Representing New Math: Genre Chains and Controversy in the Saskatchewan Media

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The media's response to the release of "Math Instruction that Makes Sense" (2011), a research report by the Frontier Centre for Public Policy (FCPP), helped spark a public controversy and spur the Saskatchewan government to reexamine the Ministry of Education's math curriculum. The purpose of this article is to examine the CBC's depiction of the FCPP report and subsequent responses to it utilizing the tools of Critical Discourse Analysis and linguistic anthropology as a way of understanding the means by which concrete linguistic artifacts like research reports are recontextualized and disseminated with and for political means. By identifying the construction of voices, external resources and interview data in the CBC's reporting—the movement of resources across stable genre chains—my intent is to demonstrate how 'common sense' is established in the broader public discourse on matters of educational policy and the media's active role in creating it.

La réaction médiatique au lancement en 2011 de « Math Instruction that Makes Sense » (Donner un sens aux maths), un rapport de recherche par le Frontier Centre for Public Policy (FCPP), a suscité une controverse au sein du public et a incité le gouvernement de la Saskatchewan à revoir son programme d'études en mathématiques. L'objectif de cet article est de se pencher sur la représentation qu'a faite la CBC du rapport du FCPP et les réactions qu'elle a entrainées et ce, en utilisant les outils de l'analyse critique du discours et de l'anthropologie linguistique pour comprendre comment les objets linguistiques concrets comme les rapports de recherche sont recontextualisés et diffusés par des moyens politiques et pour des fins politiques. En identifiant la construction des voix, des ressources externes et des données d'entrevue dans le reportage de la CBC – le mouvement de ressources le long de chaines de genre stables - j'ai l'intention de démontrer comment le «sens commun» s'établit dans le discours public élargi relative aux politiques en matière d'éducation d'une part et d'illustrer le rôle actif des médias dans sa création d'autre part.

When the Saskatchewan branch of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) released a series of online articles interrogating the use of 'new math' pedagogy in provincial schools (CBC News, September 21, September 22, September 25, 2011), it reignited a controversy over education that had surfaced only a year earlier in the media (LeBlanc, 2011). Soon afterward on television, on the radio, and in online print, reporters, experts and pundits were discussing and debating whether discovery-based instructional practices have any place in elementary and secondary schools throughout the province. At the heart of this controversy was a report by the right-leaning think tank, the Frontier Centre for Public Policy (FCPP), and their educational specialist, Michael Zwaagstra. The report, titled *Math Instruction That Makes Sense*

(Zwaagstra, 2011), first appeared on the FCPP website in September 2011 and was immediately picked up by the CBC's online news division and reporter Geoff Leo (CBC News, September 21, 2011). According to the FCPP website, *Math Instruction That Makes Sense* "demonstrates conclusively that traditional math education methods are superior to the highly ineffective, discovery-based instructional techniques that are in vogue now in educational curricula" (Frontier Centre for Public Policy, 2011), a claim that was quickly and publically disseminated by various media outlets (cf. Chung, September 22, 2011; McDonald, September 27, 2011).

The purpose of this article is to examine the media's uptake of *Math Instruction That Makes Sense* and the means by which the media used, selected from, and framed the policy document in their reporting. Specifically, I examine the recontextualization (Bauman & Briggs, 1990) of *Math Instruction That Makes Sense* in the CBC's original article on the topic (CBC News, September 21, 2011) using the tools of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 2003; Jeffries, 2010; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; Wodak, 2001) and linguistic anthropology (Blommaert, 2005; Wortham, 2001). This admittedly focuses on only one 'link' in the broader 'discourse chain' (the FCPP report was recontexualized across numerous spaces – coffee shop conversations, PTA meetings, Facebook posts, and official policy discussions in the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education), however, it is crucial to examine the 'origin' of the controversy (at least in the public discourse) in order to see how the issues have been framed for future uptake.

Following this process of uptake and dissemination of educational issues by the media has proved crucial in recent years, as media-generated controversies over the Saskatoon Public School Board's assessment policy (CBC News, September 27, 2010; LeBlanc, 2011) and the implementation of "New Math" in provincial schools have led to large scale public outcries, local and provincial policy changes, and even the formation of public consultation groups by the Ministry of Education (CBC News, February 27, 2012). Indeed, the most recent turmoil over the "New Math" curriculum has taken nearly a year for the government's fact-finding committee to bring to a close (CBC News, May 11, 2012), while the Saskatoon Public School Board eventually relented in the face of public and governmental pressure and reversed its assessment practices (LeBlanc, 2011). Such events demonstrate the profound role of the media in influencing governmental policy and practice, and the capacity of media representations to impact public opinion (Zhondang & Kosicki, 1993) in the province and elsewhere.

Finally, because my analysis deploys the tools of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it is equally rooted in the kinds of socio-political projects and critiques germane to that approach. In this case, I am interested how a policy document from a right-leaning think tank is utilized as a form of "metaculture" (Urban, 2001), easily decontextualized and redeployed in a variety of spaces, and taken up as a resource by the historically left-leaning CBC. This process of decontextualization and recontextualization has profound implications for our understanding of the media's work in representing text and action, notably in a world of shrinking resources for traditional media and increasingly intensified work for reporters: with a dearth of time at their disposal, reporters increasingly turn to pre-prepared media releases and packaged information for their sources (Jacobs, 1999; Sleurs, Jacobs, & Van Waes, 2003). Think tanks, public policy experts and governments are not unaware of this (Fairclough, 2000) and regularly craft media releases as 'performances' (Bauman & Briggs, 1990), which are perfectly suited for entextualization elsewhere in some semblance of their original form. In the case of broadly circulating discourses, we are reminded that, "not all texts are created equal. Some occupy special positions within a culture and become the focus of multiple realizations, each one taking

them from seemingly fixed, decontextualized forms" (Silverstein & Urban, 1996, p. 12). Since semiotic choices are socially motivated (Halliday, 1994; Hodge & Kress, 1988), the deployment of the FCPP report by the CBC is viewed here as a very real political project.

In the case of the CBC's representation of the new math 'controversy' (that returned to prominent public consciousness as a controversy once the FCPP policy paper was distributed across headlines around the province), I would like to argue that the article's selective recontextualization of Zwaagstra's report and the internal framing of the article's argument around the 'accusation' of the FCPP report helped create a 'baseline' epistemic modalization (Fairclough, 2003) from which other articles and voices had to respond: the 'failure' of new math and the conclusions of the FCPP report were treated as fundamentally true.[i] Modality indicates the linguistic commitment to a truth claim (typically indicated by modal verbs such as 'can', 'may', 'should', etc.); given the capacity of press releases and other promotional literature to be distributed by the media 'as is' (Sleurs, Jacobs, & Van Waes, 2003), examining the epistemic modality of a media text (what it claims to be true) can help us understand what portions of these truth claims are utilized by future entextualizations. While texts do not provide closure on matters of interpretation, they do have the capacity to set the agenda for public discourse and narrow the field of knowledge available for public consumption (Apple, 2000). To uncover this process, it is crucial to trace the means by which the CBC article assembled the resources of the FCPP report. In the words of Ruth Wodak (2001), we must "follow the genesis and transformation of arguments, the recontextualization throughout different and important public spaces resulting from the social interests of the participants and their power relations" (p. 72). The intent of this article is to demonstrate the working of an established process of recontextualization of media texts (Jacobs, 1999) in the Saskatchewan context as a means to understand how educational controversy is generated in the province.

CDA and Genre Chains

Before moving on to an analysis of the CBC's article, "New math equals trouble, education expert says" (CBC News, September 21, 2011), I would like to briefly outline the project of Critical Discourse Analysis and the concept of genre chains. This can be no more than a cursory treatment of the topic (for more comprehensive introductions to CDA, see Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Luke, 1995-1996; Wodak, 1995), however, I believe establishing the kind of political project implicit in this form of critique is helpful for understanding the focus of my interrogation.

CDA has several distinct incarnations (cf. Fairclough, 2003, 2005; Gee, 2005; Wodak, 2001), but the core socio-political critique of the movement remains rooted in a form of social theory concerned with a Habermasian (1985) conception of ideology as systematically distorted speech. This project has taken on increased importance in the stages of late modern capitalism where economic and political gains are won and lost through discursive acts, and the production of particular linguistic repertoires and discourses in the media can constitute a form of hegemony (Fairclough, 1992, p. 92-94). Wodak (1995) describes the purpose of CDA as to examine "opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (p. 204). In short, CDA seeks to understand how language practices distort and obfuscate social relations and how language practices are deployed within broader social practices that help "legitimize relations of organized power" (Habermas, 1977, as cited in Wodak, 1995, p. 204).

This legitimization of power structures can be accomplished through the circulation and distribution of particular concrete linguistic resources (phrases, words, genre types) in a variety of politically relevant locations. This stance sees discourse as something that is both a physical 'text' (or portion of text) and which is "consumed in society" (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000) as it moves from one space to another: for example, from press releases to television pundits to dining room tables (though obviously the distribution of discourse has innumerable circuits). For instance, journalist Robert Fisk (2010) laments the continual use of the term "a spike in violence" to describe the state of conflict in Iraq—such a term, regularly deployed by the US government and television reporters, indicates that violence is temporary, sporadic, and likely to descend from its crescendo, a denotation which obscures the continual, rampant and ever-present violence in the country since the US-led invasion. The continual use of government or corporate sanctioned terms by the media has the capacity to obscure the reality of a situation (cf. Cheney & Carroll, 1997; Chun, 2009).

This movement of a concrete phrase from one space to another is an example of a 'chain' of discourse and constitutes a kind of hegemony. It should be noted that hegemony, in the Gramscian sense, is continually contested, a war of position that continually needs to be refreshed: consciousness is not circumscribed (Thompson, 1990). However, by examining which concrete texts are mobilized and distributed, we can see what constitutes 'common sense' (Apple, 2000) by those producing the newly recontextualized discourse. By tracing the interaction between texts, we can begin to see the political negotiation at work.

This movement of content, phrasings, and words from one text to another (a form of recontextualization) often takes on regular patterns, what Fairclough (2003) calls "genre chains" (p. 31). For example, think tank policy papers and reports by groups such as the Fraser Institute, the CD Howe Institute, and the Polaris Institute are regularly taken up in the media and disseminated through regular channels. This provides a necessarily linkage for dissemination of content across social events: from the construction of the policy paper at the institutes, to the report's publication, to its transformation and representation in the media, to its viewing on televisions and readings on the internet in homes, to the casual conversations people have about the content in their kitchens and living rooms. Tracing these intertextual genre chains is the heart of Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical method (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; Wodak, 2001).

Genre chains become 'stable'—predictable and regular—when their movement from one space to another with relatively little change is solidified. Sleurs, Jacobs, & Van Waes's research (2003; see also Jacobs, 1999) is particularly illustrative of the emerging stability of press releases in media reporting: by attending to metapragmatic considerations such as provocative titles, comprehensive lead paragraphs, and the use of self-referencing quotations, the authors of press releases can ensure that the media report their work with significant fidelity, often verbatim. When the movement takes on a patterned quality—the continual verbatim reproduction of particular genres into other genres—the genre chain may be qualified as relatively stable.

The concept of genre chains is equally indebted to Bakhtin's (1981) work on intertextuality, a notion liberally deployed by Fairclough (1992 - see especially Chapter 4) to understand the 'multivoiced' nature of any text. Intertextuality—the notion that texts are made up of a variety of speakers, genres, and other texts—helps us understand the 'presence' and impact of other voices in a single text, even when they are not foregrounded by the author. Texts that clearly delineate the presence of other texts are said to have "manifest intertextuality", while texts that draw more

implicitly on genres and broader 'orders of discourse' (like conventions) are said to have "constitutive intertextuality" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 85). By examining which voices are marshaled, which are foregrounded, when they are marshaled (early in the text, late, etc.), how they are deployed (as an authority, as a counterpoint, etc.), and how 'originally' they are allowed to speak for themselves ("'New math equals trouble', education expert says" as opposed to "New math equals trouble, education expert says"), we can gain insight into what qualifies as credible and authoritative, and what content or whose voices have been ignored.

On Methodology

This paper deploys Critical Discourse Analysis as a hermeneutical process, and as such recognizes this form of analysis as "a synthetic construction, a creative projection, of a possible meaning" (Thompson, 1990, p. 133). The intent is not to provide a closure to a text's meaning, but rather to descriptively attend to the 'materiality' of a stretch of discourse in order to indicate potential meanings and ideological effects. Articulating the ideological impact of a piece of discourse is best viewed through its 'uptake', the means by which it is reconstituted and deployed across various spaces (Krotz, 2009; Rymes, 2012).

In making a case for the ideological work of the September 21, 2011 CBC report, this study draws upon the methodological schema developed by Wodak's discourse-historical method (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; Wodak, 1995, 2001). According to Wodak (2000), this analytic method requires attention to interdisciplinary dimensions of textual production which take into account four levels of the text in order to triangulate findings beyond the immediate and linguistic:

1. the immediate, language or text internal co-text [linguistic/grammatical]

2. the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses [what I have referred to as 'genre chains']

3. the extra linguistic social/sociological variables and institutional frames [broader discourses of a particular genre]

4. broader sociopolitical and historical contexts

Because the discourse-historical method attends to contexts beyond the grammatical constitution of the text in question, analysis must be "problem oriented, not focused on specific linguistic items" (Wodak, 2001, p. 69). The resulting process was highly abductive: a movement back and forth between concrete words and phrases within the original CBC article which were coded by origin and animator, indexed 'external texts' (such as the FCPP report and press release), and broader theories of linguistic production (cf. Sleurs, Jacobs, & Van Waes, 2003). This process does not guarantee findings, but does provide a useful heuristic to trace the movement of particular words and phrases across genre chains, and to describe the types of linguistic strategies used to assemble those resources.

Finally, Wodak's (2001, pp. 69-73) framework provides a number of analytic tools for examining the production of identities within media texts by attending to several core questions: How are persons named? What characteristics are attributed to them? What argument schemes are used to exclude certain individuals? How are these labels and arguments expressed? Are

these positions articulated overtly? By focusing attention to these questions, the production of particular identities within the text ('common sense', 'out of touch', etc.) are uncovered.

Representing New Math

The CBC online article, "[New math equals trouble, education expert says](#)" (CBC News, September 21, 2011) (see Appendix), is comprised of less than 500 words (as well as a brief two minute video clip, which aired on the CBC News Network) and is organized into six distinct sections:

1. Title

2. Introduction to FCPP report

3. Zwaagstra's commentary represented and directly quoted from FCPP report

4. Reporter represents outside voices

5. "Not every child learns the same": Saskatchewan - Ministry of Education representative Simone Gareau responds

6. Public Opinion online poll (with data)

This portion of the article examines each section and discusses the kind of ideological work being performed here by virtue of two constituent elements: framing and intertextuality. My principal argument (after Wortham, 2001) is that by virtue of the assemblage of intertextual voices, the order they appear in, and the means by which they are framed, the CBC article follows a narrative very much like a "mock trial" (Wortham, 2001, p. 58). Evidence is marshaled in prosecution, witnesses appear, the defendants have their say, and ultimately the 'jury' (the public) provides a verdict. The 'work' that various quotations, indexical references, and recontextualization of the FCPP report do "depends on segments of the conversation beyond the utterance itself" (Wortham, 2001, p. 47)—in this case, they index a form of genre not unlike a legal trial. While this is not a manifest genre, it is indexed by virtue of the assemblages of voices.

The title of the article, "New math equals trouble, education expert says" is a good example of a typical media headline genre. It is provocative, and the creative use of the pun "equals" likely serves its job of drawing readers in—this title doubled as a hyperlink on the CBC News and CBC Saskatchewan News' main page that directed readers to the article itself. Two elements stand out for analysis; the first is noun choice, and the second is the indirect reporting of a seeming speech act (Jefferies, 2010).

While not directly named, the "expert" the article refers to is Michael Zwaagstra, the FCPP report author and education specialist for the think tank. The choice of the pronoun "expert" to stand in place of his name is politically-motivated choice (in the most banal sense of the word 'politics'): Fairclough (2003) notes that in increasingly technocratic societies, expertise functions as a form of legitimation for social policies, a type of authorization "by reference to the authority of tradition, custom, law, and of persons in whom some kind of institutional authority is vested" (p. 98). In this case, by proclaiming Zwaagstra to be an expert (a title neither he nor the FCPP provides), the article immediately indexes an identity of authority and helps legitimize a range of statements that come before and after (including the ventriloquated "equals" pun in

the title). Equally interesting is the choice of "expert" for someone who is a research fellow at a small think tank—what constitutes expertise seems to be a textually-constituted signifier. Furthermore, expertise denotes professorial neutrality and papers over a range of implicit ideological positions, notably the avowedly right-leaning positions of the FCPP.

Secondly, the title is constructed as a form of indirect reported speech. In terms of the spectrum of options for reporting speech and thought (see Fairclough, 2003; Jefferies, 2010), this form represents a middle ground in terms of 'faithfulness' to the original utterance or intention—it is not directly quoting (i.e., Expert says, "New math equals trouble") nor is it simply a report of a speech act (i.e., Expert interviewed on new math). It is somewhat clear from the construction of the title that Zwaagstra did not actually say "New math equals trouble", however the format of the title encourages the reader to believe that this was in the spirit of Zwaagstra's report (a near facsimile of this pun reappears in the opening line of the article itself: "The answer is simple: old math is greater than new math, according to the Frontier Centre for Public Policy"). In this case, the entire FCPP report is being recontextualized in the form of a headline-grabbing pun as a resource for enticing readership and summarizing the assemblage of voices found within the article itself. The title, therefore, begins with what constitutes a form of accusation by a seemingly neutral expert: new math is trouble. This is not immediately evident, however, this structure becomes clear as it emerges. Emergence "describes how an utterance's interaction function depends on how subsequent utterances cohere with it" (Wortham, 2001, p. 41). How the utterance of the title emerges as an accusation is rooted in what follows.

Section 2 of the CBC article, the Introduction to the FCPP report, is remarkable for its two forms of intertextuality: indirect reported speech and directly reported speech. It begins with a rehearsal of the original pun from the title ("old math is greater than new math") but ventriloquates the FCPP report rather than naming Zwaagstra as the author ("according to the Frontier Centre for Public Policy"). This might be viewed as a 'piling on' of voices (though they actually constitute the same voice), ergo a piling on of witnesses to attest to the validity of the 'charge' that new math is failing students. Furthermore, by leaving Zwaagstra unnamed in this section, the appearance of impartial institutional validity is constructed. Following this ventriloquation, the report then quotes the FCPP website at length, quotations which directly condemn the use of new math.

These are unique quotations and carry various "scents" (Bakhtin, 1981)[ii] of genre and identity types (Blommaert (2005) describes this as indexically referencing identities). The first is that of an academic register ("demonstrates conclusively", "must contain clear, systemic instructions"), which is an identity of legitimation and neutrality (Fairclough, 2003). However, it also constructs an identity of 'common sense' by standing in opposition to instructional techniques that are now "*in vogue* in educational curricula" (my emphasis)—in opposition to the 'out of touch' academics who composed the new math curriculum, the FCPP report is grounded in 'tradition.' Identities of 'traditional values', even in math education, and of academic effectiveness help construct a new social identity that has emerged in forms of late capitalism, what Apple (1996) calls the "New Right": a bloc deeply concerned with issues of "security, the family, and traditional knowledge and values" (Apple, 1996, p. 6) as well as market-readiness. By "New", Apple means the contemporary neoliberal phenomenon of the fusion of traditional conservative populist movements with contemporary market influences.

Examining the modality (commitment or certainty) of the CBC's claims to the validity of the FCPP report, the article allows Zwaagstra's report to 'speak for itself'. While qualifiers ("according to", "said a news release", "The centre suggests") do conclude or introduce the three

instances of reported speech, the bulk of the text in this section is dedicated to the FCPP's highly modalized direction quotations ("old math is greater than new math", "demonstrates conclusively", "schools must place stronger emphasis on mastering basic skills"). This intertextuality helps solidify the accusation and construct an air of certainty—the report is not interrogated for its findings, but rather presented as a 'given', a 'charge', which the various voices that follow must now respond to.

In Section 3, Michael Zwaagstra's voice is first represented, though he is not named as the report's author until later sections. This occlusion of authorship helps maintain this process of piling on voices in opposition to new math: in the first three sections, an unnamed educational 'expert', the FCPP, and Zwaagstra all appear to accuse new math of being ineffective (though, in actuality, they are the same voice). Zwaagstra's voice is not directly quoted in the first two instances of indirect reported speech. Rather, the CBC ambiguously writes, "Michael Zwaagstra said discovery-based instructional programs are not much use . . .", leaving the reader to wonder about the authenticity and instance of the reported speech act. Indeed, the instances of reporting Zwaagstra's speech appear to be an interview conducted by the CBC ("Zwaagstra is quoted as saying..."), however the distillation of quotations is in actuality being directly extextualized from the FCPP report. For example, the CBC report writes:

> "In order for students to receive a strong grounding in math, they need to spend more time practicing math skills such as basic addition and subtraction, along with the standard multiplication tables," Zwaagstra said.

The time and instance of this utterance are unclear (it seems to be a free-floating speech act), suggesting that the CBC must have solicited it from Zwaagstra. However, in actuality it is a direct quotation from the FCPP report (Zwaagstra, 2011, p. 8). By not naming this source, the CBC recontextualizes the FCPP report as an act of legitimation: it appears that more research has been done, more voices have been attended to, and more people stand in opposition to new math. This example of recontextualization demonstrates the complexity of the genre chain in media representations: what was once a report is now marshaled as a represented voice which appears distinct from the report it was imbedded in in order to construct a new speech event like that of a 'mock trial'.

This appearance of 'witnesses' continues in Section 4. The author of the CBC report, Geoff Leo, now appears to provide a distillation and definition of new math. Leo is not named as the article's author, however. Leo's contribution to this section is two-fold. First, Leo is ventriloquated as describing new math through an indirect speech act, and then quoted as saying (in a speech act not situated in time or location, though it is in fact from the video clip hyperlinked on the page, a clip that aired nationally on the CBC News Network) that new math included experimental approaches, "even experimentation where they [students] come up with their own math". The use of the word "even" is important, as it indexes Leo to an identity of tradition (thus allying him with the FCPP and Zwaagstra) by virtue of the implied incredulity. Second, Leo is represented as speaking with an anonymous math professor who laments that students can no longer do even the most simple math functions ("students don't know how to do long division"). This continues the construction of 'common sense' through the use of anecdote—the math professor functions as a form of equivalence (Fairclough, 2003, 88-98; see also Jeffries, 2010), standing in the place of all math professors. Furthermore, the students that the professor references (not "some students" but evidently all "students") equally function as a

synecdoche for all students who have come through new math instruction at schools. "Students" don't know how to do math.

The prosecution rests its case. Through the process of emergence (Wortham, 2001), the CBC article has assembled voices that mimic that of a trial: accusation (the title), a disimpassioned reading of the charges (in the form of the institutional FCPP voice) and the marshaling of voices as witnesses to affirm the charges (Zwaagstra, Leo, and the anonymous math professor). The defense now has its turn to respond to the charges.

Section 5 represents a distinct sub-section of the article, designated by the bold heading: "Not every child learns the same: Saskatchewan". "Saskatchewan", in this case, represents the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (which is immediately named below in the accompanying paragraph). This clear bifurcation between what came before (the proverbial prosecution) and what comes after (the defense) by virtue of a sub-heading only further demonstrates the 'trial like' nature of the CBC article. Here, the Ministry of Education representative, Simone Gareau, is depicted as directly responding to the claim that new math is ineffective. This is a highly intertextual section, as direct quotations from Gareau, and indirect quotations from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, comprise the bulk of the text.

Within the bounds of CDA, increased intertextuality is typically described with moral language; more voices represented means a kind of democratized speech act wherein various stakeholders are given space to respond (Fairclough, 1992). However, Wortham's (2001) conception of emergence helps demonstrate that the very presence of external voices does not necessarily mean greater diversity of thought. What is paramount is the way in which these voices are framed. In the case of the CBC article, the order of voices (Fairclough, 2003, p. 53) is crucial to understanding the role that Gareau's voice plays in the context of this speech act. While Gareau provides a counterpoint to the FCPP report, she does so while framed as a witness who has already been accused of failing students. Such framing helps colour her response; having already been framed as out of touch and elitist by the various voices that came before, Gareau's voice has little hope of assuaging the readership. In the court of public opinion, the accused are often presumed guilty simply by being charged.

This becomes most evident in the concluding section, a public opinion online poll that readers of the CBC article could instantly respond to. The poll is framed as such:

> A Frontier Centre report says the new math isn't working and a back-to-basics approach is needed. What do you think?
>
> - I agree. Kids would benefit from old-fashioned math methods and more drill and practice.
>
> - I disagree. Rote learning doesn't work. Children need to experiment to find the best methods for doing math.
>
> - I'm not sure one way or the other.

In light of what preceded it, the first option, "I agree" [with the FCPP], garnered 78.74% (1,874 votes) of the readers' selections. In the framing of the various intertextual voices, this poll now serves as a metaphoric jury decision. Following the accusation, the charges, the prosecution, corroborating witnesses, and the defense's response, the public opinion poll

represents the 'final word' on the matter and an act of closure. The opinion poll is "mediated" (Wortham, 2001, p. 58) by what preceded it, by contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1992) that indicate the way an utterance's "context should be construed" (Wortham, 2001, p. 36). In the case of this article, the mediation of the article's structure helps the reader to interpret the opinion poll as a distillation of the evidence provided and a final verdict on the facts of the case: new math appears to be guilty as charged.

Conclusion

I have described the recontextualization of various texts (Zwaagstra's report, the FCPP website, an interview with an anonymous math professor, an interview with Simone Gareau) across stable genres and their reformation in a media report. I have also described this process as a deeply political act: van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) note that recontextualization fundamentally involves deletions, rearrangements, substitutions and additions, all of which are socially motivated. They write, "Recontextualization always involves transformations, and what exactly gets transformed depends on the interests, goals and values into which the practice is recontextualized" (p. 96). By assembling and recontextualizing the voices and texts in the manner befitting a "mock trial" (Wortham, 2001), the CBC article is implicitly constructing a "moral evaluation" (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999): the assemblages "invariably embody moral values (and social prejudices) which are detached from the moral logic from which they stem . . . and presented as common-sense fact" (p. 108). Voices and texts which were previously related to or responding to other contexts are decontextualized and taken up as players, witnesses, and characters in a pseudo courtroom drama (including the readers, who are asked to serve as judge and jury).

My purpose here has been to describe the ideological undercurrent of the CBC article's recontextualization of various resources (what we might think of as the hegemonic work) in order to understand the way this text was then redistributed along various stable genre chains: the September 21st article was decontextualized and recontextualized in numerous contexts (CBC News, September 22, 2011, September 25, 2011; Chung, September 22 2011; McDonald, September 27, 2011), sparking what a later CBC article would call a "divisive debate" (CBC News, September 25, 2011) (a divisive debate the original CBC article initiated). What is not explicit is how the very construction of the original CBC article helped create a form of metaculture (Urban, 2001), a performance (Bauman & Briggs, 1990) that mimicked a courtroom drama which in turn allowed for easy and rapid dissemination across new contexts and genre chains: a complex phenomenon was reduced to the verdict that stood as a given from the start of the article—new math equals trouble.

This uptake can be seen in the movement of concrete phrases from one setting to another. For example, the phrase "abysmal level of math skills" (CBC News, September 22, 2011) was initially proffered by a university professor in the subsequent media fall-out of the original CBC story. The math professor, Fernando Szechtman, is directly quoted in the September 22, 2011 story making claims about the quality of his university students. However, this phrase is reproduced nearly verbatim in a February 27, 2012 CBC article, citing unknown 'critics' that complain of math instruction that is "producing graduates with abysmal math skills" (CBC News, February 27, 2012). Other concrete phrases continued to circulate, and in virtually the same manner as the original September 21, 2011 story. For example, the accusation "old math is greater than new math" appears at the head of a same-day article ("Spotted: You give new math

a failing grade", CBC News, September 21, 2011), followed immediately by a large attributed quotation from the FCPP that claims their study "demonstrates conclusively that traditional math education methods are superior to the highly ineffective, discovery-based instructional techniques that are in vogue now in educational curricula", a quote taken directly from their press release of the study (Frontier Centre for Public Policy, 2011). Both serve at the outset to frame the supposed insufficiency of "New Math" instructional techniques.

Such a troubling conclusion highlights the means by which the mediating process of recontextualization across a variety of spaces involves a politically motivated transformation. In this case, the process of transforming voices and text to fit the predetermined generic roles of prosecution, jury, witnesses, etc., is a form of political work which backgrounds the progressive foundation of discovery-based math instructional strategies in favor of a 'common-sense' approach to traditional math instruction that serves as the 'baseline'. Such an approach, which claims to favor efficiency, college-readiness, and economic preparation to the exclusion of all other factors reveals a disturbing trend in the Saskatchewan media and the CBC (LeBlanc, 2011) to narrow the purpose of schooling to a single variable. While such a project fits neatly with the framework of neoliberal visions of schooling (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996), it must be met by a broadened social imagination that serves to disrupt the taken-for-granted assumptions of what school is for.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

[I] My understanding of this trial-like 'accusation-response-verdict' format of media coverage is indebted to Wortham, 2001. See especially pp. 47-62.

[II] "Every word gives off the scent of a profession, a genre… a generation, an era, a day, an hour. Every words smells of the context and contexts in which it has lived" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 106).

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Appendix

CBC News online article, "New math equals trouble, education expert says"
Posted: Sep 21, 2011 12:49 PM CST

Full URL:

http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/story/2011/09/21/new-math-paper.html

Retrieved August 29, 2012