

RUNNING HEAD: I'm the Unabomber

Pleased to meet you, I'm the Unabomber or

Did you get my message?

Ted Kaczynski Introduces Himself to Society

John T. Glaneman

California University of Pennsylvania

Introduction

Meaning is not always available through surface structure examination. At times the hypostatization of intention often must be completed through deep or hidden inspection. Theoretical constructs exist for the sole purpose of meaning research. A communication scholar has many theoretical vehicles specifically designed for the examination of artifacts. Of course different theories fit different situations just as differing artifacts purport differing intent, i.e. interpersonal theories fit interpersonal situations, mass communication theories fit mass communication theories, etc. Theory application leads scholars to the depth of meaning while exposing possible hidden author intent. While some argue the position that artifact criticism has the ability to corrupt author intent, at times, looking into author's motives are necessary for complete understanding of artifact content. An examination of Social Penetration Theory, The unabomber, and his manifesto provides the preliminary information necessary to understand the progression of the author's true intention. Through an application of Social Penetration theory to the Unabomber manifesto, the true intentions of the author can be exposed revealing an entirely different agenda for the purpose of the document. The unabomber was not interested in critiquing modern society as much as he was in introducing and familiarizing society with him and vice versa.

Social Penetration

Interpersonal communication remains a field of study that has interested researchers for many years. The process of communication between people, usually two, is defined as interpersonal communication. The term penetration is often linked to interpersonal communication because of the metaphoric relevance to the operation of interpersonal and relational dynamics. "Gerald Miller and his

colleagues literally define interpersonal communication in terms of penetration' (Littlejohn, 1996, p.264). Penetration refers to the process by which communicators grow more intimate over time as personal information is disclosed i.e., penetrating into one's personality and private life. A relationship that experiences no penetration will eventually cease to exist. Since all interpersonal communication involves one or more people, then it can be considered as a social activity. Therefore, interpersonal communication can be discussed in terms of social penetration. Social penetration was a term first used by Altman and Taylor as a title for their theory on interpersonal communication (Littlejohn, 1996, p. 264). Social penetration remains a valid and useful tool for the communication scholar to investigate interpersonal phenomena.

The social penetration theory is often represented visually as an onion. The onion metaphor adequately portrays both the layering effect of emotional containment and the depth and breadth of self disclosure. 'The depth of penetration is the degree of intimacy' (Griffin, 1994, p.163). As an individual discloses more and more personal information, or information they usually keep close to them, the layers are penetrated or peeled away to reveal a more intimate side of the individual. Breadth refers to the areas of discussion (Griffin, 1994, p. 165). A person may reveal everything about a particular subject while keeping some subjects secretive or hidden from view. A long friendship would have both depth and breadth. Layers of a person's intimate facade are peeled away as the layers of an onion in a predictable pattern.

The social penetration theory states that as persons engage in discourse and get to know each other more, they go through predictable phases or stages of their relational development (See Littlejohn, 1996, p. 265). '*Orientation* consists of impersonal communication, in which one discloses only very public information about oneself' (p. 265). This would happen upon first meeting or initially being

introduced to a person. ‘*Exploratory affective exchange*’ consists of the ‘expansion of information and movement to a deeper level of disclosure’ (p. 265). This happens during the stage when a layer of emotional cloak is removed to become more acquainted or test someone’s reaction. ‘The third stage, *affective exchange*, centers on evaluative and critical feelings at a deeper level’ (p. 265). This stage must have some benefit to the person disclosing the information because there is a substantial emotional risk involved. ‘Finally, *stable exchange*, is highly intimate and allows the partners to predict each other’s actions and responses very well’ (p. 265). This stage is reserved for marriages and or long time friends where a great deal of trust is involved.

With such a broad range of interpersonal communication situations available, the social penetration theory has a wide range of applications. Any communicative event or artifact that is interpersonal in nature remains eligible to be studied utilizing social penetration theory (See Allensworth, 1996; Clement, 1994; Hensley, 1992; Keaten, 1994). While the Unabomber Manifesto is a written text, it is still interpersonal in nature due to the definitional aspect of interpersonal communication. Social Penetration theory has valid application for the Unabomber manifesto.

Social Penetration provides an excellent theoretical vehicle for the examination of the Unabomber Manifesto. The phases of the introduction of the Unabomber to the public through the manifesto follows predictable patterns according to social penetration. Through the manifesto, Ted voluntarily removes the layers of his protective facade to establish a relationship with society. He speaks not to another individual although his dialog is that of a teacher to a student. He is informing us of who he is and why he has done what he has done. For many years, Ted was isolated in that cabin with only his thoughts to keep him company. He needed a friend and the public was his choice of confidants. The initial units of the manifesto are actually the layers he wants to remove to become more

intimate with us. The writing of the manifesto could just as easily have been a coffee shop diatribe between two new acquaintances with the one, Ted, desperate to be understood by the other, us. Not only does he peel away the layers to show us depth and breadth but he also does so in a manner consistent with the stages of relational development. The document itself is obviously too large for a paper such as this but the entire document does not need to be critiqued, only the few beginning sections in which Ted opens himself up to us.

The Unabomber

While this paper does not attempt to explain how or why the Unabomber carried out his evil plans, a brief look into his biography will acquaint the reader with the individual who held the country hostage and law enforcement officials impotent. His biography, however, is anything but glamorous, in fact until he left the university, it is quite normal and uneventful.

Born Theodore Kaczynski in 1942, The Unabomber was a bright child from the start. His family tried to provide him with the mental stimulation necessary for an intelligent young person to develop. His mother would take him to museums in Chicago, where they lived, in the hope that he would absorb information (Gibbs, 1996, p.45). The efforts of his family paid off. He was able to completely skip his junior year in high school. While not overly social, he did find time to join a few school extracurricular clubs: Coin club, German club, Math Club, and Biology Club (p. 45). While these appear to be worthwhile endeavors, he was exploring other types of instructional entertainment on his own. He and childhood friend Dale Eickelman, used to experiment with home made explosives using material that they found around the house or in grocery stores. Without doubt, he took his childhood knowledge into the future with him.

The Unabomber took advantage of his natural intelligence well into his adult life and university career. He was able to graduate high school at the age of sixteen and entered Harvard University (Gibbs, 1996, p. 45). He was a rather nondescript student who lived alone in a dormitory for those who are loners. Those who lived on the same floor as him have only a single vivid memory of him. His room was so filthy and unkempt that the others on the floor had to call in assistance to force him to clean his room and rid the floor of its peculiar odor (p. 45). Once through with Harvard at age twenty, he went on to earn his Master's and Ph.D. at the University of Michigan (p.45). Again, he more or less just molded into the scenery. With his education complete, he made his way to U. C. Berkeley to teach. Had he known what radicalism and ideology awaited him, he might have been better off somewhere else.

The universities in California in general, and Berkeley in particular, were hot beds of student radicalism and leftist ideology. Radical ideology flourished on campuses during the time of the late 1960's. Professors had to choose which side of the fence they were on (Gibbs, 1996, p. 46). After two years, The Unabomber suddenly quit the premier mathematics department in the world and left to live in a self made hut in Montana. Although, whether he left the university to start killing was because of the radical influences on the campus, or not is pure speculation. However, his life previous to Professorship seems to be of a type that would be able to be influenced by that type of anti-social, anti-cultural, social commentary rhetoric.

His life after academia was a solitary, hate filled, life of death and destruction. Although, he left industrial society behind in 1971 (Gibbs, 1996, p.46), his killing spree did not begin until 1978 (Cockburn, 1995, p. 14). Over the course of almost twenty years, he sent a total of sixteen bombs which killed three people and injured twenty three (Dear Diary, 1996, p. 32). He led the government

on the longest, most expensive man hunt for a serial killer in United States history (Gibbs, 1996, p. 38).

The name Unabomber is an acronym for the victims he initially targeted, university types and airline executives, hence Unabomber. Eventually, however, it became apparent that he was pursuing an anti-technology agenda, targeting even computer manufacturers.

Once the background of the Unabomber was discovered, the fact that he became a terrorist is actually easier to comprehend. He has the characteristics necessary for that type of personality to emerge. First, he was an extremely smart individual whose natural abilities were nurtured by his family. Second, he had the knowledge of explosives from his childhood experiments. Third, he had the solitary, impressionable, personality type that is easily influenced under the proper circumstances. Lastly, he found himself in Berkeley where the radical influences overwhelmed any sense of morality he might have had. Add all of these factors and we arrive at the Unabomber.

The Manifesto

The manifesto is an extraordinary document. Many persons have outlined their societal plans before enacting them (See.

Getting to Know Ted

Through the manifesto, Ted Kaczynski follows through the stages of social penetration theory to form a relationship with the American public. He uses the document to provide details into his psyche as a means of explaining himself and his actions. At the first layer, or the orientation stage, the public is introduced to its first glimpse of the Unabomber, in a drawing. The second layer and the exploratory affective exchange stage begins in the manifesto with the introduction section of the document. Manifesto sections 2 through 7 correspond to intimate layers 2 through 7 and the affective exchange stage of the social penetration theory. Through this analysis, the Unabomber shall expose himself to the

scrutiny of the public eye as he bares open thoughts that he could not or would not share with anyone else during his seclusion in Montana.

Layer 1

The first glimpse of the Unabomber is through a drawing of a possible suspect in some bombing incidents that at the time may or may not have been related. Who could forget the figure behind the sunglasses with the hood up over his head, sporting a mustache? Perhaps the ambiguousness of the drawing enhanced the public perception and influenced their initial perceptions of who this person was. The public finally had something or someone to associate with the acts of terrorism that were befalling American citizens. Although Ted did not have any input into the drawing, it was nonetheless the first time that the public was introduced to the elusive terrorist. This was the first layer to be removed or the orientation stage. We were allowed to see only very basic, and public information about Ted. This was of course something that Ted absolutely did not want. Identification leads to incarceration. Nonetheless, we glimpsed a layer of Ted. This initial introduction took place in the early 1980's and it was not until many years later that Ted would move the relationship further with the publication of the manifesto.

Layer 2

The introduction section of the manifesto leads us into the exploratory affective exchange and the second layer of the personality onion. Ted moves from the basic introduction to the expansion of information. He reveals his thesis for writing the manifesto in the very first sentence. 'The Industrial Revolution [sic] and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race' (Kaczynski, 1998, p.1). Now that Ted has revealed his purpose he goes on to let us in on what has influenced him thereby

opening up his personality to us. He wants us to know him, who influenced him, and the driving force behind his attitudes.

Ted has been influenced by many literate figures down through history as evidenced by the introduction section. His classical underpinnings show through his use of the Aristotelian method of rhetoric. He is appealing to the ethos of the individual by proclaiming a crisis that demands immediate attention. 'The continued development of technology will worsen the situation' (p. 1). Immediately we are confronted with Ted's view of the world and technology. Through his characterizations of fact and objective based ideology, he allows us to see his epistemological and ontological assumptions regarding the nature of our surroundings. The fact that there is a concrete problem and a solution exists proves this.

The writings of Marx and Engels also influenced Ted and his ideology. '..only at the cost of permanently reducing human beings and many other living organism to engineered products and mere cogs in the social machine' (p. 1). This sounds remarkably similar to Marx's theory of alienation. Man is alienated from man, and man is alienated from nature. (See Marx, Capital 1992). This goes right along with Ted's anti-technology views. Furthermore, Marx plays a further role in the formation of Ted's ideology. 'We therefore advocate a revolution against the industrial system' (Kaczynski, 1998, p. 2). Through, the Communist Manifesto, (1992) Marx advocates the exact same thing. World wide revolution remains the only answer to the ills of society. The only difference is Marx focused only on Capitalism while Ted focused on technology which is an out growth of capitalism. The introduction section is so full of Marxist rhetoric that it is no wonder Ted uses the plural 'we' instead of the singular first person 'I'. Ted had other influences as well.

Ted discussed the fact that there are existing environmental movements but there is not a large enough anti-technological movement to adequately resolve the technology issue. He insinuates that his is the first 'movement' (Kaczynski, 1998, p.2). He does not give enough credit to his anti-technology predecessors who have obviously played an important role in the formation of his ideals. Surely his solitary lifestyle and cabin in the woods imitates Thoreau. (See Thoreau, 1960 and Glaberson, 1997). The similarities between Ted and Thoreau's Walden pond experiences are astounding. Furthermore, his anti-technology criticisms have influences found in Richard Weaver (1984). Ted calls for a revolution against technology while Weaver only provides the criticism that fuel Ted's obsessions.

Ted has introduced us to how he feels about certain issues and who has provided some of the influences necessary to come to the conclusions he does. Certainly, this resembles two people learning about each other. Two academics would certainly discuss subjects of this nature to let the other know where they stand. In fact, much of what Ted says in the introduction appears to have been derived from some type of formal education. Although possible for a person self-educate, we can assume since he attended University that some of the influences came from there especially viewing the time he was there and the negative influences that the University could put upon a person (See Bloom, 1987). Many of the ideas expounded upon in the upcoming sections might even have been generated at the University.

Layer 3

Through the third layer, Ted begins the affective exchange of social penetration theory. he will remain in this stage through the rest of the discussion. He lets us in on how he feels about himself. Although he discusses others, he is describing himself. Ted wants us to know him. He hides his feeling in the rhetoric but the truth is in document. The truth will set you free, and in this case, the truth has set Ted free.

This section, entitled 'The Psychology of modern leftism', is the first glimpse into Ted's psyche. Ted sees leftism as an adverse product of society. 'One of the most widespread manifestations of the craziness of our world is leftism...' (Kaczynski, 1998, p.2). The history of leftism begins with socialism. 'During the first half of the 20th century leftism could have been practically identified with socialism' (p. 2). For Ted, socialism is no better than any other form of government that accepts and or promotes technology and progress. Ted states that the article is mainly about leftists who are 'socialists, collectivists, "politically correct" types, feminists, gay and disability activists, animal rights activists and the like' (p. 3). These characterizations are roughly accurate of the description of leftists. Most activists are left leaning. According to Ted, a leftist is more a psychological type more than an ideologue. Clearly, Ted does not favor leftism; in fact if he blames societal problems on leftism, then he hates or dispises leftists. What he fails to realize is that he leaves himself out of the equation. Ted engages in obsessive activism through his mail bomb activities. He is the quintessential activist. Furthermore, he is a leftist by his own definition. If most activists are leftists and he is an activist then he is a leftist. The syllogism makes perfect sense in this case. One step further. If Ted is a leftist and he hates leftists then he loathes himself. Ted has let us in on a secret about himself by accident. Not only is Ted a leftist but he is one that dislides himself. There are two psychological tendencies that underlie modern leftism: feelings of inferiority, and oversocialization.

Layer 4

Further into Ted's intimate personal details are feelings of self described inferiority.

'By "feelings of inferiority" we mean not only inferiority feelings in the strictest sense but a whole spectrum of related traits: low self-esteem, feelings of powerlessness, depressive tendencies, defeatism, guilt, self-hatred, etc. We

argue that modern leftists tend to have such feelings (possibly more or less repressed) and that these feelings are decisive in determining the direction of modern leftism' (p. 3).

Ted runs the gambit of traits. Every single one of these could and does apply to him. He expresses self hatred through his diatribe on leftism. Guilt is one reason for writing this document. Surely through the discussion about needing a revolution to solve societal problems because of their vastness describes a form of defeatism. Bullies generally suffer from low self esteem. Surely, sending mail bombs anonymously exhibits a tendency to bully others while exhibiting large amounts of cowardice. etc. etc. etc.

While attempting to disassociate himself from leftists, Ted takes on the characteristics of a leftist. He states that leftists suffering from inferiority are often too sensitive about offending anyone. However, he makes points not offend classes of people he blames others for engaging in hypersensitivity against. Take the following parenthesised sentences for example:

'(We do not mean to imply that primitive cultures ARE inferior to ours. We merely point out the hypersensitivity of leftist anthropologists.) (We do not suggest that women, Indians etc. ARE inferior; we are only making a point about leftist psychology).' (p. 4).

Ted attempts to hide his leftist leanings but does not fare very well. Lastly, Ted implied to us in the last section that he was not only a leftist but one that did not like himself. he peels away more of the onion in this section with the statement 'Self-hatred is a leftist trait' (p.6).

Layer 5

The Oversocialization section of the manifesto holds some interesting keys to understanding Ted. He willingly unveils himself in these pages and peels away another layer. Oversocialization is the second cause of leftism. Ted explains during a discussion of how leftists use relativism to deceive themselves exactly how he goes about self-deception. Although not entirely clear on this subject, Ted uses the term oversocialized to describe a person who has been overexposed to society and the moral code within that society so that they become relativists in their attempt to do what is right for everyone.

Some people are so highly socialized that the attempt to think, feel and act morally imposes a severe burden on them. In order to avoid feelings of guilt, they continually have to 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 "oversocialized" to describe such people' (p. 8).

Ted could not have done a better job describing himself. He wants us to know how he went about blowing people up without the slightest bit of guilt. He could not have felt guilty or he would have stopped. Most leftists, however, do not engage in violence.

Ted is not an ordinary leftist. He needs to stand out in the crowd. He states on page 10 that leftists typically do not engage in activity against the moral code of the society. There are, however, exceptions, that rebel against oversocialization by rebelling. Ted plays both sides of the oversocialized fence. On one hand, he uses it as a tool for deceiving himself and on the other hand it is a tool for rebellion. Leftists need to justify their rebellion. 'If they engage in violence they claim to be fighting against racism or the like' (p. 10). Ted must be fighting against 'the like.' Ted has done an admirable job letting us get to know him and explaining himself to us. There is still more we need to know to understand him, though.

Layer 6

In this section Ted deals with the need for power or control over one's life and destiny. He breaks the power process into four elements: goal, effort, attainment of goal, and autonomy. Although Ted speaks in terms of an Aristocracy in this section, he is merely euphemising a point regarding the need for goals and not just pure power. He obviously felt pure power as he was destroying lives and property while everyone was powerless to stop him. But this was not enough for him; he needed a purpose for his power. Whether or not he invented this whole anti-technology scheme as a way to give himself a goal is unknown. Perhaps he was only power crazy, needed a purpose, and decided to rid us of technology. Goals provide the means for a person to stay mentally sane. Effort is required to exercise the mental and physical capacities and avoid depression and lethargy. Finally, the effort towards goals must be attainable. If Ted's attainment of goal was to rid the world of technology, he failed miserably. He did not even make enough of an impact for anyone to take him seriously because of his methods. Ted left out attainment of his goal and went straight towards his own autonomy. He lived a completely autonomous life and was totally in control of not only his own destiny but of others as well. In summation, 'in order to avoid serious psychological problems, a human being needs goals whose attainment requires effort, and he must have a reasonable rate of success in attaining his goals' (p. 12). So, we now know that Ted needed some sort of activity to keep his power process in full swing.

Layer 7

This is the last of the layers we will examine. It provides enough insight to complete the path from ideology to destruction. Ted titled this section 'surrogate activities' (p. 12). A surrogate activity is an

‘activity that is directed toward an artificial goal that people set up for themselves merely in order to have some goal to work toward, or let us say, merely for the sake of the “fulfillment” that they get from pursuing the goal’ (p.12).

Ted, unfortunately, pursued bombing as a surrogate activity. He put everything into this activity. He was well versed in explosive technology and bomb making. He was a master at eluding authorities (See Lavelle, 1997). His entire identity was absorbed in the terroristic process which he pursued with obsessive abandon.

Through the application of social penetration theory to the manifesto, a clear picture of Ted Kaczynski emerged. He was attempting to become friends with the American population through the document. Through each section of the manifesto, more and more layers of the onion metaphor were peeled away giving us insight into the unabomber psychology.

Discussion

The final stage of the social penetration theory, stable exchange, remains absent from the discussion. This is not an omission. The stable exchange stage is the point in the relationship where persons can predict each others behavior. Clearly, Ted did not want that much closeness with society. He did, however, have a need to be validated. He fulfilled that need by establishing a relationship with society through the manifesto. Social penetration provided an excellent key for the criticism of the manifesto. As a society, we should look favorably upon the manifesto for what it represents. It not only led to his capture but also provided a window into his soul. We must conclude that his intelligence level was such that he knew before publishing the manifesto that it would ultimately lead to his capture.

Ted K.. held the nation within his terroristic grasp but was brought down by his own vanity. His need to be heard became his undoing. First, the recognition of the manifesto by his family was the beginning of the end for Ted. Ted 'was a killer betrayed by his own prose style' (Morrow, 1996, p. 37). His mother, Wanda, and brother, David were cleaning out their house, they found some of Ted's old writings that contained echoes of the Unabomber's manifesto (Gibbs, 1996, p. 40). Furthermore, when agents stormed his shack, his journal entries were just as good as a confession. The journals describe experiments with explosives, times and dates of mailings, thoughts about what he was doing, etc. (Dear Diary, 1996, p. 32). Although not public yet, the journals would probably read as a modern day Walden, and most certainly be of interest to communication scholars. Perhaps they will be published after his trial.

One of the most poignant subjects within the manifesto is Ted's criticisms of the left. The left should be outraged by the affront to their thoughts and ideology. They are not. The left has the curious habit of tenaciously holding close those who are like themselves. It takes a lot for the left to give up their own, and Ted is one of their own. First, it was proven in this essay that he is a leftist and second, the left have not abandoned him yet. The far left leaning Pacifica radio has aired some thirteen commentaries by Ted on their show Democracy Now (Taranto, 1998). The left doesn't abandon one of their own easily.

This essay focused mainly on the critique of The Unabomber Manifesto through social penetration theory. It was in no way directed towards validating the horrible and cowardly crimes of an individual who obviously suffers some sort of mental disfunction. Society would have been better off without Ted's destructions but if we had to have him, it was better that he left a written record of his reasons. The essay did, however, prove the inherent worth of the manifesto and social penetration

theory. The manifesto might provide a benchmark for seeking out others who may have the same tendencies. Furthermore, the manifesto is not the ravings of a lunatic. In fact much of what he says is accurate to a degree. Allen Cockburn disagrees with Ted's assessment of the left, but his characterizations hold more validity than Mr. Cockburn would like to admit (1995, p.15).

What lies next remains a more detailed analysis of the manifesto than is available for this type of work. An in depth examination of the full document lies in the purview of the thesis or dissertation.

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