Mike the Knight in the neo-liberal era

# Details

## Year

2016

## DOI

10.1075/jlp.15.3.07lin

## Issued

2016

## Language

English

## Volume

15

## Issue

3

## Start Page

## End Page

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## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Journal of Language and Politics,Multimodality, Politics and Ideology

## Publisher

John Benjamins Publishing Company

## Topics

* Learning
* Social mediation
* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Digital and socio-cultural environment

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

## Implications For Educators About

Other

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

Today, in the neo-liberal era, goal-oriented learning seems to be a ubiquitous demand for almost all kind of play activities. Different resources for play, like toys and games, are motivated from a learning perspective. Promises from media corporations, such as "Your kids are learning while they watch!" (www.nickjr.com), indicate an assumption that parents expect more than mere entertainment from the products that their children engage with. The parents' assumed demand for more than 'mere' entertainment could also be interpreted as a 'new' form of caring, where caring for the overall development of the child has been transformed into an emphasis on stimulating its learning success (Holmer Nadesan 2002, 424). Earlier ideas about a” universal” child and an ”autonomous” child are no longer at the fore. Rather, it is the idea of how to construe the ”superchild” – a child that can learn (more than ever before) and develop a capacity for making rational decisions – that seems to become a dominating paradigm (Kaščák Pupala 2013). This shift can also be seen as a sign of change of social positions, activities and responsibilities between agents within formal (e.g. school), semi-formal (e.g. museum) and non-formal (e.g. home) sites of learning.

Our intention in this article is to show how the discourse about the "superchild" is articulated multimodally (Kress van Leeuwen 2001) in a number of media texts related to the trans-medial (see Aarseth 2006; Jenkins 2006; Lemke 2004) brand Mike the Knight. We will do so by introducing three examples – a digital story app, online games and a "Chivalrous Reward Chart" – that are part of a wider body of research.

# Outcome

"[T]he three types of texts we have engaged with in this article...can be seen to combine into a trans-medial kit for construing 'superchildren'. This kit consists of representations, resources for developing and training cognitive, technical and motor skills, and resources for social governing." (Authors, 348)