

Patrick bateman in  
"american psycho" –  
a freudian analysis  
essay sample



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## **Patrick Bateman in “ American Psycho” – A Freudian Analysis Essay Sample**

Patrick Bateman was a young, white, ivy leagued male who worked on Wall Street in the 1980's era of self indulgence and materialism. He was driven to be perfect and to be the best at everything he does no matter what the cost. Material things meant more to Patrick than life itself which was clearly stated in the movie. Patrick was vain and self absorbed person who treated his body like a temple. He spent his days and nights doing vigorous workouts, mergers and acquisitions on Wall Street, fine dining with beautiful ladies and satisfying an insatiable and uncontrollable lust for torture and murder in the “ big apple”.

Patrick Bateman was the ultimate serial killer who killed victims from all walks of life such as homeless people, friends, family and co-workers without fear or remorse. He killed for many reasons which included material obsession, envy of co-workers who accomplished more than him, pure hatred for what he deemed to be the weak and pathetic people in society and blatant insanity at times. He appeared to enjoy killing women in particular including one that he seemed genuinely affectionate for.

Throughout the film, Patrick kills over 20 people. Many times he could not tell whether or not the events were real or simply a part of a psychotic delusion brought on by his problems. His character revealed the inner goings on in his mind by narrating these thoughts throughout the film. Patrick acknowledged that what he was doing was wrong. He noted that he had been depersonalized and that he had lost the ability to feel compassion for

others, but he was unable to understand why; he was also unable or unwilling to do anything about it.

#### Analysis: Psychosexual Stages of Development

Freud would likely say that Patrick Bateman had a normal Oral Stage of psychosexual development because he did not seem to have any of the “symptoms” that would result in having problems in this area such as smoking, nail biting, overeating or constant chewing of items. On the contrary, Patrick seemed to have the exact opposite characteristics of a person who developed problems during this stage.

Patrick Bateman had obvious control and power issues. According to Freud, this may have been a result of problems in the Anal Stage of psychosexual personality development; particularly with regards to toilet training. There were definite issues regarding Patrick surrounding issues such as anal fixation; more specifically, anal retentiveness that resulted in abnormal behaviors in adulthood.

Patrick was obsessively clean and antiseptic in his living conditions and in his life. His apartment was clean, organized and perfect in almost every way. Patrick treated his body like a temple and was always overly concerned, or fixated, with any imperfection that may somebody else may have seen. He did several hundred abdominal crunches and push ups every day as well as exfoliating, moisturizing and massaging daily to maintain the level of perfection that was expected of him. These are all symptoms that can be the result of an anal retentive and narcissistic personality according to Freud.

The only contradiction to this would be Patrick Bateman's apparent <https://assignbuster.com/patrick-bateman-in-american-psycho-a-freudian-analysis-essay-sample/>

enjoyment and disregard of making a horrible mess when committing many of his heinous crimes. This type of behavior does not coincide with the typical characteristics of a person with anal retentiveness and a narcissistic personality.

Patrick exhibited a child like euphoria when torturing and killing women in particular. Freud might say that this was due to his apparent issues with people from the opposite sex. It could be theorized using a Freudian perspective that Patrick had some unresolved issues in the Phallic Stage of psychosexual development. If Patrick had a difficult time resolving his Oedipus conflict for instance, it may explain why he had such hostility towards women in particular. Perhaps he was rejected from his mother at an early age, or punished severely by his father out of jealousy. Another indication that Patrick had difficulties in the Phallic Stage was his apparent narcissistic personality. According to Freud, this is one of the main indicators that a person can have as a result of a phallic fixation.

Patrick's conscience obviously did not play a role in his actions because he appeared to feel no remorse or concern afterwards - only contentment and a sense of impatience for the next time that he could kill again. Why Patrick lacked this conscience is anyone's guess, but Freud might say that it could be traced back to the beginning stages of personality development, particularly at the Latency Stage when morals and values are developed. There seemed to be nothing in Patrick's head that talked sense or reason into him to prevent his unconscious urges from rising to the surface possibly because he had not learned them during the Latency Stage of development.

Freud might say that Patrick hit a roadblock during this stage of development due to his own self described “ depersonalization” and failure to feel compassion or empathy for others (Harron, 2000). Patrick’s values and beliefs all seemed to orbit around materialism, perfection, wealth, power and greed which can be developed at this stage and can provide problems in adulthood if the values and morals are not developed at this time. The movie is based on a character from the 1980’s when many people were thinking individualistically and were very materialistic in nature (Putman, 2000). Perhaps Patrick was simply a product of his environment or perhaps it was a combination of a development problem and his environment; nature versus nurture.

#### Analysis: Id, Ego and Superego

Freud would likely say that Patrick Bateman had problems related to control over his internal primitive urges or his “ Id”. It could be said that Patrick’s “ Id” was exercising power over his Ego and Superego, creating an unnatural imbalance between the three. Perhaps the Superego joined forces with the “ Id” and convinced it that satisfying Patrick’s libido and other primitive urges was normal and acceptable. Patrick’s fixation on wanting to be the best in everything he did could be a result of events that happened in the early stages of personality development, possibly causing his “ Id” to become so powerful that his Ego, Superego and conscience all fell to the wayside creating a psychopathic serial killer and leaving the Ego in a helpless position to maintain Patrick’s urges and talk sense into him.

Freud would say that it was the " Id" that gave Patrick all of his energy to engage in his daily activities that included an intense, egocentric and narcissistic approach to his appearance. The " Id" would also be responsible for the pleasure principle leading Patrick to commit all sorts of deviant sexualized behaviors towards women, fulfilling his libido's unconscious desires.

It appeared in the film that Patrick was experiencing a small amount of moral anxiety as a result of his crimes. Freud would say that his denial defense mechanism allowed him to suppress or justify his actions in the subconscious realm of his mind. At one point in the movie Patrick convinces himself that this is all just a fantasy or a psychotic episode. Freud says that this type of behavior is often used to block external events from awareness making it easier for someone to deal with reality.

## Conclusion

I think that there are examples in this movie displayed by the character Patrick Bateman that would fall into categories of Freud's psychoanalytical and psychodynamic theories. From a psychoanalytical approach, Patrick Bateman displayed signs of unresolved issues that can be traced back to childhood relating to issues such as the Oedipus complex and the Anal, Phallic and Latency stages of his psychosexual development.

From a psychodynamic point of view, Patrick indicated a clear problem controlling the " Id" part of his personality. It seemed to be the part that took over in nearly all situations and was responsible for satisfying all of his instinctive and primitive urges.

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It is unlikely that Freud would have been able to treat Patrick Bateman using talk therapy because it is likely that Patrick was suffering from a psychosis that was brought on by a severe psychological disorder. This psychological disorder could be traced back to early development stages. It could be theorized that Patrick's uncontrollable urges and conflicts between his " Id", Ego and Superego were formed as a result of these problems.

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