

Ted Kaczynski (Unabomber) | Mental Health & Personality | MMPI Results

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnlUgfBB2jA>

Synopsis

This video answers the questions: Can I analyze the Ted Kaczynski case (aka the Unabomber)? What are the mental health and personality factors at work in this case? What do the results of his MMPI indicate?

The Psychology of Notorious Serial Killers; The Intersection of Personality Theory and the Darkest Minds of Our Time by Todd Grande, PhD

What drives serial killers to commit their horrific crimes? Are sex crimes really motivated by sexual desire? Why do some killers stop killing, while others escalate?

The science of personality theory has advanced dramatically in recent years, shedding new light on the inner workings of these criminals. In this book, professional counselor Todd Grande applies personality theory to over a dozen of the most notorious serial killers in modern history, unraveling the mystery surrounding their crimes.

Serial killers are typically motivated by sexual domination, money, or political ideology, or experiencing psychosis. Dr. Grande delves into the thought processes, behaviors, and emotions of these criminals, analyzing common personality traits as well as environmental factors such as childhood stressors and even certain kinds of injury. Empirically supported principles create a framework that offers new insight into why people do what they do and how they might recover from destructive patterns.

All human behavior exists on a continuum, and through the study of extreme behaviors, any behavior becomes a little more understandable. Learning about serial killers can enlighten us about the human condition.

The Author

Dr. Todd Grande is a professional counselor, counselor educator, and content creator who specializes in personality disorders, addiction, trauma, and psychopathology. He operates a popular YouTube channel in which he covers mental health disorders, personality theory, true crime, relationships, and narcissism. He is a Licensed Professional Counselor of Mental Health and Licensed Chemical Dependency Professional in Delaware and is a National Certified Counselor. He holds a Master's of Science in Community Counseling from Wilmington University and a Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision from Regent University. For many years, Dr. Grande was an associate professor in Wilmington University's Clinical Mental Health Counseling program and provided counseling and consulting services in his community.

Introduction

Welcome to my scientifically informed insider look at mental health topics.

Hello, this is Dr. Grande. Today's question asks if I can take a look at the mental health and personality characteristics in the Ted Kaczynski case. Ted Kaczynski of course was also known as the Unabomber.

Another question here is what do the results of his MMPI indicate.

So, just a reminder I'm not diagnosing anybody here in this video, only speculating about what could be happening in a situation like this.

First I'll take a look at the timeline, then look at the investigation, Ted Kaczynski's background and then the mental health and personality factors in this case.

The Timeline

So, from the perspective of an outside observer, this case starts on May 25th 1978.

A package wrapped in brown paper is found on the campus of the University of Illinois in Chicago, it was to be delivered to the sender, a professor at nearby Northwestern University. The professor however did not send the package, so he gave it to campus security and it exploded, injuring one of the security guards.

In May of 1979 a graduate student at Northwestern University was injured by a bomb and then we see in November of 1979 twelve passengers aboard American Airlines flight 444 from Chicago to Washington DC, were injured from smoke inhalation, a bomb in the cargo area of the aircraft failed to detonate completely, but it still caused smoke, this occurred while the plane was flying and of course caused an emergency landing.

Then we see in June 1980, the president of American Airlines was injured by a bomb, at this point the FBI formed the unabob task force named for the earliest targets, universities and airlines, they had no idea Kaczynski was the Unabomber.

The FBI discovered that the suspect used materials that were commonly available, like nails, tape, fishing wire and wood. There were also no fingerprints or DNA left in any of the packages, Kaczynski did leave false clues in the packages, though evidently designed to mislead investigators.

Now from October 1981 through June 1985, six more bombs were sent to universities, two were diffused and four caused injuries to five different people.

Then we move to December 1985, a computer store owner was killed making it the first murder that Kaczynski would commit. February 1987, Salt Lake City, Utah, a bomb explodes and injures a computer store owner, a woman reported seeing a man in the parking lot outside that store, her recollection leads to the now famous drawing of the Unabomber suspect.

In June of 1993, we see two different bombs injure two more people, the attacks occur just two days apart.

December 1994, one of Kaczynski's bombs kills an advertising executive in New Jersey and in April 1995 another bomb kills a timber industry lobbyists in California.

Kaczynski had murdered three people and wounded 23 from 1978 to 1995.

In June 1995 Kaczynski sends a 35 thousand word essay titled 'Industrial Society and Its Future' to the New York Times, The Washington Post and some other media outlets. He demanded that the media outlets publish this manifesto, if they satisfy this demand, he said he would stop his criminal activity.

The Investigation

So, now moving to the investigation and his arrest.

The FBI had formed a psychological profile of the Unabomber suspect, it theorized that the suspect had connections to academia, was highly intelligent and had a degree specifically in the hard sciences. Interestingly although this profile was actually extremely accurate, the FBI gave up on this profile years after it was formed.

The FBI offered a 1 million dollar reward for information leading to the arrest of the suspect, this combined with the publication of the manifesto led to the FBI receiving thousands of phone calls a day for several months.

One of the people that contacted the FBI was David Kaczynski, Ted Kaczynski's younger brother, David had recognized the style of writing in the manifesto as belonging to Ted [It was actually Linda, David's wife]. It took the FBI two months of investigating this possible match to get a warrant to search Ted's cabin, located outside of Lincoln, Montana.

Prior to this Ted Kaczynski's name had never been on any list of potential suspects compiled by the FBI. Agents believed that the suspect they were looking for was 10 years older [younger] than Kaczynski.

Ted was taken into custody on April 3 1996 the FBI found 40,000 journal pages that Kaczynski had written by hand, they contained descriptions of the crimes and instructions on how to make explosives.

They also found a live bomb, so in theory one that was ready to be mailed, so it would appear that Ted Kaczynski did not intend to keep his promise about discontinuing criminal activity. I know several people who have commented on this particular activity as very disappointing, like they were disappointed in Kaczynski, so in a sense I guess they're saying if you can't trust somebody who sends explosives to all these people around the country, who can you trust? I'm not sure exactly what they're getting at there. I mean, it seems pretty clear that Kaczynski was going to continue doing what he was doing before the publication of his manifesto. But, I find that interesting that people would be really kind of let down by Kaczynski having that other explosive in his cabin, like if he can't trust Kaczynski, who can you trust haha? Again, I don't get it, but either way I've heard that a few times.

In 1998, Kaczynski accepted a plea deal where he would serve the rest of his life in prison without the possibility of parole; he has filed numerous appeals since then, but they have all been unsuccessful.

Kaczynski's Background

Ted Kaczynski was born in Chicago, Illinois on May 22nd 1942.

Everything really seemed fine, he was relatively normal by most standards and then he developed an allergic reaction at nine months old, he had to go into the hospital for some time, for several months after his hospitalization he appeared fearful of being separated from his mother, he was also less responsive and more withdrawn.

In elementary school, he seemed to be socializing well, then his family moved and he had to transfer to a different junior high. He took an IQ test at that time and according to his report, scored between 160 and 170 points, so about four standard deviations above the mean, right? Which would be highly unusual.

He was permitted to skip sixth grade and after this yet difficulty fitting in and was bullied, during these years people described him as shy, they said he would shut down in social situations, they referred to him as a loner, in high school Kaczynski continued to be thought of as an outsider, but he did exceptionally well academically.

He had a specific interest in mathematics, he was permitted to skip 11th grade and he graduated high school at just 15 years old.

Kaczynski then went to Harvard College and graduated with a degree in mathematics in 1962, during this time we see he is described as a genius, but also socially awkward.

He also spent over 200 hours in a psychological study, he was a participant in the study and this involved him being repeatedly berated verbally and humiliated. It's really amazing to me that academics would think that this type of study was a good idea, it really highlights how some academics have a lot of intelligence, but no common sense.

After Harvard, Kaczynski went to the University of Michigan, where he would earn both a masters and a doctoral degree in mathematics.

In 1967, at age 25, Kaczynski became an assistant professor of mathematics at the University of California, Berkeley. As an assistant professor, he conducted research and taught. Evidently his teaching style was rigid and disconnected from the students, he would read from the textbook instead of engaging in a dialogue with the students, he wouldn't answer questions, so he was not well liked as a professor.

Kaczynski left that position in 1969 and offered no explanation for that decision, he moved back home with his parents and in 1971 he moved into a 10 foot by 14 foot cabin that he and his brother David had built outside of Lincoln, Montana.

His life there was pretty simple, not unusual for that rural area, he didn't have running water or electricity, he would ride a bicycle into town if he needed anything. He

became increasingly concerned that his ability to live peacefully was being jeopardized by the expansion of industry in that area, now shortly after this, his criminal career begins, up until the point he was arrested, he had no significant criminal history, he ran the red lights of a school bus at one point, but that was about it. He had no religious affiliation, no history of substance use, but he did have a history of seeking mental health treatment and I'll talk about that in the next section.

Mental Health and Personality Factors

So, now moving on to the mental health and personality factors at work in this case.

Before I go through this analysis, I want to mention something that Kaczynski said during one of his evaluations. He said that “science has no business probing the workings of the human mind.” So, he didn’t appear particularly fond of mental health professionals.

Looking at his five factor model profile, I remember the five factors through the acronym ‘OCEAN’; openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism.

Kaczynski appears to have mid to high openness to experience, mid range conscientiousness, he seems to be extremely low in extraversion, so introverted, he has low to mid agreeableness, and low to mid neuroticism.

Now taking a look at his intelligence, we see this report I talked about before where his IQ was between 160 and 170. In May of 1996, when he was in prison, he scored a 136, now this is an incredibly high score, it’s still over two standard deviations above the mean. I think this second score is probably more accurate, it was administered by a mental health professional in a controlled environment.

It’s not uncommon when we see high levels of intelligence, that it seems to come at a cost, in terms of one’s ability to socialize. So, many people in this situation are considered socially awkward and disconnected, they don’t like being around other people, they feel like they’re on the outside, we see all these things with Kaczynski, he had difficulty finding people he could relate to.

Now in terms of what was happening with his mental health, here we see a number of theories and quite a bit of controversy on this topic. As I mentioned in the prior section, we see Kaczynski did seek mental health care both prior to and after the beginning of his criminal career.

When he was at the University of Michigan he had excitement involving fantasies of being a female, he went to talk to a mental health clinician there, but in the waiting room he became anxious, by the time he got to see the clinician, he simply said he was depressed and anxious, so he never brought the topic up.

In 1988, we see he sought counseling several times around the issue of establishing relationships with women, he reported depression and insomnia at that same time.

Before the plea agreement was entered On January 22nd 1998, Kaczynski objected to the idea that he should mount an insanity defense. This is what his attorneys

had recommended. On January 7th, 1998, he attempted to end his own life using his underwear as a tourniquet, when his vision became blurry and he started to feel dizzy, he worried about possible brain damage that he could sustain in a non-fatal attempt, so he discontinued and because of this activity, a judge ordered a mental health evaluation.

A clinician named Sally Johnson performed the evaluation, the total interview time in this assessment was about 22 hours, an intake interview at a mental health agency would take about one and a half to two and a half hours, so this was an extremely thorough evaluation.

The report is 51 pages, it's actually quite interesting, I'll put a link to it in the description for this video. As part of the mental health evaluation, Kaczynski was given an MMPI - so this is a Minnesota multiphasic personality inventory, arguably the most advanced psychometric instrument that has ever been developed. He was also given a Milan clinical multi-axial inventory too, a Beck Depression Inventory, and a projective test, called the 'draw a person picking an apple from a tree'.

Alright, so that's a real thing, I didn't just make that up, that's an actual test. It's not too popular anymore, but at that time it was somewhat popular, projective tests have kind of fallen out of favor, the idea behind a projective test is that you have kind of a neutral stimuli and somebody will project their own thoughts and feelings onto that stimuli. The Rorschach test, the inkblot test, is another example of projective. They're based on a psychoanalytic theory, that with defense mechanisms, projection is one of the defense mechanisms.

So, now back to the MMPI. Dr. Johnson's interpretation has been disputed by many other people. I'll cover that controversy after I talk about her diagnosis.

I did a comprehensive review of the MMPI too, a while back and another video, I'll put the link to that video in the description as well.

Dr. Johnson gave Kosinski a provisional diagnosis of schizophrenia, paranoid type, this diagnosis was available in 1998 under the DSM4, it's not available in the current DSM, in the current DSM it's just referred to as schizophrenia. There was also a disorganized type, catatonic, undifferentiated and residual type, in that old DSM, that had been dropped.

In addition, we see that Dr. Johnson diagnosed Kaczynski with paranoid personality disorder, this is a cluster A personality disorder, in the same cluster as schizoid and schizotypal.

She also diagnosed him with antisocial and avoidant features, so not avoidant and antisocial personality disorders, just the features. Interestingly antisocial is in cluster B and avoidant is in cluster C, so in this diagnosis we see all three of the personality disorder clusters are represented.

Dr. Johnson believed that paranoid personality disorder was premorbid, so that means that she believed that disorder was already there when schizophrenia developed.

Now the schizophrenia was justified by the presence of two long-standing delusional beliefs; modern technology was controlling Kaczynski, he believed that, and he was

verbally abused by his parents when he was young, which led to him being unable to establish a relationship with a woman.

Dr. Johnson noted that Kaczynski was not psychotic at the time of her evaluation, now the paranoid personality disorder was justified by Kaczynski's pervasive distrust of others, the antisocial personality features were justified by the criminal offenses that he committed, now she would have probably given him the diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder, except he did not have symptoms before the age of 15, so he met enough of the symptom criteria, but he did not meet that other criterion.

The avoidant personality features were justified by the long-standing pattern of isolation and having difficulty in social situations.

Dr. Johnson believed that Kaczynski was competent to stand trial, which of course in this case functionally meant he was competent to accept the plea agreement.

Now it may sound unusual that he was found competent, but it's really not a high standard there, one has to be able to understand the nature and consequences of the proceedings, and to assist attorneys in their defense. So it's not really necessarily a high bar that's set in the sentence.

Critique of the Diagnosis

Now moving to the controversial interpretation of the MMPI results.

Dr. Johnson's interpretation of the results suggest that Kaczynski honestly answered all the questions, including some that indicated he had strange thoughts, odd perceptions and feelings of isolation and alienation.

His profile was said to be consistent with someone who would be socially insecure, introverted, shy, as well as hostile, irritable and demanding. The profile is also consistent with somebody who would avoid social activities and keep their distance from people, who would be described as cold and distant and be unable to directly express feelings. And who would be hypersensitive to criticism and troubled by a lack of relationships. This point is particularly interesting because it runs contrary to the idea of schizoid personality disorder and I'll talk about that in a few moments.

So, some interesting conclusions we see from the evaluation of Kaczynski, specifically from the MMPI results, but there has been some disagreement as I indicated.

There's another popular theory about how this MMPI could be interpreted that we see in the research literature, so this theory goes like this:

'The results of the MMPI indicate that Kaczynski was over-reporting symptoms, so it's possible that this can be attributed to his unusual personality, so his unusual personality could lead to an unusual pattern of responses, but another possibility would be that he was lying.' This other theory also finds 'no evidence of disordered thinking, little evidence of delusions or persecutory ideas, no depression, he was upset about the prospect of an insanity defense, but that's not the same thing as depression, this theory says that there is a pronounced lack of positive emotions, indicated in this MMPI profile and that's not the same thing as having negative emotions, so positive emotions are tracked on extraversion and negative emotions are tracked on neuroticism, additionally here we see no signs of anxiety'.

So, with this theory what does that really leave us with, well it seems to align with schizoid personality disorder. Now, interestingly this is what the prosecution experts believed that Kaczynski had, so again, they had a difference of opinion there with Dr. Johnson.

Another interesting point here, the results of the Millan indicated elevations on the schizoid clinical scale, so just to cover the other two assessments that were given the BDI the Beck Depression Inventory, and the 'draw a person picking an apple from a tree'. Both those test results came back as normal.

So, what is schizoid personality disorder, well it's a cluster A personality disorder. We see seven symptom criteria in the DSM, four or more are required for a diagnosis.

The symptom criteria are “neither desires nor enjoys close relationships including being part of a family.” this one seems to align, “almost always choosing solitary activities,” this one seems like a good fit considering he lived in a cabin in a rural part of Montana, “has little if any interest in having sexual experiences with another person,” I don’t think this one fits, “takes pleasure in few if any activities,” this one’s not really clear, lacks close friends or confidants, other than first-degree relatives, this one seems to be endorsed, “appears indifferent to the praise or criticism of others,” well he was hypersensitive to criticism, so this one does not seem to be endorsed, and “shows emotional coldness detachment or flattened affect,” this one seems endorsed. So, a good argument could be made for schizoid personality disorder.

Conclusion

From everything I've seen here, what do I think about this controversy around the diagnosis? Well as I mentioned, I can't diagnose him, I can only align symptoms with behavior like his, but if I were to do that, I think I would lean more on the side of schizophrenia. I think Dr. Johnson made some good points about the delusions, particularly convincing was the idea that Kaczynski believed modern technology was controlling him, that does seem to rise to the level of a delusion. We see an alignment with avoidant personality features and also with antisocial, I think she made good points there. As far as the premorbid paranoid personality disorder, I think this makes sense based on how we understand cluster A personality pathology, we understand it to be on a continuum with schizophrenia, so it wouldn't be unusual for somebody who was eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia to have had paranoid personality disorder before that. So, the idea is that that personality disorder could be an indication that somebody would develop schizophrenia later on.

So, what about the schizoid personality disorder argument, well we see alignment with some of the schizoid symptom criteria, like I talked about, so perhaps really here we see both schizoid personality disorder and paranoid personality disorder were premorbid. So, certainly a complex set of symptoms, but there's a lot there around cluster A personality pathology and around schizophrenia.

The Ted Kaczynski case has been an area of interest from many professionals in the world of mental health and for those in the criminal justice system. Kaczynski was an extremely dangerous criminal, if not for his brother recognizing that writing style, it's likely he could have evaded capture indefinitely. He really had a dangerous combination of extreme intelligence delusional thinking paranoia and a lack of empathy. I know whenever I talk about famous cases like the Ted Kaczynski case, there will be a variety of opinions. Please put any opinions and thoughts in the comment section. They always generate an interesting dialogue, as always I hope you found my analysis of this topic to be interesting.

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