

Criminal theory case study: whitey bulger



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Criminal Behavior

James Joseph Bulger III (better known as) Whitey Bulger's criminal behavior started early on in life. Whitey ran away to join the circus at ten years old. According to Biography. com, " Whitey Bulger was first arrested when he was 14 years old, for stealing, and his criminal record continued to escalate from there. As a youth, he was arrested for larceny, forgery, assault and battery, and armed robbery and served five years in a juvenile reformatory. Upon his release, he joined the Air Force where he served time in military jail for assault before being arrested for going AWOL. Nonetheless, he received an honorable discharge in 1952." (Biography. com) After the military, Bulger returned to Boston and committed multiple bank robberies in multiple states. In 1956 he was sentenced to 25 years in Federal prison for those bank robberies. After his release from prison Bulger immersed himself into Boston's organized crime, and by 1979 he was one of the top figures in Boston's underworld. After working " with" the FBI, he led the FBI on a 16-year manhunt. Whitey Bulger was finally caught by the FBI in 2011. In 2013, " Bulger faced a 33-count indictment, including money laundering, extortion, drug dealing, corrupting FBI and other law-enforcement officials and participating in 19 murders. He was also charged with federal racketeering for allegedly running a criminal enterprise from 1972 to 2000." (Biography. com) Bulger was not convicted of everything, " after a two-month trial, a jury of eight men and four women deliberated for five days and found Bulger guilty on 31 counts, including federal racketeering, extortion, conspiracy and 11 of the 19 murders. They found he was not guilty of 7 murders and could not reach a verdict on one murder." (Biography. com)

Whitey Bulger's Life

Whitey Bulger's childhood was rough. " James Joseph Bulger Jr. was born on September 3, 1929, in Dorchester, Massachusetts, (Where I was born) as second of the six children, to Roman Catholic Irish parents who immigrated to America." (www. thefamouspeople. com) Whitey's father was a longshoreman that lost his arm in an industrial accident forcing him and his family to move to government housing in South Boston (Where I attended elementary school). When Bulger was ten years old, he attempted to run away and join the circus. When Whitey was 14, he was charged with stealing and forgery and other crimes resulting in being held in a juvenile reformatory for five years. Bulger joined the Air Force and was charged with AWOL ultimately being honorably discharged. Once Bulger returned to Boston, he returned to a life of crime and ultimately rose to the top crime boss in Boston. Bulger reigned over Boston's underworld for nearly 20 years. Oddly enough he was an informant for the FBI against another crime family which ultimately help Bulger's enterprises. When indictments against Bulger came down his connections at the FBI tipped him off to the impending arrest allowing Bulger to go on the run from 1996 until he was ultimately arrested in California 2011. Bulger was convicted of most of the charges levied against him, and he is currently incarcerated at Coleman Federal Penitentiary in Sumter County. Bulger was disciplined for sexual activity while in prison in 2016.

Theories of Criminal Behavior

I believe that the first of three theories that could describe White Bulger's criminal lifestyle would be Albert Cohen's Theory on Delinquent Boys. " Cohen's research and resulting theory were a reaction to the limitations and <https://assignbuster.com/criminal-theory-case-study-whitey-bulger/>

oversimplifications he saw in Robert Merton's strain theory, according to the University of Portsmouth. Cohen agreed that criminal behavior was in part the result of the strain of being unable to accomplish one's goals, but he disagreed with Merton's hypothesis that crime was individual, gain-based and could occur at any socioeconomic status.

In 1955, his book "Delinquent Boys," Cohen investigated trends of criminal behavior in lower-class urban areas of the United States, then built on emerging findings about the delinquent subculture. Florida State University's College of Criminology and Criminal Justice states that Cohen's investigation of gangs revealed that the groups were mostly lower-class males who seemed to be retaliating against a world that had given them empty promises regarding the "American Dream." Cohen's theory on the delinquent subculture also predicts that the existence of the subculture would likely draw in lower-status persons exposed to it, therefore creating more delinquency among anyone who might believe that their only opportunities for progress existed in the ranks of gangs." (www. reference. com)

I believe Whitey Bulger also fit into the Durkheim's Deviance theory, "...his discoveries were so deviant that people had a hard time accepting them. And they still do! Which is why Durkheim's views of deviance have been pretty much ignored by sociologists for over 100 years. Durkheim was a firm believer in observation. So he began his study of deviance by observing as many societies as he could. He studied his own, those in neighboring European countries, and even those of the ancient past. What did he notice? They all had deviance! It didn't matter where or when he looked. In every

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society, there was something that got defined as deviant, and someone who did that deviant thing.” (<http://www.nonjudgmentday.org>)

I also believe that Whitey Bulger would fit into the Social Disorganization Theory. “ The theory of social disorganization states a person’s physical and social environments are primarily responsible for the behavioral choices that a person makes. At the core of social disorganization theory, is that location matters when it comes to predicting illegal activity. Shaw and McKay noted that neighborhoods with the highest crime rates have at least three common problems, physical dilapidation, poverty, and a higher level of ethnic and culture mixing. Shaw and McKay claimed that delinquency was not caused at the individual level, but is a normal response by normal individuals to abnormal conditions. Social disorganization theory is widely used as an important predictor of youth violence and crime.” (Mark Bond, Ed. D) There is little doubt that South Boston or Boston, in general, could fit this theory just as well as Chicago.

Theoretical Application to Whitey Bulger’s Life History

Growing up in South Boston with a father that was a longshoreman and that was ultimately disabled allowed Whitey to do as he pleased and he did just that fitting the Albert Cohen’s Theory on Delinquent Boys. As a young man, Whitey was arrested for assault and battery, armed robbery, larceny, and assault. Those charges resulted in Whitey being sentenced to five years in a juvenile reformatory. After his release from the reformatory, Whitey joined the Air Force and subsequently went AWOL. Despite this, he was granted an honorable discharge. I included the military factor in this theory because as we know, men don’t fully mature until at least 25 years old.

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Due to Whitey's now developed deviant behavior as a youth, I believe that he fits into Durkheim's Deviance theory. As we all know there is deviance everywhere and I think that during Whitey Bulger's criminal rise he just took advantage of the deviance and rose to the top of Boston's underworld. Some say his power made him like a Robin Hood for the city, " For years, James " Whitey" Bulger was viewed as a Robin Hood-like figure on the streets of South Boston, valued by his neighbors who saw him as a tough guy who kept drug dealers out of their neighborhood.

That image was shattered when authorities began digging up bodies." (www.boston.cbslocal.com)

Finally, Whitey Bulger's criminal activities fit in my opinion into the Social Disorganization Theory. Boston, like Chicago, was ripe for the picking when it comes to poor neighborhoods, high crime rates, socially disadvantaged people. Whitey dominated a city that had many poor areas that were very ethnically diverse just like Chicago.

The mixture of these three theories, I feel, created Whitey Bulger. In my opinion, many of these theories are interchangeable and could fit almost any powerful crime figure. The mixture of these three theories, I feel, created Whitey Bulger. In my opinion, many of these theories are interchangeable and could fit almost any powerful crime figure.

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