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## **Emotions as Practice: Anna Freud's Child Psychoanalysis and Thinking-Doing**

### **Children's Emotional Geographies**

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**Abstract:** The paper introduces Anna Freud's early writing from the perspective of the theory and practice of children's emotional geographies. Discussing especially Freud's view on the theory of defence mechanisms and her early arguments with Melanie Klein about the nature of the child's mind, it explores how children's emotions can be approached beyond children's own representational accounts of their emotional experiences. The paper advocates an engagement with Anna Freud's work and psychoanalysis that would account for different forms of knowledge produced in the intersubjective processes of research and for the significance of the relationships with child participants.

**Keywords:** child psychoanalysis, Anna Freud, emotional geographies, defence mechanisms, research with children, children's geographies

#### **1. A conundrum of children's emotional geographies**

During my doctoral research, I came to explore the significance of friendship and peer relationships for children's practices<sup>1</sup> in a small deprived neighbourhood of Bratislava, Slovakia<sup>2</sup>. The research involved a twelve-month ethnography during which I worked with a local community centre in the

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<sup>1</sup> I acknowledge the diverse usage of the term 'practices' in the contemporary literature (Schatzki 2001). The research in question operated with an intentionally broad and open definition of practices as the 'ongoing mix of human activities that make up the richness of everyday social life' (Painter 2000, 242) or, more profoundly, 'a series of actions that are governed by practical intelligibility and performed in interconnected, local settings' (Schatzki 1988, 244).

<sup>2</sup> See Blazek (2011a, 2011b) for more details.

position of a detached youth worker. This service was a regular youth work provision, primarily on the streets of the neighbourhood, and the nature of the contact with children aged 5-14 varied and responded to children's immediate needs, requirements and expectations. Meeting the agenda of the centre, work with children usually consisted of play and entertaining activities, but also included individual and group advisory, counselling and crisis interventions.

Peter (11) and Martin (9) were brothers<sup>3</sup> with whom I spent a lot of time on the street. They moved to the neighbourhood a few years before I began the research and they now lived with their parents and other siblings in a small flat. Two attributes were notable about the boys: their extraordinary compassion for each other juxtaposed with a reluctance to express feelings. Peter was very protective of his younger brother while also kind and considerate, and Martin was equally dedicated and appreciative of Peter's care. The brothers usually hung out together, with Martin in particular rarely going out without Peter. However, they seldom talked about their feelings, at most giving just short evasive replies such as: 'I'm fine' or 'it's ok'. When they talked about their experiences, the boys emphasised conflicts with all kinds of authorities and how they enjoyed breaking rules. Only rarely did Peter or Martin mention being appreciated by someone else, and if they did acknowledge this, they usually sought to terminate the conversation quickly.

After a few months, Peter was taken away from the family for his involvement in a series of felonies with a group of friends. For the next few weeks, Martin was only rarely seen on the street, usually just passing by and not paying attention to anyone else. It took some time before we made contact again, and while Martin began spending time on the street with his other older brother, he more often showed up alone.

Martin was slightly more outspoken now – it had been Peter who used to be more active in our conversations before – but he was still very cautious of talking about himself and especially about his

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<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of anonymity I changed the children's names. I keep their family situations and other personal circumstances intentionally vague throughout the paper but no deceptive information is given. I state children's real age at the time of our encounter while their gender might or might not have been changed.

feelings. He preferred to turn attention to other people, including myself, or to activities where we did not speak, enjoying the simplicity of strolls or observations of the neighbourhood where we avoided other children. After a couple of weeks, I asked Martin about Peter. Martin just snapped: "He's fine!" and refused to talk any further. For some time, he deflected my attempts to talk about Peter, although with less anger; but one day Martin told me more about how sad Peter was in the juvenile centre, how he struggled to get on with the staff, how he cried, and how he missed his home and family.

From this moment, Martin talked about his brother frequently and regularly and he often initiated such conversations. Yet, I noticed that Martin often revealed new information about Peter even when I knew from his mother that no family member had been in touch within that period and Martin had no means to have heard from Peter. Some of his news even contradicted the stories that Martin's mother and other siblings told me and my colleagues about Peter. A few weeks later, a colleague of mine suggested that by speaking about Peter, Martin could have been actually talking about himself.

There was no way to confirm this with Martin directly. He still fiercely refused any attention towards his own feelings, and when he talked about his experiences in the neighbourhood or in the school, he emphasised his "wrongdoings" again and again, and avoided any notice of his achievements or of being appreciated. Taking his stories about Peter as accounts of Martin's own life, though, gave me some leads around which I built my interpretations and these informed my actions towards him. For instance, I took Martin's stories of Peter's new friends as a reference to Martin's emerging relationships with a couple of children I knew from the neighbourhood. Martin talked about Peter's excitement for finding new friends in the juvenile centre and how they shared certain interests, but also about Peter's hesitation to trust them as much as he trusted Martin. I took these stories as an expression of Martin's feelings and uncertainties about his own relationships with children in the neighbourhood and in turn, I could pay attention to mundane moments of interactions between

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Martin and other children in activities and games which I, as a detached youth worker, could impact and this facilitated a safer environment in which Martin could explore his new relationships and the emotions associated with them. Martin also talked about Peter's feelings for his parents, emphasising how he felt sorry for being able to spend very little time with them. In this case, our talks even shifted to Martin revealing cautiously his own feelings. He emphasised how he wished to spend more time with his parents, especially with his father. While the reason for Peter's lack of time with his family was his detention in the juvenile centre, Martin's dejection came from the fact that his parents worked late, and gave their children less time and attention than Martin wished for. Even though we did not address any possible solutions to this – Martin still refused to go to such a depth – understanding Martin's feelings about the family situation helped inform the work of the community centre staff with the family as a whole.

The story of Martin and Peter at that time seemed to support my conclusions about the uppermost significance of children's relations with their siblings for their daily practices in this neighbourhood and about how any sudden rupture was of great difficulty to them. However, I found it difficult to integrate this story into my overall interpretative framework. Most troubling to the analysis was that I had no direct evidence from Martin – he never explicitly expressed to me his feelings over Peter or his new friends to me. He did not discuss his struggles after Peter was gone or his uncertainties with developing new relationships a few months later. All I had was a detailed personal and family history of Martin and Peter, and an interpretation that often contradicted Martin's explicit statements, such as when he said that he was 'fine' and it was Peter who was unhappy.

In searching for a way to resolve the discord between my interpretations and Martin's statements and reflections, I looked towards various literatures. Some of the writings concerned with the barriers between feelings and interpretations, particularly between the researched and researcher or between children and adults, were of some help. Various authors for instance argue that adults cannot entirely comprehend children's words and worlds so that the two need to be seen as largely

unbridgeable (Sibley 1991, Jones 2001, 2003, Philo 2003). There is also the vast literature informed by non-representational theory, which suggests that it is not possible for human beings to grasp fully what we experience, feel and do, and even less to communicate it to other people in our common language (Thrift 1997; Horton and Kraftl 2006a, 2006b; Anderson and Harrison 2011). Intriguing as these two trajectories were, I did not find them satisfying. Was Martin's reference to Peter just a perfectly understandable figure of a child's world, which I could not translate to my adult sense of what constituted the "truth"? Or should I have avoided taking Martin's "child" subjectivity as accounting entirely for the emotional scene of our encounters and for how I understood them? Did the absence of Martin's own feelings in his words come from his inability to apprehend or express them, or was it rather his reluctance to do so? Is it possible, that Martin's feelings about his brother's absence and new children arriving were there, right with him, clear and expressible, but for some reason he just did not disclose them?

The second kind of literature that appeared valuable touched upon my detached youth worker positionality and to its entrenchment in Martin's social space. As a practitioner based in the community centre, my role was not simply to explore children's worlds and generate research knowledge. I was part of an intentional, motivated and professionally framed set of activities, relationships and processes that gave priority to supporting children through a specific set of methods and through developing particular kinds of relationships<sup>4</sup>. Thus, when I interpreted Martin's story about Peter's uncertainty in relation to new friendship as Martin's own insecurity, my task was to focus on supporting him in his interactions with the children he befriended by helping him find an environment and activities where he would feel safe with these children and where their relationships could thrive. During this period, I was perhaps the closest contact that Martin had in the community centre; he was very keen to spend time together and increasingly opened up to me as our time together progressed and intensified. When I contemplated Martin's decision to talk about his world *at all*, to move beyond not mentioning Peter, and to begin articulating his feelings

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<sup>4</sup> See Blazek and Hraňová (2012) and Blazek and Lemešová (2011) for more details on the research approach.

towards his parents to me, I questioned whether this could be explained by some intrinsic feature of *our relationship*, something I had said or done or, on the contrary, by something I *avoided* doing or saying? Were the relational bond and our history of interactions (in a way extraordinary for Martin) in any way significant for what I came to know from Martin (and what I did not)? Was there any '*relationality, betweenness, and intersubjective mobility of emotions*' (Bondi 2009, 500, italics added), a shared spatiality relevant for the course of the research and for the contents and contexts in which I came to understand Martin's emotions (see also Bondi 1999, 2003a, 2005a, 2005b, 2008, Bennett 2009, Punch 2011, Kraftl this issue)?

To engage with these two themes – of the nature of the knowledge I could present, and of its surfacing through the embodied process of ethnographic fieldwork in the practitioner role – I now turn to the writings of Anna Freud. My discussion of her work is not intended to provide an exhaustive response to these fieldwork issues on its own. Rather, I seek to introduce Freud's<sup>5</sup> perspective on child psychoanalysis, largely overlooked by geographers, as a robust theoretical and methodological framework that can contribute to already existing approaches and at the same time foster new possibilities for thinking as well as doing children's emotional geographies.

## **2. Anna Freud, child psychoanalysis and geography**

Anna Freud remains virtually absent from the geographical literature. She has received no mention in the increasing work on psychoanalysis and geography (see Callard 2003, Kingsbury 2003, 2009, Thomas 2010); except for a minor note in Holt's recent outline of an agenda for geography of infants (Holt forthcoming), not even a passing reference to Freud exists in the literature on geography and childhood. This is despite the widespread interest of geographers in Freud's father to whom her work

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<sup>5</sup> Throughout the paper, by "Freud" I refer to Anna Freud while I will include Sigmund Freud's first name when referring to his person.

closely relates (Pile 1996, 2005, 2010a, Wilton 1998, Nast 2000, Parr et al. 2005, Hook 2005), and especially their interest in other formative figures of child psychoanalysis such as Melanie Klein or object-relations theorists such as John Bowlby or Donald Winnicott, including geographers interested in childhood (e.g. Sibley 1995, Aitken and Herman 1997, Aitken 2000, Kingsbury 2003, Kullman 2010, Shaw 2010).

There are a few possible explanations for this. First, Freud's work is still too often perceived as a hard and fast apologetics of Sigmund Freud without taking into consideration the expansion, but also (often subtle and implicit) critique that she brought forward against her father's work. Second, as Rose Edgcombe (2000) shows, a cold reception of Freud, particularly by those in the UK, has for decades been shaped by her theoretical, personal, and also social distinction from Melanie Klein, who settled in London in 1926 and became the decisive figure of the British child psychoanalysis, together with Freud's long-term suspicious attitude towards John Bowlby, a key up-and-coming figure in post-War British child psychoanalysis. It is my guess that there is also a third reason. The focus of Freud's activities and writing reaches far beyond psychoanalytical theory and has, since the beginning, focused on the extra-clinical and intersectional applicability of psychoanalysis. Upon commencement of her training, Freud contemplated the choice of becoming a psychoanalytically-informed teacher rather than a practising psychoanalyst and for a long time, she was involved in the so called "Vienna School" of child psychoanalysis<sup>6</sup> that employed psychoanalysis in social projects under the belief that 'altering environments can improve the psychic condition of children' (Young-Bruehl 1988, 177). Not only was this in stark opposition to the cultural and political settings of Melanie Klein and her supporters<sup>7</sup>, but Freud later expanded her activities by opening a centre for

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<sup>6</sup> See for instance Aichhorn (1935/1984) or Bernfeld (1931/1973).

<sup>7</sup> Young-Bruehl (1988) highlights that the only Kleinian psychoanalyst involved in education at the time when the confrontation between the two camps emerged was Susan Isaacs (e.g. Isaacs 1930/1999). Otherwise, she characterises Klein and her supporters by 'their upper-class traditions of cultural radicalism and political conservatism' (Young-Bruehl 1988, 178), in contrast to both the Vienna School of child psychoanalysis, and to an important fraction of the broader Viennese tradition initiated by Alfred Adler (the first president of the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society). Adler studied the collective psychology of immigrant workers and was practically involved as a physician for the Vienna underprivileged. He also influenced other politically active

young war victims, the Hampstead Clinic in London, with which her work was associated until her death (see Bolland and Sandler et al. 1965).

The context of psychoanalysis as strategically reaching beyond the clinical setting and informing or intersecting with other services such as education or nursing, has been important for my choice to focus on Freud in dealing with issues such as those outlined in the story of Martin and Peter. Yet I aim for more than just filling a blank space in the mosaic of psychoanalytical figures that geographers engage with (see Philo and Parr 2003 on potential pitfalls of this). Illustrated throughout by my research encounter with Martin, this paper discusses Freud's work through a dialogue between psychoanalytical theory as a conceptual tool (even with all its lack of 'ability to adapt to unfamiliar environments' (Sibley 2003, 391)) and the emerging engagement with methodological and practical implications of psychoanalysis (Bingley 2003; Thomas 2010; Pile 2010a; Proudfoot 2010; Healy 2010; Kingsbury 2010) for geographical research.

In this paper, while I focus only on Anna Freud's early (pre-War) work, I believe that her later writings on adolescence (Freud 1936/1993, 1962a; see also Erikson 1950), discussions of the figure of mother and transference in psychoanalysis (Freud 1962b, 1976), and her concepts of children's diagnostic profiles and developmental lines (Freud 1965, 1981) would all be innovative contributions to various strands of contemporary human geography. Nonetheless, this paper explores only two early areas of Freud's work. Reversing the chronological order in which they developed, I first discuss her foundations of ego-psychology, which followed from developments in theories of defence mechanisms, and illustrate how these can be applied to understand and inform the dynamics in research relationships with children, such as the one I experienced with Martin. Then, in section 4, I draw more loosely on Freud's earlier introductory writings on child psychoanalysis to illustrate how they can respond to some of the queries about exploring children's emotional geographies. These two themes also broadly correspond with the questions stated in the section 1 – one related to the

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figures of the early Vienna psychoanalysis movement such as Wilhelm Reich, Otto Fenichel or Erich Fromm (see Schwartz 2003).

epistemology of children's emotions and one about the inter-subjective dynamics of research with children.

### **3. Mechanisms of defence**

In 1923, Sigmund Freud (1923/1991a) expanded his early topographical model of the mind divided into conscious and unconscious areas by introducing three new concepts: the ego, the id and the superego. His claim was that the unconscious and consciousness are qualities of psychic processes rather than structures of the mind and he introduced a tripartite model of the psychic apparatus that stand behind all mental activities. The *id* is an exclusively unconscious set of instinctual impulses that evolve from the basic human drives. The *ego* is 'a coherent organisation of mental processes... [and] the mental agency that supervises all its own constituent processes' (Freud 1923/1991a, 443).

Sigmund Freud explained the relation between the two as follows: 'The ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavours to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle<sup>8</sup> which reigns unrestrictedly in the id. For the ego, perception plays the part which in the id falls to instinct. The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions' (Freud 1923/1991a, 450).

The third element of the psyche stretches between the unconscious and conscious, acting as a control mechanism of the ego: 'Whereas the ego is essentially the representative of the external world, of reality, the superego stands in contrast to it as the representative of the internal world, of the id'. The superego is often described as "conscience", an internalised set of moral and social

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<sup>8</sup> Sigmund Freud's account also drew on his early work on the pleasure and reality principles (Freud 1911/1991b, 1920/1955a). The pleasure principle drives human action from inner premises to seek immediate contentment and avoid suffering. In later developmental stages when confronted with the reality principle, the human being learns to defer indulgence in so far as external circumstances require.

principles that govern activities of the mind. The superego thus bridges between the unconscious drives and the adopted cultural norms. Sigmund Freud argued that the 'ego forms its super-ego out of the id' (Freud 1923/1991a, 461), so 'the super-ego is always close to the id and can act as its representative *vis-a-vis* the ego' (Freud 1923/1991a, 469). His emphasis was thus principally on the dynamics of the mind that involve desires and fantasies, internalised socially- and morally-accepted norms, and the mind's engagement with the external reality.

This framework was crucial for Anna Freud's second book, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (Freud 1936/1993). She began the book with a critique of version of psychoanalysis that engaged exclusively with the unconscious:

'There have been periods in the development of psychoanalytical science when the theoretical study of the individual ego was distinctly unpopular. Somehow or other, many analysts had conceived the idea that, in analysis, the value of the scientific and therapeutic work done was in direct proportion to the depth of the psychic strata upon which attention was focused. Whenever interest was transferred from the deeper to the more superficial psychic strata whenever, that is to say, research was deflected from the id to the ego — it was felt that here was a beginning of apostasy from psychoanalysis as a whole. The view held was that the term "psychoanalysis" should be reserved for the new discoveries relating to the unconscious psychic life, i.e., the study of re-pressed instinctual impulses, affects, and fantasies.' (Freud 1936/1993, 3)

Freud found this futile and argues that for psychoanalysis to investigate only unconscious life is conceptually erroneous<sup>9</sup>. She insisted that the only path by which to approach the id springs indirectly from the 'derivatives which make their way into the systems of pre-consciousness and

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<sup>9</sup> While not explicit, Freud's critique was probably aimed largely at Klein's version of psychoanalysis. On the other hand, she quotes her father's work (Freud 1920/1955a, 1921/1955b) as a source of inspiration for her interest in ego-analysis despite Sigmund Freud's earlier harsh disapproval of Adler's attempts to redirect psychoanalytical investigations from unconscious conflicts towards holistic ego contents (Freud 1914/1957, Adler 1965, Schwartz 2003). In turn, an argument has been that the 'prestige of [Freud's] endorsement has [...] done much to lend strength' (Wolman 1972, 34) to the next generation of psychoanalysts who developed theories of the ego (notably Hartman 1939/1958, Erikson 1950).

consciousness' (Freud 1936/1993, 5). However, as long as the id is in a state of peace and satisfaction, no tensions with the ego are brought about, and the id does not alert the ego to its presence and remains unreachable for observation. Of the superego, Freud argued that although much of its content resides consciously, it remains imperceptible to the ego when the two coincide, that is, unless the superego 'confronts the ego with hostility or at least criticism' (Freud 1936/1993, 6) over its morally unacceptable actions.

These observations led Freud to conclude that the focus of psychoanalysis needs to be located *at the interface* of the ego and the other two elements of the psyche *just when* a conflict takes place between them. She emphasised that the ego submits to the reality principle by perceiving and reflecting, but also proceeding as a result of transmissions from the id and the superego, in order to secure an *organisation* that would at the same time comply with social and moral norms, individuals' basic desires and wishes, and perceptions of the objective reality. Freud argued that it is the task of psychoanalysis to 'split up' (Freud 1936/1993, 8) this constructed and dynamic unity into its original particles belonging to the id, ego and superego.

For the rest of the book, Freud focused on the concept of *defence*<sup>10</sup>, a mechanism through which the ego attempts to deal with unpleasant impulses from the id and the superego. She described a defence mechanism as a process through which the ego 'proceeds to counterattack and to invade the territory of the id [in order] to put the instincts permanently out of action by means of appropriate defensive measures, designed to secure its own boundaries' (Freud 1936/1993, 7). She identified the ego's triple position in psychoanalysis as an *object* of inquiry, its *instrument*, but also an "*enemy*", because, through defences, the ego seeks to conceal psychic dynamics and thereby to protect itself from the anxiety that comes with the unsatisfied impulses from the id, or from the conflicts with the superego. She thus argued that making ego resistance and the mechanisms of defence conscious,

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<sup>10</sup> Conceptually, Freud followed earlier writing by her father, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (Freud 1926a/1959), in which he claimed that repression of instinctual drives and affects, the concept he had endorsed for the previous three decades, is just one type of mechanisms that the ego employs to deal with anxiety and not the only one.

thus 'rendering them inoperative' (Freud 1936/1993, 41), and decomposing the ultimate psychical reaction (a defence) into its structural components from the ego, id and superego, provides a psychoanalytic understanding of all three structures of the mind.

The theory of defence mechanisms does not refer only to instinctual impulses. In Chapter 3, Freud elucidated how '[t]he ego is in conflict not only with those derivatives which try to make their way into its territory in order to gain access to consciousness and to obtain gratification. It defends itself no less energetically against the *affects*<sup>11</sup> associated with these instinctual impulses. When repudiating the claims of instinct, its first task must always be to come to terms with these *affects*.' (Freud 1936/1993, 31-32, italics added). What Freud explicated here is, in later psychodynamic theory, represented as a theory of conflict, a tension between wishes, associated fears/anxieties, and ensuing defences (Brenner 1976, 1982, Malan 1995), the later arising as a dynamic process for containing a range of feelings, thoughts and actions (Gray 1995). Jon Frederickson (1999) explained that the psychoanalyst's task here is to capture the elements of this dynamic relationship that are known, through verbal interaction and an ongoing experiential observation, and to identify the hidden ones<sup>12</sup>.

With Martin, applying such a framework could lead to the following interpretation (which I did not consider to be definitive, as will be discussed below):

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<sup>11</sup> The meaning of the word 'affect' in Freudian theory differs from what has been established as a prevalent conceptualisation in human geography (Thrift 2004, Pile 2010b). For Freud, and despite the conceptual elasticity in both Anna's and Sigmund's writings (Rapaport 1953, Stein 1999), affects can be seen as experiences as well as expressions of feelings. I seek to follow Freud's conceptualisation carefully, relating it analytically to Martin's experience and looking for a common conceptual background rather than joining the terminological polemics, effectively agreeing that 'efforts to delineate sharp and stable conceptual boundaries around and between emotion and affect are misplaced' (Bondi and Davidson 2010, 595) and carry the risk of 'losing sight and sense of the subjects with which we claim to be concerned' (Bondi and Davidson 2010, 598).

<sup>12</sup> Freud (1936/1993, 1965) also illustrated that intra-psychic conflicts and ego-defences can be proceedings of a normal development and not necessarily symptoms of a neurosis development. This point was later developed by others including George Vaillant (1977) who claimed that defence mechanisms also help to shape the relationship between the self and the object. Depending on how one recognises or externalises symptoms of anxiety outside the self, the range of defensive adaptations can range from primitive, or even pathological (e.g. psychotic denial, splitting or extreme projection), to 'mature' responses such as altruistic surrender, humour, anticipation or sublimation of negative impulses into positive actions. This point emphasises that defence mechanisms are part of the everyday psychological life and the theory can be applied broadly, not just to patients with mental illnesses.

- Perhaps Martin wished for the presence of his brother or for a peer relationship that would replace what he had experienced with Peter. Perhaps he also wished for more engagement with his parents and ultimately also for not being hurt by or after revealing his feelings to another person<sup>13</sup>. Although these wishes might signal the beginning of a mental process (conflict), I could not approach them empirically because Martin did not talk about them, or express them directly in any other way, apart from cautious remarks about his parents. Therefore, they are a tentative *conclusion* of my interpretation of Martin's intra-psychic conflict. This interpretation is based on the theory of unconscious conflict and it could be assessed only if two underlying propositions – about *anxiety* and *defence mechanism* – could be explored.
- I had a long-term record of observations of Martin avoiding talk of his own feelings and presenting himself in a positive light. In Freud's psychodynamic framework, this might point to *fear* or *anxiety* about letting other people *know about his feelings* (who might then act towards him on the basis of such knowledge), and of being perceived as a "good boy" by others. The reasons that might lie behind such anxieties were beyond my knowledge and I did not have the means to investigate them within the timeframe and opportunities of the research<sup>14</sup>.
- Martin appeared to establish a *defensive reaction* by talking about his own feelings and experiences as if they belonged to Peter, thereby apparently not disclosing his own feelings to me or to others. In psychoanalytic theory, this mechanism is called *projection*, a denial of one's own emotions, thoughts or features and ascription of them to another person. Empirically, I became increasingly convinced that Martin was talking about himself as the stories corresponded to my experiences with him in the neighbourhood and I knew they could not be Peter's. Conceptually, projection is a prominent defence mechanism of paranoia

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<sup>13</sup> The analytical process would call for further examination and interpretation of these wishes. I refrain from doing so in this paper because the purpose is to illustrate rather than implement the analytical ideas.

<sup>14</sup> As with the interpretation of Martin's wishes, this was not relevant to my research.

(Moss 1988, Gabbard 2005), understood as the fear of negative effects coming from the outside (Klein 1946/1975). Projection serves to 'break the connection between the ideational representations of dangerous instinctual impulses and the ego' (Freud 1936/1993, 122), this way excluding these unpleasant 'ideas or affects from the ego' and 'relegating' (Freud 1936/1993, 51) them to objects in the outside world. By projecting his emotions onto another person (Peter), Martin may have been seeking to protect himself from possible harm that he supposed would happen if someone else had known about his feelings.

Two moments are notable about this interpretation. First, on this account, although Martin's wishes along with his anxieties are foundational in his intra-psychic conflict, empirically, they depend primarily on the inference of his use of the defence mechanism of projection, itself an outcome of the conflict. In other words, in order to understand Martin's emotions, the analysis began with his act – of talking about "Peter's" emotions – uncovering first the conflict, and then the affect behind it. Second, as Freud stresses, such an exploration of Martin's feelings, associated with his instinctual desires, would not be possible if the ego did not need to protect itself from them, triggering the defence mechanism. Defensive mechanisms are derivatives of emotions (Plutchik 1979) arising in the conflict between the ego, the id and the superego.

This interpretation still did not entirely satisfy my dilemma about the lack of empirical evidence of Martin's feelings and Martin still firmly refused to talk about himself. In the rest of the paper, I explain how, rather than accepting this account as a definitive explanation of Martin's emotions, I used it tentatively in the development of my relationship with Martin, which in turn enabled me to further explore his emotional life. In the next section, I focus on the specificity of *child* psychoanalysis and *children's* geographies in relation to my story, before concluding with an outline of the applicability of child psychoanalysis in the research on children's emotional geographies.

#### **4. (Anna Freud's) child psychoanalysis and children's geographies – some thoughts on connections**

The interpretative philosophy of psychodynamic therapy (Freud 1925/1961b) expects the therapist's interpretations to be constantly tested through ongoing engagement and interactions with the client (Bondi 2005a), drawing on both an 'elaboration of the interpretation' by the client and on the client's 'greater rapport with the therapist' (Frederickson 1999, 60). In Sigmund Freud's (1914/1958) view on the analysis of adult clients, the analyst's interpretation should be voiced and 'dialecticised in speech'<sup>15</sup> with the client so the client would not repeat the neurotic actions that respond to the repression of a trauma, but rather be stimulated to remember this trauma by engaging with the analyst's interpretation. The accuracy of the analyst's interpretation is not as important in this perspective as is the effect it has on the client. For Sigmund Freud, it is important to 'curb [...] the patient's compulsion to repeat and... turn it [...] into a motive to remember' (Freud 1914/1958), achieving catharsis primarily by working through transference (an unconscious redirection of the client's feelings onto the analyst).

An analyst following this Sigmund Freud's perspective might be expected to confront Martin after he spoke about Peter's supposed experiences in the detention centre with what I have interpreted as his desire for Peter's presence, for relationships with other children and for his parents' attention, and in relation to his fears of intimacy with others. Martin angrily refused my early attempts even to persuade him to talk about himself. He even refused my company on the street a couple of times.

Very soon, I entirely gave up voicing my interpretations. What follows is an explication of the reasons

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<sup>15</sup> I am quoting one of the anonymous reviewers here, to whom I am much indebted for highlighting the importance of the voiced interpretation in psychoanalysis, which I overlooked in the earlier draft of the paper and which is crucial for my argument about the distinctiveness of research/psychoanalysis with children, as well as for pointing me towards Sigmund Freud's *Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through*, a discussion of which follows.

behind this, connecting to the primacy of my research rationale and developing this through additional readings of Freud and some literature on children's geographies.

First of all, I was not Martin's analyst or therapist. In order to obtain access to the community as an ethnographer, my principal role with children was the one of a youth worker. Although this role expected the application of some counselling skills, the main goal was to offer and to develop contact and relationship with children, several of whom were perceived as disengaged. It was important that there was someone professionally skilled on the street where the children were spending a lot of time, and that the children would trust this person and might be willing to relate to them more easily than to others professionals or adults. It was expected that if there was a need for more intense professional intervention, while some youth workers were capable of providing this, all were asked simply to facilitate contact with other professionals, drawing on their relationships and trust with the children. Rather than directly seeking to intervene therapeutically, I focused on maintaining and developing the relationship with Martin, something he shared with very few adults or children around him. Also, the nature of the service, where the youth workers shifts on the street were scheduled but children did not have to be there, made any systematic therapeutic process difficult unless the children agreed to attend regular sessions in the community centre (where a qualified counsellor was available).

This makes the kind of knowledge production in my research different from the kind of knowledge that would emerge through a therapeutic process: 'Therapeutically, the task of meaning-making is an interpersonal one [...] interpretations are interpersonal and intrapsychic moments of communication, "owned" at least as much by the patient or client as the practitioner', while in geographical research, 'meaning-making that ensues is not generated directly within research encounters and research relationships' (Bondi 2003b, 326). However, I want to argue that my interpretation of Martin's emotions, fabricated without his involvement, was not the only body of knowledge – and certainly not the only significant knowledge – produced by the research and our

research encounter. But first, I elaborate an argument that reading Anna Freud's earlier writings would problematise Sigmund Freud's methodological propositions if applied to child psychoanalysis.

#### **4.1 Child vs. adult psychoanalysis**

In *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* and *Introduction to the Technique of Child Analysis*<sup>16</sup> (Freud 1927/1974), her first book, Freud developed two arguments for why child psychoanalysis needs to adopt different theoretical and methodological premises from the work her father suggested with adults.

Freud identified three types of anxiety against which the ego activates defence mechanisms – *instinctual anxiety*, or the 'dread of the strength of the instincts' (Freud 1936/1993, 58), where the ego is worried about getting overflowed by movements from the unconscious structures of the mind; *objective anxiety*, where children's struggles with their instinctual drives come from their effort to avoid a *real* conflict with parents or other authorities; and *superego anxiety*, which is invoked by the superego's conflict with residual instincts from the id in which the ego is involved. She emphasised that objective anxiety and its associated defences precede chronologically anxieties associated with the superego and the intensity of drives: 'The child learns how to defend against stimuli that come from the internal world on the basis of his dealings with the external world [...]. The first clashes in the child's life are between the instinctual wishes and impulses on the one hand and the frustrating agencies and powers of the external world, on the other. And only later does this become an internalized process and an internalized conflict' (Sandler and Freud 1985, 525).

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<sup>16</sup> *Introduction* was developed as a manual for the Vienna Training Institute (founded in 1925) and drew on Freud's contributions to a course on psychoanalytic pedagogy for teachers and social workers (run with August Aichhorn, Siegfried Bernfeld and Willi Hoffer), to the associated journal *Zeitschrift für Psychoanalytische Pädagogik* (later renamed as *The Psychoanalytical Study of the Child*), and from her ongoing psychoanalytical practice in which children were about two-thirds of her patients (Young-Bruehl 1988). The book was largely a polemical statement responding to recent writings by Melanie Klein (mainly in a series of papers in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* and later in *The Psychoanalysis of Children* (Klein 1932/1989)) and inaugurating the long-standing quarrel between them.

However, she argued that the most common defence situation among adult neurotics, and the one that her father's work largely reflects, is *superego anxiety*, which has different roots and symptoms, and different prospects for treatment. Freud emphasised the utmost importance of understanding and engaging in the extra-analytical settings of children's everyday experiences and relationships through involvement in educational and nursing activities with parents and other adults, *along* with exploring the demonstration of emotions through acts of defence<sup>17</sup>. Freud also refused her father's interpretation of 'transference neurosis' (Freud 1901/1953), which would stand for the recapitulative mirroring of a child's relationship with the parents in the relationship with the analyst, and which would be instrumental in the Sigmund Freud's methodological arguments presented in the first paragraph of this section. Instead, she argues that child's *actual* relationships with the parents or other objects, not only their introjections, are very much present during the contact (framed by fears, resistance, devotion or submission) with the analyst. She claimed that the '[child's] original objects [...] are still real and present as love objects, not only in fantasy as with the adult neurotic' (Freud 1927/1974, 44; see also Freud 1946, 34). Therefore, child psychoanalysis must use *different methods* than the treatment of adults as the problem is different<sup>18</sup>.

Freud argued that there is a third fundamental difference between analysis of child and adult clients apart from the differences in the formation of neurosis and the significance of the external world in understanding children's defence mechanisms. Psychoanalysis with children could not rely on free

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<sup>17</sup> As Freud remarked later, '[t]he idea that fear of the external world could [...] cause similar results as the fear of internal agencies, was a more or less heretical revolutionary idea' (Sandler and Freud 1985, 264).

<sup>18</sup> This is also a crucial divergence from the Kleinian view, which, in its most radical form, states that psychoanalysis should be concerned 'simply and solely with the imaginings of the childish mind, the fantasied pleasures and the dreaded retributions' (Rivi re 1927, p.376), and it can disregard the child's actual interpersonal relationships. Freud argued that a preparatory period when the analyst gets to know about child's life, social context and history, communicates with parents, and progresses to build a relationship with the child, is necessary for a successful analysis – something that Klein saw as 'corrupting to the analytical process' (Young-Bruehl 1988, 167). Freud disagreed with Klein's technique of interpretation that would exclude any preparation or extra-analytic content, 'in short, upon any means of reaching depths from the surface of consciousness' (Young-Bruehl 1988, 168) and called for an "inside out" understanding of children's psychic *and* social life. On the other hand, it is notable that while Freud expressed some sympathy with object-relations theorists (e.g. Ainsworth et al. 1976, Bowlby 1988), she also called for cautiousness in placing too much emphasis on children's experiences relative to their fantasies. She argued that psychoanalysis in the end does not 'deal with the happenings in the external world as such but with their repercussions in the mind, i.e. with the form in which they are registered by the child' (Freud, 1960, 54).

associations, a verbal tool that was central for the psychoanalytical treatment of adult patients.

Unlike Klein, who argued that play, as the main device of children's expressions, could be used in the very same interpretative manner as free associations with adults, Freud claimed that play is a process of its own and not just a projection of child's unconscious impulses<sup>19</sup>. She emphasised that verbal interactions *in the context of the relationship* between the child and analyst are absolutely central and *directing* children to play *way over* their own initiative can lead to regression (Sandler et al. 1980). In other words, Freud did not refuse voice as an important instrument of analysis. She just downplayed its role as a medium of the interpretation-association procedure and highlighted its role in the development of the relationship between the client and the analyst.

These two features – children's use of language and the adult-child relationship – were important in my story with Martin. Even though I did not seek to achieve analytic change, the development of our relationship and our activities were shaped by my psychoanalytically-informed reading of Martin's emotions. And even though Martin refused to speak – or hear – about his feelings, language was still important in the development of this relationship, even if these were just mundane conversations that helped Martin feel secure and comfortable, or sometimes it was just a silent activity we shared that had this effect<sup>20</sup>.

These two moments are very important also in the contemporary debates in children's geographies. In section 4.2, I briefly review some of the arguments presented by geographers, so I can outline connections to these disciplinary debates. In the conclusion, I sketch possible links between my empirical vignette and conceptualisations of child psychoanalysis and geography.

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<sup>19</sup> In this respect, Cindi Katz's (2004) adaptation of Lev Vygotsky's (1978) and Walter Benjamin's (1978) ideas regarding play connects to Freud. Katz too thinks about play not simply as a projection of children's conscious and unconscious comprehension of the world, but rather as a creative expression and a possibility of radically new orderings at various scales. Play is a productive, not reproductive, process through which children interact with the external world.

<sup>20</sup> This stance also responds to some warnings by geographers about approaching psychoanalysis as a 'universalizing, decorporealized, and culturally decontextualized account of psychosexual development' (Blum and Nast 1996, 571) or as an 'individualised understanding of the self and the unconscious [as] these understandings arguably risk misinterpreting the contextual quality of psychoanalytical thinking' (Parr et al. 2005, 90).

#### **4.2 Children's geographies concerns**

The limits of language in work with (especially younger) children have been acknowledged by geographers, whether in relation to the perceived 'abilities and social competence' (Gallacher 2005, 243) of children, the significance of other domains in children's expressions and subjectivations (Katz 2004, Horton 2008, 2010) or the power relations embedding children's dynamic identities and their voice (Holt 2004, Ansell et al. 2012; see also Horton and Kraftl 2006, Woodyer 2008). As Jones (2001, 177) in particular argues, 'the challenge [of research with children] is to translate [children's geographies] into the rational language of academic research and writing without, in the process, losing those very characteristics which may be at the centre of understanding children's geographies'. However, working beyond language (which does not necessarily mean ignoring language) offers 'not just a novel style of knowledge (re)presentation [...] but it also acts as a political tool that opens up new spaces of expression, perception and understanding for those whose active presence in academic debates is marginalized by the prevalent insistence on the use of (rigorous) language in the production of knowledge' (Blazek and Hraňová 2012, 153), which is especially relevant in research with children where researchers tend to engage with more 'multifaceted, enlivened and multisensory forms of knowledge' (ibid.; see also Mitchell and Elwood 2012 for an example of a recent critique of 'de-voicing' research with children).

In addition, it has been argued by geographers that 'there are very real differences between the becoming of children and the becoming of adults [...] that pose epistemological, methodological, ethical and political challenges to research' (Jones 2008, 210; see also James 1991, Sibley 1991, Jones 2001, 2003, this issue, Tucker 2003, Philo 2003, Kraftl this issue). Even participatory research emphasising the presence of children in research process is being hugely impacted by considerations of differences between children and adults (Ansell et al. 2012, Todd 2012).

One of the implications of this line of thinking is that as the differences between children and adults are not just epistemological but also political, attempts to fully understand children's lives can become efforts to colonise them (Jones 2008). By responding to difference from children, and by engaging with it supportively but non-invasively (to an extent), various authors see the role of children's geographies as not only in understanding children's lives, but also as 'providing space for [children's] otherness' (Jones, this issue) and a 'loving, supportive and not overly corrosive environments' (ibid., see also Kraftl this issue). In relation to my story with Martin, this could stand for 'taking place' (Anderson and Harrison 2011) in Martin's emotions. Whilst I tried to understand them, I was also becoming an object in Martin's emotional dynamics, as a researcher/youth worker and as an individual person. Thus, I did not only produce the ethnographic outputs of the research, but I also took place in the generation of knowledge by Martin that would remain private, inaccessible by others including myself, but which would surface in effect as a change in Martin's 'personal relationships and dispositions, but also subtle emotional intelligences' (Blazek and Hraňová 2012, 164).

## **5. Conclusions**

This paper has illustrated how focusing solely on children's voices to understand their emotions and taking verbal expressions as truth within the analysis might be problematic. The transposition from children's emotional experience to researcher's voiced expressions is far from straightforward because of the chasm between children's and adults' worlds, and because of the psychological processes influencing our capacity to recognise, conceive and articulate our emotions. In my story about Martin, my interpretation directly contradicted his words.

I offered Anna Freud's theory of defence mechanism as a conceptual framework that could tackle this tension. In my analysis, I considered Martin's words, but also his actions and my broader knowledge of his family and social life, all attained through my practice as a youth worker in the neighbourhood where Martin spent most of his time, a practice that was psychoanalytically-informed and guided by a professional code of conduct<sup>21</sup>.

This contextual experience informs the last section of the paper where I discussed in more detail Freud's view on the psychoanalysis of children and some recent discussions in children's geographies, which share concerns about the limits of language in work with children, the significance of the relationship between child participants and the adult therapists/researchers, and aspects of these dynamics which are often considered to be outside the analytical or research process. My story of Martin illustrated that while I did not know the "truth" about his feelings, I yielded an interpretation of his feelings through exploring his practices as well as broader life settings, but importantly, I also acted in the relationship with Martin as if this interpretation was correct. In other words, the core of my conclusions was not just the kind of knowledge that would *represent* Martin's feeling, but also the kind of deliberate knowledge that *governed my practical actions* towards Martin.

As a conclusion, this paper not only suggests that geographers engage with Anna Freud and psychoanalytic theory and practice more widely, but it also calls for serious consideration of the intersubjective dynamics that arise with child research participants as a way of thinking-doing children's emotional geographies beyond the representations of children's voice as research outputs.

### **Acknowledgements**

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<sup>21</sup> I should emphasise at this point that I do not suggest that geographers need to become psychoanalysts (see Bondi 1999, 2005a, Bingley 2002, 2003), even if getting trained in various aspects of psychoanalysis (or psychotherapy more widely) might sometimes be helpful, in research that entails interpersonal processes and encounters. Whilst there are conceptual and practical advantages in drawing on child psychoanalysis in studying children's emotional geographies, there is also the risk of inappropriate application or even harm caused to the research participants if the researchers do not master the necessary skills, for which a period of training and praxis, generally unavailable to researchers (Bennett 2009), is needed. While Freud was supportive of her father's advocacy of lay analysis (Freud 1926b/1959b), she was also very vocal about the possible harms that misguided psychoanalytic practice without proper training can cause (Freud 1936/1993, Sandler et al. 1980).

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