

**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**

**Lisa Engelke (AUT)**

**Struggling with the transition from Young Child Observation to Work Discussion.  
On unconscious defence, emotional challenges and professional development**

***Saturday, April 20, 2.30 p.m. / Hörsaal 30 / Parallel session B3***

**Abstract:**

This article describes the lecturer's experience of the transition from Young Child Observation in the context of a research project to Work Discussion as part of a psychoanalytic-psychotherapeutic training programme. (1.) The first part of the presentation reports on the lecturer's involvement in the research project "Rules, Rituals, and the Transition to Kindergarten" of the research unit "Psychoanalysis and Education" at the Department of Education at the University of Vienna. She observed a toddler for several months and wrote a single case study on the transition of the three-year-old child to kindergarten. (2.) The second part describes differences between observation according to the Tavistock concept and Work Discussion. In particular, the challenge of addressing unpleasant (negative) emotions is focussed: emotions (i) that oneself experiences in the work situation, (ii) that the people one works with feel, (iii) and that arise in the seminar group. (3.) With reference to an example from social work with "multi-problem families" in the context of coercion the lecturer will describe the way in which the transition from Young Child Observation to Work Discussion was linked to the processing of unconscious defences against threatening emotions. It is discussed how difficult it was to give up the role of the observer in order to become "visible" in the Work Discussion seminar as a person who is more involved in the work situations described. (4.) The understanding and learning processes initiated in the Work Discussion seminar are described. The lecturer also emphasises that Work Discussion processes should take place over a long period of time: This is relevant both in terms of psychosocial professionalisation processes and in terms of supporting the development of family structures and relations.

**Keywords:**

Young Child Observation, Work Discussion, professionalisation, unconscious defence

**Biographical details:**

Lisa Engelke, BA MA MA, studied education and is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist in private practice and at the Child Guidance Clinic Vienna (Institut für Erziehungshilfe).

**E-mail:**

[lisaengelke@gmx.at](mailto:lisaengelke@gmx.at)