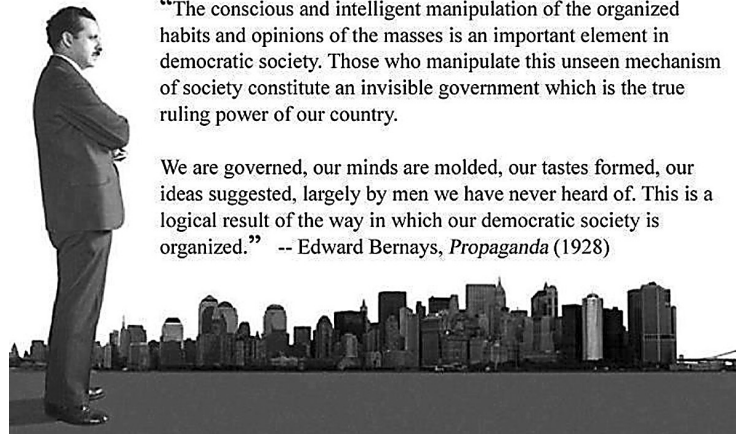


Psychoanalysis shapes consumer culture

Who could ever have imagined that Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, would be an **unwitting** contributor to the rise of Western consumer culture? The link between psychoanalytic Freudian ideas and advertising was made by Edward L. Bernays, the **acknowledged** father of public relations and nephew of Sigmund Freud. Bernays was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1891, but grew up in New York City. His mother was Freud's sister and his father was the brother of Freud's wife, Martha Bernays¹.

He maintained contact with his uncle and the family often joined Freud for summer holidays in the Alps. Bernays began his career **shaping** public opinion by creating a media campaign, but his application of psychoanalytic principles to public relations and advertising came only after reading Freud's "General Introductory Lectures", a **gift** from Freud to his nephew to thank him for a box of Havana cigars. These lectures were delivered by Freud during World War I. Never before, in the course of thirty years of lecturing at the University of Vienna, had he deliberately **set down**, with a view to publication, the full range of his theories and observations. This work offers the reader, **acquainted** with the concepts of Freud, the possibility of tracing the logic of his arguments and sharing his conclusions. In these "Lectures", Freud constantly **engages** the reader in a discussion and **backs** them **up** with examples from life and from clinical practice.



"The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.

We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized." -- Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (1928)

"These twenty-eight lectures to **laymen** are elementary and almost conversational. Freud **sets forth** with a frankness almost **startling** the difficulties and limitations of psychoanalysis, and also describes its main methods and results as only a master and originator of a new school of thought can do. These discourses are at the same time simple and almost confidential, and they trace and **sum up** the results of thirty years of devoted and **painstaking** research."²

Manipulating behaviors

Bernays was soon **intrigued** by Freud's idea that irrational forces drive human behavior and tried to take advantage of those forces to sell products for his clients. In his 1928 book, *Propaganda*, Bernays suggested that, by understanding the group mind, it would be possible to manipulate people's behavior without their even realizing it. To test this hypothesis, Bernays launched one of his most famous public relations campaigns: convincing women to smoke. In 1929, it was

¹ LISA HELD, Vol. 40, No. 11- *Print version*, p. 32, December 2009.

² SIGMUND FREUD, *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, preface by G. Stanley Hall President, 1920.

acknowledged: *riconosciuto*

acquainted: *al corrente*

to back up: *sostenere*

to engage: *impegnare*

gift: *dono*

to intrigue: *incuriosire*

layman: *profano*

painstaking: *scrupoloso*

to set down: *preparare*

to set forth: *esporre*

to shape: *modellare*

startling: *sorprendente*

to sum up: *riassumere*

unwitting: *involontario*

taboo for women to smoke in public and those who **disregarded** conventions were thought to be sexually permissive. Bernays' client was George Washington Hill, president of the American Tobacco Company, who **conceived** the idea of breaking this taboo to **broaden** the market for his 'Lucky Strike' brand. Bernays asked Hill for permission to consult New York's leading psychoanalyst and Freud's disciple Dr. A.A. Brill. He was **granted** this unusual request. This was the first but not the last time Bernays would consult psychoanalysts to help shape his public relations campaigns. When asked what cigarettes symbolized women, Brill's response was that cigarettes were symbolic of male power.

Equating smoking with **challenging** male power was the **keystone** of Lucky Strike's "Torches of Freedom" campaign, which debuted during New York's annual Easter Parade on April 1, 1929. Bernays had procured a list of debutantes from the editor of Vogue magazine and **pitched** the idea that they could contribute to the expansion of women's rights by lighting up cigarettes and smoking them in the most public of places – Fifth Avenue. The press was **warned beforehand** and could not resist the story. The "Torches of Freedom Parade" was reported not only by the local papers, but also by newspapers nationwide and internationally.

to disregard: *disattendere, ignorare*
to conceive: *ideare*
to broaden: *ampliare, estendere*
to grant: *concedere*
to equate: *equiparare*

challenging: *impegnativo*
keystone: *chiave di volta*
to pitch: *lanciare*
to warn: *avvertire*
beforehand: *in anticipo*

1  Answer these questions.

- a. Who was Edward L. Bernays?
- b. What was his family relationship with Freud?
- c. Freud gave his nephew his book "General Introductory Lectures". What had Freud received from him?
- d. What are Freud's "General Introductory Lectures"?
- e. When did Bernays write his first book and what was the title?
- f. What was his most famous public relations campaign?
- g. How were women who disregarded conventions considered?
- h. Who was Bernay's "Torches of Freedom" campaign for?
- i. Who did Bernays ask Hill for permission to consult?
- j. What was the challenging idea of the "Torches of Freedom" campaign?

