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Relevance of Freudian theory

Why are we discussing the relevance of Sigmund Freud's discoveries and their impact on the 20th and now the 21st Centuries? The short answer is that like Albert Einstein and Charles Darwin, Freud described a method of studying what was unknown before:

- Einstein turned the world of physics upside down—that there were physical forces that were not plainly observable;
- Darwin communicated that the human species and the other species on the planet have many similarities and that the special place of humans was not as special as we humans wished them to be; and
- Freud discovered that we all have irrational forces within us, which we are not fully conscious of and that we cannot consciously control

This idea, that we are not always conscious of our wishes and desires, has led to controversy ever since Freud's initial description of unconscious mental activity. Almost routinely since Freud's death in 1939, the question has been asked: Is Freud (and by implication, psychoanalysis) relevant? Or, as it often is phrased, is Freud dead?"

While some of Freud's theories about human development have been refocused, altered or even discarded, his two most important discoveries –

- That an individual's actions, thoughts and feelings are influenced by factors outside his or her awareness (the unconscious) and
- That an individual's childhood experiences have a profound influence on development and personality - remain undisputed.

What's more, much of the language of Freud - the unconscious, repression, talking cure, slip of the tongue, free association - has become the common parlance of the 20th century—in fact leading to the idea that we are all Freudians now. It is important to bear in mind that the scientific study of the mind is very difficult and that many say that no superior theory of the functioning of the mind has been able to replace psychoanalytic theory. I will discuss in one minute, the integration of neuroscience and psychoanalysis and how we are in a unique position at the beginning of the 21st century, that neither psychoanalysis nor neurology was at the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th.

The other important fact is that since Freud's times, the numbers of talking therapies have increased by many hundreds—I have heard the number as being like 400. We have to remember that whichever form of therapy an individual chooses, Freud is behind it—either as an elaboration and expansion of what psychoanalysis wrote about or issues that he overlooked. One can say that psychoanalysis has given a frame of reference for talk therapy in general enabling therapists to better understand human motivation.

Importance of dreams and unconscious mental activity

A century ago Sigmund Freud, in the spirit of scientific inquiry, and after years of research as a neurologist, published *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The book began his exploration of the mind and his development of psychoanalysis.

The book's publication also marked the real beginnings of scientific research into the mind and to the development of truer understanding of mental health problems. The line where the brain and behavior meet is the focus of much of modern neuroscience. And dreams are proving to be a foundation for much of that research. After a period when dreams were thought to be little more than mental fireworks, scientists are finding that they provide many insights into the mind's workings. Freud called dreams the "royal road to the unconscious." Modern scientists, using technology such as PET scans are discovering that Freud's "road" is indeed "royal."

The Interpretation of Dreams: The First 100 Years 1899-1999

The poets and philosophers before me discovered the unconscious; what I discovered was the scientific method by which the unconscious mind can be studied. Sigmund Freud

The history of "The Interpretation of Dreams" is as fascinating as the book.

What happened when Freud published The Interpretation of Dreams?

You could say that the fields of psychoanalysis, psychiatry, and psychology were born, but much more importantly, scientific thinking about the mind began. Before that, the brain was something physical and the mind was a kind of pixyish spirit world. There

was science about the brain and pie-in-the-sky speculation about the mind. After Freud, the study of the mind became more serious and scientific.

How did Dreams do that?

To put it very simply, it was through Freud's theory that we understood for the first time that we dream for a reason; that reason is to deal unconsciously with the problems the conscious mind can't deal with. That theory meant that the mind obeyed its own rules. People set out to discover those rules and the reasons for them.

Was Freud the first person to look at the mind scientifically?

No, but in "The Interpretation of Dreams" he was the first person to look at the mind and to develop a theory about its basis and creation. The statements Freud made in "Dreams" about the conscious and unconscious gave labels to the ethereal parts of the mind that make us human. In effect, he established the foundation for our current thinking about the mind. Before that, thinking was much more spiritual or even alchemic.

So Freud established a baseline?

In "Dreams" he began to create a means of thinking and studying the mind compare it to Newton's discovery of the laws of gravitation, without them you have no way of studying much of physics, with them you can study everything from planets to quarks and gluons. With the work Freud began in "Dreams" there is a basis to study everything from war to a person's most secret fears and hopes.

When and how did Freud come to discover psychoanalysis?

Freud was always interested in examining his own thoughts and motivations; after his father died in 1896, he underwent a self-analysis.

How did he do that?

He analyzed his dreams, his childhood memories, screen memories, slips of the tongue, and episodes of forgetfulness. Screen memories are memories of events which actually stand for other memories which have been forgotten. These memories may have an unusual vivid quality because they represent a convergence of a variety of scenes.

How did Freud come to do a self-analysis?

He had a dream ("Close the eyes dream") the night after his father's funeral in October 1896, which led him to undertake an ongoing systematic process of self-examination (in contrast to isolated episodes of analysis before this). This analysis included an examination of the complex and ambivalent emotions he had about his father. During this self-analysis he developed the idea of the Oedipus Complex (that is, the complicated feelings of a child towards his or her parents).

Where did Freud write about his self-analysis and his own dreams?

Mainly in "The Interpretation of Dreams." By 1902 he recorded 50 dreams. Forty-three are described in "The Interpretation of Dreams"; four in "On Dreams"; and three in his letters to his colleague, Wilhelm Fliess.

Did Freud realize that the death of his father was a central stimulus to his self-analysis and his dream book?

In a preface to the second edition in 1909, he wrote: ". . . this book has a further subjective significance for me personally - a significance which I only grasped after I had completed it. It was, I found, a portion of my own self-analysis, my reaction to my father's death - that is to say, to the most important event, the most poignant loss, of a man's life. Having discovered that this was so, I felt unable to obliterate the traces of the experience."

What does it really mean to analyze dreams and other elements such as memories?

To analyze dreams, memories is to try to understand how events from the past, including the distant past in childhood, continue to actively influence our current behavior and feelings without our conscious awareness of their influence.

How did Freud analyze a dream?

He listened to the dreamer's associations (his own or his patient's) to the dream. Through the associations and connections one could understand the motives for the dreams: current and past conflicted situations.

How do these events continue to affect us if we are not conscious of them?

Freud hypothesized that these memories continue to exist outside our awareness, unconsciously.

What is the connection between unconscious mental activity and dreaming?

Freud said that, "The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind." He meant that because dreams are such an unconscious activity they give an almost direct insight into the workings of the unconscious mind.

What was Freud's first dream in which he understood that dreams have meaning?

The dream of "Irma's injection," (dreamt on July 24, 1895). He discussed his associations to this dream in about 25 pages of "The Interpretation of Dreams." In a letter

to his colleague, Fliess, Freud wrote: "Do you suppose that some day a marble tablet will be placed on the house, inscribed with these words?: *In This House, on July 24th, 1895 the Secret of Dreams was Revealed to Dr. Sigm. Freud* At the moment there seems little prospect of it."

According to Freud, what was the major stimulus to dreams?

Dreams are fueled by a person's wishes, particularly wishes of which the person was not conscious. On another level, the purpose of the dream is to allow the person to continue sleeping.

What was problematic about the idea that all dreams are wish-fulfillments?

Anxiety dreams and punishment dreams. Freud came to understand that anxiety often resulted from the gratification of a person's wishes. The phenomena of punishment dreams was one of the factors that led Freud to the concept of the "superego" (that part of the mind dealing with a person's sense of morality and his or her unconscious need to be punished). Traumatic dreams proved to be a problem for Freud (were they an exception to the rule that all dreams are wish-fulfillments?) Freud came to maintain that traumatic dreams functioned to master trauma rather than to gratify wishes. Other analysts have maintained that there is no need to contrast the two types of dreams.

What are the major mechanisms that Freud postulated of how the mind works in dreams?

Dream-work, as it is called, has four major elements.

Displacement, which is the way the importance of an idea shifts from one idea to another. (For example, the most significant ideas or feelings for a person may shift from one idea (in the latent content of the dream) to an insignificant detail in the manifest content of the dream.

Condensation, that one idea or image may represent several ideas, which converge on one dream image.

Considerations of representability, where all meanings, including abstract thoughts, are represented through images.

Secondary revision, which explains how the apparent incoherence and absurdity in the dream are eliminated by filling in the gaps to make the manifest content of the dream more logical.

What is the difference between the manifest content of the dream and the latent content?

Manifest content is the dream as perceived by the dreamer. The manifest content is a result of the dream-work. Latent content is the meaning of the dream as revealed by analysis. The latent content does not appear as a narrative (like the manifest content) but rather as a group of thoughts expressing one or more wishes.

Was Freud always a psychoanalyst?

No. Freud was born in 1856. From 1876 until 1896 he was primarily a neurologist and an anatomist.

Did he make any significant neurological contributions?

He wrote three monographs on infantile cerebral paralysis and in 1891 he wrote his most important neurological work: "On Aphasia."

Why is "On Aphasia" important?

At that time most neurologists believed that there were discrete anatomical areas in the brain that were responsible for different cognitive functions. Freud followed the ideas of the English neurologist, Hughlings Jackson who proposed a hierarchic view of the nervous system. Freud's study of aphasia (the various language problems that result from brain injury) convinced him that a static notion of brain function was incompatible with the complex findings. Rather, he thought that large areas of the cortex of the brain had various functions (a notion of functional systems, which antedated the work of A.R. Luria, the founder of neuropsychology, by 50 years).

Did Freud try to integrate neurological and psychological phenomena?

In 1895 he wrote the "Project for a Scientific Psychology" which he never published (and which was only published in 1950, many years after his death). Many notions in the "Project" have been of great interest to modern neuroscientists and psychoanalysts trying to integrate the findings of psychoanalysis and those of modern neuroscience. One very important area which Freud studied and modern neuroscientists study is the area of memory. For Freud, memories are continually worked over and revised. For example, Gerald Edelman, the Nobel Laureate, has described the brain's role as one of constructing categories (so that every memory is a recreation or a recategorization) based on experimental neuroscientific data.

Why didn't Freud continue his neurological work and his attempts to integrate neurology and psychology?

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Centuries, there were no neurological techniques to study the functioning of brain. We now have capabilities to perform such functional studies using machines such as PET scans. Because of the primitive methods of neurology in his day, Freud focused solely on psychological studies and developed only psychological theories. However, many of his neurological ideas continued to influence his psychoanalytic theories, such as the central role of memory in the development of the individual.

Were there any connections between Freud's attempts to develop a neurological theory and his later psychoanalysis?

Freud's "The Interpretation of Dreams" has a direct relationship to the "Project for a Scientific Psychology." This work provided an outline for Chapter 7, the theoretical chapter, of the dream book. "The Interpretation of Dreams" can be viewed as a completion of, or an alternative to, the Project. In the last few sections of the draft of the Project, Freud identified dreams with wish-fulfillment and sketched out how dreams work.

How did contemporaries of Freud react to the publication of The Interpretation of Dreams?

The first review was published on December 16, 1899. The review was in a literary journal (he was in fact more appreciated by the lay educated public than by the scientific public), by Carl Metzger, and the last paragraph deserves to be quoted:

"We now must forsake the pleasure of following further the astute - and frequently daring - observations of the Viennese physician. Only one more note from the conclusion of his epoch-making work, a note which concerns the value of dreams for gaining knowledge of future. 'In every respect, dreams are children of the past. There is a grain of truth, though, in the ancient belief that we can see in them our future. By showing us our wishes as fulfilled they point to the future. But this future, which the dreamer mistakes for his present, is modeled by the indestructible wish into the likeness of the past.'"

How psychoanalytic ideas help us understand and address problems of aggression (a current concern)

Sigmund Freud pointed out that civilization is only made possible by individual renouncements, including the renouncement of violence. Violent individuals, however, often experience no guilt about a violent act nor do they have an empathic connection with their victim. The psychoanalytic understanding of both the roots of violence and the

ways in which people connect with one another is a critical factor in understanding violent behavior and crafting a solution to this nationwide problem.

Sigmund Freud stated that humans instinctually are aggressive and seek egoistic self-satisfaction. Culture, however, has the effect of putting prohibitions and curbs upon our human tendencies toward unchecked aggression and egoistic self-satisfaction. From these prohibitions and curbs comes the individual person's sense of guilt--conscious and unconscious--that has become the hallmark of civilized humanity. Understanding the role guilt plays in helping us check our tendencies towards aggression and violence is paramount.

Q. How do psychoanalytic ideas about child development help us to prevent the development of violence in people?

A. Children, being children, will always have selfish and aggressive impulses. Psychoanalysis has taught us that when children are acting in an angry and destructive fashion, they are not simply being "bad," but that they are upset for a reason. Talking with the child, helping him or her to understand what the problem is helps in several ways. The child is more likely to feel understood and cared for and less likely to feel he or she is "bad," and this in itself tends to diminish the anger and destructiveness. The child is also helped to put his or her anger into words, instead of destructive behavior. Limits to behavior are necessary, but in an atmosphere of understanding, fewer battles over them are needed.

Q. Is corporal punishment relevant to this discussion?

A. Yes. It remains common, and it encourages violence! Psychoanalysts have often observed that people who are hurt often wish, consciously or unconsciously, to get out of the hurt position by hurting others. A parent hitting a child shows the child by parental example that violence is OK, and kindles the fire for the child to strike someone else later when he has the chance. Treating the child as a person with his own sense of self and developing autonomy, that is, with respect, is much more useful than corporal punishment. Psychoanalysis has had a profound influence on how we raise our children, but much remains to be accomplished.

Q. Did Sigmund Freud consider how violence in human society could be understood psychoanalytically? Where did he discuss this?

A. The major work in which he discussed the problem of violence was *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930) in which he discussed the irremediable antagonism between the demands of instinct and the restrictions of civilization. In *Thoughts on War and Death* (1915), written at the beginning of the horrors of World War I, he wrote about the general, including his own, disillusionment brought about by civilized countries acting immorally and by individuals acting brutally.

Q. What does psychoanalysis show about the deepest essence of human nature?

A. Psychoanalysis shows that human nature is composed of primitive impulses, including selfish and cruel impulses.

Q. What usually happens to these impulses in people?

A. The primitive impulses undergo a lengthy process of modification during one's development. They are inhibited, redirected to different aims, or commingled with one another. Civilization is attained through renouncing or controlling these impulses. Similarly, civilized societies expect and demand that newcomers to their society also control these impulses and to be able to relate to one another.

Q. What impact does guilt (conscience) have in society? Can a person's sense of guilt be excessive and cause problems?

A. In social interactions, it is natural that people have mixed feelings toward people they must interact with, and which results in a conflict between love and aggression. Some people have a great deal of guilt (even an unconscious sense of guilt) and may unconsciously direct great harm towards himself. This leads to a great deal of self-punishment. Since this can be a common problem, many people falsely think that the solution to life's problems is to eliminate guilt and to lead "guilt-free" lives. However, it is impossible-and unwise to totally eliminate guilt because guilt is a normal and necessary feeling state for individuals to have in order to interact with others, thinking not just of oneself but of the other person too. This normal guilt is the source of the commandment "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

Q. What threatens the social group and the relationships among people?

A. The greatest threat is the tendency toward aggression, which can be seen in all of us.

Q. How does civilization help us relate with one another?

A. Human life in a community is only possible as a result of people coming together and agreeing that no one individual can exert power over another and where individuals agree to restrict their own personal inner wishes in favor of the communal needs. In other words, people have to develop the two Freudian tenets of human nature and society: guilt and empathy for fellow humans.

Q. Do people give up their egotistic desires easily?

A. One of the major problems for humanity is reaching a balance and reconciliation between the desires of one individual and the claims of the social group. The goal of society is to continually address how to achieve the best balance.

Q. How does civilization set limits on people's tendency toward aggression towards one another?

A. It is important that people identify with one another and develop relationships with one another that are not just lustful. This is the essence and the personal source of the commandment- love one's neighbor as one self.

Q. When groups or nations band together this way, what happens to their aggression?

A. A group may be cohesive and caring, one member to the other. The group, however, may direct its aggression toward members outside the group or toward another nation (an example of a Freudian term, called "the other," that is still very applicable in 21st century society).

Q. What is the most important way in which individual humans have learned to control their aggression?

A. The key factor is the development of the conscience (or what Freud termed the superego).

Q. How does a child develop this conscience (superego) or internal authority?

A. In their early life, children identify with an external authority (the parents or caretaker) and take the authority as their own. As a result of the relationship and interaction between parent/caretaker and child, the child gradually internalizes the parent's or caretaker's authority. This helps the child limit and control his or her actions. Freud stated that "a great change occurs only when the authority is internalized." In other words, there is a replacement of "external authority" with "internal authority." Of vital importance to the development of a child is the child's relationship with parents and caretakers.

Children also experience mixed feelings toward people they love (especially their parents), which results in an ongoing conflict between love and aggression. Every time a child renounces an aggressive wish toward the parent, it intensifies his or her sense of guilt. What also occurs during childhood is that as the child's relationships widen in the community and he or she develops ties to other people, the internal conflict between love and aggression becomes active.

Q. The development of the individual and the development of civilization involve similar processes. In what way are they different?

A. An individual's happiness is a product of the interaction of two urges ("egoistic" urges to satisfy him- or herself and "altruistic" urges to help other people). In civilization the aim is less the development of happiness (it is pushed to the background) and more the urge to create unity among human beings.

Q. Is there an analogy between the development of the individual and the development of a community?

A. The community develops a "superego" like the individual does. The superego of an era is based on the personalities of great leaders; ideal demands are set up in the superego of each individual and similarly ideals (the development of ethics).are created for each culture.

Q. What are some psychoanalytic ideas as to how a child learns to control his or her aggression?

A. Several psychoanalytic ideas apply toward how children control aggression: Child-rearing always involves a balance between frustration and gratification in the interaction between parent and child. Restrictions are a normal part of child-rearing. If the child were allowed limitless gratification, his or her progressive development toward autonomy within the social environment would be greatly compromised.

Aggression is normally modified in the course of infant development through the child's love for his mother.

The ability to reflect upon thoughts and feelings in oneself and others provides children with a fuller range of responses to their own and others' perceived aggression. External experiences of violence, abuse, and deprivation influence the child's experience of his own and others' aggression and prevent the child from normally modulating aggression in social settings.

Q. What can be done for children who exhibit problems with control of their violence?

A. Psychoanalysis can give children an increased awareness of their feelings, a way to express their feelings, and help them understand the possible causes of their behavior. In other words, with long-term, intensive treatment, their behavioral problems may be reduced and they may acquire a clearer idea of their competencies.

Listening: Revolutionized the treatment of emotional problems

In some quarters it is considered a given that Sigmund Freud's treatment of women was aberrant and indicative of a patriarchal approach, in which women were demeaned and mistreated. From today's perspective, one can see many flaws in Freud's technique. However, it is important to praise Freud's revolutionary innovation of a

century ago. Freud learned that in order to understand and effectively treat a patient, a doctor had to listen to his patients. This contribution represented a quantum leap in psychological treatment, which far outweighs the impact of his technical errors. Freud's treatment of "Dora,"[1] exactly 100 years ago, is an example of the dramatic change in the history of mental health treatment for women.

This approach was a dramatic contrast, for example, to the usual treatment (such as that of Charcot) of women with hysteria, who were treated as if they were simply anatomical specimens.

On October 14, 1900, Sigmund Freud wrote to his correspondent (the only person with whom he shared his psychoanalytic ideas at the time) Wilhelm Fliess in Berlin, about beginning work with an 18-year-old woman, whom he called "Dora". She suffered from physical symptoms of psychological origin, which would appear and disappear over the years -- coughs, headaches, loss of voice, weakness, and abdominal pain. A note threatening suicide, discovered by her parents, brought her to Freud.

Dora's treatment came to an abrupt end on December 31, 1900. Freud wrote his paper "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria"[1] in January 1901 but withheld publication, for reasons of discretion, until 1905. On reading the case history today, it is apparent that despite obvious culture-bound details in the story, the descriptions provide a wealth of information on how to listen to patients, particularly adolescents, and how to help them with their emotional states.

Freud listened to Dora, something she had never experienced before, particularly from a man. How many doctors at the time listened carefully to their patients, particularly their women patients, and especially adolescent girls?

As an 18 year-old living in a comfortable upper middle class family in Vienna at the turn of the 19th century, we cannot compare Dora to an 18 year-old at the beginning of our century.

Young women of that era tended to be less mature physiologically and psychologically than today. On the other hand, many women in Dora's and Freud's circle married young, often to men about a decade older who were already established. Many of these young women were infantilized by their husbands.

Dora's father was a successful manufacturer, described by Freud as intelligent and dominant in his social circle. He experienced a number of severe illnesses from the time Dora was 6 years old -- he had tuberculosis when she was 6; a detached retina when she was 10; and a confusional attack followed by symptoms of paralysis and slight mental disturbances beginning when she was 12. Several of these symptoms were associated with the father's syphilis, which he had contracted before his marriage. Syphilis was relatively common in that community at the time. Men usually did not marry until the end of their twenties, once they were established in their professions. Prior to marriage, their

sexual activities primarily involved prostitutes, many of whom were infected with syphilis.

Freud, a neurologist, often treated patients with neurologic complications from syphilis. Dora's father was introduced to Freud for treatment of his syphilis by a "Herr K" when Dora was 12. Freud treated her father successfully. When Dora was 16, her father brought her to Freud for a consultation because of her physical problems. When Dora was 18, Freud recorded that "he [Dora's father] handed her over to me for psychotherapeutic treatment."

From the perspective of adolescence, the phrase ("he handed her over to me for psychotherapeutic treatment") communicates the father's relationship to his daughter and his expectations from Freud. (Or, to be more precise, the way Freud clearly understood the father's motives.) To understand the problematic significance of that statement, it is necessary to first highlight the 2 most important tasks that adolescents need to accomplish:

Adolescents need to psychologically cope with their increased awareness of their bodies, the physical changes that are occurring and their increasing desires and passions.

Adolescents need to shift their focus of attachments from their parents, as the only people who really matter, to important others, with and to whom the adolescents develop attachments and relationships.

We learn from Freud that Dora's father was having an affair with "Frau K," Herr K's wife. We also learn that Herr K had made seductive passes at the young Dora, but the father told Freud that Dora merely imagined that Herr K tried to seduce her and stressed that his relationship with Frau K was honorable. Dora's father maintained that Dora got her strange sexual ideas from reading Mantegazza's Physiology of Love, a medical hygiene book of the time that was popular with young people, for the usual reasons.

Freud, however, reports that after listening to the father's account, he "had resolved from the first to suspend judgment of the true state of affairs till I had heard the other side as well."

How many men at the turn of the 20th century would have made such a comment? Few would have thought to take into consideration the young woman's side of the story, and not just simply believe the father, the master of the house. Freud's message from a century ago is a central one for all, especially for those who are parents of teenagers or who work with teenagers -- regardless of the difficulties in communication, it is crucial that we LISTEN to what they have to say. The communication may be in the form of direct words, actions, or in some disguised manner that may be very difficult to decipher.

As Freud listened, Dora told him about an episode that occurred at age 16, when Dora and her father visited the Ks at their lake house. Dora was scheduled to spend a few weeks alone with the Ks and their children, working as a mother's helper. She suddenly told the Ks that she was leaving. It was several days after her return home before she told her mother about Herr K's attempt to seduce her. The mother told the father who then confronted Herr K, who, of course, denied the episode. We learn that there was an even earlier episode, at 14, when Herr K made an advance to Dora, in which he "suddenly clasped the girl to him and pressed a kiss upon her lips." Dora wanted a relationship with her family's friends; she wanted her mother and father to protect her when she was exposed to these inappropriate sexual overtures.

We also learn that when she was a governess to the Ks children, she had heard the Ks talking about divorce. This is a situation to which we are not unaccustomed during our own time, when children know more about the complicated and complicating issues in the adults' lives than they might wish for. It became clear to Freud that Dora's father wanted to protect his relationship with Frau K and in addition to wanting to help his daughter with her problems, brought Dora to Freud so Freud would eliminate Dora's "imaginary" thoughts about Herr K.

If we think about the different people in Dora's life (her father, Herr K, as well as others) we see that they all betrayed her. Although Freud also eventually betrayed her, he actually listened to her, believed her, and despite many, many statements to her, which by today's standards of treatment would be considered antitherapeutic -- such as talking too much about sexual matters from the beginning of the treatment and making symbolic interpretations -- he spoke to her in a way so she could sense that her feelings were her own. However, he did betray her in 2 ways. He was interested in her case for the sake of the science of psychoanalysis, as he was trying to confirm his hypotheses of his dream theory, and he betrayed her 15 months after she left him. Dora returned to see Freud and wanted to resume treatment but he refused to treat her. At that session Dora said that she had returned in order to tell him that they had confessed to her. Frau K confessed that she did have an affair with her father, and Herr K admitted the truth about the seduction episode at the lake.

What can we learn from all of these complicated family interactions? Dora constantly was feeling disappointment, not just because of frustrated inner wishes, but also because she became aware of her father's affair. When she turned to Herr K, the way troubled adolescent girls and young women may turn to teachers, family friends, or to clergy, she yearned for a relationship with a substitute man, a father figure, in which she felt accepted as a person, and not as a sexual object. She wished for attention, love, and admiration. She did not get these from her father or from Herr K, and eventually did not receive them from Freud. His technique (100 years ago) was one in which he spoke much too openly about sexual wishes and fantasies to this young woman, and he was not cognizant of what we have come to learn about the important aspects of a relationship between an adolescent girl and her father and the other men in her life.

What can we learn about fathers and daughters from Freud's oversight? We certainly know that emotional upheavals can be created in girls who have been neglected or ignored by their fathers. Certain adolescent girls whose family lives have been unstable and whose fathers have been inconsistently available may have problems with their own sense of identity and later in life may shift quickly from one man to another, alternately rebelling against and searching for a father-protector. The critical role a father plays in his adolescent daughter's development should not be underestimated. A father may not realize his important role, particularly in the midst of a screaming battle; he is an important protector for his teenage daughters -- including protector of her self-esteem during a vulnerable period of life.

Why is adolescence such a vulnerable period during which a girl's self-esteem can be easily deflated and her sense of herself as a person and as a woman is easily doubted? How did Dora feel about herself as a person and as a woman, given that her father exposed her to the inappropriate sexual intentions of Herr K? How did she feel about herself given that her father was more concerned with the preservation of his own sexual liaison with Frau K than with his daughter's sense of well being?

During adolescence, there is an intensification of the child's passionate desires resulting from hormonal changes that result in their distancing themselves from their parents. The adolescent still needs parental support and encouragement but often cannot ask for it in a direct way. The adolescent may overtly reject any offered support even though he or she still covertly longs for parental support, despite verbal protestations to the contrary. The moodiness and negativism, as well as manifestations of their own conflicts, including poor self-esteem, may lead parents to say, "I better leave her [him] totally alone." Adolescents still need attachments. Dora taught us that adolescent girls need attachments to fathers and to other men and that they need to be heard. Fathers need to listen in order to remain available to support and protect their daughters.