

Abstract

Title: *Folkhemmets barnkläder – Diskurser om det klädda barnet under 1920–50-talen.*
English title: *Children's clothes in the People's home – Discourses of the dressed child in the 1920s to the 1950s.*
Dissertation at the Department of Ethnology, Göteborg University, Box 200 SE-405 30 Göteborg.
Written in Swedish with an English summary.
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This study focuses on how meanings of children's clothes were constructed in the 1920s to the 1950s in Sweden, the period when the Swedish version of the welfare state, "folkhemmet" – the People's Home – was built. At that time three discourses was forming an order of statements about "the dressed child": the resource demanding, the active playing and the fashionable dressed child. The purpose of the thesis is to illustrate how the order of discourse of the issue of children's clothing was formed through the exchange of meanings between social actors from the contexts state, market, movements and everyday life. Theory and method come from critical discourse analysis, as described by Norman Fairclough.

From various sources – advisory pamphlets, magazines, newspaper clippings, archive material, photos, sewing books, preserved garments and interviews – the empirical chapters dwell on how discursive elements (discourses, genres and styles) are put together, through discursive practices, to establish an order consisting of accepted ways of understanding, talking about and taking care of children's clothes. The text also points at this order as always unstable and contested through discursive "struggle" between the social actors. Some themes are:

- How research on the resource demanding child's clothes was connected to changes in everyday life, for instance by forming the basis for political proposals and for advice from the state advisory bureau Active housekeeping, urging the housewives to change their views on children and practices for taking care of clothes.
- How establishing the discourse of the active playing child to a large extent was about putting forward material signs like models giving freedom of movement, strong long-lasting fabrics and details making it easy for children to dress.
- How the market saw the child as a less rational consumer than the mother and thus, to increase sales, worked to construct the fashionable dressed child. The market wanted to get children interested in the details of the garments and in choosing clothes by themselves.

The last chapter brings up the ideological effects of the issue of children's clothing. Following Fairclough this means that it discusses how the issue of children's clothing led to the maintenance or change in the relations of subordination and domination in society. Themes discussed are: Talk about that ready-to-wear clothes contributed to equality, class-relations between middle class experts and "the people" and relations between mothers and children.

Keywords: Children's clothes, the People's home, housekeeping, consumption, design, sewing, materiality, critical discourse analysis

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