

Radicals Online: Ted Kaczynski and the Anti-Tech Collective

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Thesis Approval

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Abstract

After Ted Kaczynski's manifesto, *Industrial Society and its Future*, was published it has begun a small, but growing movement of people who support his ideas. After beginning my research, I have seen a rise in the visibility of Kaczynski's ideas online. This thesis focuses on the Anti-Tech Collective (ATC) who, as a radical online community has begun promoting his ideas. This thesis has used communication phenomenology as a method to see how the ATC views their relationship with Kaczynski and his writings. In further analysis I then used Freudian defense mechanisms, repurposed as account structure as a way for the ATC to maintain social acceptability while promoting a radical ideology. In this research, I identified ways that the ATC views Kaczynski and his ideas and where this fits in online radicalism. These methods can be employed in looking at any radical online community where its members desire to maintain some level of social acceptability.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

I first read the Unabomber's Manifesto in 2019 while taking a class on political rhetoric. In that class we read *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (1973) by Jacques Ellul.¹ I thought he was thought-provoking, so I looked him up and saw that on Wikipedia he was a big influence on Ted Kaczynski, more commonly known as the Unabomber. So, I read the manifesto and thought it was a really interesting read. He brought up arguments against things that I didn't even think were a problem. I then read Kaczynski's other books and saw that other people had written about him.

It was in my first semester of Graduate School that I would begin to write about him academically. The first paper was for an environmental rhetoric class, and then for a few other classes. It became clear quickly that there is a lot to say about the Kaczynski phenomenon. From his ideas to actions, and the people who read him today, there is something unique here. While doing some beginning research I found David Skrbina. There was a collection of letters in Kaczynski's second book *Technological Slavery* (2019) between Skrbina and Kaczynski. I looked him up and found his website, then a link to the Anti-Tech Collective (ATC).

This group from the beginning looked interesting. It seemed to be made up of college-age students and from a diverse pool of people. I was interested in them, so I began to plan on focusing on them instead of just Kaczynski. The Manifesto has been published for over 25 years and the writing on that has become repetitive but there is little on those that carry on the torch. While this group does not seem violent, they are all supportive of the ideas that Kaczynski promotes.

I want this paper to be a focus on their experience and what they have done by linking themselves to Kaczynski. I have three research questions that I developed after interviewing six members of the ATC. These questions are:

1. How does the ATC view Kaczynski?
2. Why is Kaczynski convincing to the ATC?
3. What part of Kaczynski's message has had the most impact?

I will be using phenomenology which is a school of thought developed in communication studies as my method of research and understanding the information that I

¹ Jacques Ellul is a philosopher, sociologist, and anarchist commonly known for his book *Technological Society* (1964) where he explains the power of technique in the modern world.

have gathered. It will be their own words explaining these questions and should help in understanding those who agree with Kaczynski's message. I believe that this is important for two reasons. The first is the popularity that Kaczynski still has. He is a top seller on amazon.com and his manifesto is a 5-star book. The second is that if we are really seeing a national rise of political radicalization then the ATC should fall within that rise. It isn't clear whether the ATC is part of the right or left but it is radical.

The Kaczynski phenomenon is as Alain Badiou explains, in an objectless subject (1991). We are seeing many different people talk about Kaczynski in their own way. Skrbina and the ATC are only one part of this. Badiou explains the idea of subjectiveness as "the emergence of an operator that is consecutive to the interventional naming that decides the event" (1991, p. 27). It is clear that Skrbina is consecutive to Kaczynski by looking at the correspondence and now the creation of the ATC. Looking at other examples that Badiou we can see a clearer image, from St. Paul for the Church or Lenin for the Communist Party. Now we might be able to say Skrbina for Anti-Tech Philosophy. It is a secondary role that allows him to have more authority over the events. This process is both random and can be reflectively seen as continuous (Badiou, 1991).

This process while random of all factors lining up to get to the ATC, is clear to reflect on. I can see the steps that had to come together to form this group from Kaczynski to now. This claim of comparing Skrbina to St. Paul or Lenin might seem grand and almost fantastical could become a reality as we see that both previous movements started from small groups that were seen as radical in their contemporary times.

This paper will go as follows: in this first chapter, I will outline the history, ideology, and continuation of Kaczynski and his followers. Then go over my methodology and provide a literature review. Chapters II, III, and IV will consist of my research, looking at the three research questions. Finally, chapter V will be a conclusion of what this research means, my speculation, and interpretation of what I have gathered. In the end, I believe that this paper should show that not only is Kaczynski someone who should be still researched but that those who still promote his ideas are part of a larger picture of radicalization in the 21st century.

The Life, Ideology, and Continuation of Kaczynski and Followers

Ted Kaczynski was not always the Unabomber. The time before he retreated from society into the woods of Montana is filled with moments of high potential and the struggles of youth that most people see. Ted was born in the suburbs of Chicago and had one sibling, his little brother D. Kaczynski. The childhood of Ted was filled with potential. He was instantly seen as someone special and constantly reminded of it

(D. Kaczynski, 2016). This “specialness” was his extreme intelligence or at least the intelligence that is measurable from IQ tests.

Ted’s IQ was tested at 167. While the importance of IQ levels is disputed, he is well within the genius range of scoring metrics. The test was treated with great seriousness when he took it and was able to skip the 6th grade. This extreme intelligence paired with some level of social awkwardness is clear and was acknowledged by both of Ted’s parents. They both understood that Ted was interested in academics while his peers wanted to dance and listen to music. But both of Ted’s parents believed that when he went to college, he would meet people similar to him (D. Kaczynski, 2016).

Kaczynski was accepted to Harvard to study mathematics. This time at college is seen by many as the most transformative period for Kaczynski. It also enters the world of conspiracy and disputed psychological tests. The effects and seriousness of the tests are disputed. The majority of people, including his brother, lean towards the opinion that something illegal was done to Kaczynski and the other participants. The disputes come from Kaczynski while everyone else is convinced that something illegal was done to Ted and the scope of the study ranges from simply unethical to being a part of the CIA’s MK-Ultra experiments (Chase, 2000)

This study was a psychological test to see how people handle severe stress. We know that Kaczynski was a participant because he had to get the consent form signed by his mother. This study would take place over three years, from Kaczynski’s sophomore to senior year of college (D. Kaczynski, 2016). Kaczynski went to the sessions once a week and here he would get berated for his ideas. Henry Murray was the individual in charge of the study and has a complex relationship with US American intelligence organizations. He was a part of the OSS and some claim that he was funded in part by the CIA (D. Kaczynski, 2016; Moreno, 2012). Whether Murray was part of the MK-Ultra experiments or not, we know that Kaczynski was having a horrible time at Harvard.

Kaczynski would later send a letter to his parents saying that they were abusive for sending him to Harvard. He also said that his time at Harvard was the worst time in his life (D. Kaczynski, 2016). After Harvard he would go to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor to get his Ph.D. in Mathematics, winning an award for the best thesis that year. After this, he would get hired at the University of California at Berkeley as a professor of Mathematics (D. Kaczynski, 2016). He must’ve been talented because at age 25 he was the youngest professor ever hired by Berkley (Kehlmann, 2012). By this time in Kaczynski’s life, it was clear that he had become even more separated from the world. D. Kaczynski says that he became upset with the movers carrying his things and wouldn’t talk during a four-hour car ride (D. Kaczynski, 2016).

Kaczynski was only at Berkeley for two years. He was said to be unpopular among students and would announce that he was quitting because of his role in the technological society (Kehlmann, 2012). It wouldn’t be long before he was moving to Montana to escape the modern world. While he was in Montana, he would become more abusive towards his family. He would send letters attacking his parents and D. Kaczynski. D.

Kaczynski says his marriage was the final action that separated the brothers. Kaczynski was very upset (D. Kaczynski, 2016).

While Kaczynski was separating himself from his family and the world, he would also begin what gave him the infamous name, the Unabomber. On May 25, 1978, the first bomb would go off at the University of Illinois at Chicago and injured a security guard. These bombs would keep coming until 1995. Three people would die in total and many more were injured (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2021). From the 16 bombs and police sketch, the FBI had no leads. It was not until Kaczynski would threaten the FBI to publish the manifesto that the investigation would come forward. The FBI decided to publish the manifesto with the reasoning that someone must recognize this kind of rhetoric and will report it to the FBI (FBI, 2021). That person would be D. Kaczynski, Ted's brother. He and Linda, his wife, would read it and decide that it had to be Kaczynski. D. Kaczynski explains that this was one of the hardest things in his life; he did not want to believe that his brother could be the Unabomber (D. Kaczynski, 2016).

D. Kaczynski would give the lead to the FBI and they would find Kaczynski in his cabin and arrest him. In the Cabin, they would find a diary claiming all previous sixteen bombings and bomb-making supplies. This was the end of Unabomber's bombing career, but he will still stay relevant to some people. This investigation to find the Unabomber cost the US Government over \$50 million and took 18 years with no progress. It was only because of D. Kaczynski and his wife Linda that Kaczynski was found and arrested (FBI, 2021).

Before going forward in the history of Kaczynski, I must explain the ideas that he put forward in the manifesto. The ideas Kaczynski explained in his manifesto, *Industrial Society and its Future* (2018), are radical. The opening, "The industrial revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race," shows just how much contempt he had for the modern world (T. Kaczynski, 2018, p. 1). The idea of the modern technological world is something that Kaczynski claims is the root of all evil for human beings. Every problem that people face today is a direct result of the modern world. For a simple example, *The Social Dilemma* is a documentary on the ways that social media algorithms can target our anxieties to increase user use (2022). Another example is a correlation between self-harm and the rise of social media (Memnon et al., 2018). This is the result of cyberbullying, internet-related anxiety, and addiction. There is a rather simple example that has a simple solution: don't let young people use social media.

Kaczynski goes much further than that though. He believes the entire system must be destroyed to such a point that it cannot rebuild. We cannot reform the technological system because the bad outweighs the good to such a point that it is not worth it (T. Kaczynski, 2018). He explains it will come as a revolt against the technology, not the political structures, in the form of a bloody uprising. He does not say when this uprising will happen or what it will look like but understands that there must be a revolution because it is much easier than reform.

Reforming the industrial system to Kaczynski might as well be impossible. This is because the power, or inertia of technological change is always progressing and to the mass of people stopping or slowing down this technological development would seem asinine. The futility of reforming the industrial society is why there must be a revolution against the system.

This influence of technology is more than simply making us addicted to smartphones or destroying the environment. To Kaczynski technology is changing how we go through life, or the lack of autonomy in our daily lives. He presents the idea of the “power process.” The power process is the way that we accomplish tasks throughout our lives (T. Kaczynski, 2018). This power process is more than writing a paper or doing a job but the effort we expend in order to survive. He explains that in modern US America, survival is fairly easy; with welfare programs, you can get food and shelter with minimal effort. But he argues that this ease of survival is a real danger to our mental health.

Thinking of when humans were hunter-gatherers their goals were simple, find food and shelter then eventually reproduce. Going through the power process back then was a matter of life and death or your tribe dying off. Today most people can walk over to their fridge and grab food. The power process we go through is often not life and death. For example, if I do not write this thesis, I will not die; I will be disappointed, but the stakes are much less than survival for me and my tribe.

In Kaczynski’s (2018) understanding of the world, a segment of the population is a group he calls leftists. This is not someone who is simply left-leaning politically like a socialist or communist but as he says, “politically correct types, feminists, gay and disability activists, animal rights activists and the like” (p. 3). These are people who fight for someone that they believe is weaker than themselves. That is because they are victims of the power process and are self-hating, defeatists, or depressed and must fight for something to boost themselves. For example, Kaczynski believes that the move from calling people negros to African-Americans was simply a part of the leftists trying to fight for someone they view as weaker (T. Kaczynski, 2018).

These leftists have two identifiers that Kaczynski explains, and they are feelings of inferiority and oversocialization. The feelings of inferiority are explained above but I will now explain oversocialization. This is from the idea that we socialize to learn social norms and moral codes to allow us to fit in with society. But the leftists have become over socialized and are not the rebels they seem to be (T. Kaczynski, 2018). The moral code of society has become so demanding that no one can possibly act within the rules all the time. Kaczynski explains it like this: “In order to avoid feelings of guilt, they continually deceive themselves about their own motives and find moral explanations for feelings and actions that in reality have a non-moral origin. We use the term “‘oversocialization’ to describe such people” (p. 11). And it is this oversocialization that leads to feelings of inferiority. Kaczynski views these people as the greatest victims of the technological society but has seemingly obvious contempt for them, as he has four chapters on leftists and mentions them throughout the rest of the manifesto.

That is roughly the ideology of Kaczynski from the manifesto only and should be sufficient for this paper. He has since expanded the ideas with the publication of two more books from prison: *Technological Slavery* (2019) and *Anti-Tech Revolution: Why and How* (2020). While the other two books are more in-depth and recent, it is the manifesto that remains popular. But with Kaczynski in prison new people had to pick up the torch and carry on the anti-tech philosophy. That brings me to David Skrbina, already mentioned earlier. He was a professor at the University of Michigan, Dearborn, and taught a class called environmental ethics where he introduced a new generation to the anti-tech movement. Some of these students would agree with Kaczynski and other philosophers like Jacques Ellul and form the ATC.

The ATC has existed for a little more than a year and has a small but impressive following considering what they are. With over 300 subscribers on YouTube and a growing membership, I think they will continue to grow. As I said before they are all college-aged people, Skrbina being the exception. They all agree on one thing: technology is a problem that needs to be addressed.

Methodology

Study Context

As I said in the introduction, I began my research on Kaczynski simply because I was interested in him. As I continued, I noticed he was becoming more popular. This was perhaps in part because I was looking for references to Kaczynski or anti-tech thought, but it was more and more common. Something that I have always checked periodically was Kaczynski's manifesto on Amazon.com to see how well it was selling and its reviews. They have been rising and still have great reviews but also that there are multiple copies that are all top sellers under categories like Anarchism, Radical political thought, or terrorism. Under the "anarchism" tag, Kaczynski has constantly been in the top five Kaczynski is outselling people like Noam Chomsky and Peter Kropotkin, both famed anarchists.

This is not all through, on February 18, 2022, a movie titled *Ted K.* came out in select theaters and on streaming services. The script is based on a close adaptation of Kaczynski's actions and journals once he moves to his cabin in Montana. It is too early to see how this movie does or motivates people or if there is an ever-greater interest in the manifesto, which I'm sure there will be. But there appears to be an uptick in his sales on amazon.com. The Monday after the film premiered, he was the second, fourth, sixth, and 17th book under anarchism.

There is more literature coming out as well. In April of 2022, *Madman: Life next door to the Unabomber*, is being released. This is a narrative of being a child and neighbor to Kaczynski. Also, this year Kaczynski's revised edition of *Technological*

Slavery is set to be released in July. With two more books available for pre-order now, I believe there will only be more interest in Kaczynski in the coming future.

Even the focus of my study, the ATC, was founded only less than two years ago. I do not know why people are becoming more fascinated with Kaczynski or those reading his manifesto are convinced by it. I only know from my personal experience and looking online that Kaczynski seems to become a much more prominent figure in radical political thought. As I focus on the ATC, I will not be analyzing the manifesto alongside the group. This is meant to be a focus on the next generation of people promoting these ideas. While Kaczynski is still writing from prison, I believe that it is now those, still free, who are promoting the ideas and should remain the sole focus of the group.

Phenomenology

In Don Ihde's book *Experimental Phenomenology*, he explains that to learn phenomenology one must do or practice phenomenology (Ihde, 1979). This paper has been my learning and application of phenomenology. As I have gathered research, I have learned the steps in conducting a phenomenological study. *Experimental Phenomenology* was my introduction to phenomenology and gave me a greater understanding of doing phenomenology.

Jacqueline Martinez (2006), in "Semiotic phenomenology and intercultural communication scholarship" says, "Phenomenology directs the researcher to interrogate the relationship between specific instances of lived experience, and the social, cultural, and historical time and place of that lived experience" (p. 297). This allows me to describe the lived experience of being a part of the ATC and their relationship with Kaczynski, without claiming to be wholly objective. The ground of shared subjectivity supplies a basis for such descriptions. The relationship between lived experience and the other factors is examined through *intentionality* (Martinez, 2006). By intentionality, I mean the directness to objects, states, and affairs, and other objects that people express within sign systems. These sign systems, for this study, were almost entirely spoken language. As I talked to people over Zoom, I was unable to see much body language and other non-verbal expressions, so it has not been a basis for comparison or description.

Richard Lanigan, in *Speech Act Phenomenology* (1977) quotes Searle asking, "How do words relate to the world" (p. 85). While Lanigan was concerned with how people use language in, "the ordinary discourse of common situations" I am looking at people who do not think or see the world as ordinary people do. (p. 85, 1977). The ATC sees things like technology as something far different from the average person living in the modern world. The phenomenon I am going to reflect on and analyze is the following: how language is used to create a world that is opposed to ordinary discourse. What is common for the ATC is uncommon for the ordinary.

To explain how the ATC's answers to my questions becomes evidence I must explain the difference between data and capta. Lanigan in the article "Capta versus data:

Method and evidence in communicology,” explains the quantitative data as different from the qualitative *capta* (Lanigan, 1994). This difference is *data* are what is given as evidence, while *capta* are what is taken as evidence (Lanigan, 1994). The result of uncovering *capta* for phenomenology is explained by Shelley Rawlins (2020):

Phenomenological approaches facilitate a reflexive qualitative examination of a person’s unique experience of a particular phenomenon that is richly described, considered for instances of experiential agreement and departure, explicated, and then, taken as evidence (*capta*). Conversely, quantitative methods often design studies with hypothesized findings in mind, and subsequently gather participant responses given as evidence (*data*) in accordance with supporting or rejecting the predetermined hypotheses through this “verification” that ultimately allows for generalization (p. 37).

This evidence I collected from the ATC will be analyzed to see how they experience Kaczynski’s writings and being members of the ATC in general. To restate, the research questions guiding this study are:

RQ 1: How does the ATC view Kaczynski?

RQ 2: Why is Kaczynski convincing to the ATC?

RQ 3: What part of Kaczynski’s message has had the most impact?

These questions were created to look at three different aspects of their relation to Kaczynski and his writing, and then to see the larger phenomena of radical groups online. First, I wanted to see how they view Kaczynski the man. Next, RQ 2, is aimed at seeing what Kaczynski is saying and what makes it convincing to them. I believe that people who are radicalized probably have some disposition to lean toward a certain way of thinking. RQ 3 is meant to see what they take away from Kaczynski. This is helpful in seeing what part of Kaczynski’s ideology is appealing and why someone would side with him, ideologically speaking.

The ATC is an ideological movement, even if its membership is smaller than other movements. They still follow similar patterns explained by Valerie Endress and Karen Bruner (1981) in their article “A Phenomenological approach to the criticism of social movements.” One important point, that I used in creating my research questions, was how the audience views the leader or rhetor. In the case of the ATC, the main rhetor is Kaczynski, who lays out the primary ideology that brought the members together. Endress and Bruner identify this as a “cognitive structure” established by the rhetor (1981). The cognitive structure is the philosophical framing of the world and identified problems. It is through this paper that I was able to identify what I should be researching to understand the ATC and their lived experiences. If we think of someone who can become a member of a radical, particularly online, groups much as a physiological free radical waiting to attach to something, there must be something that pulls them

to one movement over the other. Certainly, one can appeal to chance but then one gets no explanation overall.

After organizing the ATC's answers to these questions, I will use Anna Freud's twelve defense mechanisms to further examine their answers (Freud, 1966). This tactic was not determined until after the interviews, although I knew I would be looking for some sort of schema for interpretation. I created rich description from the interview material and only then did I see upon reflection, that many answers fit within the twelve different defense mechanisms. These mechanisms are not "ego defense" in this paper though. These categories are going to be used as strategies to create accounts *for* the sake of interpreting the ATC members. Instead of defense mechanisms, these are ways to maintain social acceptability. There I will agree such acceptability remains important to them, although they want to be radicals. In short, although this is a structure common to the "radical online," I suspect, more research is needed. They want to be socially acceptable enough to maintain jobs in universities and go to school. These account structures allow for that to happen.

Because I am not assuming that the ATC members are on the defensive with me in these interviews, I will be saying account structures rather than defense mechanisms. This allows me to use the categories developed by Freud in a way that suits my research. The repurposing of these defense mechanisms as account structures has given me a categorization system that lets me look deeper into how the ATC experiences their connection to Kaczynski.

The use of account structures categorized in Freud's defense mechanisms is a further development of Scott and Lyman's article "Accounts" which identifies ways that people communicate when their ideas or actions are subjected to valuative inquiry (1968). They identify the ways people defend behavior or ideas that are not socially acceptable but wish to remain in society. This article they have two major categories excuses and justifications (Scott & Lyman, 1968). While excuses move a negative to a neutral, justification is meant to move the negative to a positive. This shifting is what I am seeing in the ATC. But, as I said before I am assuming they are not on the defensive but using accounts to create a socially acceptable interpretation of Kaczynski's actions and ideas.

I will only be using some of Freud's defense mechanisms in my research as account structures. They are *projection*, which is shifting the faults of your own to another person. *Displacement*, which is going from something that is stronger to weaker. *Sublimation*, is the process of taking negative emotions and turning them into a positive or going from destructive to productive. *Repression*, is the process of forgetting an unfavorable experience. *Identification*, while this is usually said as identification with the aggressor, I am saying identification alone as the members of the ATC are not victims of Kaczynski. This use will become clear in the first section of Chapter II. *Rationalization*: This is a way to make sense of an event, usually through distorting the facts. Finally, *Reaction formation* is the process of behaving the opposite way that he or she feels. These will all be changed from their psychoanalysis forms of defending

the ego to a communicative act meant to explain the ATC member's own connection to Kaczynski and his work. Through my interviews with the ATC, I would not be able to psychoanalyze them and do not claim to be identifying ego defenses or neurosis in the members.

The following chapters are separated by answering the research questions I have already stated, but the individual descriptions given by ATC members will further be analyzed with the account structure mechanisms. This further level of analysis will allow me to see the way that the various ATC members can take something seen as unacceptable and make it socially acceptable.

Ihde (1979) says, "[The Researcher must] attend to the phenomena of experience as they appear" (p. 34). This is what I have done through my research as I uncovered new ways to look at the ATC's experiences. It was not evident how I should organize the data to create capta until I talked to the members, but it has become clear now. The capta are the basis of the rich description I wrote but only when they had been written could I reflect upon their structures as phenomenological givens. Through these research questions and further adaption of the Freudian defense mechanism, I will be able to analyze not only the way that the ATC experiences their relationship with Kaczynski, but also how they create accounts to understand their understanding of Kaczynski.

Study Details

For this study, I interviewed six members of the ATC. I first contacted David Skrbina because he was listed as being in the Anti-Tech Collective and clearly knew Kaczynski to some degree, which I found out later was only through letters. He assisted me in talking to the other members of the ATC to participate in this research. They knew beforehand that I am not looking to criticize their ideas but am only looking at how they talk about Kaczynski.

I interviewed the six members individually, and the interview lasted between 30 minutes to over an hour depending on the length of their answers. They were all asked the same questions in the same order. As I go through my research questions later in this paper, I will be using aliases for the members I interviewed. The names are the Kings and Queens and England: Henry, Edward, Jane, Mary, Philip, and James. This list of names was picked because the list shows that who was assigned what alias name has nothing in common with the monarch other than assumed gender.

The members of the ATC are all college-educated and a majority are pursuing an advanced degree or have already received one. This group is centered in Dearborn, Michigan area, with a few exceptions. This group has members across the world including Egypt and India. The average of the group would be college-educated and has some affiliation with philosophy, either as a bachelor's degree or higher, and most likely with some other area of interest or education, like Law, accounting, or journalism.

Literature Review

This literature review will be an overview of the research I conducted outside of my method and interviews in preparing for this paper. I have organized this into three sections. First, I will cover the research into biographies and understanding people from other perspectives. The second will be Kaczynski's writings along with people who have written about his theories. The third section of this literature review will be articles and research on radicalism online.

My literature review is a departure from usual practice, as there is not much written about Kaczynski outside of his terrorism. I have spent the better part of two years now looking for what people have written about him and found very little. Because there is not a large existing body of literature that I had for reference this literature review is more about my journey researching and my findings as of now.

When I first thought of interviewing others for this paper, I wanted to understand their perspective and mindset. The first book I read for this was *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote (2012). This book is written from two perspectives, one of a family that was murdered along with the town contrasted with the two murderers and their lives before, during, and after the murder up until their executions. In this book, Capote is able to create an empathetic feeling toward the murderers as they had lives filled with traumatic experiences. That quickly goes away when you remember the murder of the Clutter family.

The balance was important for me as well. Kaczynski is to some people a philosopher of technology and to others, he is a terrorist and has ruined many people's lives. As I go into the research of interviews, we must remember there is a balance. It also raises some side questions, how much empathy can we have for someone who destroyed others' lives? Along with that, how many bad things can someone do before we no longer teach their ideas? While thinking about this and writing this paper I was always remembering *In Cold Blood* and the balance that Capote had to maintain throughout his book.

The next book on biography I read was *His Glassy Essence: An Autobiography of Charles Sanders Peirce* by Kenneth Laine Ketner (1998). This book is Ketner's process of researching and trying to write the autobiography of Peirce. He uses fictional characters, his own narrative, and unpublished manuscripts claiming to be Peirce's own Autobiography. Ketner immersed himself in Peirce's writings and theories to understand who the man was. This immersion helped me in understanding my own research into Kaczynski. As you will see further along in this literature review, I have read not only Kaczynski's theories but what others have said about his ideas and his life. In my eyes, they are both important to understanding the Kaczynski phenomenon.

The third biography book I read was *Dear Reader: The Unauthorized Autobiography of Kim Jong-Il* by Michael Malice (2014). This was not originally for my research but after reading it for fun I saw some important connections. Malice wrote this book almost exclusively from books he bought in North Korea. He says that he read over sixty books from Korea about Kim Jong-Il. Unlike the first two books I have mentioned

this book is unbalanced. It is the ultimate biased version of a story, except for the last page that reminds you while you laughed at the ridiculously fictitious stories that Kim Jong-Il promotes there is real horror taking place in North Korea.

This helped me in my research because I came to see the meme and glorification side of Kaczynski and people would negate or minimize the horrors that he caused. It reminded me of *Dear Reader* as people would say something like, he only killed three people or use his image as a meme template. They forget that he tried to blow up a passenger plane with 78 people on it.

The last biographical book I read for my research was *Every Last Tie: The Story of the Unabomber and His Family*, by David Kaczynski (2012). I have already cited this book in the history of Kaczynski. D. Kaczynski helps illuminate the troubled childhood of Kaczynski. I saw that Kaczynski had a complex childhood and it brought a conflict of emotions forward. I always want to remember the pain he caused but he also had a painful life. D. Kaczynski also feels this conflict and it is what caused him to write the book.

D. Kaczynski used to idolize his older brother, but ultimately was the one to turn him into the FBI. When D. Kaczynski remembers his brother he is bringing a conflict of memories into his mind and I think many people who like his ideas have to go through a similar process. But what my research will show is that most people minimize the terror and bring forward the ideas as something that outweighs the former.

As said earlier I began my interest by reading *Industrial Society and Its Future* (2018) known commonly as the Unabomber's manifesto. This was and is the most popular of Kaczynski's books. I have read and reread this manifesto many times for my research. In my opinion, it has a logical layout that clearly explains his complaints, solutions, and possible outcomes for the future. Kaczynski explains complex ideas in a very clear way and that could be a possible reason for its popularity.

In 2019 when I read it the first time, I had just finished the class on political rhetoric and I thought Kaczynski was many degrees easier to understand than what we read in that course which includes Ellul, Woodrow Wilson, V.I. Lenin, Mao Zedong, and Karl Marx. That might have been a reason that I became interested in Kaczynski more. The way that I was able to understand his ideas much clearer than anyone mentioned before made more of an impact. That also led to more curiosity. Kaczynski is not nearly as popular as Marx, Lenin, or Mao but they are much more difficult to understand.

After *Industrial Society and its Future* Kaczynski wrote two books from prison. The first of these was *Technological Slavery* (2019) which includes the manifesto, additional writings, and letters. These letters as I have said led me to the ATC through Skrbina. The main point of *Technological Slavery* is to have a definitive edition of the manifesto with proper formatting, according to Kaczynski. The letters at the end provide people's questions and conversations and Kaczynski's answers. This book was fascinating to me considering it was written from prison.

This is a book expressing the same ideas that Kaczynski held and gave him the self-justification to mail bombs to people and now it is being shared from inside a US Federal prison.

The second of Kaczynski's books from prison and his third book in total is *Anti-Tech Revolution: Why and How* (2020). This book is now the definitive ideology of Kaczynski and offers more details on group organization for a revolution. I do believe that the ATC is the main group of anti-tech thinkers, but they expressed no ideas for further violence. *Anti-Tech Revolution* in my mind is the next step after reading the manifesto. If someone read the manifesto and believed in the ideas, this book is the next step.

The previous two books are important for understanding Kaczynski's ideas but not so much more for this thesis. If you look at the questions I asked the ATC members, I stayed close to the manifesto and the initial impacts of reading Kaczynski. But after reading Kaczynski's books I was on YouTube looking up Kaczynski to see if anyone uploaded anything on him. That is where I found Chad A. Haag. He had some videos explaining Kaczynski's ideas and wrote a book himself titled *The Philosophy of Ted Kaczynski: Why the Unabomber was Right about Modern Technology* (2019). This book was my first interaction with someone who agreed with Kaczynski's ideas.

The dedication alone shows which side Haag (2019) is on when he says, "Dedicated to Freedom Club" (p. 3). Freedom Club is what Kaczynski refers to himself as in the manifesto, for those who do not know. This book explains the ideas and connects them to thinkers like Ellul. This book is clearly on the side of Kaczynski as Haag only mentions the bombings a few times. I also saw for the first time someone calling Kaczynski a philosopher.

The Philosophy of Ted Kaczynski opened my eyes to how the ATC might talk about Kaczynski. I also found when looking up Skrbina that Haag is a member or affiliate of the ATC.

I realized after reading this that talking to people who like Kaczynski's ideas might be more interesting or enlightening than talking about Kaczynski, which is the direction I have gone. This book was what set me on that path.

The next piece is Skrbina's book *The Metaphysics of Technology* (2016). While this book has little to do with Kaczynski, he does make it in the section titled "Two Radicals". He is in the section Two Radicals and it is clear that Skrbina sides with Kaczynski. He brings forward a few things. The first is Kaczynski is not so much a philosopher but a synthesizer of others' ideas. I have already mentioned this, but Skrbina explained it in greater detail. Kaczynski made these complex ideas digestible for a larger audience in few pages. The second is that Kaczynski should be taken seriously. Just because he did something bad does not mean we should ignore his ideas (Skrbina, 2016). While the support for Kaczynski is less overt compared to Haag, we see a professional academic siding with Kaczynski which might be more important.

The final book I want to mention in this section could be part of another study altogether. That is *Ted Kaczynski's Industrial Society and its Future.: The Graphic*

Novel by Valentine Ramon (2021). This is what the title says, a graphic novel version of the manifesto. It has the same text but with illustrations. It was published in April of 2021 and only led me to further believe that Kaczynski is becoming more popular. This graphic novel will not be part of my study but I felt the need to mention it as something that existed in this world of people promoting Kaczynski.

The final section of this literature review is on radical groups online. Most of the recent literature on this topic focuses on the far-right. While the ATC does not fit on the right/left spectrum they are radical and online. First off, to define radical, I went to Merriam-Webster's website and pulled their definitions of radical. They say this as one definition of radical is

"having extreme political or social views not shared by most people" (Merriam-Webster, 2022). The ATC does fit that definition but the traditional meaning of radical meaning root, also defined by Merriam-Webster, elaborates why the ATC is radical. They view technology as the root of most problems and want to change that. Other radical groups share this commonality of having a root problem that they want to fix.

The four articles I found and read for this section are looking at how the internet allows for the radicalization of individuals. The first that I will cover is about 4Chan. This website is an online forum famous for its radical right-wing leanings. The article titled "Radical Opacity" by Julian Dibbell (2012) looks at the anonymity people have on 4Chan. This is something that is mentioned in other articles I read. That it is the anonymous nature of the internet that allows people to become radical (2012). This is the first major difference between the majority of online radicals and the ATC. They are not anonymous, but rather have their pictures and names listed on the website. This difference is something that I found very interesting and the reason for showing their faces could be for several reasons. One that came to mind is it gives credibility to the group because you can see that they are real people who like the ideas.

The second article is "The Radical Online: Individual Radicalization Process and the Role of the Internet" by Daniel Koehler (2014). Here Koehler explains the ways that people become radicalized online. The explanations for radicalism are similar to the last article. The focus on anonymity leads people to say more radical things than they normally would and in turn makes people feel more confident in the messaging. If this is the case what does something like Chad Haag's book do? He says the Unabomber was right and puts a picture of himself online along with his name. I think we can see that this might encourage an even higher level of trust in the group if they are all publicly known.

The next article is, "The Curious Case of Colleen LaRose: Social Margins, New Media, and Online Radicalization" by Jeffry Halverson and Amy Way (2012). These two look at how LaRose was radicalized online and explain the idea of a contact point as a nexus for radicalization (Halverson & Way, 2012). LaRose utilized online communities as a nexus point for becoming a radical. The nexus point does not have to be online to have an online community of radicals. As we will see the ATC has three points that lead to joining the group: Skrbina's class, Skrbina's book, and the ATC

website. Two of the three are not online but they move someone who wants to learn more to the website.

The final article is about the difference between a radical online and offline community. Titled “Carrying online participation offline - Mobilization by radical online groups and politically dissimilar offline ties” by Magdalena Wojcieszak (2004). This article looks at radical online communities and their offline actions. It was looking at how your offline community relates to its online community and vice versa. Wojcieszak found a few things. First, that the less radical the group the more likely participation offline will occur. An environmentalist group will protest but neo-Nazis online are less likely to protest. I think this is interesting for looking at the actions of the ATC because they are extremely radical in their desired change but have very few offline actions. I think their lack of action can be explained after going through the research questions later in the paper.

In summary, these articles are important because as I said in the introduction, there are many radical groups online and the ATC fits within the larger picture somewhere. There are quite several differences and similarities among them. The main difference is the anonymity while most groups are anonymous the ATC is not. The similarity is action vs support. This group is similar to other radical groups in that they do not have much offline action other than teaching and promoting the ideas to others. The change they seek is so radical that action now is not worth the legal repercussions or social stigma. Wanting to turn back technological evolution is no easy task and the ATC understands this. They are focused, as of now, with spreading the ideas of Kaczynski and creating a space where his ideas are discussed seriously.

This literature review was a comprehensive overview of what I have read in my research for this study. I explained through the biography section the need to balance the life of Kaczynski with the actions and ideas and the challenge that it is. Along with that, I explained Kaczynski’s books and those that have carried the message since. Finally, I reviewed some literature on online radical groups and the similarities and differences they shared with the ATC. This information should help understand the mindset I was in for this research.

I have gone through my current research on Kaczynski, and while this is nowhere near complete, I do believe that there is a lack of research on Kaczynski apart from him being a terrorist. This is very important because the story of Kaczynski mailing bombs might be becoming the least important part of the story. Groups such as the ATC are moving the discussion away from the Unabomber and towards Kaczynski the philosopher. They have moved past his infamy and are identifying with something very different, an identification with his ideology. Those exploring Kaczynski’s ideas are coming from an angle that allows them to move past his bombings and seriously consider his ideas. This is seen through the rise in sales of his manifesto, movies, graphic novel adaptations of the manifesto, and references online.

This thesis is going to be a beginning on the research of who accepts the ideas of Kaczynski and push for more people to think similarly. I have explained the research

I have done on radicalism, biography, and other anti-tech philosophers coming in the wake of Kaczynski. The method I chose and the research questions guiding my research should allow further research on Kaczynski and radicalism to expand as we see how people join radical groups and what influences them to connect to different groups. Along with that my Freudian account mechanism will offer insight into seeing how people phenomenologically create their political values and relate them to others.

Chapter 2. RQ 1: How does the ATC view Kaczynski?

This chapter will look at how Kaczynski is viewed by the ATC. Do they separate the man from the ideas and denounce his actions? Or do they take all of this as a package? As you will see the ATC holds Kaczynski's ideas in very high regard and view him as essential or as a figurehead of the anti-tech movement. But when the bombings come into question, they disagree with him to varying degrees. Yet some view these bombings as a necessary evil, originally to spread the message. This chapter is divided into two themes, first the figurehead and second the bomber. I believe the way that the group grapples with their outward support of Kaczynski's ideas and their attitudes toward the bombings show a clear tension since most believe that we should just move on from the bombings and focus on the ideas. No one can deny the ideas will forever be stained by Kaczynski's actions.

Theme 1: Kaczynski as a Figurehead -Uncle Ted

This theme of Kaczynski as a figurehead, symbolism for the whole, or "Uncle Ted" is how people view his relationship to the ATC. For the most part, Kaczynski is the nexus or what connects everyone involved. They have been unified because of Kaczynski's manifesto. The way that people in the ATC describe Kaczynski is quite symbolic and gives him a great deal of importance in the anti-tech movement.

When asked, what does Kaczynski mean to the ATC he was almost always regarded as extremely important to the group. "James" says, "Call him Uncle Ted.. .It's like for the Vietnamese, its like Uncle Ho. He's Ho Chi-Minh in a way. Like he's the symbolism for the whole of this idea." Here James has given Kaczynski quite a lot of symbolic meaning by connecting him to Ho Chi-Minh, the leader of North Vietnam who was often portrayed as the face of Vietnamese Communism (History, 2010). This comparison of Kaczynski and Minh is very telling of not only how the ATC views Kaczynski but even how they view themselves.

Comparing the philosophic leader of the movement to the leader of a radical revolutionary army allows us to infer that the ATC might view themselves as similar to the Viet Minh. While throughout the interviews there was a feeling on my end that the ATC had no violent intentions, they do understand that their symbolic head is a violent person, or at least was violent. The ATC also might think of themselves as

equally radical as the Viet Minh. And because the ATC exists in mainstream society as students and teachers, they are just like the guerrilla insurgents living alongside the rest of us. While that last sentence is only a light comparison, it is revealing how much deeper the comparison between Kaczynski and Minh is. If the ATC, or at least some members, are viewing Kaczynski as Uncle Ted then we should, believe they view themselves as similar to Minh's followers.

But what makes Kaczynski the figurehead and not, for example, Ellul who wrote similar things. "Jane" says, "I think Kaczynski is a definite figurehead. I don't think he is the entire pie. Because there's Ellul, there's Heidegger, [who] wrote on the topic, [and] there's a few others. But I think Kaczynski is interesting, because he's the only one who tried, not saying what he did was great, but he tried to do like something direct about it." Jane believes it is Kaczynski's action that gives him the top spot. Here Jane perhaps feels like she also is doing something by being a part of ATC. Her last sentence is extremely telling about the complex relationship that the group has with Kaczynski's actions. If there are two sides to the Kaczynski coin, one is the philosopher whom they all agree with, and the other side is the bomber, which is much more difficult to grapple with.

Jane gave Kaczynski credit for trying to do something. I think this is more than just the bombings but his lifestyle. Kaczynski was willing to live as far as he could from modern society but could never fully escape. This I believe is part of his credibility, as someone living what he preaches. The bombings on the other hand give him his fame and notoriety over the years. Jane's explanation of Kaczynski being the figurehead for his actions, while disagreeing with him, shows some tension in how she views Kaczynski. I think these tensions make it difficult for the full approval and support of Kaczynski. Because they do not support the bombing of selected people, the members of ATC cannot give their wholesale approval of Kaczynski. Nonetheless, the ATC, from their stories, do stand with Kaczynski and see him as extremely important for unifying them.

In all of this Kaczynski is often symbolic of the group. If they don't see him as a figurehead, they see his ideas as the unifier. "Mary" says, "So his work means a lot to us because it's what kind of molds us together and it kind of predicates a lot of what we believe. So, it's predicated on *Industrial Society and its Future*." Here Mary shifts from the group and is not viewing the man as the unifier but his work as the unifier. Here is a place where we can see phenomenological displacement. Mary has shifted the unifier from Kaczynski the man to the ideas of Kaczynski. They can condemn the actions and still promote the work.

Seeing Kaczynski as the symbol that brings them all together is something that everyone said. His manifesto is the collection of symbols that connects them all. Here "Philip" explains this unification through Kaczynski's ideas. He says, "I think almost everyone that we've interacted with has gotten into these ideas because they read Kaczynski. And that's the case with how we all met, basically, as we all read Kaczynski, and we found it extremely compelling and hard to deny that we wanted to do something.

And so that it's kind of what Kaczynski is kind of what unifies us is his ideas, the way that he stated them, at least." Viewing him as a unifier I think aligns with viewing him as a figurehead. It is from Kaczynski's ideas that the ATC is born.

To the group, Kaczynski is, if not a leader, one of the many important people. Everyone seems to see Kaczynski and Ellul as the two most prominent but change on how much credit they give to Ellul and others. Edward believes that he is just one of many and tries not to focus on Kaczynski. But he does try to promote taking Kaczynski seriously. He sees the ATC as the next generation of anti-tech scholars as they are for the most part graduate students, they will soon be teaching their own classes and able to bring Kaczynski into the academic world. This view changes Kaczynski from the leader, to being one of many. But, if the rest of the ATC gives him more credit, then when they go on to teach or talk about technology, they are more likely to see Kaczynski as much more influential.

The viewing of Kaczynski as Uncle Ted or a symbolic leader or nexus point of radicalization is identification. I believe that the ATC is identifying with Kaczynski as the group he intends to form by publishing the manifesto originally. If Kaczynski is Uncle Ted, to the ATC, then as his followers they will promote his ideas, which the ATC is. They are not identifying with the violence but with the ideas, and that will be revealed throughout the paper. But while they will not condone violence, some members will further identify with the ideas.

Theme 2: Bomber

Kaczynski wanted to spread his message far and wide and did. He was published in a special edition of the Washington Post but his means, a bombing campaign that killed three people, dirtied his image. The ATC as described above has tension with the ideas and bombings, but they all have a spin or way to support the man and not the bombings. This view of Kaczynski the bomber or terrorist will show the ways that the group pushes aside the crimes Kaczynski committed to look at his ideas. Here Edward says:

Because somebody's firing a drone or a bomb or something you don't even know you'll never know how many the military killed, and Kaczynski killed three people 30 years ago. And to use that to say, well, we're never going to even talk about his ideas. We're never going to talk about text, skeptical ideas. That's just so stupid. It undermines your own position. It undercuts your own rationality. It shoots yourself in both feet. And you know, it does nothing for the future does nothing for the planet does nothing for your children and your grandchildren to say, well, this guy, he killed three people. So, I'm not going to talk about, so we have to sort of like grow up, develop the kind of maturity that says we're going to set the crimes aside, we're

going to talk about the issues because the issues are important to all of us. And if we don't talk about them, about you know, a million times three are going to die or a billion times three.

Edward here says killing a few people should not ruin your credibility. The US American government kills more people and if you can still respect the Government's ideas then you can respect Kaczynski's ideas.

I think this is a clear downplaying of Kaczynski's actions, but Edward says more than that. He introduces a certain maturity needed to see past the dismissal of Kaczynski. That you need to "grow up" and move past the bombing because that is just how important what he says is. Edward is not the only one to think that there is a certain level of maturity needed to seriously consider Kaczynski's ideas. Henry says that the bombings and growing up and moving past them act as a sort of filter. If you cannot move past the bombings, then you probably would not engage with his ideas anyway.

Henry believes that this is a net neutral. Because people who would be willing to take Kaczynski's ideas seriously are most likely going to be those that can move past the bombings. I think this must be a certain type of person then. To move past the bombings, you most likely must have a certain type of mindset that is different from the majority of people. Edward and Henry explain it as a maturity. Edward not only said maturity but says that the US American government is much worse. They use the argument against those that do not take Kaczynski seriously because he killed people. James said the same thing, that the government kills way more people than Kaczynski ever could have.

The other important point that James said was, "I mean, this is what I tell it's like when you look at like, Kaczynski as a domestic terrorist, he was actually pretty bad at it all considering like, he killed three people in like, 20 years. Like we like we have more murders in the streets of Detroit, like on a weekend." I think this is important to note because Kaczynski did try to kill many more people. His attempt at bombing a commercial airliner failed, but this argument would not hold up if Kaczynski had succeeded then. Kaczynski being a bad bomb maker allows James to argue away the other bombings because he was bad at terrorism. I think this helps in looking at Edward's view of Kaczynski as well. That the fact he managed to kill three people and not hundreds allow them to say look how much worse the government is.

What makes one good at terrorism or bad at it? This is something that James touches on. He is of the opinion that terrorism should be judged by the number of people killed and that can be a fair point. The view that being bad at terrorism might be a displacement by putting the blame on other people, or saying he is not good at terrorism. This account structure is a function to show Kaczynski as a philosopher who is better than the government and not only that but also not even good at terrorism. I would remind the reader that he must have some skill because he was not caught for 18 years and was able to get his manifesto published in the Washington Post.

The group believes that we should move on from focusing on the bombings. As Mary says, we should carry on and not lament everything else. This focus on moving on from the bombings is a shared sentiment from what I gathered. This group is focused on the ideas and has tried to move away from Kaczynski's actions. I think they would all rather ignore the bombings all together to focus on what Kaczynski has to say.

The way that the group deals with the bombings is projection. Here we are seeing them push the blame from Kaczynski to the US Government. While it is safe to say that the US Government has done horrible things, that does not absolve Kaczynski of his crimes. This account structure does not bring Kaczynski up, however. It only drags other institutions down to their level. It is in Edward's answer that we see he is not only dragging the government down to Kaczynski's level but trying to show them as a greater evil. If they judge credibility from the total people killed then the government is much worse.

With the attempt to project the faults of Kaczynski onto the US Government we also see a form of purposeful repression. This is not psychological repression but as simplypsychology.org says "motivated forgetting." This motivated forgetting, or as some said in their interviews, moving on, is an account structure to ignore the damage Kaczynski caused. In Repression, we are seeing a way to separate Kaczynski the man and Kaczynski the bomber as two people or ways of remembering him. Along with that the idea that the ability to separate the two as a form of mental maturity might be the exact opposite.

This opposite is reaction formation account structure. The lack of mental maturity needed to understand the value of Kaczynski might be the lack of mental maturity of some ATC members to understand the pain that people went through when they lost family members to Kaczynski's bombs. I do not want to accuse the members of being immature, but this could be an account structure to maintain social acceptability and a way to maintain the group as they think similarly.

Here these account structures maintain their social acceptability because the ATC will condemn Kaczynski's actions but then create account structures that minimize and distance themselves from their critics. This is through the projection of claiming the government is worse, repression or motivated forgetting and moving on from the bombings, and then reaction formation by claiming their critics are just not mature enough to separate the actions from the man and ideas. This chapter and the account structures here are a way to see the way the ATC views the man Kaczynski and his actions.

Chapter 3. RQ 2: Why is Kaczynski convincing to the ATC?

Kaczynski is convincing, at least as far as the critique goes. As I have done my research and talked to many people about it, those who have read him all agree that he is right about something. Most disagree with the solution but see that something is troubling about the world we live in. Even though most people agree with some of his general ideas they do not join groups supporting Kaczynski's ideas. The ATC has formed such a group but why? This chapter is going to look at what the ATC has said to find what is convincing about Kaczynski's writings.

Kaczynski employs classic rhetorical tools such as framing to create an argument. This can be seen as him identifying the problem as modern technology. With this frame, he creates a common ground with people who are at the least wary of modern technology or maybe don't like one aspect. Jay Heinrichs in *Thank You for Arguing* explains that framing is an important rhetorical tool in establishing your argument (2017). This chapter will look at the ways that Kaczynski is able to tap into the common emotion or pathos between the members of the ATC.

Many of the ATC members already had some familiar feelings toward technology prior to reading Kaczynski and then as Kaczynski presents his argument the future ATC members were more willing to listen to the argument. This plays into the basic three elements of rhetoric: ethos, logos, and pathos (Heinrichs, 2017). Because the members were emotionally similar to Kaczynski and Skrbina they were easier to persuade as Kaczynski presents his argument and lived the message, which many members noted as important to them. While Kaczynski is rhetorically convincing, at least to those that already had similar sentiments to his, there is more that will be elaborated on in this chapter.

The themes in this chapter are the following: 1 Setting/Mindset going in, 2 Compassion/Sincerity, and 3 Clarity of writing. The ATC all provided stories of first reading Kaczynski and their thoughts on the subject. They all claim to have instantly agreed with Kaczynski and their reasons for finding him convincing had to be pulled out from the descriptions they gave. I did this by looking at how they describe his writing, mainly their first impression. I reason that their first impression of his work must be an insight into the persuasive power of Kaczynski.

Theme 1: Setting/Mindset going in

Many people in the ATC first read Kaczynski while taking Skrbina's class on environmental ethics. This did not focus solely on Kaczynski but there were required readings from his manifesto. James said this about learning who they read in that class:

And I remember reading it [the manifesto] and going, damn, this guy's got some good ideas, like who the hell is this and, and we go to class the next day. And so Skrbina, first thing he says, when he walks in, he's like, so who knows who this guy is. And like, one person raises their hand, he just laughs and we're just like, no one else raise. He's like, the Unabomber. And we're like, that's the Unabomber. I was like, Damn, I'm sold like, okay, I got real. I got really interested in that point.

While many people in the class roughly knew what the Unabomber did, they did not know his name or what he really believed in. This was James' first interaction with Kaczynski's writings and was instantly sold. I believe that it can be inferred that he was sold prior to knowing who wrote it. But being instantly sold on the ideas is interesting. Before going into what makes many of the ATC members convinced I will show more descriptions of their initial impressions.

Jane was first introduced to Kaczynski's writings in this class too. She said this before taking the course:

[Skrbina] suggested I take his upcoming philosophy of technology class. And I said, I don't really want to take that I don't like technology at all. I actually hate it like I, I get I don't want to be disrespectful, but I don't like technology. And he's like, Well, that's what it's about. So there I was, took the class was like, this is exactly what I've always thought about what I've always been like, like, you know, when you have a feeling that something is wrong, and you can't put your finger on it. And it's just, it's everywhere.

Here we see that Jane already, before reading Kaczynski had a hatred or negative view of technology. I believe that having this mindset prior to reading Kaczynski is going to make a huge difference in how you view him. By not liking technology and then reading Kaczynski you are going to already be on his side.

After reading Kaczynski, Jane saw his examples of why technology is hurting us everywhere. If you agree with Kaczynski his examples and explanation of technology are obvious to see. Everyone has a smartphone on a college campus or has a laptop for taking notes. By reading Kaczynski and agreeing with him it is easy to then find examples around you. These readily available examples might lend to a more convincing argument. If people can apply what they are reading to their immediate surroundings I believe it is more convincing.

I find that the way the ATC was introduced to Kaczynski is extremely important. All members of the ATC view Skrbina as important not only for introducing them to Kaczynski and anti-tech philosophy in general but as a mentor for the group. This classroom setting is a clear nexus point for the connection between Kaczynski and the members of the ATC. The way that a few explain how they first read Kaczynski and then were told that it was the Unabomber might also factor into how they view the man, as discussed in the previous chapter. Agreeing with the ideas first and then learning about his actions might help in preventing the terrorism idea of Kaczynski from taking hold and making his ideas disagreeable.

This is different from many online forums and articles on the subject, as many radicals online are radicalized online as well. The contrast between the respectable institution and professor versus anonymous online forum is stark. This might play into why Kaczynski's ideas laid the groundwork for a radical online community that was not seen prior to the ATC. I have mentioned before and will continue that Kaczynski is mentioned frequently online on radical forums, but it is very different from the ATC. To many, he is an offshoot of other radical ideas, but to the ATC, he was the reason for the group. This is the phenomenological point that makes the setting/mindset so important in the persuasiveness of Kaczynski. Skrbina and the nature of universities make Kaczynski more persuasive to this group than seeing him mentioned online.

This theme saw account structures explaining where they read this and why it was okay to read. In a classroom or being told to read something by a professor can change how it is viewed in the mind of the reader. This could be rationalization as a way to explain why it is okay to begin agreeing with Kaczynski. As the ATC saw they agreed with Kaczynski, and some already had a bias that agreed with Kaczynski's ideas unbeknown to them, they had a rational way of understanding or seeing that he is right. The classroom with Kaczynski as an assigned reading is a rational and normal way to learn new ideas so this might lead to why it is seen as acceptable to read Kaczynski and agree with him.

Theme 2: Sincerity Compassion

This theme, compassion, was likely to not be expected. Most do not think of Kaczynski as someone who is compassionate or caring. But members of the ATC see that Kaczynski has some genuine care for people or sincerity in his writing. Jane says this:

It was like one of the most quickly resonating books I've ever read it felt like I think a lot of what drew me to this stuff is like having read Emerson and Whitman, like the transcendentalists a lot when I was a teenager, because there's something just so truly resonant, like intuitively sincerely resonant about it. So when I opened that first page to industrial society, and I saw literally just every problem that we're having listed on that and saying, this is why

This sincerity is something that I had not encountered in people talking about Kaczynski until I talked to the ATC. They see this as not someone who is a charlatan, but someone who sincerely wants to help.

While Jane sees Kaczynski as someone who is sincere, James believes that Kaczynski is someone who cares about the people. If we tried to get into Kaczynski's mind I believe there is a distinction between those he bombed who profit from technology, and the average person. James explains Kaczynski's compassion like this:

Kaczynski really cares about like, the practical psychology, like, he really cares about how people are like, like the mental well being of people. And he's like, Hey, like, you can trade off like all these things that you keep trading off. Like they have this derivative effect on your mental well being the further you get away from the power process, the worse your mental health becomes, even though your quality of life keeps getting better.

This compassion is something that I find interesting since most people do not view terrorists or revolutionaries as compassionate. But, reading Kaczynski it is clear he believes that his solutions are the way to make everyone's life better.

Looking at the sincerity and compassion or caring side of Kaczynski is new to me. In my research, I never thought of Kaczynski as caring but he did seem sincere. He was living the life prior to preaching it which goes back to the credibility of Kaczynski. The reader knows that Kaczynski has cut himself off from society for years before writing the manifesto and his bombings can be believed as sincere.

This view of Kaczynski as someone who cares about the people also can play into the use of account structures. The contradiction between bomber and caring thinker is a contradiction that must be resolved. This could be done in two ideas previously discussed. One, displacement, shifting the evil to the government makes Kaczynski someone who can be caring if the government can be and they kill more people. The second, is repression, if we choose to ignore the bombings or move on, the ATC no longer has to dwell on the bombings and can focus on the caring aspect of the manifesto. Both account structures can be seen in a way to allow for this sincerity/compassionate side of Kaczynski to come through.

Theme 3: Clarity of writing

While I did not expect theme 2 to ever be a serious factor, theme 3: clarity was. Having already read Kaczynski I saw that he writes very clearly and expected the ATC to say the same thing. They were not asked directly about his writing style but because they all mentioned it, I believe it must be a major part of why Kaczynski is convincing to them and others.

As Jane said earlier in this chapter, he was instantly convincing to her. Mary said something similar by describing it in this way:

So I have to always have this copy with me because it's an easy read. And it's pretty it distills just the main concepts of what is essentially wrong with technology for any level of education. Like what I like about his writing is it's not that complicated at all.

He does not complicate things he's kind of stating the obvious is merely shedding a light on things we already know. So I like how he's eloquent with with his words. I like how the flow of the text goes like especially like how he gracefully moves from one topic to another and how they're all interconnected in a way.

Here Mary has explained thoroughly why the manifesto is so convincing. The distillation and simple writing. It also raises the question: does the simplicity of an argument or idea change how convincing it can be. The ATC is not alone in remarking on the clarity of writing; this was something I also saw in amazon.com reviews of the manifesto.

Kaczynski himself explains in *Anti-tech Revolution: Why and How* that he is rephrasing a lot of ideas that Ellul already discussed but makes it more readable for the average person. Ellul's books are a much more difficult read. This ability to take complex ideas from philosophers and say them in a way that most people can understand is, in my opinion, very important for making a convincing argument. It might not stand up against more thoughtful or insightful thinkers but for the average person, this might be the path to making a popular movement. If people can understand what they are reading, there must be more persuasive power.

Edward saw this when he was reading Kaczynski's manifesto for the first saw and said, "Basically it was an impressive document, clear, well written, [and] straight to the point. Very uncompromising." The uncompromising attitude and clear argument was also a shared opinion of James, when he says the opening line of the manifesto is clear and establishes the tone for the rest of the manifesto. They are not alone in seeing the importance of this opening line which is "The industrial revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race." (Kaczynski, 2018, p. 1). This is a very bold way to start, but it does set the tone for the rest of the manifesto.

The importance put on the quality of writing is another form of rationalization as seen in theme I of the chapter. If it is rational to like the ideas because of the setting you read Kaczynski in, then the writings themselves can also be rational. Kaczynski does make a clear argument with supporting research that is cited. If the argument looks well thought out and is presented neatly in a chapter-by-chapter argument it can be seen as rational by those who are convinced by it. I believe that the writing quality and setting are two important parts of viewing Kaczynski's writings as a rational argument that can be seriously considered.

Chapter 4. RQ 3: What part of Kaczynski's message is most effective?

When talking to the members of the ATC I heard from everyone they touched on different points with observable importance. When asked about PC culture their response would acknowledge it, but it was clear that was not what they took away as a major point from Kaczynski. The first important point will be what I am calling the “full agreement” with his ideas. I want to say here that this does not include actions taken by Kaczynski but rather the ideas presented in his manifesto.

The members of the ATC vary in how much credit they give to Kaczynski for the ideas, and what they agree with. The most notable hesitation was with Kaczynski's ideas on revolution. Others do not see Kaczynski as the creator of the ideas but rather the synthesizer of others' ideas. This chapter will explain what they agree with and what they do not.

Theme 1: The Power Process

The power process is the autonomy we experience in setting a goal and achieving it. Originally in humans, as Kaczynski explains, this would be survival and reproduction. There is no greater goal than surviving another day. This has changed as social systems have changed what we must struggle for as survival is essentially guaranteed. They see this as one of the most important aspects of Kaczynski's writings. From reading the manifesto we see that the power process being disrupted is the source of many problems we see today, and I believe that the ATC agrees.

To begin Mary says:

Okay, so, first and foremost, I think, like, I really like how he frames the power process of how one kind of, has a goal works towards the goal and then attains the goal. So, this is basically the power process and obviously, there needs to be some sort of autonomy in the goal. So, one can feel somewhat satisfied with whatever they wanted to achieve. And then I completely agree with him that the power process is completely truncated in this day and age.. .And I think I'm the type of person who is not satisfied with

these surrogate activities, because I've tried them all. I've tried so many different activities, and I wasn't as satisfied as I thought I would. So, when I read Kaczynski his work and I was like, oh, that is why I'm not satisfied.

This is a clear understanding of the power process with Mary. She was experiencing this separation from the power process, and it was reading Kaczynski that showed her why she was not satisfied in life. From this, we can see that some of the ATC use Kaczynski as a surrogate therapist.

This was common with many of the ATC members I talked to. As they read Kaczynski, he was able to show them why they were not happy in their own lives. If you are not happy and what you are reading tells you, I believe you are apt to agree with it. I saw with Philip as well a desire to feel more fulfillment. He says, "[Running the ATC] helped me occupy my time in a way that actually feels fulfilling. But, again, that might be because it's like a surrogate activity of sorts, but at least feels like we're moving towards something that's actually important." This desire to feel accomplished is something that I think a lot of the ATC members want.

The lack of energy needed to go through life, as in just going through the motions, is the removal of the power process. I think most people can see people like this. Those who are getting no fulfillment out of their life and just surviving. Philip said this:

I think in the end, it kind of enabled us to, as because you see things, it's enabled us to live kind of empty lives, so to speak. And, you know, I felt that I felt most of throughout high school and stuff, and then some college that I was just kind of like going with the motions, I didn't really feel driven in any way. And I wasn't being pressured to find drive in any way. It was, you know, everyone's like, just find something that you love. And you know, you'll never work a day in your life and keep going. And it's just like, just find something that makes you happy, and just go with the motions and just make it through until and maybe if you're lucky, you'll have some kids, and they can do the same shit.

The removal of the power process is something that Philip saw in his own life but feared for future generations. He sees that this did not begin with himself and will not end with him. That there are serious problems that allow people to just go through life and now feel any real accomplishment because they just went through the motions.

The idea that school and more of life become one large surrogate activity was shared by Jane as she said:

Universities now are becoming a surrogate activity; everything is becoming a [surrogate activity]. I feel like the way that things are manifesting is literally everything we're occupying our time with is becoming a surrogate activity, even things that should be sacred and intimate, like even things

that used to be invigorating, and something that they're invigorating, but to the point of like, what's going to be more like, it's just, it's all shallow now.

Jane sees everything we do become a surrogate activity. From going to college to using Tinder to make a game out of sex. This was an extremely interesting point that we talked about. She saw the ways that we made dating a game through apps such as Tinder a perfect example of people trying to find accomplishment and fulfillment through sex. They are seeing more of our lives becoming pointless activities that do not contribute to our happiness but are there simply to take up time while we try to find something that makes us happy.

Philip also recognized this problem with playing video games. The way that people are now spending a lot of their time sitting inside staring at a computer screen is something that led them to feeling depressed. Both Philip and Jane recognize that much of a young person's life can now be surrogate activities and going through the motions finding nothing that makes them feel good.

The idea of the power process is important because we see in media around us people rejecting modern lifestyles, and this is not new. There have always been people wanting to get away from the modern world *Walden* (1854) was about this same feeling. This small population of people who want to get away from modernity has shifted with the ATC and Kaczynskian thinking because they believe the whole system must be brought down. As explained in the introduction it is the system that creates the problems because we have been removed from the power process.

The focus of the ATC on the power process is something that is similar to Kaczynski's focus as well. It is one of the first ideas brought up in the manifesto. Edward noticed this and saw it as something very important. He said, "there's a long sort of preamble, a long quarter or a third of the document where he's talking about psychological questions, and the power process and problems with leftism, and various psychological issues." Edward later explains that this was "strategic" in a way to frame what is lost because of the controlling nature of technology. The leftism and psychological issues, as explained by Kaczynski, are related to the power process. This is once again a focus on the importance of this idea.

From the descriptions given by the ATC, I can see that this manifesto gives some insight into the dissatisfaction someone might feel in their current life. It makes sense that if you are spending all your time doing activities that are not rewarding or require serious effort you might feel unsatisfied with your life and Kaczynski can provide some insight into why you feel that way. Mary explains that most of what we do are surrogate activities to "just fill up the void.. and are in the end meaningless." This is a very contradictory way of thinking about the modern world, as I touched on earlier, the way they view modern lives is directly opposed to the majority. Mary also brings up Kaczynski's example of the Japanese Emperor Hirohito becoming a marine biologist

before becoming emperor. While Hirohito advanced the science of marine biology Philip played video games all day.

Kaczynski is clearly not introducing something new, but tapping into a feeling that is over a century old. In *Brave New World* (1932) Huxley looks at the same idea. The endless opportunities to maximize pleasure and avoid real challenges is seen as a problem in 1932 and the 1990s when the manifesto is published and now in 2022 when I talked to the ATC. Why does a portion of people have this disdain for the endless pleasure we can experience in the modern world? I ask this because I want to show that this being one of the most impactful parts of the manifesto shows the long history and feelings people have had towards the ease of modernity.

The power process being so important to both Kaczynski, as one of the largest parts of the argument, and the ATC members could show a sign of identification. This account structure was seen also in the views of what Kaczynski meant to the ATC and now we are seeing an identification with the ideas. They are using an identification with Kaczynski's ideas to explain their own dissatisfaction. Whether he is Uncle Ted in chapter II, or now carrying a copy of the manifesto with you, they are forming some kind of bond with the man and his ideas. But while we are seeing them use identification with his ideas or the idea of the man, they do not imitate his actions, by going into the wild or bombing people. This is also important as the account structure still allows them to exist within their societies.

Theme 2: Kaczynski is right about it all

While many members of the ATC that I talked to identified the power process as the main idea that was impactful on them they also agree with the rest of what Kaczynski had to say. To not like surrogate activities and the removal from the power process the ATC would not be the ATC. It is only by agreeing with the rest of the anti-tech philosophy that they become what they are. That is where this theme came in, it is a total agreement or near-total. The differences people have in what they disagree with are about the implementation of Kaczynski's ideas.

Some believed that the system would eventually collapse as Kaczynski believed and others thought that eventually there would be a small portion of the population that decided enough is enough and separate themselves entirely from the modern world and live in a community that rejects the modern world. From this, it seemed that it would be similar to the Amish communities in US America, but on a larger scale. This view on the future and what action should be taken is a minor part of the group because the ATC is focused on discussing the ideas from Kaczynski and anti-tech ideology as a whole rather than starting a revolution of some sort.

Going into a full agreement there are some parts that they all disagree with mainly violence. Everyone was very clear that they do not support bombing people. Some are of the opinion that Kaczynski's bombings were necessary for his own goals, getting

the manifesto published. Henry believes that it was the most effective way to get the message published and for people to read it. The ATC is split in their opinions about using terroristic blackmail as a publishing avenue. Some see the value in having the Washington Post publish the manifesto and others see the negatives outweigh the mass publication. This disagreement is not in the ideas put forward in the manifesto but in actions. Going into the total agreement with Kaczynski I found some interesting patterns. When asked about politically correct culture or universities the majority of ATC members agree, as does Kaczynski, that they are symptoms of leftism and once again the effects of the power process. This section is going to focus on how they explain their agreement with Kaczynski.

This total agreement is in part Kaczynski changing the focus of what the problems are. It breaks the normal frame we see problems in society as. Henry said the manifesto is “Revolutionary,” “eye-opening,” and “groundbreaking,” all in describing his thoughts on the ideas Kaczynski presents. This was followed by his idea that the manifesto changes the path of how we think of problems in the world. The move from looking at individual political problems to seeing everything as mere symptoms of the technological world is radically different from the majority. This could be a reason that so many ATC members are of the opinion that Kaczynski is just right about it all. This massive shift of views leaves them with few theoretical writings that fit with Kaczynski, except for Ellul who influenced Kaczynski.

James says this in response to what he agrees with Kaczynski on:

I’d say pretty much his outlining of the problem. I think he’s pretty much 100% right ..if you gave me any ideas about, you give me a quote from Kaczynski, like nine times out of ten I’ll probably agree with it. Honestly. I think he really is right because he went off and lived in the fucking Woods for thirty years. He said, Fuck this, I’m off. And he lived it and then saw, oh my god, like he’s finally got out looking back in here.

This description shows that Kaczynski outlines the problems we see in the world as a person who is outside of it. The idea of Kaczynski going out away from society is something I looked at earlier, but it comes back here. The separation from society is something that is noticeable throughout the conversations with the ATC. They see this time he spent in Montana as extremely important, not only for building credibility, but that the separation gave him an outsider’s perspective.

Kaczynski’s outline is that technology is the cause of the problems we are facing today as a society. Philip believes that it is only getting worse though. He says, “I agree that technology’s root cause of environmental crisis that we’re facing, that it’s a root cause of psychological issues that humans are facing, especially in modern society, there’s especially our generation. And there’s so much I don’t know anyone that doesn’t experience some level of depression or anxiety, like on a daily basis.” The relationship between depression and anxiety and technology is something that Kaczynski explains

in the manifesto. Philip clearly accepts Kaczynski's argument that technology is the root of many problems and as we increase our technology usage we are only seeing these problems become greater.

Edward says something very similar to Philip when he says, "the argument that technology is really the root cause behind social and environmental problems, which I think is true." This is not only the same idea being said but in the same working. The idea of technology being the root problem. Edward later says, "technology is a driving factor behind politics and economics. Its the dominate factor. Its the decisive component in social evolution." This way of viewing the world is outside the norm. I think the idea of technology being the decisive component of social evolution is something very revealing in just how powerful the ATC views technology.

Looking at social evolution, there is a great deal of literature but simply put it is how cultures and societies evolve over time. Saying that technology is the decisive component in structuring this change in society sheds light on just what technology is to the ATC. The idea of what technology really is, is further elaborated in ATC member, Chad Haag's book *The Philosophy of Ted Kaczynski: Why the Unabomber was right about Modern Technology* (2019). Kaczynski spends a large portion of the end of the manifesto explaining how there is no possibility of reform and why revolution is the only option. This opinion might not be entirely wrong, there are a lot of social changes that come about because of technological invention, but saying it is decisive in this change is very important in understanding the impact Kaczynski's work has on ATC.

Edward explains that this is technological determinism. If one is to believe in technological determinism and agrees with Kaczynski's ideas they would encounter a form of malaise about their future and the future of the world. Here we are seeing an account structure that is trying to find a solution to this malaise. I think one part is that they agree with Kaczynski and thus know the problem and how it will get worse. If you believe in the saying knowing is half the battle, then they have a good chance of winning. By understanding the problems with technology the ATC can control their feelings of malaise as they have described it by knowing that it is technologies fault. The various members of the ATC saw that problems with politically correct culture or even the spread of COVID-19 are only possible because of technology. This apolitical view of 'displacing' all problems to technology is a way to move their energies to one thing.

The ATC is itself a sublimation of some kind since the group moves the ideas of a terrorist to a socially acceptable philosophy group. I showed that much of the group is in almost 100% agreement with Kaczynski's ideas but because they have moved it to an online discussion they can separate it from the violence. They can probably even support Kaczynski's bombings as necessary and as acceptable in some places. The displacement of the manifesto into a classroom reading and philosophy group changes what the manifesto is. There are different forms of violence that are acceptable

in different groups and how that is expressed is the divider between acceptable and unacceptable.

This sublimation of having the ATC as an online radical group while also maintaining social acceptability is working as a way to reduce the malaise I discussed in Chapter IV. The ATC now sees the problem as technology and increasing technological innovation. If they maintain these views the problems they see as associated with technology will only increase with further innovation. As this happens the feelings of malaise will increase alongside it. If we look at the difference between 1990 and 2020, we can see many innovations and problems that were not thought about but now exist. Kaczynski's ideas can alleviate this because regardless of *what* is invented the problem will always be the same, technology.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

Conclusions on the ATC

As I have expressed before the ATC never claimed to want to do any violence, and they have few in-person events. This is why I have described them as a radical online community. They are focused on discussing anti-technological philosophy and spreading the ideas behind that. The ATC online acts as a small community of like-minded people who share a connection to Kaczynski by expressing that he is the man who has synthesized the ideas developed before him, but put them in a way that is consumable for larger swaths of the population. It is through writing the previous chapters that I have identified larger account structures at work that prevent a neurosis in the ATC members.

The use of Kaczynski as an almost self-help book or therapy device is something that I noticed while talking to many of the ATC members. They expressed dissatisfaction with their lives prior to reading Kaczynski and the way that Kaczynski frames the world connected with them. This connection as identified in Chapter III was what related to their own lives. This is as an account structure is a displacement of one's problems to a larger idea that cannot be changed or stopped. Whether that be anxiety, depression, or malaise, as I explained it, the ATC has employed Kaczynski's ideas to explain these feelings.

The displacement of malaise about one's own life to technology removes the control of it, so that it cannot be helped. Many members of the ATC described a process of not wanting something, whether that be a modern lifestyle, or a career and how it was through the ATC that they did not have to conform in such a way. The account structure has become a way to explain the experiences the ATC has encountered before and after reading Kaczynski. It is through these structures that they have created an explanation that reduces malaise and maintains social acceptability.

In Chapter II, the ATC expressed their views of Kaczynski the man, and how they understand him and his actions. I had seen people call Kaczynski "Uncle Ted" prior to these interviews but this was through forums like 4Chan.org, through this interview, I was able to better understand the meaning of it, at least from the ATC's perspective. The identification with Kaczynski as a leader, unifier, or nexus of radicalization was important in understanding this relationship. As they addressed Kaczynski's bombings their identification became clearer.

It was through the account structures of projection, repression, and reaction formation that the ATC was able to move away from the bombings and yet identify with Kaczynski. The use of projection brought the morality bar lower as they compared the harm that governments do as no worse than Kaczynski mailing bombs to people. This point was something that I believe is important in understanding the account structure of projection. It seems that projection can only be applied to bring the other down to you. It is a tool to avoid guilt from those you agree with by showing that the other is guilty as well.

The repression and reaction formation were used in tandem in this chapter as well as the ATC employed what is called motivated forgetting to avoid the tension of Kaczynski being the Unabomber and ideological unifier for the group. The forgetting was then explained as a kind of maturity that moves past the bombings and focus on the ideas. This was explained as the ATC was more mature and thus able to take his ideas seriously but the rest of the world is not mature enough so they cannot learn from Kaczynski. I believe this is some form of reaction formation as an account structure to explain why they can move past the bomber aspect of Kaczynski while most people cannot.

This chapter was an in-depth look at the two sides of Kaczynski that I was beginning to see as I started my research. The ATC was able to bring this forward as they saw Kaczynski as a unifier or symbolic leader rather than a terrorist. The account structures that I used to analyze this is a way of understanding and organizing the thought and possibly the process the ATC has gone through to explain why they have Uncle Ted rather than the Unabomber.

While Chapter II looked at the man, chapter III is focused on why the ATC was able to be convinced by Kaczynski. I saw three main ideas shared by the group, the situation they encountered Kaczynski in, his tone, and writing quality. The first was that most ATC members were introduced to Kaczynski in the classroom, and this provided some credibility to Kaczynski's ideas. As the ATC saw Kaczynski as credible, they could see the manifesto in a different way. Mainly that Kaczynski has some concern for the well-being of the world. His ideology is not for power but to help people live fulfilling and natural lives. These ideas might be missed when the reader is focused on Kaczynski being a bomber or that this is a dangerous text. The third theme was the writing quality. Kaczynski is able to express his ideas clearly and in a language that is much simpler compared to someone like Ellul. I saw this when I first read it and so have many others. This was a shared idea but the ATC was able to describe it in greater detail than a book review.

The account structures used here were rationalization and repression. The rationalization was a way of thinking about the setting they read the manifesto in. By rationalizing that because this is an assigned reading it must be okay to agree with, they were able to be persuaded. This rationalization also played into the writing being so important to them. I think it must be that if someone can write well and clearly they

must be sane and rational themselves. This book is not the rantings of a madman but a clear argument, that does use generalizations but also has cited specific examples.

The recurrence of repression is seen as they view Kaczynski as someone who is sincere and compassionate or caring. Some members thought at the minimum that Kaczynski is sincere in his writing. This could very well be true as it goes back to him practicing what he preached and was cut off from society. As members said he cared about people I then saw the use of the repression account structure come back. The fact that Kaczynski was able to murder people with mail bombs is something that cannot be forgotten by most. It could be viewed by some as not being as bad if it was only those who are destroying the environment, but many of his bombs were hurting people who were secretaries or graduate assistants. Also, the attempted bombing of a passenger plane is something that shows just how indiscriminately Kaczynski was willing to kill. But by choosing to ignore or forget this history of Kaczynski the ATC is able to move past and see the manifesto as an argument for humans to live better lives by removing technology. Seeing Kaczynski as caring can only come after one chooses to forget or move past the many lives damaged by the bombings.

Chapter IV is a look into what is so effective in Kaczynski's manifesto that the ATC decided to promote his ideas. This section has only two parts as the ATC focused on the power process or claimed that they agreed with everything. The power process is essential to Kaczynski's argument as everything goes back to this simple idea. As the ATC members described their experience reading the manifesto they saw that their own lives were unfulfilled because they were separated from the power process. The ATC members were reflecting on their own experiences as they read Kaczynski and saw that these problems they have are a result of the technological society.

The second part of the chapter was that people agreed with everything, with the exception of the solution to end the technological society and Kaczynski's methods. They saw that Kaczynski had the problems correctly identified though. This could be from the ATC once agreeing with a part pushed them away from anyone else ideologically and then must agree with everything he says, or at least with what Kaczynski says is the problem.

I saw the account structures in play being identification and displacement. The identification was that they identified personally as victims of the power process and not with the victims of the bombings. They saw that this argument explained their own experiences and feelings. I think that them seeing themselves within the arguments Kaczynski made allowed them to identify with the manifesto and that is extremely important in the effectiveness of the manifesto as a persuasive artifact. The ideas of displacement were explained at the beginning of this chapter as the ATC saw how to fix their own lives and remove the feeling of malaise they then saw the world suffering from it. The displacement of malaise from the individual life to the world can be seen as an essential part of the ATC forming. As they see that the world is wrong and must be saved they need to form a group to promote the ideas to save everyone.

Overall, the use of the research questions and account structures has been a way for me to organize and analyze the ATC's description of their experiences after reading Kaczynski and forming the ATC. Through this I have begun to understand the processes of radicalization and how they occur. The way that the ATC members explain their experiences sheds light on what they see as the most persuasive parts of Kaczynski and how they can see someone most regard as a terrorist as a symbol that unites them. The account structures were a tool that I created and employed to see how they express views and understandings of the topics in ways that seem foreign to the majority of people.

Through this analysis and use of the account structure, the ATC has given Kaczynski his goal of becoming a serious thinker that is not dangerous. The ATC has shown that violence is not a solution, and thus by creating a discourse where Kaczynski is right, can show his ideas in a way that maintains their own, and possibly, more importantly, Kaczynski's acceptability. This was done through the account structures as a way to avoid possible negatives and address them when they do come up regarding Kaczynski's ideas and actions. As Kaczynski explained in the manifesto, armed rebellion is not going to destroy the technological society but a slow process of building a small group who are committed to the ideals and simply make the majority aware of the ideology (2018, p. 111).

Reading the manifesto, it is clear that the ATC, which is international, is the beginning goal of Kaczynski. This group is not convincing the mass of people but is beginning to refine the ideas of the anti-tech philosophy. Along with that, I believe, from seeing Kaczynski mentioned online and in book reviews, his critiques of technology and the modern world are becoming more popular and accepted. While all of this poses no danger to the world, as of now, Kaczynski is getting, at least the beginning, of what he wanted.

Moving past the ATC

The idea of radicals online is as old as the internet or as new because there have been radicals long before that. The online radical community is something that sees more and more attention on the news, from my experience. In the news these days the focus seems to be on far-right or Neo-Nazi communities online and their threat. But there are radical groups that are not far-right, such as far-left, or even radicals that do not fit a left-right spectrum, such as the ATC.

The idea of the online radical community has a few specifics that I feel are important.

The first is that the majority of interactions they have with each other are online, and not in person. This allows for distance among members of the group so that in-person interaction is difficult. While much of the ATC lives in the same area, they have members across the world and do very few events in person. When seeing a

radical community as an online community they should be online for a majority of their interactions.

This online part then plays into their in-person action. I believe that these online radical communities are a way of expressing a view that is not easy to find in one's own vicinity. The distance between members also plays into what they can do other than release content and spread a message. The ATC's few events are simple things that are more about community volunteering than revolting against technology. For example, they organized a community trash clean up, which is not very radical. Though they use the internet to release articles and podcasts in an attempt to share their anti-technology philosophy. This is something that can be used to look at other radical communities. Looking to see what these communities actually do can be very important in researching them. Perhaps this is a promising avenue for further research by others.

Account structures as a research tool can be used for any online radical community as they must have some literature backing their ideology and people they see as leaders or unifiers. Looking to see what was effective in persuading them and how they understand their own experiences is very important in practicing phenomenology and understanding the ideas of a radical. The account structures I employed were already established Freudian ideas but repurposed by me to see how people explain themselves and not assume they are defensive. The account structures ways of communication that the ATC used to explain how they view Kaczynski. I believe that they could be seen in many other radical online communities and the ways that they explain their own understanding.

The account structure also allows for a more nuanced understanding of the radical community and how they understand their unifying ideas. The way that I employed the account structures allowed me to further understand the ATC and how they described their experiences. Here we gain a deeper understanding of the group and their ideas. It allows for a new way of understanding what is said by a member of a radical online community. As they described their ideas I began drawing connections from the defense mechanism but understood that the ATC was not defensive but explaining their thought process and their understanding to me. The radical ideas were explained in a way that maintains some social acceptability, since they do not want to leave society but hold views that oppose it.

What more we might say about radical online communities awaits further research, I think it likely that the account structures that I have described and employed in this study can be used in good effect in future research, and far beyond in further communities. Thus, this can be seen as an addition to phenomenological literature and deserves a more complete explication.

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Appendix A - IRB Approval

SIU Southern Illinois University

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE
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CAMONDMI

To: Mitchell Brown

From: M. Daniel Becque

Chair, Institutional Review Board

Date: November 22, 2021

Title: The *Kaczynski Phenomenon: A phenomenological analysis of the Anti-Tech Collective*

Protocol Number: 21197

The referenced study has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Institutional Review Board.

This approval by Southern Illinois University IRB on November 22, 2021 is considered active. Extensions are no longer required by the IRB for this research. However, you must submit the information below as applicable:

- *Changes or modifications to the protocol, regardless of how minor, must be submitted for IRB review and approval prior to implementation, except to eliminate immediate hazard to subjects.*

- Promptly report adverse events, off- protocol activities, or other noncompliance to the IRB within 5 business days. Contact the IRB for further guidance.

- The IRB will request an annual update each year the project remains active. Update forms must be received by the due date provided to maintain active status.

- The Principal Investigator is responsible for reporting study closure to the IRB in a timely manner. Please contact the IRB for a study closeout form when research activities are complete.

- As always, you are responsible for compliance with Southern Illinois University Carbondale. If you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Institutional Review Board Office via email siuhsc@siu.edu or via phone at 618-453-4530.

Best wishes for a successful study.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the USDHHS Office of Human Research Protection. The Assurance number is 00005334.

MDB:sk

Cc: Randall Auxier

Appendix B - Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted by Mitchell Brown, a graduate student in the School of Communication Studies at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Randal Auxier is the advisor for this project. This purpose of this study is to interview members of the Anti-Tech Collective and collect their experiences of reading and organizing a group that sympathizes with Ted Kaczynski's philosophies on technology and the world.

What will you be asked to do?

If you decide to participate in this study you will be asked for an interview that should take no longer than one hour. The questions will relate your experience reading Ted Kaczynski and personal beliefs on technology. These interviews will be conducted over Zoom or phone based on personal preference. The audio will be recorded and video if permission is granted. You will also be asked to sign and mark the lines at the bottom of this document and return them to be before the interview takes place. This study is only open to persons older than 19.

Risks

The risks are minimal for this study. Your identity will be kept private by me using pseudonyms for those who participate. I also ask that you do not use the names of non participants in this study. The only people who will have access to this data will be myself and Dr. Auxier my advisor. He will only see it, as I will retain full possession of the raw data.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits for taking part in this study. But, this might provide members of the Anti-Tech Collective the chance to have their ideas and organization enter the academic world.

Confidentiality

To ensure your privacy, I will retain possession of the interview recordings at all times. They will be kept on personal computer which is password protected, then deleted after the study is finished. For those who wish your names will not be mentioned in the paper as mentioned above in "risks" section.

Voluntary

Participation is voluntary. If you choose to take part in this study, you may stop at any time. You may also skip any questions you do not wish to answer. There are no penalties to withdraw from the study. You may do this at anytime.

I agree [_____] I disagree [__] to participate in this activity and know that my responses will be audio/video recorded.

I agree [_____] I disagree [__] that Mitchell Brown may directly quote me using a pseudonym in their paper.

Signature of participant

Contact Information

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This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Institutional Review Board. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Institutional Review Board Chair, Office of Research Compliance, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62902-4709. Phone (618) 453-4534. Email *siuhscfd siu.edu*

Appendix C - Interview Questions

Tell me about yourself? Age? Education? Hobbies?

How did you get introduced to the anti-technology philosophy?

Were you familiar with him prior to reading *Industrial Society and its Future*?

What were your thoughts when you first read Kaczynski?

What are your thoughts on the politically correct culture?

Do you think social media is a good or bad thing for humans? Please explain why?

Do you participate in any environmentalist groups?

What are your thoughts on the current state of universities?

What ideas do you agree with Kaczynski on?

Have you taken steps to use less technology after reading Kaczynski?

Have you tried to spread the ideas Kaczynski presents in *Industrial Society and its Future*?

Do you think Kaczynski's message is getting stronger or weaker?

Have you furthered your education on the topics of technology?

What would you say are your political values?

How has being a member of the Anti-tech collective changed your life?

Many people dismiss Ted Kaczynski by saying he was just angry. What would you say to that?

What does Kaczynski mean to the Anti-Tech Collective?

So, Kaczynski is most commonly known for the bombings, how does this affect the message?

And were they necessary for spreading his manifesto?

Is there anything else you'd like to say?

VITA

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Major Professor: Dr. Randall Auxier

The Ted K Archive

Mitchell J. Brown

Radicals Online: Ted Kaczynski and the Anti-Tech Collective

May 2, 2022

[<opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/theses/2980/>](https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/theses/2980/)

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Arts Degree. School of Communication Studies in the Graduate School Southern Illinois University Carbondale August 2022.

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