



Aaron Hernandez and Criminal Culpability

Aaron Hernandez was a star football player on the New England Patriots. During his time with the Patriots, he was investigated as a suspect in the killing of Odin Lloyd. Lloyd was shot and killed in an industrial park area, situated only about a mile from Hernandez's house. It appeared that he was shot in the back and then shot repeatedly. The body was left in the open, with no attempt to conceal the crime. Lloyd's girlfriend was the sister of Hernandez's fiancée, which led to the two men knowing each other.

Hernandez was arrested on June 26, 2013 and charged with the murder of Lloyd. Two more suspects were arrested as well in connection with the murder. The evidence that was collected showed no real attempt to conceal the crime. On August 22, Hernandez was indicted by a grand jury for the murder. The other men arrested were later indicated as well. On April 15, 2015, Hernandez was found guilty of first-degree murders, give weapon charges. These charges would carry a mandatory sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

While it is not completely clear what the motive was for the murder, one suggested factor was Lloyd talking to persons of whom Hernandez was suspicious, and with whom he had previously had an altercation. Hernandez was known to demand a certain amount of loyalty from his friends, seeing things in a "with me or against me" way. Hernandez had a lot of legal trouble before the murder of Lloyd. He was implicated in a bar fight and a double shooting in Gainesville, FL in 2007 while a student at the University of Florida. He was never charged in either case. Later, he was involved in a bar fight in Plainville, MA. In this case he was let go by police who recognized him. Furthermore, he was implicated and charged in a double murder in Boston. He also was charged in a shooting in Miami in 2013. He was acquitted for these charges. Thus, for most of the actions that he was implicated in, he had received no punishment. While it is possible that he was in fact not guilty for these other acts, it does show a pattern of poor judgment for being associated with these cases.

To what extent did his own personality and previous experiences play a role in his committing the crime? How do you think someone should be punished in order to deter future criminal activity of the same type? Was the punishment for the crime fitting? What kinds of policies might be implemented to prevent this kind of crime in the future? Should there be additional surveillance of (certain) people in order to stop these crimes?



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While it is not completely clear what the motive was for the murder, one suggested factor was that Lloyd may have come to believe that Hernandez was gay. There are a number of first-hand reports, including from a high school friend and prison friend, that Hernandez was gay or bisexual. Given that football is a hypermasculine environment, where historically players have not come out as gay or bisexual, such information could be seen as damaging to Hernandez. Society's attitudes toward being "out" has definitely evolved, but not necessarily in professional sports. Additionally, Hernandez's father was said to be very negative toward homosexuality, which may have added to Hernandez being fearful of being found out. Thus it is very possible that Hernandez had a enormous fear of being seen as gay or bisexual. Part of this is rooted in his own upbringing, and part of this was based in the larger professional culture.

To what extent do you think these factors may have influenced or affected his behavior, and the crime for which he was found guilty? How do you think someone should be punished in order to deter future criminal activity of the same type? Was the punishment for the crime fitting? What kinds of policies might be implemented to prevent this kind of crime in the future? Should there be additional surveillance of (certain) people in order to stop these crimes?



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While it is not completely clear what the motive was for the murder, one suggested factor was the damage that was done to Hernandez's brain through plaining football. Hernandez's brain showed severe signs of CTE. CTE is a degenerative brain disease that has been found with football players whose brains can experience repeated trauma through their careers. While Hernandez was 27, his brain showed symptoms more commonly seen in a football player in his 60s. it was said that it was "the most severe case they had ever seen in someone of Aaron's age." There is question as to whether the CTE was at root of his erratic and violent behavior. CTE can result in problems controlling aggression and impulses, mood swings, lapses in judgment and a disorganized manner. It should be noted that the National Football League for a long time avoided the issue of CTE, and its impact on it employees. There are numerous examples of former football players exhibiting impulsive behavior, including suicide.

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While it is not completely clear what the motive was for the murder, one suggested factor was his family environment. His family life was tumultuous, with his parents often engaged in physical and verbal altercations. His father had issues with alcohol, which could manifest itself negatively. Even with this, his father was a stabilizing influence in his life. However, his father died in 2006 during a hernia surgery. It is reported that this loss resulted in Hernandez not have a stable figure on which to model his behavior.

He also had a difficult relationship with his mother. After his father died, his mother started dating and married her cousin's husband. He also was physically abusive, stabbing her with a three-and-a-half-inch slash on her right cheek. Hernandez had a complicated relationship with his mother, alternating between affectionate and contentious. There are phone calls while in prison where Hernandez's mother was berating him for not giving her at least one million dollars from his football contract for her just to have. He at the same time seemed to both love and loathe/fear his parents.

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While it is not completely clear what the motive was for the murder, one suggested factor was the culture in which Aaron was raised. Being a star athlete, he was frequently favored by adults in terms of their attention. He was slated to go to University of Connecticut on a full-ride scholarship at a very early age after distinguishing himself at a football camp. He eventually went to University of Florida to play for Urban Meyer. Meyer has been involved in numerous programs, and in many instances has left these programs in disgrace. The program at the University of Florida was characterized as "entitlement run amok, roster manipulation, a drug problem in the locker room and more than 30 player arrests in six seasons." He had other problems at Ohio State University in relation to player and coach behavior. Taken together, there would appear to be a program of corruption in which the players had no boundaries, and a program of entitlement where players who got into trouble often would be able to escape punishment. This is a similar pattern that we can see for other youth athletes in terms of not having to suffer ramifications for their actions.

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While it is not completely clear what the motive was for the murder, one suggested factor that was revealed after his death, which was a possible gang affiliation. Tattoos would indicate that he was a member of the Bloods street gang, something he was disciplined for while in prison. There is record that he threatened to kill a correction officer and his family. It is not clear to what extent any gang activity may have played a role in his killing of Lloyd. However, the Bloods are known to be a violent street gang who can mete out sharp justice for those who are seen as going against the gang. He surrounded himself with persons described as gangsters as well.

To what extent do you think these factors may have influenced or affected his behavior, and the crime for which he was found guilty? How do you think someone should be punished in order to deter future criminal activity of the same type? Was the punishment for the crime fitting? What kinds of policies might be implemented to prevent this kind of crime in the future? Should there be additional surveillance of (certain) people in order to stop these crimes?





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While it is not completely clear what the motive was for the murder, one suggested factor was Hernandez's drug use and addiction. Hernandez, being a professional football player, was not a stranger to pain killers. He would joke about taking Toradol, a drug that is used as a pain killer. Hernandez also had a history of marijuana use. He would talk about taking Toradol with marijuana. He also used synthetic marijuana as well. There were additional reports that he was addicted to PCP (angel dust), and had developed extensive paranoia. He may have had failed drug tests at the University of Florida, which were covered up. Thus, there was not treatment for his drug problems, which may have escalated to the crime that was committed.

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