

**The Psychoanalytic Observation of Children**  
**Origins and Recent Developments -- Training and Research**  
**Its Significance for Psychotherapy and other Fields of Psychosocial Work**  
**An International Conference at the University of Vienna, April 19-21, 2024**

**Matthew Chuard (UK)**

**The child-in-the-family-in-the-community: Psychoanalysis, infant observation and the social matrix. Further examination of the external world and the way that it shapes unconscious processes and identity formation**

**Saturday, April 20, 11:30 a.m. / Hörsaal 30 / Parallel session A3**

**Abstract:**

As the programme co-lead for the pre-clinical MA in psychoanalytic observational studies at the Tavistock Centre in London, this paper outlines some of the developments and changes that have taken place regarding the way we approach the teaching and learning of infant and young child observation. Through our work we had come to realise that despite psychoanalysis' deep interest in the way that group processes shape our individual lives, limited attention had been paid in the psychoanalytic observational literature to the way in which wider social structures, such as those relating to gender, race, faith and social class, shape unconscious processes and identity formation. Included within this was also an awareness of the subtle ways in which certain identities, and aspects of identity, become marginalised and repressed at the expense of others. With this in mind we have been in the process of developing methods of working and thinking which keep the internal world and the unconscious very much the central object of study, whilst at the same time developing and refining our understanding of the way that the external world and the historical and social processes of which it is comprised, shape the developing internal world and identity of the child in the family within the community. In this presentation I will discuss and outline the impact that this work has had on my practice as a teacher of infant observation and as a programme lead. I will discuss the emotional challenges we have faced in bringing this central aspect of human experience into greater focus in the teaching and learning of psychoanalytic observation.

**Keywords:**

Infant Observation and intersectionality, the concept of the social matrix, psychoanalytic models of group and institutional functioning, Meltzer's psychoanalytical model of the child-in-the-family-in-the-community, teaching and learning of psychoanalytic observation.

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