

Sparrman, Anna: The ontological practices of child culture
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This paper explores the ontologies of child culture by examining how child culture is enacted in and through practices in a variety of child-oriented leisure/ cultural settings. Specifically, the study considers five different settings: an amusement park, a theme park, a science center, and two children's museums. Even though these places generally do not fall into the same genre of child culture we treat them symmetrically. We focus on how the institutions enact the figure of the child and the figure of the adult, and what that tells us about child culture today. The material discussed is generated through ethnographic observations, visual documentations, and institutional documents.

Each practice activates different entities in the process of configuring the child 'user' of these settings. For example, in children's museums, the figurations of the child is enacted through relations between the museum's educational ideas, the design/materiality of exhibitions, entrance fees, light, sound, and the visitors' (children, adults) use of the place, and organization of their visits.

The concept of child culture will be explored through the idea of rhizomatic thinking and knowledge. This will move the discussion about child culture beyond binary thinking such as child-adult, material-human, and ideas of culture for and by children.

Within each setting different figurations of the child are brought into being. Our findings show that multiple different figures of the child are enacted both within and across the practices. The paper asks what are the consequences of this multiplicity? Which figures of the child need to be accepted for the institutions to work? What happens when competing figurations of the child are enacted? How multiple is the ontology of child culture and how much is repeated across the settings? What does this say about politics of child culture?

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References

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