'instrumental leader' was not present and therefore the working class boys had no male role model resulting in a life of crime and deviance. Traditional Marxists would argue that the causes of crime are because of structural problems in society, for example, poverty and class inequality. Gordon argues that because of poverty crime could be the only way for the working class to survive in mainstream society. The deviant subculture This goes against the idea that the cause of crime lies within the individual as the evidence suggests that working class individuals can only really survive through crime by using 'illegitimate means' of acquiring wealth and status. Nonetheless, traditional Marxists have been criticised for romanticising the working class and for ignoring the relationship between crime and non-class inequalities, for example, ethnicity. The chivalry thesis