

# Ted bundy: a personality comparison with the theor essay



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Ted Bundy: A Personality Comparison With The Theories Of

Rollo May and Albert Bandura

The objective of this case study is to examine the personality of one of the most notorious serial killers in modern history, Ted Bundy. Ted Bundy was alleged to have humiliated, tortured and murdered at least 50 women. Possibility more, but the true number will never be known. Because Ted Bundy kept the true number of his victims to himself and refused to inform authorities of the exact number of his horrific deeds, before he was executed on January 24, 1989 (Wikipedia, n. d.).

Ted Bundy was once a Boy Scout and those who knew him in the labor force said that he had a promising career in politics, because Ted Bundy appeared to be an example of a good, upstanding citizen (L. Corpus, 1989). Still others, who knew Ted Bundy, described him as handsome and his nature as confident, friendly, educated and charming. This was the personality that Ted Bundy chose to exhibit in public to his girlfriend, friends and peers, which was quite different type of personality then the lurking monster that he hid internally from them, but displayed to his victims.

Various articles and biographies about Ted Bundy's life were collected on numerous websites in order to conduct a personality theory comparison. This research will try to analyze as well as make an effort to come to some sort of understanding or explanation of what could have caused or effected Ted Bundy's personality in such a way that he felt the compulsion and need to

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kill without regards to human life (R. Bell, n. d., S. L. Scott, 2005,). This report will attempt to explore Ted Bundy life history. A comparison of personality theories from two well know psychologist, Rollo May who is

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best known existential psychologist and Albert Bandura a behaviorist who is often consider one of the fathers of the cognitive movement; will be used for better comprehension of the development of Ted Bundy's personality (C. G. Boeree, n. d., B. Engler, 1999).

### Ted Bundy's Biography

Ted Bundy was born November 24, 1946 as Theodore Robert Cowell to an unwed mother. Ted would never know who his biological father was. For four years Ted was raised by his grandparents who treated him as their son. Due to societies prejudice, Ted Bundy was lead to believe that his birth mother was his older sister. It was a bit confusing, when four years later, Ted moved to Tacoma, Washington with his older sister leaving his parent's home and the violent behavior he witness from his grandfather. A year later, his mother fell in love and married Johnnie Culpepper Bundy. Ted assumed his stepfathers name which he would keep for the rest of his life (Scott, 2005).

Ted's mother had four more children by his stepfather and Ted baby-sat his siblings after school. Ted's stepfather tried bonding with him but, was unsuccessful and Ted remained socially as well as mentally unattached to his stepfather. Since Ted could not form an attachment to his stepfather or others in his family he started to withdraw socially from the family and spent

more time alone, which later could have very well been one of the causes of his inability to interact with ease in society (Bell, 2005).

As an adolescence, Ted was very shy, had self-doubt and very uncomfortable in socially gatherings. Which left the door wide open for bullies, who teased him unmercifully and humiliated him by making him the butt of pranks as well as jokes.

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However, regardless of the all his degrading experiences he endured, he was able to always maintain a high grade-point average all through school and later in college

(Bell, 2005).

In high school, Ted started to become friendlier; as a result he became more popular with his peers. They described him to be well dress and well mannered. But there was a shadow that hung in the background of dishonesty and petty theft. Even though he was well-liked by the opposite sex he seldom dated and was more interested in extra curricular activities such as skiing and politics (Bell, 2005).

After high school, Ted worked his way through the University Of Puget Sound and the University of Washington. Some of his low-level employment positions that he obtain to support himself through College were as a bus boy and shoe sales clerk. His employers considered him unreliable due to the fact that he never stayed in one post very long. Even though he was

inconsistent in his work outside of school, he always stayed very focus on his high grade-point average (Wikipedia, n. d.).

Ted Bundy's life changed forever in the spring of 1967, when he met and fell in love with the woman of his dreams. She was beautiful, sophisticated and from a wealthy family. She was Ted's first love and possibly his first sexual encounter. She liked him a lot, but did not have the same deep feelings towards him. This didn't discourage Ted Bundy since he would ask her to marry him on several occasions. She was very reluctant to make a serious commitment, because she felt that Ted had no future goals or real direction in his life. Ted began to try to impress her by lying and even winning a summer scholarship from Stanford to try to influence her feelings for him. But the mask of

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deception that he was trying to display for her admiration fell away leaving all his lies and immaturity exposed to her (Bell, 2005).

When Ted's girlfriend graduated in 1968, she broke off the relationship with him; she realized that Ted had some serious character flaws that did not meet her criteria for a husband. Unfortunately, Ted would never recover from the break up. He experienced major depression and nothing held his attention, not even school which had always been a strong attachment to him in the past, but did not interest him anymore, so he soon dropped out (Bell, 2005).

He did manage to keep in touch with his ex-girlfriend after she moved back to California, but she continued to exhibit an indifferent attitude towards getting back together. However, the woman of his dreams became Ted Bundy's obsession in life that would set off a sequence of events that would stun the world. It was also during this time, that Ted found out on his own that his older sister was truly his mother and that his parents were really his grandparents (Bell, 2005).

It was during this period that Ted Bundy's personality started to change. He became more dominate and forceful (Bell, 2005). He enrolled back in school and started studying psychology. He soon met his next and last girlfriend, Elizabeth. His relationship with Elizabeth lasted for five years, until he was arrested for the first time for murder (Wikipedia, n. d.).

From 1969 -1972 he became involved with politics and in 1973 he met up with his old ex-girlfriend. Due to his studies in psychology, Ted Bundy was able to invent a new man. He became the kind of man that his ex-girlfriend wanted for a husband. They started their

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relationship again and she fell in love with him again (Bell, 2005). When Ted won her affections, he started acting cold and distant. It became apparent that he had planned revenge towards her, because in February 1974, Ted broke all communications and contact with her with no warning. He rejected her like she rejected him (Bell, 2005).

It was also during this time, in the spring and summer when young women began to disappear. Ted Bundy had set in motion a killing spree of young women that would shock people all over the world. His victims were young women who resembled his ex-girlfriend. All the girls were white, slender, had long brown hair that parted in the middle (Bell, 2005).

Ted Bundy was a suspect on at least three occasions but was dismissed due to his appearance and demeanor. He was finally arrested in 1976, when one of his victims got away and reported him to the police. He escaped jail twice. The first time was in 1977; he escaped by jumping out of a court library window, but was caught again, a week later. When Ted Bundy escaped the second time in 1978, he lost weight so that he could fit through a hole in the ceiling that he cut out. Unfortunately, he was not caught until three weeks and three murders, later. When Ted Bundy was caught, he said that he committed rape and murder because of his addiction to pornography (Corpus, 1989).

Ted Bundy's personality development according to Albert Bandura

Albert Bandura was a social learning therapist who believed that the personality was developed by both the producers and products of the environment. He believed people

have cognitive, experience, self-monitoring and the capacity to understand ones self that help influence their behavior and provide some measure of control over it (Engler, 1999).

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Ted Bundy's motivation for torturing, humiliating and murdering young women, who resemble his ex-girlfriend, seems to be that he was able to act out his revenge, angry and resentment against her over and over again in which Bandura refers to as promised reinforcements (Boeree, n. d.).

Ted Bundy said himself that he learned to degrade and treat woman as if they were an object, instead of a human being (he would not let them talk because his victims would then be human to him). Ted Bundy explained that he started to pay attention to aggressive behavior toward women since he was a boy not only through pornographic material, but also from witnessing his grandfather's violent tendencies (Boeree, . n. d.). Bandura would describe this scenario as observational learning (Engler, 1999).

Ted Bundy also claimed that he acquired an addiction to watching as well as reading pornographic movies and magazines (Corpus, 1989). Bandura would label this behavior as " reciprocal determinism" which means that the environment in which he grew up in (his exposure to pornographic material and violent behavior) caused his behavior (torture, humiliation and murder toward women). This means that the environment and the behavior caused each other (Boeree, n. d.).

Bandura would conclude that Ted Bundy had no internal control that would prevent him from stopping his abnormal behavior (Engler, 1999). So, Ted Bundy would apply " Self- regulation" in a maladaptive way, for his own benefit in order to continue killing and not get caught while he was fulfilling his abnormal fantasies. Ted Bundy used " Self- regulation" as a way to control the behavior of others not himself (Boeree, n. d.).



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He exploited “ Self-observation” by observing his behavior and the effects he had on his victims when he approached his prey so that he could manipulate them to believe that they were safe. He utilized his charm, good looks; to lure his victims into his web of deceit. He applied “ Judgment” to perfect his mask of falsehood in order to become even cleverer at his technique of obtaining his victims. When Ted Bundy employed “ Self-response” it was through self-serving sociopath behaviors that dehumanized and flatten his victims into worthless objects in his eyes (Boeree, n. d.).

Bandura would also point out that Ted Bundy also exercised excessive self-punishment which resulted in his personality traits of Compensation – delusion of grandeur, inactivity – apathy, boredom and depression, escape – through pornographic fantasy which turned into reality in Ted Bundy’s case (Boeree, n. d.).

According to Bandura’s theory of personality Ted Bundy exhibited a poor sense of self-efficacy (Engler, 1999). Therefore, when the ex-girlfriend broke off the relationship, his perception of the situation was that he was unworthy of the ex-girlfriend. So internally, he felt unworthy of all women and resented them for not accepting him for the man he was. Ted Bundy’s abnormal perception created an acceptable link to murder women that looked like his ex-girlfriend in order to gain a sense of control the he felt he lost through her rejection and to punish her over and over which in his mind made the victims demeaned (Engler, 1999).

Ted Bundy’s personality development according to Rollo May

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But on the other hand, according to Rollo May's existential theory, Ted Bundy's antisocial behavior could be caused by the loss of moral values in Western society where

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everyone is taught to compete with each other and not how to work together (Engler, 1999). When Ted Bundy's ex-girlfriend broke off the relationship with him, it led to his feelings of powerlessness. The feeling of powerlessness then produces the feeling of impotence that leads to "anxiety and repression, leading in turn to apathy, which is a form of protection (Engler, 1999, p. 378)." Impotence and apathy breeds violence and hostility which gave him the compulsion to murder the symbol of his source of powerlessness which further alienated him from society which only increased Ted Bundy's isolation (Engler, 1999).

Ted Bundy's personality also coincided with May's theory of daimonic, the totally evil side that includes sex, anger, a craving for power that took over his self in which he again demonstrated through his violent behavior toward his victims. May also believed that pornography and commercialization has displayed sex, as a symbol of power which Ted Bundy used to have power over his victims (Enger, 1999 & Boeree, n. d.).

One of the most important daimons is Eros. Eros represents love. Therefore, Ted Bundy's Eros of love turned into a demon of obsession for his ex-girlfriend. Ted Bundy was incapable of comforting his "intentionally" because he never seemed to try to discover his inner self that has a

connection to everything else. Ted Bundy was given the "will" to change, <https://assignbuster.com/ted-bundy-a-personality-comparison-with-the-theor-essay/>

grow and develop, but he chose to step over to the dark side of human nature. Ted Bundy not only confronted his evil but embraced it in an intimate, loving way (Engler, 1999).

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### Ted Bundy's Personality Conclusion

Exploring the personality of Ted Bundy, through his life history revealed that he spent his first four years of life observing his violent grandfather and thinking his mother was his "older" sister for 22 years. Then, from early childhood to early adolescence, Ted Bundy was described as shy, with low self-esteem and was the target for bullies to tease as well as be picked on and it was during this period that he was introduced to pornography. Later, in high school, Ted Bundy started to become popular with his peer group. His social life probably changed because he had learned by then how to manipulate and deceive those around him to his true identity.

The only other major issue that affected his life was the break up with the woman he loved. This incident brought major changes in his personality and behavior. It is interesting to note that Ted Bundy studied psychology in order to change into the type of person that his ex-girlfriend wanted in a husband, but only utilized the transformation of his character for revenge against his ex-girlfriend.

Ted Bundy had not shown any principles, ethics or morals of any kind that a normal person would exhibit. He appeared to separate himself from others and his family at a young age. Ted Bundy did not seem to have any

emotional attachments to anyone but himself. He displayed no sense of remorse or shame for what he did to his victims or their families.

Looking at Ted Bundy's personality through May and Bandura personality theories has help to explain a small part of his personality and how it developed in a maladaptive way, but there are many more questions to be answered such as, " Why are there people

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like Ted Bundy?" " Was his personality constructed by his environment, cognitive skills, or his genetics?" " Or was he born without a consciousTed Bundy 12

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