

The james bulger case criminology essay



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Both Attard and murder. co. uk introduce the case by saying that on the 12th of February, Denise Bulger took her son, Jamie, to her local shopping centre in Bootle, Liverpool at around 3. 30 p. m. Nine minutes later she realised that her son was not next to her anymore and started to look for him. She went to security , police were called on the spot and together they watched CCTV cameras of the shopping centre to try and determine what happened to the boy. Jamie was seen leaving the premises alongside two other boys and the police thought little of it as no one could have ever made out the horrific events that followed so they set out to search for him and the two boys. A couple of days later , some children were playing next to a train railway and saw what they thought was a doll or something similar. When they got close to the presumed doll , they saw the most haunting image one could imagine ; a toddler's body cut in half. Police were again called on the spot and initial indications showed that the body belonged to Jamie Bulger. After this horrendous find , police deepened its investigation even using the media as a mean to get to the bottom of all of it with the children seen accompanying him in the tape being the prime suspects. A tip came in on who the boys might be, and two boys both aged 10 ; Jon Venables and Robert Thompson (their identity was only revealed after the sentencing) were brought in for questioning. Both boys were sent to court and tried with the murder of Jamie Bulger. The trial began in November of 1993, and the horrific events of this macabre murder were revealed to shock not just the nation but the whole world. After leaving the premises together with Jamie Bulger , Jon Venables and Robert Thompson took him on a 2. 5 mile trip beating him along the way until they reached the railway. Once there, Jamie was further beaten, thrown stones and paint at, and had his trousers and

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shoes removed implying perhaps a sexual assault (never proven.) In addition to this, Jamie was hit with an iron rod for around 30 times, leading to his death. Afterwards, the boys put Jamie on the railway fully knowing that a train would come soon to try and conceal their terrible actions by perhaps implying that Jamie would have walked there on his own, fell, and hit by a train. This shows the full wickedness of the boys and that they knew exactly what they were up to. Both Jon Venables and Robert Thompson were found guilty and sent to at least 8 years imprisonment in a detention centre.

B) Background Of Case

The forensic evidence presented in James Bulger's case proved to be very strong and led to the boys being found guilty beyond any reasonable doubt. Forensic scientists such as Graham Jackson, Andy Mulley and Philip Rydeard managed to conclude that blood found on the suspects matched that of the victim's but not just this, Rydeard also managed to prove that the shoe characteristics of one of the boys was found on the victim. A number of paint-marks were found both on the victim's and the suspects' clothes. These marks, light-blue in colour, established that this paint was used during or before the murder. This helped to further strengthen the evidence brought forward against Jon Venables and Robert Thompson. <http://www.crimeandinvestigation.co.uk/crime-files/james-bulger/trial.html>

The number of blows that James suffered from the boys were so numerous that no forensic scientist was able to determine which blow was the fatal one. http://www.trutv.com/library/crime/notorious_murders/young/bulger/6.html

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Videotape recordings of the boys' interrogations were shown in court as evidence by the prosecution. A pathologist, Alan Williams, utilised in the case concluded that James Bulger's foreskin had been manipulated with. Thus, this might imply that there was a sexual element in the murder, a notion that was never proven as the evidence was inconclusive. <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/reexamining-the-evidence-a-year-ago-this-week-james-bulger-was-murdered-by-two-11-year-old-boys-the-crime-shook-the-nation-the-boys-were-tried-convicted-and-locked-away-but-what-do-we-know-about-them-do-we-know-why-they-did-it-after-months-of-research-including-interviews-with-parents-of-both-boys-we-publish-in-two-parts-the-story-that-has-not-been-told-1392400.html> This evidence was perhaps the weakest presented in court against the young defendants.

In addition to this, the shopping centre's CCTV tapes, the numerous weapons such as 27 bricks, stones and the 22lb iron rod were all presented in court to further remove all possibilities of the boys' innocence. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/james-bulger-suffered-multiple-fractures-pathologist-reveals-two-year-old-had-42-injuries-including-fractured-skull-jonathan-foster-reports-1503297.html>

38 witnesses also took the stand all saying that they saw Bulger accompanying Venables and Thompson on Bulger's fatal journey to the railway. A woman testified that she even stopped them and was going to take Bulger to the police station herself but withdrew from doing so and trusted the boys with the quest, little knowing what they were up to. http://www.murderuk.com/child_killers_thompson_venables.html

The evidence presented in the case is both strong and unique , the blood found on the victim was matched with that of the suspect, the paint was also equal on both the victim and the suspects , whilst the shoeprint of one of the suspects was found on the victim's body. In addition to this , CCTV cameras played a key role in this case as they showed the boys leaving the shopping premises whilst other CCTV cameras of premises leading to the railway also showed Bulger being accompanied by Venables and Thompson. . http://www.murderuk.com/child_killers_thompson_venables.html

C(investigation)

After the suspects were brought in for questioning, the police started to suspect that the involvement of Venables and Thompson in the murder was almost certain , yet they had to prove this and the fact that the suspects were both 10 years old did not help them all. Since the boys were under the age of 14 , a specific set of questions were asked by the police so that they can determine whether the suspects knew right from wrong and this would help to destroy the notion of “ doli incapax” in court. The boys differ in their reaction to interrogation, Venables is terrified of the idea of going to prison , Thompson on the other hand , keeps his composure and stays cool despite fully knowing the consequences. They both start to slowly give details of the case with Venables stating that he was at the area but never at the shopping centre , Thompson on the other hand gives a vivid description of Bulger including the outfit Bulger was wearing the day of the murder. The police finally notice that Thompson can not conceal his nervousness whenever Bulger is mentioned until finally he breaks and admits that they had taken him to the railway. On the 20th of February 1993 , after managing to collect <https://assignbuster.com/the-james-bulger-case-criminology-essay/>

enough evidence , the police were finally able to charge both Venables and Thompson with the kidnapping and manslaughter of Bulger. <http://www.crimeandinvestigation.co.uk/crime-files/james-bulger/trial.html>

Despite the fact that the investigation was handled logically well given the tender age of the suspects , personally I still believe that it could have been handled better. First of all, I would have brought in the witnesses in front of the suspects to see the suspects' reaction to them and perhaps get the confession out of them faster. In addition to this , I would have tried to put the fact that the suspects were mere boys aside as much as possible and fought for not just a confession but perhaps for an explanation as to why they committed the horrific murder. This would have been very helpful in court, not just to show the awareness that the boys had of the nature of the crime they committed, but to further establish whether these boys were a threat to society or whether this was just something that happened without any possible explanation. The pressure the police had from both the media and the whole nation certainly did not help them in their investigation and perhaps this is why the police were looking for a confession as quick as possible. Since the media was portraying the suspects as monsters it must have been very hard for the police to sympathize with the suspects as they could not understand why these boys had committed this murder. This would be where my investigation would differ, as I would've befriended the suspects , hard as it would have been , in order to try to get the truth perhaps by doing what you would with do any kid ; offering them a reward for their cooperation. This , I believe , would have played a crucial role in getting a confession out of the boys.

D) Why it Happened?(Criminological theories)

A number of criminological theories could be put into question in James Bulger's case but perhaps the most controversial one could be applied in this case; Cesare Lombroso's Born-Criminal theory.

This criminological theory is inarguably the most dangerous one as it gives no logical explanation as the criminals themselves can not explain why they commit certain crimes and no one can recognise these criminals except for their special characteristics or their odd behaviour according to Lombroso.

<http://roxbury.net/images/pdfs/ct4ssg.pdf>

This theory could be applied in this case as the boys never gave any real explanation to why they committed the crime, which might have been due to the fact that they did not possess any logical explanation which even if not entirely, it backs the Born-Criminal theory.

This notion of being born criminal is also backed by the detectives who handled this case as they could find no other possible justification why children could murder children alike. On the other hand, in the case of Robert Thompson, the criminogenic family he was raised in could have played an important factor in his behaviour. His mother and his siblings were all mercilessly beaten by his father Robert Thompson senior who eventually abandoned his family. After this, his mother turned to drinking and violent behaviour became a habit of hers as well. This shows that Thompson was not immune to violent behaviour, which may in turn give some insight about his criminal behaviour. Jon Venables also showed a rather odd behaviour even if not entirely criminal at school after his parents split up. He demanded to

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have everything he wanted, and violence was his main amusement . In addition to this, when Jon Venables went to spend a few days with his father, he was exposed to some incredibly gruesome videos or pornographic ones which were certainly not suitable for his young age. One of this videos , “ Child’s Play 3” contained a horrific murder which was very close in resemblance to the one he and his friend Thompson committed. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1257614/The-police-sure-James-Bulggers-year-old-killers-simply-wicked-But-parents-dock.html>

Criminology is the study of criminal behaviour but in this case society seemed to deter from trying to understand these young boys , rather they enjoyed condemning them blaming everything from violent video games to problems in society such as divorce and theft amongst other things.

This lead to society accepting the notion put forward by then Prime Minister John Major that society should try to understand a little less and rather condemn a little more. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/major-on-crime-condemn-more-understand-less-1474470.html>