

**San Diego State University**  
Comm 204 Advanced Public Speaking  
Instructor: Thomas Adams

**Jan Kubran**  
RedID#810568727

Assignment: Final Speech Outline

Topic:

*Sigmund Freud – today's genius or master of quackery?*

(revised for final speech)

## 1. Introduction

**[Attention Getter:** What kind of influence does cocaine have on the human body? Why does a son love his mother and therefore regards his own father as a rival? Why does a baby like to smell, touch and even taste its own excrements?] Answers on these and several other questions were tried to explore by a man who has been regarded by some as genius and by others as a pervert male chauvinist. However, his 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary on this year was celebrated worldwide. **[Reason to listen:** Because of his impact on past generations I was asking myself if the thoughts and theories of this influential man are still relevant today and also would like to take you on a journey through some of the real dark sides of human instincts. Let me guide you through the lucid mind of Sigmund Freud..]

## 2. Main points

I spent a lot of time thinking about what you the students could be interested in to hear about Freud, because I don't want to have you sleeping on your desks after three minutes already! In the end I thought: Ok, talking about sex and drugs might work.

### 2.1 Basic knowledge

But before that I want to make sure that we all have the same kind of background - you know some basic knowledge. I guess all of you know that Sigmund Freud is considered to be the father of psychoanalysis. According to the American Psychology Association psychoanalysis is "The form of psychodynamic therapy developed by Freud; an intensive and prolonged technique for exploring unconscious motivations and conflicts in neurotic, anxiety-ridden individuals"

(<http://www.psychologymatters.org/glossary.html#p>). In brief, psychoanalysis' basic

“goal was to maximize pleasure and to minimize unpleasure or discomfort” (Frosch, 2006, p.44). Furthermore, Freud said: “The theory of repression is the cornerstone on which the whole structure of psychoanalysis rests. It is the most essential part of it.” (Freud, 1914/1957a, p.16)

**Thesis statement:** [

## **2.2 Sexuality and Personality**

Now, repression, which implicates suppressed wishes or desires of human beings, is for Freud the basic reason for neurosis (Freud, 1907). Neurosis are mental or personality disorders that have an impact on certain behavior of a person. “The nervous symptom can be different kinds of abuse such as drug abuse, eating disorders, self-harm, anxiety, depression, sexual problems, etc. In psychotherapy, [as Freud developed and performed it] the neurosis can be cured by letting the patient relive the suppressed painful and forbidden memories, and the feelings which were associated with them.”(web4health.info, 2005) This is of course, still relevant for today's patient treatment. Now, when I'm talking about suppressed desires, that lead to mental disorders..then don't get me wrong - that does not mean that you get the worst neurosis of your life, when you don't manage to hook up with Paris Hilton or Tyra Banks for instance.. Freud sees sexuality linked to humans from the very beginning of our life. “The baby's obstinate persistence in sucking”, he refers “gives an evidence at an early stage of a need for satisfaction [...] and should be termed sexual” (Freud, 1939) In an open letter to a colleague Dr. Fürst he strongly calls for the sexual enlightenment of children (Freud, 1947). Freud cannot believe how parents can withhold the information of sexual life from their children.

As you can see, by offering the rich fruits of psychoanalysis, he was quite ahead of his time also showing acceptance for some permutations of human sexuality. Psychologist John A. Friedman says that Freud showed a basic acceptance for homosexuality and we all know that some people even today feel offended by homosexuality. Furthermore, Friedman insists that this often called “antifeminist, sexist white male” gave massive and unending support to women in psychoanalysis and medicine beyond other professionals of his day.” (Friedman, 2006, p.592)

For a better understanding of the human psyche Freud developed the model of the id, ego and superego which was the last of Freud’s major theoretical works. It is easy to explain the main goal of this approach by quoting Freud again. He said that “The ego is not master in its own house.” (Freud, 1917). That’s it basically! The Ego is everything that we represent to the outside, but this “Ego” is always influenced by the “id”, which are all of our instincts and the “super-ego” which represents all social given rules and laws that affect our life. So, the “Ego” can be seen as a mediator between the “id” and the “superego”

### **2.3 Freud and cocaine**

Now, tell me what is the one thing that heavily affects Snoop Dogg's or Ice Cube's life, beside from women and music? Right, they are well known for doing a looot of dope, Freud did let's call it “thorough studies” on doing cocaine! Did you know that? Ok, one reason might be, that Freud tried to find new ways of treating his patients, but probably he just wanted to have the best trip of his life..

But what was his experience like? Well, in a letter to his fiancée Martha Bernays he wrote:

“In my last serious depression I took cocaine again and a small dose lifted me to the heights in a wonderful fashion. I am just now collecting the literature for a song of praise to this magical substance.” (Streatfeild, 2002). In addition he found out that it served as a gastric anesthetic. An anesthetic is a drug that inhibits the propagation of painful feelings along nerves. (Thornton, 1984)

It is said that he did his extended studies on coke for about 15 years. Starting in the late 1890s and probably stopping around 1903/4. Therefore, it seems not surprising that he even sent a sample to some of his friends and even to Martha Bernays. Sigmund Freud – the first pusher worldwide? I think we should better switch the topic, now..

### **3. Criticism**

With great popularity always comes criticism – Marx did know that, Sigmund Freud did know that.. hmm..and I think Mark Foley knows that just too good right now.. The question of a long-standing debate is: Was Sigmund Freud a real scientist? You get a brief answer from me: Yes, he was! “As the natural sciences are defined by their use of the scientific method [which means collecting a lot of numbers and facts and putting them in a nice excel table], so the cultural sciences [that Freud practiced] are defined by their use of the interpretive method”, respectively the method that I would simply call the “this-car-over-there-is-probably-more or less-around-90mph-fast”-method. (Wallerstein, 2006, p.308) However, Grünbaum argues, “Freud’s investigative method of free association does not possess the required probative capabilities at all.” E.M. Thornton a lay Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine already claims in the precis of her book called “The Freudian Fallacy” “that Freud’s central postulate, the unconscious mind,

does not exist” and that “Freud himself, when formulating these theories, was under the influence of a highly toxic drug.” (Thornton, 1984)

It's true that some psychoanalysts in those days behave like guru's especially a protégé of Freud called Carl Jung, who later separated from his mentor. There was a famous instance, where Jung seduced his first patient the schizophrenic Sabrina Spielrein (Carenuto 1982). Now, can you believe this Ladies: You, the schizophrenic patient are about to tell your psychologist a serious problem. For example that one part of you wants to have a Gucci bag and your other part rather would like to have a Louis Vuitton bag and the only thing your psychologist cares about is getting laid!! However, Freud didn't abuse his couch for exploiting his patients. At least there is no document telling so..

#### **4. Relevance for today**

But what is the proof for his relevance for today? Despite the fact that some of his arguments were disproved by scientists over the past, his examinations concerning the human psyche represent a milestone within the field of psychology worldwide and paved the way for a lot of techniques that are still being used today. Psychologist Frosch says: “The contemporary culture of psychoanalysis, our conscious and unconscious fantasies, organizes the data of psychoanalysis today just as Freud's did a century ago.” Besides, his relevance for today can be underlined by the fact that Freud ranks on 1st place of the most cited psychologists in the Top 100 list of the most eminent psychologists of the 20th century. (Haggbloom, 2002) You're asking yourself why? “The Freudian perspective has throughout the 20th century played a signal role in the understanding of literature and biography, of art and music, of history and politics, of

sociology and anthropology, and even of linguistics and rhetoric and philosophy, not to mention the much more down to earth worlds of mass culture and mass market advertising.” (Wallerstein, 2006, p.303) Oh and I think everyone of us came across a Freudian slip..No? Check this out: (video clip) **End thesis statement]**

#### **4. Conclusion**

Several scientists and researchers, like Thornton or Grünbaum, might regard Freud as a master of quackery. In my eyes, he basically had a special interest in the fleshly nature of human beings and also wanted to explore his own soul through treating his patients. As I showed you quite a number of Freud's thoughts and theories are definitely still being used today! So, in case you find yourself doing little obsessional things, like itching yourself or kneading your hands and you actually don't know why or you catch yourself at looking into a mirror and asking like the prince narciss: “Damn, why am I so damn pretty?” Then you might have found a relevance of Freud's theories not only for you, but also for the everyday life of the 21st century.

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