

UWSP College of Letters and Science Research Symposium 2024

Further Reading and Works Cited for:

*The Effects of Fear: Club Disney and the Privatization of  
Recreation*

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Within this document you will find supplemental information, and a selected bibliography for the poster “The Effects of Fear: Club Disney and the Privatization of Recreation.” Included are short writings on Club Disney topics, historical recreation, as well as a timeline of significant events and a facility map from one of the Club Disney facilities (likely the Thousand Oaks location).

\*Note on Poster\*- Under the section “Late 20th Century Fear and Club Disney” as a slight inaccuracy. The last two sentences state “Additionally, Club Disney’s computer lab’s name was also changed from “The Chat Hat” to “The Mouse Pad” during development. I attribute this change to be related to parents’ fear of online chat rooms.” The words “changed” and “change” should be “diverted” and “diversion.” As well as “attention being inserted as well. The sentence should read:

“Additionally, Club Disney’s attention to the computer lab’s names was also diverted from “The Chat Hat” to “The Mouse Pad” during development. I attribute this diversion to be related to parents’ fear of online chat rooms.

“The Chat Hat” still existed, it was an area for parents to go and check their emails and the like. However, there was a significant amount of mention of “The Chat Hat” section in the early history of Club Disney. However, the focus seemingly switched to “The Mouse Pad” as time went on.

## Further Reading

### Club Disney’s Target Audience and The Capitalization of Fear

The advertising for the first Club Disney in Thousand Oaks, California was handled by the company Wunderman Cato Johnson (WCJ). The archives at Duke University hold the Wunderman Archives collection. Within the collection there are three boxes that pertain to Club Disney, “Club Disney creative, undated,” “Making Magic Together Presentation, circa 1997,” and “Club Disney 1996-1997.” These boxes hold things like mailers, membership program information, and press releases. What’s most important as it pertains to this section is the “Making Magic Together Presentation, circa 1997.”

This presentation goes through the different ways that WCJ can help Club Disney and how they will market to potential audiences. In this document they identify their target audiences. They identify two targets of parents and children: “Nice Kids” and “Active Parents.” They describe “nice kids” as intelligent, curious, active, friendly, and well-behaved. Making certain to add to their presentation that it’s how parents see their children. When describing “active parents” they describe them as wishing they had more control over who their kids are playing with.

These two descriptions go right inline with fear over other recreational facilities and specifically juvenile delinquency. Their target “nice kids” are described as the opposite of juvenile delinquents, specifically the well-behaved part. Parents wanting to have more control over who their kids play with is another aspect of juvenile delinquency. The whole reason why indoor children’s play places were popular was because parents did not want to bring their children to places like video game arcades and have their kids play with those “juvenile

delinquents.” While WCJ does not state this fear of juvenile delinquency and public recreation anywhere within their documents, their target audience section points to those.

### Club Disney’s EdVentures

One aspect that Club Disney focused on for their facilities was education. For school groups they had a program called EdVentures. The Wunderman Cato Johnson Club Disney documents include descriptions of the two pilot EdVentures, both themed around *The Lion King*: “Disney’s Alphabet Safari” and “Circle of Life.” The first being geared towards preschoolers and kindergartners and is about letter identification. The second is geared towards teaching students about the environment. How it works and how students can protect and improve it in their communities. These programs would change throughout Club Disney’s lifespans focusing on different themes and topics.

### Club Disney Thousand Oaks Grand Opening Protests and Attendance

The opening of the first Club Disney in Thousand Oaks, California had a few significant events that could not be covered on the poster but are still important to mention. Firstly, a small group of protestors were at attendance protesting the fact of Disney’s merchandise being produced overseas. These factories were (and still are) very poorly operated in terms of working conditions, with some of the factories using child labor. While Disney was promoting their Club Disney facilities to parents as being safe, some of the merchandise they would be selling in their gift shop would have been produced by children in unsafe working conditions.

Additionally, attendance was greatly overestimated. Disney had predicted around 10,000 people to attend the grand opening. However, that number was closer to 1,500 in reality. It was assumed that people were scared off by potential traffic problems. Disney closed Club Disney due to the facilities not making as much money as they were expecting. They were turning profits but not big enough profits. The attendance overestimations were an early sign of Disney’s greater than reality expectations for the facilities. *For more on this topic see the newspaper articles under the bibliography sections “Club Disney Grand Openings” and “Club Disney Closure.”*

### The Early Starts of Public Recreation

When public recreation was first on the rise in the late 1800s, it was intended to solve societal ills. This was mainly done through public parks. People, specifically in urban areas, were afraid that without a means of recreation, morality within society would decrease. Public recreation facilities were the solution. By the early 1900s, this panic of societal ills took a

specific focus. The new focus was on juvenile delinquency. Public recreation was now seen as a solution to society's fear around juvenile delinquency. If they gave the youth a place to go, it would be solved. Public recreation facilities were most always segregated, both officially and de facto based on their location within the city. It wasn't until the middle of the century that this would change. However, with this change also came a rise in privately owned recreational facilities due to white people's baseless fear over desegregation.

## Juvenile Delinquency Re-Awakens: Recreation and the Late 20th Century

The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a rise in new leisure and public recreational facilities, the biggest one being shopping malls. Shopping malls also were seen as a place for juvenile delinquency. The solution created by mall owners and city officials was to open privately owned video game arcades within the mall. This way the youth were sectioned off into one area of the mall and couldn't bother other patrons. Similarly to the start of the century, the fear over juvenile delinquency prompted a rise in a new form of private recreation. However, this did not solve the problem in the eyes of parents. Their own children wanted to go to these new arcades, however they were seen as hotbeds of drugs and violence by those "delinquents" that frequented the arcades. Furthermore, the fear over public playgrounds and kidnappings made the perfect gap in the private recreational sector. Parents wanted a place for their kids to go that would be safe, these were indoor children's play places. Chuck E Cheese, Discovery Zone, and Club Disney gave parents a place to bring their kids. A place that was safe and shielded from the fears of playgrounds and arcades.

### Timeline of Significant Club Disney Events

**September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1996:** Linden Construction announces they are building the Thousand Oaks, California Club Disney location. This is the first mention of Club Disney in the news.<sup>1</sup>

**November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1996:** Disney officially announces the opening of Club Disney Thousand Oaks.<sup>2</sup>

**October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1996:** Disney files the trademark for Club Disney.<sup>3</sup>

**February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1997:** Club Disney Thousand Oaks Opens.<sup>4</sup>

**June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1997:** Club Disney Announces Expansion to West Covina, California.<sup>5</sup>

**January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1998:** Club Disney West Covina Opens.<sup>6</sup>

**April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1998:** Pepsi wins bid for soft drink supplier at Disney Regional Entertainment over Coke, who was Disney's longtime partner.<sup>7</sup>

**May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1998:** Chandler, Arizona City Council Discusses Proposal for Club Disney.<sup>8</sup>

**June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1998:** Club Disney in Chandler, Arizona, and Club Disney in Glendale, Arizona announced.<sup>9</sup>

**September 1998:** Club Disney in Lone Tree, Colorado announced.<sup>10</sup>

**January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1999:** Club Disney in Chandler, Arizona opens.<sup>11</sup>

**February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1999:** Club Disney in Glendale, Arizona opens.<sup>12</sup>

**April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1999:** Former chairman of Walt Disney Studios, Jeffrey Katzenberg has been suing Disney for unpaid contracts and incentives. Within this lawsuit, the case of merchandising royalties comes up, including merchandise sold at Club Disney. Katzenberg called Club Disney and other Disney venture “DisneyQuest, “educational centers” which Disney’s lawyer refuted as both being purely theme parks.<sup>13</sup> The outcome of this lawsuit cause Disney to take a significant monetary hit of around \$115 million. This loss could certainly have come into the conversation when analyzing profitability of ventures like Club Disney.

**May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1999:** Club Disney in Lone Tree, Colorado opens.<sup>14</sup>

**October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1999:** Disney announces the closure of all five Club Disney locations. Citing profitability reasons. The facilities weren’t losing money, but they weren’t making enough.

**November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999:** All five Club Disney locations close.<sup>15</sup>

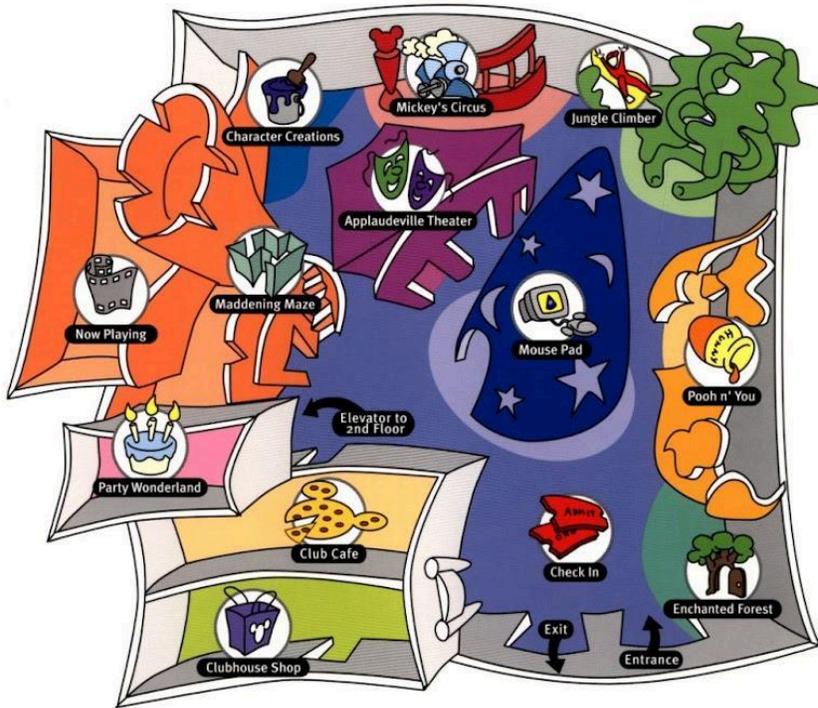
1. “Linden to Build Club Disney.” *Ventura County Star*, September 14, 1996, <https://www.newspapers.com/article/ventura-county-star-linden-construction/137622820/>.
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## Map of Club Disney and Description of Areas– It is likely this is from the Thousand Oak Facility

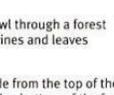
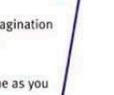
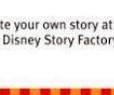
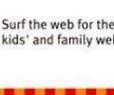
On the next page is a map and description of the areas at Club Disney. This map is likely from the Thousand Oaks, California Club Disney location.

Club Disney Map, n.d. In the Author's Personal Collection.



© Disney

## CLUB Disney AGE APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES

AGES 1 - 2 3 - 5 6 - 8 9 and up	 <b>Pooh-n-You</b> Pick carrots in Rabbit's Garden	 <b>Jungle Climber</b> Play with magnetic bugs at the Sand Bug table	 <b>Character Creations</b> Experiment and create your very own work of art with Mom & Dad	
	 <b>Mickey's Circus</b> Build your own Big Top with soft blocks in Mickey's Circus	 <b>Applauseville Theatre</b> Play & bounce at Disney Storytime Theatre	 <b>Now Playing</b> Play your way through Disney's latest movie	 <b>Mouse Pad</b> Explore Disney Playlands with Mom & Dad
	 <b>Mickey's Circus</b> Take a slide out of the Circus Train	 <b>Applauseville Theatre</b> Dress up as a Disney character in the Fantasy Fashion Show	 <b>Now Playing</b> Take a journey through the world of Disney's newest feature	 <b>Mouse Pad</b> Journey through a Disney Animated Storybook
AGES 3 - 5 6 - 8 9 and up	 <b>Mickey's Circus</b> Help the Seals make music	 <b>Applauseville Theatre</b> Rock out at the ClubHouse Dance Party	 <b>Now Playing</b> Watch how your favorite character from our most recent movie was created	 <b>Mouse Pad</b> Check out the Toy Story Activity Center
	 <b>Mickey's Circus</b> Write your own story at the Disney Story Factory	 <b>Applauseville Theatre</b> Write your own story at the Disney Story Factory	 <b>Now Playing</b> Check out what happens behind the scenes with Disney's latest film	 <b>Mouse Pad</b> Surf the web for the latest kids' and family websites

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## Newspaper Articles and Advertisements

Below is a selection of newspaper articles and advertisements found in newspapers that give an overview of the general history of Club Disney from its planning to its closure, and significant events in between. I have separated this from the other alphabetized bibliography sections for ease of access and reading.

### Advertisements Appearing in Newspapers

Club Disney 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration. "Make Club Disney Part of Your 4<sup>th</sup> of July Weekend Celebration." Advertisement. *The Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 1997, <https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-los-angeles-times-club-disney-4th-of/137630600/>.

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## City Council and Committee Meetings News Articles in Relation to Club Disney

What's most significant from most of these articles is the Thousand Oaks Club Disney paint scheme dispute. For more information, see the entries for the Meeting Minutes of the Thousand Oaks City Council/Redevelopment Agency and Thousand Oaks Planning Committee from 1997-1998 under the *Governmental Documents and Meeting Minutes* section in the bibliography

“Chandler Council to Discuss Proposal for Club Disney.” *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix, AZ), May 28, 1998, <https://www.newspapers.com/article/arizona-republic-chandler-city-council-d/137691092/>.

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## Club Disney and Other Companies

Disney partnering with Pepsi for its Disney Regional Entertainment division (the division Club Disney was under) was significant. For a long time, Coke was, and still is, the sole supplier

for soft drinks at all Disney parks. In addition to Pepsi products, The Club Cafe also served Starbucks Coffee and items from the Cheesecake Factory.

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## Competitor Companies

Multiple companies tried to cash in on the closing of Club Disney, those advertisements can be found below. Additionally, the former Club Disney location in Chandler, Arizona is still an indoor children's play place called Makutu's Island. On their website they have a history page in which they state that "Club Disney was a tropical jungle-themed play center developed in suburban areas."<sup>1</sup> This is a partly inaccurate statement, however the last theme of Club Disney was for the movie *Tarzan*. An article in *The Denver Business Journal* reports that during the demolition of the Lone Tree, Colorado Club Disney location, Disney removed anything copyrighted but left "headless statues of Disney characters."<sup>2</sup> It could be that the *Tarzan* theming was left up, creating the above inaccuracy.

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