

The Unabomber & Quiet Neighbors

The Frustratingly Predictable ‘Quiet Neighbor’ News Stories

Theo Slade

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Introduction

He was just a real quite guy, never bothered anyone ... just not the guy I would think would be the Unabomber.

—ABC News footage¹

Most people believe that the people we know well could never act in a horrendously evil way. If we're ever forced to come face to face with the fact that they could, then we have this realization of the ways we were blind to being able to help those people.

For me, this is why it's so frustrating when in the aftermath of many crimes there is virtually uniform obliviousness on the part of people who knew the perpetrator as to their true motivations or character. Obviously that's purposefully cultivated by the perpetrator, but I wish people were more perceptive. Even if they didn't have enough information to act on, I wish people paid some attention to the signs and were able to articulate some lessons learned.

At the end of this essay I'll offer some possible solutions for how we can improve our political and cultural circumstances such that more people can have the capability and knowhow to look out for one another.

¹ ABC News Footage on Ted Kaczynski's Arrest

Missed opportunities to stop the violence

Here is a timeline of key life events that I believe contributed to Ted's violent tendencies, and events where I believe he could have been stopped:

- Separated from parents as a sick baby at a key time for attunement and attachment with parents. His mother felt this was key to his behaviour. Ted felt they used that event to avoid responsibility for the impact their inadequate parenting had on his character.
- Moved forward a year at school whilst failing to make sure he maintained friendships, rather than taking a year off to travel with family.
- Parents/teachers/counselors failing to talk through his desire for escape in primitive life as a desire to escape bullying, plus a lack of classes offered in politics.
- Attending Harvard a year early without taking the time to travel and explore the world.
- Unwittingly participating in psychological experiments at Harvard which were later used by the CIA to demonstrate the efficacy of torture. These experiments would be considered unethical in the US today and could not take place.
- Angry with himself for being unable to move from social interaction with women, to romantic or sexual involvement, he projected his feelings of inadequacy on to them, blaming them for his frustration.
- Inability to discuss his sexual fantasies of becoming a woman in order to get to be intimate with a woman to a councillor. Coming away with stronger suicidal ideation, and his feelings of desire to kill through a murder suicide. His shame at not being able to find a relationship turned into hatred at society for regimenting his life and making him this way.
- Kaczynski showed a letter to his brother, parents and romantic interest that he planned 'violence of a serious nature' against the romantic interest who had broken off their romance, but no steps were taken to either get him help or report him. His journal entries later revealed that he brought a knife with him in a paper bag, to disfigure her face.

- Kaczynski proposed founding an organization dedicated to stopping federal aid to scientific research, thereby preventing the “ceaseless extension of society’s powers. He sent this essay, similar to the manifesto he’d later write, to a few politicians. He would often write anti-technology essays to newspapers and favorite authors. If the FBI had put more focused callouts for information, then one of these people may have tipped off the FBI sooner.
- Felt guilty later about his sadism towards animals.
- Briefly felt bad about having crippled the arm of a man who was an airline pilot.
- Felt guilty later about the innocent people he would have killed on an airliner he attempted to blow up, as well as the secretary of a computer scientist.
- Regret about being careless in selecting targets at the beginning.

Missed opportunities to learn and share lessons from having known Ted

I'd like to consider three people who were all well placed to have offered valuable insight which may have prevented Ted's descent into violence. Importantly, what was it specifically, about the politics and culture of the time that dissuaded them from acting.

In seeking answers to these questions, hopefully we will get a sense of how far various cultures have progressed in putting in place these fixes to feelings of alienation, and how far we still have to go.

Sadly, the contrast between what was reported and the interesting reality which was left out is often stark. This isn't necessarily the fault of the people closest to a tragedy. However, their personal testimony can often be a valuable tool for helping more people absorb those lessons.

Ellen Tarmichael

When one reads of how close to danger Ellen was, it's easy to empathize with her not wanting to talk endlessly about the subject. This is simply an outsiders perspective on the fact that a first person testimony is missing of what thoughts one might have about interpersonal relationships, culture and society after having come so close to danger.

Coverage

San Francisco Chronicle:¹

"He was intelligent, quiet, that's about all I can say," Tarmichael said of Kaczynski ... "He was an acceptable employee until that last day."

¹ Woman linked to Kaczynski speaks up

Interesting reality left unreported on

From July 17, 1978, Ted recorded his day-to-day processing of his infatuation with Ellen, who was a higher-up at work. This journal includes a disturbing entry where he says that after being rejected by her, he planned to mutilate her face with a knife. He claimed to have sent letters to Ellen that he also showed his brother and both his parents. The letters included such statements as “I intended physical violence of a serious nature”. Sadly there was no effective intervention made in Ted’s life to set him on a better path and so he went on to kill 3 people and seriously injure many more.

Quoting Ted:²

July 17, 1978: For 2 or 3 weeks I have been working at Foam Cutting Engineers, where my father and brother work (my father got me the job there). The shop superior is a 30-year old woman named Ellen Tarmichael.

She has a beautiful face but a very mediocre figure (too much fat on her ass and thighs). Nevertheless she is very attractive because she has charm; her personality, so far as it is exhibited to the world at large, is very attractive, she is apparently very intelligent, and probably quite competent. The result was that I got infatuated — an unfortunate weakness to which I am occasionally subject.

I am now cured of the infatuation; but the story is interesting and possibly is not yet finished...

July 29. Yesterday I took Ellen Tarmichael to an expensive restaurant for supper. She then invited me to her apartment, where, she hastened to add, we would not be alone...

Aug 23. Despite the negative conclusions about Ellen that I reached, as stated above I couldn’t help thinking about her constantly, especially since I was exposed to her charms every day at work, and especially since she seemed quite friendly to me...

There is only one way left to wipe out this shame, and that is with blood. Tomorrow I am going to get that bitch and mutilate her face.

Aug 26. (Sat.) Last Thursday morning I drove to the plant and parked in the lot, waiting for Ellen. When she arrived, I ran over to her car, said I wanted to speak to her briefly, and told her to move over so I could get out of the rain. This she did slowly and grudgingly, and I got into the drivers seat. I carried with me a knife concealed in a paper bag. I began by saying that she had intentionally humiliated me on Sunday. In the brief discussion that followed, she said that the reason she had been so cold on Sunday was that it “just struck her” at the beginning of the date that there was nothing

² Ted’s Journal on His Plans to Disfigure the Face of a Romantic Interest

between us no future in anything between us, because we had nothing in common. She also said that the first 2 times she went out with me she did so because she “really thought there might be something in it; friendship, or ...” I had then, and still have, grave doubts about the truth of this last statement, because she has often seemed insincere in the past, and because the statement is contradicted by things she said earlier. Nevertheless, the statement cooled my anger, because if true, it would mean she was not just using me as a toy. So that was the end of that.

All I feel now about the whole thing is a kind of wistful melancholy about the whole affair, brought on by the thought of what a woman with some of Ellen’s best qualities might have meant to me, if she’d been sincere, and if we’d had some common aspirations. I sent Ellen a long letter explaining everything from my point of view.

Dale F. Eickelman

Again, I’d like to offer a disclaimer that this isn’t a critique of the individual person, as everyone has a right to weigh the pros and cons of talking about such a novel case as this. As a very accomplished academic, it’s likely that one reason Dale hasn’t written anything on the subject up to now might be simply not wanting the happenstance of having gone to the same school as a serial killer interfering in any way with having the kind of conversations he would like to have in his life as an anthropology researcher of complex cultures.

Coverage

San Francisco Chronicle:³

Once in a while, Ted did have a sense of play, such as when he and fellow brain David Eickelman teamed up to blow up weeds in fields. One time the two classmates demolished a metal family garbage can with explosives that they built themselves.

To Eickelman, now an anthropology professor at Dartmouth College, it was ordinary enough behavior for two “bright kids who read a lot of science books and experimented.”

A small university newspaper:⁴

³ Who was the Unabomber? Colleagues, classmates say Kaczynski’s intellect isolated him

⁴ Child’s Play for the Unabomber

“We used to play chess together,” Eickelman says he told reporters, “but no one wanted to talk about that.”

Interesting reality left unreported on

Quoting Ted:⁵

Eickelman, now a professor at Dartmouth College, told my investigators that “Teddie did not have other friends [than Dale Eickelman] during the time that Dale knew Teddie from 5th grade until Teddie’s sophomore year [of college].” ... Professor Eickelman correctly states that I visited his home during the summer following my freshman year at Harvard.

So, Ted’s longest childhood friend became a distinguished professor of anthropology, a field of study that Ted read zealously from the age of 11. Ted found in our hunter-gatherer past an ideal which if had been allowed to continue, to his mind, would have prevented the existence of a life full of humiliating experiences. Experiences, such as alleged bullying by other kids and his parents which he felt he was conditioned into not responding violently to:⁶

Unquestionably there is no doubt that the reason I dropped out of the technological system is because I had read about other ways of life, in particular that of primitive peoples. When I was about eleven I remember going to the little local library in Evergreen Park, Illinois. They had a series of books published by the Smithsonian Institute that addressed various areas of science. Among other things, I read about anthropology in a book on human prehistory. I found it fascinating. After reading a few more books on the subject of Neanderthal man and so forth, I had this itch to read more. I started asking myself why and I came to the realization that what I really wanted was not to read another book, but that I just wanted to live that way. ...

In living close to nature, one discovers that happiness does not consist in maximizing pleasure. It consists in tranquility. Once you have enjoyed tranquility long enough, you acquire actually an aversion to the thought of any very strong pleasure—excessive pleasure would disrupt your tranquility.

Finally, one learns that boredom is a disease of civilization. It seems to me that what boredom mostly is is that people have to keep themselves

⁵ Truth Versus Lies

⁶ Theresa Kintzs’ Interview with Ted Kaczynski

entertained or occupied, because if they aren't, then certain anxieties, frustrations, discontents, and so forth, start coming to the surface, and it makes them uncomfortable. Boredom is almost nonexistent once you've become adapted to life in the woods. If you don't have any work that needs to be done, you can sit for hours at a time just doing nothing, just listening to the birds or the wind or the silence, watching the shadows move as the sun travels, or simply looking at familiar objects. And you don't get bored. You're just at peace.

Along with this, social ineptitude and sexual frustration played a large part in pushing Ted over the edge into desiring to start killing people. So Dale being the first person he experimented with sexually, and the person who played a recurring role in his sexual fantasies is I think worth deciphering.

*Content warning for the graphic recounting of his childhood sexual development.*⁷

When we first moved to Evergreen Park, there was a boy ... who lived nearby. A couple of times this kid persuaded me to go out in the prairie and strip with him ... in the end I did strip, and found it sexually exciting, as he did. Apparently this kind of stripping was a common practice among the boys around there ... There was a kid named Dale ... I suppose we were about 13 when this kid first persuaded me to strip with him. At first I wasn't interested, but by and by I got excited and went along. This kind of thing was repeated several times. At that age I was already suffering from acute sexual starvation, ...

... Anyhow, I never did get a girlfriend — or even one date — at Harvard. Consequently, I suffered considerably from acute sexual starvation. I found by experience that I could not study well in Widener library, because my thoughts were too much distracted by the sight of female behinds swaying up and down the aisle. All-male Lamont Library was a refuge for me; but even there on many days my ability to study was severely impaired by a tendency for my thoughts to wander off into day dreams about girls.

I was never attracted by the idea of going to a prostitute. I felt there would be no point in having intercourse unless the woman wanted it too. But even if I had wanted a prostitute, I would have had no idea how to find one ...

... At home in my room, when I got sexually excited, I would either fantasy a variety of oral and anal sexual perversions with either a male or female partner or an animal, or I would fantasy normal intercourse. In imagining normal intercourse, I might put myself either in the male role or in the female role. In imagining myself in the male role, I usually imagined myself

⁷ Ted Kaczynski's 1979 Autobiography

as having a greater or lesser amount of affection for the girl. (But still my desires toward girls were mostly just physical ...

... I might imagine myself living a stone-age life all alone in some far wilderness; then I find a beautiful girl off in the woods, injured or in some other danger or difficulty; I rescue her, nurse her back to health, and make her my mate. Fantasies of myself as female had a completely different character. Usually I imagined myself as a sexually hot but unloving female, using her sexual power to seduce males. In many cases I imagined my sex partner as being Dale Eikelman (seep. 50 of these notes), and except when provisionally submitting to him intercourse, I imagined myself as dominating him physically ... in fantasies of myself as a female, the emphasis was always on myself as a girl — the man in the fantasy only served to provide a prick. I have never been sexually attracted to men ...

... By my third year at Michigan, though I still could hardly keep my eyes off good-looking girls, I had closed my heart against them. Since I felt sure I would never have any kind of sexual relationship with any of them, it was less painful, frustrating, and humiliating to simply close off all hope and hate all good-looking women ...

... finally I got disgusted with the whole thing, and angry, and said to myself, "What am I doing here working up a sweat trying to phone some stupid broad. It's an indignity. To hell with it. I don't need any damn women." This incident was a major step in making me completely hopeless about ever getting a girlfriend. I tended to close my heart against women. (Against people generally, for that matter ...

During my U. of Michigan period I no longer felt ashamed of my perverted sexual fantasies in the same way that I did at the age of, say 15. That is, I still felt more or less revulsion after orgasm associated with a perverted fantasy; and I felt thoroughly and strongly disgusted after orgasm whenever I had spent a long period playing with perversions, especially when I feared I might be damaging my health through prolonged accelerated heartbeat and prolonged erection, or when I wasted, on perversion, time that I should have spent on some task. But, on the other hand, when I looked back on my sexual fantasies and activities from a little distance of time, I no longer felt any particular shame about them. Though of course I was very careful to keep these activities concealed, since I knew how other people would react to them ...

... As for sex, at Berkeley, I rarely practiced perversions or had prolonged sex-fantasies, because I would usually masturbate promptly whenever I got excited, so that sex didn't get much grip on me.

My sex fantasies were either of having normal intercourse with a woman, or of being a woman myself and having intercourse that way.

So, five years into studies at Michigan, and concerned about being drafted to Vietnam where he feared he might in a fit of rage shoot some bullying sergeant, the stresses of a life he'd felt pressured into, and was incapable of socially adapting to, all bubbled over:⁸

Alone in his room, he was driven crazy by the sounds of the couple next door making love. Finally—and this is what broke my heart—Kaczynski decided to convince a psychiatrist to allow him to undergo the surgery and chemical treatments he thought would transform him into a woman, not because he was transgender, but because, as a woman, he might wrap his arms around himself and be held by someone female.

Kaczynski kept his appointment with the psychiatrist, only to realize he was going mad. Furious at a society that had pushed him to excel in academics at the cost of his ability to find love and connection to other human beings, he vowed to stop being such a good boy and learn to kill. Only later did he come up with an ideology that justified his murderous rage, lashing out at science and industrialization for destroying our environment, pressuring us to conform, depriving us of our privacy, and robbing us of our humanity.

Finally, Dale has written all kinds of great analysis of the social dynamics of people growing up within socially conservative Islamic cultures. So, as well travelled and knowledgeable a person he is, he'd be the perfect person to draw insights back to the hometown he and Ted grew up in.

Here are some of the early adverse experiences Ted faced, quoting Ted:⁹

... Until I was, say, 5 or 6 years old, I think my father was warm and affectionate toward me ... However, as I grew older, my father began to refrain from physical expressions of affection toward me, and a certain element of coldness sometimes appeared in his behavior ... One day, when I might have been about 6 years old, my mother, father, and I were all set to go out somewhere. I was in a joyful mood. I ran up to my father and announced that I wanted to kiss him. He said, 'You're like a little girl, always wanting to kiss.' I immediately turned cold and drew back resentfully. My father immediately regretted what he had done and said, 'Oh, that's alright. You can kiss if you want to.' But there was no warmth in his voice. Of course, I didn't kiss him then. I recall after that there was a period of a few years when I had a marked aversion to kissing. ... the

⁸ From the Unabomber to the Incels: Angry Young Men on Campus

⁹ Ted Kaczynski's 1979 Autobiography

reader should be careful not to get an exaggerated idea of the coldness that my father occasionally exhibited — generally speaking I felt I had a good relationship with my parents that didn't show any serious deterioration until I was about 11 years old ... Ever since very early childhood I was attracted to the woods and to the idea of being physically independent of society. My father was fond of the woods and I have memories, going back very early, of pleasant excursions with him ...

... As far back as I can remember, my view of girls and women always included a substantial element of contempt ... it was a contempt for femininity as a general concept. represented weakness ... Having observed that women were more passive and physically weaker, my liking for power and aggression would naturally incline me toward contempt for the feminine ...

Be that as it may, I did skip 6th grade. It seems fairly obvious that it was this event which eventually led to my becoming practically a social cripple and deprived me of sex, love, and (perhaps) marriage ...

On the other hand, it is possible that the consequences of this event hardened me. It is also possible that, if I had never skipped 6th grade, I'd never have broken away from society and taken to the woods; in which case I think I would ultimately have felt my life to be empty and unsatisfactory, no matter how much love and marriage I might have.

But now we are slipping into the realm of conjecture. Who can tell what course my life would have taken? ...

... once I was in 7th grade, I quickly slid to the bottom of the pecking-order ... jealousy was probably roused by the fact that I was supposed to be vastly smarter than them; and my shyness in a new situation may have been interpreted as coldness or a superior air ... By the time I left high school, I was definitely regarded as a freak by a large segment of the student body. I was subject to very little physical abuse ...

... Soon after entering 7th grade I became thoroughly cowed (as I said, I was at the bottom of the pecking-order), and I stayed that way all through high school. I was usually afraid to defend myself when insulted or abused, unless the offenders were (like me) in the lower part of the pecking-order ..., instead of becoming aggressive, I simply ignored the insults as best I could ...

... This was a purely social problem — it had nothing to do with any lack of physical courage. It was some psychological mechanism connected with dominance — relationships ... I am rather lightly built ay, and being with kids first one year older and later 2 years older than me pm:: me at a great disadvantage in muscle ...

... After finishing 10th grade, I was put into 12th grade, thus finishing high school in 3 years ... I felt less hostility toward me among the 12th-graders (but I still had plenty of opportunity to receive hostility from the 11th-graders).

However, many of the 12th graders were condescending toward me, and this was at least as bad as the hostility of my earlier classmates... Not daring to fight back, and not wishing to show weakness, my only choice in the face of hostility was to be cold and stoical ... The cold impression was often accentuated by shyness, and I suspect that my apparent cold aloofness may have alienated some kids who might otherwise have been friendly ...

... In my early teens I conducted my search for power by experimenting with home-made explosives surreptitiously, without my parents' permission ... couple of incidents in school... On one occasion in Chemistry lab I finished my experiment early, and then set to thinking about explosives...

I suspect that I had quite a reputation in high school. In fact, there is reason to suspect that in some quarters of the student body, knowing me even conferred a kind of left-banded prestige — the kind of prestige that one might get from being personally acquainted with the Devil. with a mad genius, as I was supposed to be.) ...

Now here is some of Dale's writing relevant to how different cultures dealt with young people having difficult early experiences:¹⁰¹¹

Reason grows in a person with his ability to perceive the social order and to discipline himself to act effectively within it. Proper social comportment within this framework is symbolized by the concept of *theshsham*, or *hshu-miya*. These terms approximate the English concept of *propriety* (which is the translation I give to the terms when used in the abstract), although they are also used in contexts where the English terms *deference*, *respect*, *circumspection*, and occasionally *embarrassment* would be fitting.

The locus of propriety is not so much the inner moral consciousness of a person as his public comportment with respect to those with whom he has regular face-to-face relations. A person is said to lack propriety when he is caught outside the image which he is expected to project of himself before "significant others." Maintenance of "proper" comportment reflects one's possession of reason.

Like reason, propriety is a quality which persons acquire as they mature. It is inculcated by parents, especially the father, and to a certain extent

¹⁰ Moroccan Islam; Tradition and Society in a Pilgrimage Center

¹¹ The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach

by other relatives and outsiders. This is achieved both by suggestion and, on occasion, by the use of physical force. As a son acquires reason, he is expected increasingly to show deference toward his father in the household and in public.

Before boys are taken to the mosque and initiated in the fast, fathers as well as mothers play with their sons and show affection and tenderness (*Jianana*) toward them. As a boy matures, only the women of the household, especially his mother, continue manifestly to display affection toward him. Mothers and sons develop strong, expressed ties of affection: widowed or divorced mothers frequently live with their sons and look to them for moral and economic support. It is believed that if a father were to continue to be affectionate with his son as he matured, the son “would become soft like a woman, allowing others to dominate him [*st‘amaru*]. Thus the father increasingly assumes a greater formality with his son and becomes hard [*qaseh*] with him.

As a boy matures, he increasingly strives to avoid situations in which his father or other persons can exercise domination over him. This often entails tacit public avoidance of the father, even when the son continues to live in the same household. This avoidance continues after a son becomes economically autonomous and establishes his own household. It does not indicate active hostility so much as a desire to avoid situations in which the son, himself the head of a household, is placed in a position in which his own “word” must be circumscribed. On the marriage of a son, the father avoids those aspects of the celebration which would bring him into direct contact with his son. He generally sits with his friends in a separate room, away from the female dancers (*shikha-s*) and musicians usually called in for the celebration. Direct contact between father and son on such an occasion is thought to be highly improper.

Propriety is similarly related to subordination and restraint outside of the household. Among examples of impropriety are acts of adultery, homosexuality, or other illicit sexual exploits, at least if they become publicly known; fighting in the street; being caught in the act of stealing; and various forms of deceit and exploitation. These are considered less as “immoral” than as “improper” acts. It is their public knowledge which is the subject of greatest concern, since, as one Boujadi said, only God knows the true motivation of a person’s actions.

As suggested thus far in this chapter, ideologies of sexuality involve complex dimensions, including notions of domination, authority, intimacy, friendship, economic hegemony, and other essential definitions of, and practical control over, self and social honor.

Nonetheless, or possibly because sexuality in the Middle East as elsewhere is such a crucial component of notions of self, it is difficult to elaborate a more comprehensive discussion of the issue because of the lack of a solid base on which to build. So little reliable discussion has taken place to date in the scholarly literature on the Middle East that Burton's "Terminal Essay" to his translation of *1001 Nights*—an encyclopedic inventory of hearsay and what he considered to be the sexual wonders and extravagances of the "Sotadic Zone" (a region which for him stretched from Tokyo to Tangier, his "Orient")—is astonishingly referred to even today as authoritative in some general books on the region. Most discussions of sexual conduct make cursory references to male and female homosexuality and other forms of sex, as when Snouck Hurgronje wrote of nineteenth-century Mecca that there were many men "who gave themselves up, to the vice called after Lot" and their female counterparts as well. The "Orient" writ large was used as a screen against which Western images of its supposed excesses could be projected. Pilgrimages such as that made by Andre Gide in 1893 to Algeria in search of the "golden fleece" of moral and sexual liberation only served to reinforce the Western notion of the "Orient" as different and exotic, in sexuality as in other spheres.

Such images persist in the travel literature of the present, as when Gavin Maxwell suggests that the marsh Arabs of southern Iraq "are not very selective in their direction of sexual outlet; all is, so to speak, grist to their mill." With sexuality treated superficially as the exotic, it is not surprising that even nineteenth-century ethnographers such as Snouck Hurgronje noted that Middle Easterners, especially educated ones, spoke with circumspection concerning sexual attitudes and beliefs. As ethnography, isolated comments such as those I have cited above only underscore how little is known of sexuality in theory or conduct.

A sketch of what a comprehensive study of sexuality should be and an indication at least of the documentary sources on which it could be built is provided by the Tunisian sociologist, Abdelwahab Bouhdiba. His *La Sexualitken Islam (Sexuality in Islam)* analyzes attitudes toward sexuality in the medieval Islamic world and in the contemporary period both through texts and (by reference to a few relevant colonial and contemporary studies of Tunisia alone) sociological accounts. He insists that although the Islamic community considers itself rightly as a unity, Islam is fundamentally "plastic" in its essence, so that nothing of the ambiguities of existence or of life are "sacrificed," including the serious and playful, collective and individual components of sexuality. For Bouhdiba, one can speak of a Malay Islam, an Arab Islam, and Iranian Islam, a Tunisian Islam, and other Islams, each of which suggests essential comportments and attitudes which cannot be

reduced to “folklore.” His text is resplendent with suggestions of how the sexual dimension of identity has been elaborated in the context of various expressions of Islamic belief and practice and a multiplicity of social structures.

David Kaczynski

I’m retessant to discuss Ted’s brother David as part of this list as he’s been incredibly open about the lessons he’s learnt from his connection to his brother in interviews, lectures and books.

Also, David’s story is one of being stuck in multiple terrible circumstances, such as first having to decide whether to turn in his own brother, then whether to open up to various media interviews if it might help save his brother’s life from the death penalty.

Finally, talking of crucial missed opportunities, the FBI did not treat carefully enough the information that David and Linda were the people who were the biggest help in discovering who the Unabomber was. This meant David never had the opportunity to be the person to tell Ted himself, and explain his reasons. Which if it wasn’t the case already, made it more likely that Ted would be unwilling to learn from his mistakes and offer remorse to his victims.

But, to return to the interesting reality unreported on or scarcely reported on, there is a lot that could be said. Not least of all that journalists would often fail to give David’s wife Linda credit for being the first person to have the insight to take seriously that Ted could be the Unabomber.

I would also like to analyse one peculiarity in how David often told the story of growing more confident in his brother’s guilt. Although it’s a peculiarity of memory that could happen to anyone, I think it’s important to analyse precisely for this reason.

Coverage

In lectures and his book, David often started the story of all the steps to learning his brother was the Unabomber at; coming home from work to a concerned wife who had finally plucked up the confidence to broach her suspicions with him:

David in 2005:¹²

Well, it’s a long story. It began in 1995 when in my home, my wife Linda sat me down one day and said Dave, did you ever consider the possibility even the remote possibility that your brother might be the Unabomber?

¹² David Kaczynski’s Second FBI Interview

David in 2012:¹³

I got home from work one day at this point I was working at a youth shelter on the south end of Albany Equinox and here I was helping troubled kids and their families and I felt really good about the work although there was a fair amount of crisis and stress involved in it but nothing to prepare me for what was going to come next.

I remember I was walking up the driveway and you know Linda and I have been married for five years now I can kind of read her face and I'm thinking as I look at her face looking out the kitchen window uh-oh what did I do she did not look happy and I came in the door and sure enough she says David we have to talk and at that point I was sure I was in trouble.

David in 2019:¹⁴

But I got home from work one day. I start walking from the garage to the house. I look up and I see my wife Linda space in the in the window and I, you know, I've been married five years. I figured, oh I'm in trouble. She does not look happy. Sure enough, I walk in the door and she says Dave, we have to talk. All of a sudden I figured OK. What have I done, you know? OK, so she leads me to our couch in the living room. She puts her hand on my knee and she says David don't get angry at me but. Now I'm thinking OK, what did she do? And of course I'm going to forgive her. Love conquers all. But, then she says something that absolutely turns my world around. She said, you know, Dave... You think there's any possibility that your brother Ted might be this Unabomber that everybody is talking about?

Interesting reality scarcely reported on

So, by the way that he often told this story you'd be mistaken for thinking this was the first time Linda ever brought up her suspicions with David.

Therefore, I think often David was simply failing to discuss an uncomfortable reality of a longer period of disbelief in any serious probability his brother could be the Unabomber:¹⁵

¹³ City Talk: David Kaczynski, New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty

¹⁴ Families as Secondary Consumers of the Mental Health System (2012)

¹⁵ David Kaczynski's Lecture on Ethics & Responsibility

During the last part of September, 1995, DAVE's mother, WANDA KACZYNSKI, had been briefly hospitalized due to illness, and DAVE and LINDA had traveled to Chicago to care for her upon her release and see to her comfort upon her return home. On October 3, 1995, they were exiting a restaurant in Chicago with WANDA when DAVE felt compelled to make what he called a "casual remark" to his mother which was, "Mom, did you ever think that TED might be the UNABOMER?" WANDA paused and then said quietly, "It's crossed my mind." LINDA was highly alarmed at the apparently casual nature of this conversation, and when she was alone with TED again pressed him to read the UNABOM Manifesto when it was published, which occurred almost contemporaneously with the above exchange between DAVE and WANDA. DAVE noted that his mother later said she had read about the "violent militia groups" in Montana, and hoped that TED had not joined one of them. She thought it might be likely, however, given that TED is "so angry." She then said that she would never communicate her suspicion of such a thing on TED's part, however, and she hoped that DAVE would refrain from telling anyone of any worries he might have regarding TED's associations with such groups because it "would be so unfair to him."

Rather than focus on discussing with journalists this uncomfortable reality of his weeks of projected nonchalance, I think the story morphed slightly in his mind to a topic that was always taken very seriously. And where the only reason there was a delay in calling up forensic linguists is the serious anxiety this topic induced. But although I'm sure there was serious anxiety, I think a more accurate description of events initially would be Linda's wearing through a casual blindness most people desire to walk around with about the faults of people we care about.

Finally here is a glimpse of the real and important story from an interview the couple gave in 1998:¹⁶

Linda Patrik: It took me a month or two to convince David to take the possibility that Ted was the Unabomber seriously. I had gone to Paris in the summer of 1995, and because there had recently been bombings in the Paris subways, the Parisians were fascinated with the Unabomber and there were newspaper articles on him every day. It was a time when the FBI was releasing more information to the public: about his woodworking ability, about the cities he had lived in, and the fact that he was now considered to be a loner rather than part of a revolutionary group.

Ellen Becker: Considering what you went through, you must have experienced a lot of fear.

¹⁶ Unmasking the Unabomber

Patrik: I was completely wrapped up in fear. But I knew I had to tell David about this as soon as he arrived in Paris, after he recovered from jet lag. I was very scared, to the point of having paranoid fantasies about people planting newspaper stories or people following me in Paris because I was so absorbed in the suspicion that Ted was the Unabomber.

At first David thought I was nuts and didn't take it seriously. But I couldn't drop it, so we discussed the situation intensely for a couple of days.

Becker: Did you have any doubts in that period, or were you pretty convinced that Ted was the Unabomber?

Patrik: In philosophy, you get really complicated notions of what knowledge is, so that if I had to answer as a professional philosopher, I'd never say anything of the kind. But if you allow for the things that Western philosophy doesn't, such as strong gut feelings, strong intuitions, then you allow yourself to draw conclusions that don't necessarily appear rational at first. I couldn't get this thought of Ted being the Unabomber out of my mind. I was obsessed, and I couldn't tell if it was a realistic obsession or a fantasy obsession.

Tom McPheeters: Tell us more about how you related to David in this period and how this process went between the two of you.

Patrik: I really liked Paris, and I wanted David to see it, so we talked about his brother for a while and then came to an agreement that David would read the manifesto when we returned home. In exchange, we let the problem recede into the background so that we could enjoy the city.

Still, it was a strange stay in Paris. We had two weeks of wonderful romance, and in the evening we sat on the balcony of the apartment and discussed his brother possibly being the Unabomber. I had to listen to David telling me that my suspicions about his brother were unjustified.

McPheeters: And what was the experience like for you, David?

David Kaczynski: It was strange, in that it had to be a joint decision, I think for a couple of reasons. One was that our whole family was in denial about the extent of Ted's illness. I think that in some ways you could relate our denial to some of the family's beliefs, which were that it was OK to be different, that we were different from other people, and that it was OK if Ted was different. It was OK if Ted didn't follow the normal career track that someone as brilliant as he was would ordinarily follow.

But I think there was a deep fear that many families feel when mental illness strikes, that there is something wrong with the whole family. It's a tremendous stigma. There is tremendous shame associated with it. It took Linda, somebody outside the family who saw more clearly, to press me on

this issue. She had persuaded me back in 1991 to take some of my brother's letters to a psychiatrist, and the psychiatrist confirmed that he thought Ted was very ill and isolation was definitely negative for him. There was not a good prognosis for him. At the same time, the legalities left very little to do, so we just kind of let things be and hoped that Ted would find help or seek us out when he realized he needed help.

I began taking this seriously only when Linda insisted that I read the Unabomber manifesto. I was confident when I approached it that I would be able to tell her in a page or two that this was certainly not my brother. I felt a sudden fear when I realized that I couldn't give her that assurance. I was the one who knew Ted. Linda had never met Ted, except through my stories about my brother. But she had very strong intuition and depended on me for information, for feedback. After we had retrieved more letters from my mother's home and compared them to parts of the manifesto, I said there might be a 50-50 chance. And I felt how immediately disturbed Linda was at that point. For the first time the mirror that I was in our relationship was confirming to her that her intuitions, her fears, might be accurate.

Discovered opportunities to learn and share lessons from having known Ted

So far I've discussed missed opportunities to share some lessons that I think would be valuable for people to consider, and that would be great if those lessons could have been told by the people themselves.

But, an important story worth mentioning, is a story Jamie Gehring wrote in her book *Madman in the Woods*. Jamie knew Ted through growing up in the nearest neighboring house to his cabin.

After Ted was arrested, the world's media descended on the very rural town of Lincoln, Montana, which forced Jamie to reconsider her memories of the scruffy hermit next door.

Also, with the grief of losing her father and sister, the memories she had of growing up in this idyllic rural location with her family became more important to her than ever. So, perhaps by chance of desiring to reminisce about the wild lands she grew up in and shared with Ted, this meant finding an emotionally and intuitively satisfying way to wrap her head around the two starkly different images she had about Ted also took on a new importance.

And as David Kaczynski wrote, the book simply does a perfect job at opening a window into that journey for the reader:

Combining the observations of a one-time close neighbor with extensive research and empathy for the many lives affected, Jamie Gehring's book might well be the best attempt yet to understand the strange life and mind of my brother, Theodore J. Kaczynski.

Solutions

Finally, I think one broad, but important lesson we can take away from the missed opportunities to prevent Ted's violence is that we need to hold onto our humanity and build up deeply compassionate cultures. For Ted's brother David this meant an even deeper commitment to Buddhist philosophy, and sharing these lessons as part of his decades long death penalty abolition campaigning.

We need more people to invest in carefully studying the myths, folklore and valued archetypes that functionally provide the grounding for what decisions people make when they're not questioning the status quo that deeply.

And crucially, we need people willing to carefully argue for rational improvements to our political and cultural circumstances, improvements which can provide more meaning to the individual.

There are two major ways I see this happening:

Progressing culture from inside the beast

This would look something similar to the way I think we should all be attempting to gently win over our friends to our politics when they're open to the discussion. Basically, having gentle conversations with friends who are in the mood to talk seriously about the foundational reasons motivating their actions and the valuable web of cultures they're drawing from.

This is a quote from an essay I wrote on political advocacy, but a similar dynamic can apply to persuading friends and acquaintances over to being open to complex ethical and aesthetic cultural values through for example book clubs:¹

I think we need to get well educated on how even the baby step policies toward the left would be an improvement on where we are now, we need to learn the internal politicking of government and get good at having friendly and persuasive arguments to appeal to friends and acquaintances basic intuitions.

The goal being that we can talk the latest news and (1) Win over conservatives to obvious empirically better policies on the left, and (2) Win over liberals when center-left parties are in power to feel dismayed at the slow

¹ Why I think anarchists should not abandon all left-wing mass movements

pace of change, and so acknowledge how much better it would be if there was a market socialist in the position willing to rally people to demonstrate and strike to push through bills.

This still must entail a cynical clarity about how many swing voters you meet will be responding to the see saw effect in politics of blaming the last person in power for everything wrong, so knowing how much time to invest and picking your battles.

The other way I see culture changing is through people simply trying to build a little piece of utopia here and now in the shell of the old world:

Progressing culture from the radical fringe

From tree sitters in California, to Food not Bombs groups in Indonesia we can see this movement learning from each other internationally, that has different social and moral norms.

The same way some people have the willpower to put up with horrible bosses in order to pursue a passion at work, some people are OK with putting up with physical hardships in order to get to explore this more co-operative culture in its grassroots form, still developing, trying to become the mainstream culture and politics.

And in some cases, the alternative means of meeting your needs can even be time-saving. The first time I was introduced to dumpster diving food from supermarket bins, we used to find so much great food that on each trip filling up the van I'm sure it would have cost £500 on the supermarket shelf, so to be able to do that and have it all neatly stacked away in our kitchen in 2 hours, where I otherwise might have had to work way more hours at a job that isn't creatively engaging in the least is a massive win.

The forest land squat I used to live on existed at the edge of this huge badly planned urban sprawl from multiple directions, such that the forest met the 'planning criteria', for having better amenities in terms of supermarkets, than anywhere else around. Because of the way supermarkets have to pop up at the edge of urban sprawl to account for this badly managed city planning. So I could have tried to be a politician in one of these cities with a button-up tie advocating against continually building out into the green belt further and further. But I genuinely think being a presence there, as a place families could bring their kids to play around on the walkways, and be able to tell that story to people of the comedic situation we existed in as squatters also plays an important role in shifting the culture.

Finally, here is a pop culture TV show dialogue and inspired philosophical dialogue of the concept I'm trying to get across:

A dialogue between an absurdist and a cynic

The Original Scene

[Quidd's room. Day. House runs the ultrasound test on Quidd. Quidd removes his oxygen mask to talk to House.]

JIMMY QUIDD: So what's wrong with me?

GREG HOUSE: You mean besides your music?

JIMMY QUIDD: [rolls his eyes] Oh, well, sure, 'cause I don't play your kind of music, it's not music, right?

GREG HOUSE: Yeah. I resent you because you're not Perry Como.

JIMMY QUIDD: [chuckles] Look, I don't... I don't play for an audience, okay?

GREG HOUSE: Well, then, that stage you stand on is an odd choice.

JIMMY QUIDD: I just... I do it for me, okay? I don't do it for you.

GREG HOUSE: You have three choices in this life. Be good, get good or give up. You've gone for column "D". Why?

JIMMY QUIDD: Look, you know, some people... They like my music. Most people can't stand it. But they just sort of just shrug and ignore me. But a few, they feel like they have to tell me... what I'm screwing up. You know, what I'm wasting. Why do they care?

The Inspired Dialogue

ABSURDIST: Have you figured out why you think I'm choosing to behave wrongly yet?

CYNIC: How about that you openly exhibit all the vices of what usually correspond with being wrong?

ABSURDIST: I'm comfortable with not being easily comprehensible to most people.

CYNIC: To what end though? What to you is the point in communicating at all then?

ABSURDIST: Because I've found that I enjoy precisely seeing people work through that incomprehension.

CYNIC: There are obviously virtuous people to look up to though, why not simply follow their example and try to be as good as them?

ABSURDIST: What if most people's metric for who to look up to is screwed up though? What if what's actually virtuous looks dull and boring?

What if you need a clown to show you that being good doesn't have to mean being dull and boring.

Maybe the clown looks to be failing or being inconsistent at first, but only because you're stuck viewing their actions through a broken lense.

Further Reading

- Why Culture Wars Matter
- Humble Theory; Folklore's Grasp on Social Life

The Ted K Archive

Theo Slade
The Unabomber & Quiet Neighbors
The Frustratingly Predictable 'Quiet Neighbor' News Stories

www.thetedkarchive.com