

The Visual and Beyond: A Symposium on Rereading, Revising or Perhaps “Hacking the Source Code”¹ of the CWPA Outcomes Statement

Our fall / winter symposium extends our CWPA task force’s review of the Outcomes Statement now underway with an aim of acknowledging, as Sid Dobrin posits, “the role of the visual in writing.” When the Council called for the OS revision in response to Dobrin’s “Visual Rhetoric” query to WPA-L, Alice and I mused offline about remixing the OS with intellectual work near and dear to us, but truly beyond our professional interests and of concern to WPAs widely situated within the field (rhetorical genre studies, research on transfer, diversity and reading). With these constituencies in dialogue, this symposium further troubles the Statement’s content, even its epistemological undergirding in order to nudge readers beyond Dobrin’s initial question: “[S]houldn’t the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition include some acknowledgement of the role of the visual in writing?”

We asked each of our six contributors to remix the question: “Shouldn’t the Outcomes Statement include [other work]?” and with due diligence both critical and self-reflexive, they shift subject matter, reread the Statement theoretically or revise its terms. Though visions vary, together they yet remember an original OS design principle, which Ed White invokes within the same WPA-L thread that brings us to this fall / winter forum: “The Outcomes Statement must remain a living document to stay relevant” (17 Dec. 2011).

We hope this symposium brings new and relevant life to the Outcomes Statement.

We further invite our readers to contribute to this discussion, either on WPA-L or within this symposium for our spring 2013 issue. Please submit your response to journal@wpacouncil.org.

NOTE

1. See, Banks, Will. "Queering Outcomes: Hacking the Source Code of the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition."

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The Matters of Key Knowledge Domains and Transfer of Learning in the Outcomes Statement

Anne Beaufort

Those who worked on the WPA Outcomes Statement took on a Herculean task, one that must have required much negotiation and patience. Imagine wordsmiths coming to agreement on wording. Imagine composition scholars who have very different theoretical orientations that inform overarching purposes for writing courses finding common ground. And consider the complexities, cognitive and social, in teaching writing. The range of responses to the Outcomes (some favorable, some highly critical) is just one indication of the difficulties of the task (Harrington et al.).

So first, I offer appreciation for those who've recognized the need for some common ground in first-year composition programs and have expended much time and effort to accomplish this when they could have been doing their own research or tending their gardens. Second, I offer for consideration several key issues that have emerged in Writing Studies research that could provide some guidance for improving the Outcomes. I also raise questions about the scope of the outcomes for college students and about audience(s) for the Outcomes Statement.

Two bodies of research, both within Writing Studies and beyond, seem to merit attention in order for the Outcomes Statement to become a more useful document in Writing Studies. The first is research on the nature of writing expertise (Beaufort, *Writing*; Beaufort, *College*; Bereiter and Scardamalia, *Psychology*; Bereiter and Scardamalia, *Surpassing*) and the second, the research on transfer of learning (Beaufort, *College*; Devitt; Nowacek; Perkins and Salomon; Premack; Smit; Wardle).

I take up the issue of the nature of writing expertise because, without some clear sense of the knowledge and skills needed to become more expert as a writer, there is no way to measure if the Outcomes are adequate in

scope, and there is no assurance that the appropriate knowledge and skills can be transferred to other contexts for writing. Reviewing the research on novice versus expert writing knowledge and behaviors could facilitate more thorough, empirically-grounded and explicit outcomes for first year writing curricula.

Research in the 1970s and 1980s began to compare novice versus expert writing behaviors at the high school and college levels in the areas of composing processes and critical thinking behaviors needed to generate content for texts (Bereiter, Burtis and Scardamalia; Flower and Hayes; Perl; Sommers and Saltz). And in my recent research, two studies of college writers moving through their college course work and into workplace settings, I identified five overlapping and yet distinct knowledge domains that participants in the studies needed to acquire and deepen in order to become more expert writers (Beaufort, *Writing*; Beaufort, *College*).

What then is the “match” between the research on writing expertise and the Outcomes Statement? The major categories in which the Outcomes are grouped are 1) rhetorical knowledge 2) critical thinking, reading and writing, 3) processes 4) knowledge of conventions and 5) composing in electronic environments. As Liu and others have pointed out, there are considerable overlaps in the categories (Liu). For example, “genre” is mentioned in the rhetorical knowledge section and in the knowledge of conventions section. “Use a variety of technologies” is covered in the processes section, and yet a whole separate section addresses composing in electronic environments. “Conventions of format and structure” is mentioned under “rhetorical knowledge” and in “knowledge of conventions.” “Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks” is mentioned in the critical thinking, reading, and writing section and in the processes section. How does a writing program administrator or a writing teacher conceptualize the specific knowledge and skills s/he needs to address in designing reading and writing assignments when these overlaps and redundancies exist in the Outcomes Statement and the categories themselves, and the outcomes listed under each category are not clearly defined or conceptualized in relationship to each other?

In my ethnographic research, I had to wrestle with the multiple, complex and overlapping knowledge domains that more expert writers acquired and novices needed to learn. And by necessity, in order to analyze the data systematically, I needed to operationalize clear and specific definitions of the key knowledge domains that emerged from the data. Yes, there were overlaps in the domains I identified, but each was also unique enough to warrant being a separate domain or category of knowledge writers need.

I operationalized definitions of these knowledge domains so that each domain's distinction and characteristics could be identified as present or not in writers' behaviors, and so that ultimately, curricula in Writing Studies could address all of these domains in more precise, overt, and systematic ways. Here, briefly, are definitions I developed of each knowledge domain based on inductive analysis of writers' behaviors:

- *Subject matter knowledge.* This obvious element of any writing act is often overlooked or treated in a cursory manner in writing courses. Poor writing performance is sometimes blamed on poor knowledge of grammar, genre, etc. when in fact the writer simply did not have a firm grasp of the subject matter s/he was writing about. This domain can be addressed by teaching critical thinking and analytical, rhetorical reading of texts to assure that students are building a base of subject matter knowledge to draw upon when they write. Could language about acquiring subject matter knowledge replace "Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating"?
- *Genre knowledge.* Genres are complex and multi-layered. I have operationalized a definition of genre, drawing on Slevin's and Miller's work, as entailing 1) conventions of rhetorical purpose, 2) appropriate subject matter (including appropriate evidence to support claims, depending on the genre), 3) knowledge of the genre's typical structural elements, and 4) knowledge of the linguistic features of the genre (Miller; Slevin). These four aspects of a genre warrant explicit instruction, and spelling out these aspects of genre could bring more specificity to the Outcomes Statement than "understand how genres shape reading and writing" and "develop knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics."
- *Writing process knowledge.* Although Writing Studies coalesced its thinking in the 1970s and 1980s (based on several important research studies) on stages in the writing process and the iterative nature of the process, more recent research has demonstrated that different genres, different social contexts for writing, and different writers' idiosyncrasies in accomplishing writing tasks necessitate teaching a variety of processes so that students have multiple and flexible processes to use. No one process or series of steps works for all writers in all writing situations. The current Outcomes Statement has clear language that addresses this: "Develop flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading," though other outcomes in the Processes

category seem misplaced (“use a variety of technologies”—this duplicates the technology outcome section) or vague (“understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing process”—how will anyone know either what to teach, or how to assess this outcome?).

- *Discourse community knowledge.* Considerable ethnographic or case study research in the last two decades has documented how much writing activity (and the associated knowledge and skills) varies from one writing situation to the next. But terms such as “social context” or “activity system” or “rhetorical situation” are used interchangeably in Writing Studies, each meaning something different depending on who’s using the term. Drawing on the work of Swales and Heath, I operationalized very specific aspects of a discourse community that a writer needs to take into consideration and that can be explicitly examined. I define “discourse community” as a group of individuals, always in flux but also stable enough, who communicate with each other regularly through writing (and often, using other modes of communication). A discourse community coalesces around a set of values and goals, has a set of typical genres that are used by those in the community, has overall norms for “good writing,” and defines the social roles of writers within the discourse community. The Outcomes Statement uses the terms “rhetorical situation” and “different audiences” without specifying what these concepts mean. The concept of “discourse community” is a more robust concept than “rhetorical situation” and can shed light on complex contexts for writing. The Outcomes Statement mentions “audience” and “purpose” and “rhetorical situations” (undefined) but does not directly address the fact that, in order to communicate effectively, writers need to be able to analyze the specific characteristics of the discourse community in which or to which they are writing (Beaufort, “Operationalizing”; Bizzell; Heath; Rafoth; Swales).
- *Rhetorical knowledge.* Both the concept of “discourse community” and “genre” take into account audience and purposes for writing. However, “rhetorical knowledge” I define as the knowledge of the *particular* audience (*this* professor, or *this* committee, etc.) and the *particular* communicative purpose of *one specific* instance of communication. This is another knowledge domain expert writers gain and use that is not addressed clearly in the Outcomes Statement.

In sum, there are traces of these five domains of knowledge that expert writers draw on in the Outcomes Statement. But terminology related to

these knowledge domains is used in the Statement without specificity as to their meaning or are given very limited definitions that do not represent the full scope of the concepts and skills associated. An articulation of a clear set of knowledge domains and the skills associated, based on current research, could lead to a Statement that could better guide writing program directors who train teachers on critical concepts for teaching writing that will in turn guide writing teachers in shaping first year writing curricula that educate students comprehensively and clearly in the knowledge domains the students need to attend to in order to become more expert writers.

If the Outcomes Statement fosters instruction and repeated practice in each of the knowledge domains, clearly defined, at appropriate developmental levels, the Statement will facilitate a solid writing curriculum. But how will students use this knowledge in other contexts for writing? The issue of transfer of learning was barely a blip in the research and theory on writing prior to the 1990s. In the two decades since, this has become a focal point for research in Writing Studies so that freshman writing is a viable course in the general education component of college degree requirements.

As far as I can see, transfer of learning from first-year composition courses to other writing situations is not an outcome addressed in the Statement, and yet, as current research in Writing Studies demonstrates and Premack says, “The objective of both education (and in a sense, intelligence) is transfer” (239). If the Outcomes Statement authors would incorporate a few key principles for facilitating transfer in the Statement, the influence and effectiveness of the Statement on the quality of writing instruction and potential growth of students as writers could multiply exponentially.

For example, if an outcome in each category of the document were “meta-awareness of the concept of . . . genre, rhetorical situation, discourse community, etc. and practice in using these concepts to analyze new writing situations,” then teachers would impart to students not just knowledge of a specific genre, or a specific discourse community, but also a knowledge of how to use these concepts as analytical tool in figuring out the conventions of new genres, understanding different discourse communities, etc. As I spell out in *College Writing and Beyond*, teaching that facilitates transfer of learning can be accomplished by

- connecting specific writing tasks and learning to more abstract principles that can be applied to new writing situations (i.e. the concept of “discourse community,” “genre” “writing process” “rhetorical situation” and “transfer of learning”)

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- giving students numerous opportunities to apply these key concepts and principles in a variety of writing tasks
- teaching meta-awareness of learning, so that students become self-aware of the knowledge and skills they're gaining and understand new writing demands in other courses, other disciplines, other social contexts for writing.

And, while we know how much freshmen in college vary in their writing skills, the skills and knowledge identified in the Outcomes, as Richard Haswell points out, need to be developmentally appropriate. For example, Haswell raises the question: "Does it profit to 'Understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power' (in the critical thinking, reading and writing section of the Outcomes) if one does not have the power or does not doubt the knowledge?" (196). In other words, do beginning college students have a sense of how power is related to language use? And as several research studies have demonstrated, most beginning college students do not yet question the authority of texts (Haas; Sternglass). So, Haswell is suggesting that this outcome may not be developmentally appropriate for students in the early years of college. The Outcome Statement should not reach too far. Better that a few concepts and skills associated with each knowledge domain are taught and learned well rather than trying to cover too many skills and intricacies within each knowledge domain. Imagine the Outcomes Statement as a lean, elegant (as in precise, concise, clear) document that both novice and expert writing teachers could readily translate into five or six learning outcomes tailored to some degree for any given writing course.

And one final note on audience for the Outcomes Statement: as others have pointed out, the Statement assumes background knowledge in writing theory and research. This seems to be a case of preaching to the choir. Isn't the Statement intended as a guiding document for training new teachers of writing and teaching novice writers? If this is the rhetorical purpose and intended audience of the Statement, then careful consideration should be given to clarity of both structure and terminology in the document. As Elbow says, ". . . you miss the benefits of outcomes—and indeed, the very meaning of the word—if you run away from saying what your outcomes look like in students and in texts" (Elbow).

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Genre Knowledge, Reading, and Faculty Development

Barbara Little Liu

I've just finished my most successful year of teaching first-year composition (FYC). After only fourteen years of applying the rationale and pedagogical tenets of a genre process approach I posited in my 1998 dissertation (a portion of which I adapted for a chapter in *The Outcomes Book*), I am starting to get it right.

In the past I have been disheartened by certain statements in my students' reflective introductions to their portfolios—statements such as: "I learned how to write some genres I've never written before like a proposal and a profile, and now I'll be ready to write them when I have to in the future." Despite my warnings to the contrary, such a student assumes that the purpose of my course is to teach her to write in the genres of the academy. The course is called "College Writing," after all, and FYC is required at most colleges and universities precisely because of the widely-held belief that English departments can teach foundational and transferable academic

writing skills. However, I am aware of much current scholarship which offers evidence to the contrary. Elizabeth Wardle effectively summarizes that scholarship: in FYC “writing [is] the object of primary attention rather than . . . a tool for acting on other objects of attention” as it is in other academic contexts; therefore, “the rhetorical situations of FYC courses around the country do not mirror the multiple, diverse, and complex rhetorical situations found across the university in even the most basic ways. Transfer to such varied situations is not easily accomplished” (766).

The answer for Wardle is to “give up ‘teaching to write’ as a goal for FYC” and instead teach a course “*about* writing” (emphasis in original) which presents the knowledge of our discipline: that is, “how people use writing, how people learn to write, how genres mediate work in society, how discourse communities arrange language use, how writing changes across the disciplines, and so on” (784). The writing assignments in such courses would include reflective responses to disciplinary readings, auto-ethnographies and literacy narratives, and research projects in which students conduct primary research to address writing-related questions of interest to them (Downs and Wardle 561–62). While I can see the attractions of such an approach, and while I agree with much of the critique of current FYC pedagogies on which it is based, I haven’t entirely given up teaching FYC as a course in which students practice skills that might transfer to their future writing challenges.

I agree that we need to teach students *about* writing, but I also want my students to try their hand at *applying* what they learn about “how people use writing” and “how people learn to write” to a few new and different genres. Hence my delight and feeling of accomplishment when I read the following in a recent student’s portfolio reflection: “I learned how to look at examples of new genres like the proposal and profile, and figure out how to write in that genre. This will be useful to me in the future when I have to write in other genres I’ve never had to write in before.” The student has learned a problem-solving skill that might transfer to his future writing situations. It isn’t the genre or situation itself that transfers, but the rhetorical understanding and the ability to apply insights gained from rhetorical/genre-based reading to rhetorical/genre-based writing.

Haas and Flower describe “rhetorical reading” as “constructing a rhetorical situation for the text [being read], trying to account for author’s purpose, context, and effect on the audience” (176). Adler-Kassner and Estrem break this kind of reading down into “process-based” and “genre-based,” adding that “the emphasis is on reading to develop genre awareness so that [students] can make conscious decisions about how, when, or whether to use those conventions in their own writing” (67). Rhetorical/genre-based

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reading helps students understand that texts are written by actual people and that rhetorical situations (including genre conventions) affect how real writers construct their texts. As students learn to parse a text in ways that reconstruct the rhetorical situation and the writer's rhetorical strategies, they begin to see how they can learn from the strategic choices of other writers to more effectively address the various and new rhetorical situations they will encounter after leaving FYC.

It has taken me fourteen years to develop and refine this pedagogical approach so that I can see evidence in my students' reflections that they might be getting the point. Does that seem like a long time? Perhaps. But I have just spent several days reading and scoring some of my colleagues' portfolios in which I saw far less rhetorical awareness. This is dismaying, but not all that surprising given the mix of adjunct and tenured faculty who teach the course, only a handful of whom have PhDs in rhetoric and composition. For ten years, I was coordinator of first-year writing and struggled with faculty development, continually frustrated by the difficulty of bringing my colleagues into the genre fold. That frustration prompted the core of my critique of the Outcomes Statement in *The Outcomes Book*: many who teach in FYC programs around the country are not composition scholars but are rather (like my colleagues) a diverse group with various kinds and levels of preparation in English studies, and various levels of commitment to or support for their teaching of FYC. Few hold the "complex and theoretically informed view of genre that was at the core of the Outcomes Statement" (Liu 74). I suggested that the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) should "do more to help assure that their statement is read and applied as they would want it to be" (83–4), particularly by assisting in faculty development, i.e., "publishing collections of key articles or a readable and comprehensive guide to genre theory and genre-based pedagogies for the uninitiated" (84). I still feel that the Statement assumes too high a level of shared disciplinary knowledge and commitment among those who teach in various FYC programs (from community colleges to research universities), and I continue to see the need for the CWPA to address this reality.

My answer at this point in my own scholarly and teaching career is that there needs to be greater emphasis on genre awareness through rhetorical reading. This emphasis should be promoted within a revised WPA Outcomes Statement and—once again—through support for faculty development. In order for students to gain the rhetorical/genre knowledge called for in the current Outcomes Statement, they might be presented with readings that introduce them to the field of writing studies (as Downs and Wardle suggest); however, I also believe that students should practice rhe-

torical/genre-based reading by examining models of how diverse writers respond to various exigencies in notably different rhetorical situations. Students need practice in focusing not just on reading to summarize content or to support, oppose, or frame their own ideas (Adler-Kassner and Estrem 66), but also on rhetorical/genre-based reading that will help them develop a useful and dynamic repertoire of problem-solving strategies for reading and writing. I don't believe one FYC course can make them accomplished experts, but I do believe it can open their eyes, instilling a nascent rhetorical consciousness that, as I've stated earlier, will help them understand that "learning to write is an ongoing process [and] that there is a process (or processes) involved in learning about how a particular genre functions and in then *applying* what has been learned to writing here and now" (Liu 83, emphasis added).

Revising the Outcomes Statement to emphasize reading would not solve the problem of faculty development, however. As Haas and Flower note, "teaching students to read rhetorically is genuinely difficult" (182), and I would add that few FYC instructors are prepared to do so. They are used to teaching students to read for content or—in Adler-Kassner and Estrem's terms—read "to connect/refute," "to summarize/paraphrase," "to explore," "to extend," and to "support," "oppose," or "frame" their ideas (65–66), but not to "infer writerly behaviors," "analyze form" or "understand the rhetorical situation" (67–68).

Although my view of the ideal approach to genre in FYC has evolved, then, my charge to the CWPA remains largely the same. We must recognize the diversity of background, experience, preparation, motivation and compensation among faculty teaching FYC around the country and provide support for faculty development activities that encourage deeper understanding and broader application of thoughtfully-developed, genre-based pedagogies. Such support would include the publication of anthologies or guidebooks geared appropriately to this diverse readership, grants from the Council to support innovative faculty development projects (or assistance in obtaining such funding from other sources), and somehow encouraging the publication of more genre-based FYC textbooks and teaching resources. Such resources would offer both faculty and their students insights into our disciplinary knowledge about writing, practice in the rhetorical reading of a variety of genres, and opportunities to experiment with applying what they learn from their reading.

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Reading to Write and the Economy of Attention

Deborah Mutnick

In 2010, curious to know more about our students' reading abilities, the English Department at Long Island University Brooklyn decided to assess reading proficiency in the second of a two-semester sequence of developmental writing. We administered the Nelson Denny Reading Test, an imperfect but established, national instrument, to about 200 students. The results confirmed our impression that many of our students—the majority of whom are poorly prepared for college level writing by the city's stratified public high schools—are weak readers whose difficulties with vocabulary, comprehension, interpretation, critical analysis, and application stunt their academic growth and contribute to a disturbingly high attrition rate. We found on average these students read at a 9.5 grade level.

I start with this assessment story because it marks a shift in my thinking about the role reading plays in college-level instruction in writing. Asked to participate in the journal's dialogue forum on revising the CWPA Outcomes Statement by commenting on the section on reading, I find myself returning to three interlocking themes: the struggling college reader reflected by the Nelson Denny Test results; a seemingly national mandate for college-level *writing* rather than *reading* instruction despite persuasive arguments to the contrary (see, e.g., Bartholomae and Petrosky); and the new challenges of digital literacy as we move from an information economy to what is increasingly seen as an economy of attention (see, e.g., Lanham).

THE STRUGGLING COLLEGE READER

It happened that the Nelson Denny test was administered to one of my classes I had assigned to write a literacy autobiography, so I was able to discuss the experience of reading quite a lot that semester. What stands out most vividly in my memory is the nearly universal agreement among my 20-odd students that they loved books as toddlers and looked forward to kindergarten but by third grade—the year standardized testing begins in earnest—they had grown to hate both reading and school. At best, school had become an obligatory task they continued to engage in because they hoped it would lead to a career; now, as college students, their love of reading, writing, science, literature, history, or any other pursuit associated with formal education seemed to have been utterly destroyed. While I am invoking a specific demographic profile, I assume that a combination of forces, including the testing regime and the new digital landscape of reading, is similarly affecting the majority of college students. I also assume that the discipline-specific vocabulary and density of academic discourse have always presented formidable challenges to entering college students, ones that have neither been well understood nor fully addressed.

THE MANDATE FOR WRITING

Flash backward to the early 1990s. The Writing Program I have directed on and off for many years proposed a two-semester, developmental sequence based on the University of Pittsburgh's course in reading and writing. At one point, in addition to six hours in class with the instructor, students were required to take a four-hour weekly workshop, giving us a rare opportunity to provide the sort of intensive reading and writing instruction basic readers and writers need to succeed. A key premise of the proposal was that intensive practice is needed in both reading and writing because one is integral to the other. The themes were robust and challenging—for example, "Our Voices in History: Identity and Difference"—and the requirements substantial with four to five books, supplementary texts, and critical writing assignments.

In making the case for what now seems like an unbelievable coup in curricular revision, we cited Bartholomae and Petrosky's argument that there is no prerequisite for reading and writing; that college students at any level need to engage in reading of and writing about meaningful, challenging texts and ideas; and that the development of writing skills and knowledge is inextricably linked to the development of critical reading skills. Had I read James Paul Gee back then, whose work has since become a cornerstone of my approach to literacy instruction, I would have added that acqui-

sition occurs mainly through practice outside school rather than formal educational settings and that more direct instruction must engage not only the course material but also meta-knowledge about it. Both are important but, as Gee notes, “acquisition is good for performance; learning is good for meta-level knowledge” (4). Unfortunately, this focus on reading had diminished by the end of the decade for reasons beyond my purpose here to explain, and it is only in light of the findings from the Nelson Denny Test that we are once again talking as a department about the centrality of reading in composition instruction and across the disciplines.

THE NEW CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL LITERACY

I am currently involved in a three-year project with the Brooklyn Historical Society called “Students and Faculty in the Archives,” in which first year students conduct primary research in the BHS archives. Through Pathways to Freedom, a learning community about African American history in Brooklyn, our students examine artifacts such as slave bills of sale from the 18th and 19th centuries. They grapple with handwritten documents with the “s” that looks like an “f” and arcane legal locutions on yellowing, fragile paper. As they read the documents in small groups, aided by an iPad or a magnifying glass, they pore over language that at first seems indecipherable. They spend hours unlocking the chilling historical narrative of human beings buying and selling other human beings. The experience of reading these primary, historically distant documents—a distance gleaned not just via a date but also by handling the material object itself—provides an experience of a primary source that illuminates the meaning of secondary sources and genuinely motivates a search for answers to questions the artifacts provoke. The close, sustained attention needed to extract meaning from the artifact epitomizes the value of reading not only as tool for learning and communication but also as a habit of mind.

It is precisely this habit of mind that we are in danger of losing as reading increasingly takes place in the environment of the Internet. Unlike reading in the archives, which exemplifies a deliberate, concentrated focus on one specific, often enigmatic document, reading on the Web is like driving down a highway marked by directional and commercial signage. On the Web, we are traveling through cyberspace, and whether we arrive at texts by design or accident, they always exist among many other texts competing among multiple channels for our attention. I like the emphasis on archival research precisely because it contrasts so sharply with digital literacy. Archival research is vertical, slow, deliberate, puzzling, deep, and focused—think preservation, slow cooking, Internet Sabbaths. Reading

on the Web is horizontal, fast, accidental, immediate, and shallow. While these characteristics are not exclusive to either domain, the multi-channeled environment of the Web marks the shift from a scarcity of information to a scarcity of attention, requiring us to develop new strategies for sorting out and valuing massive, often contradictory amounts of knowledge that close, deep, slow reading epitomized by archival research helps balance. If we as academics trained to read and write in highly complex, demanding contexts are affected by this revolution in communication, imagine what it must be like for a first-year college student to navigate the same terrain.

However, the distractions of the Internet are not the only cause of what Alice Horning calls the “don’t, won’t, can’t problem” in millennial generation readers (“Don’t”). Ironically, no sooner had higher education in the U.S. reached the zenith of opening its doors to masses of people in the late 1960s and 1970s, many coping with academic gaps created by social inequalities, than neoliberal policies of privatization started to erode support for educational programs. We must therefore intervene at two levels: 1) working politically at the macro-level to demand reinvestment in education; and 2) working in the educational sphere to help students from diverse backgrounds become more expert readers through thoughtful integration of reading instruction across the curriculum (see Horning, “Reading” and “Manicules”).

How, then, might the section of the CWPA Outcomes Statement on “Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing” be revised? In addition to the existing statement of what students should be able to do by the end of first year composition, I would add:

- Develop a habit of reading via extensive opportunities for practice in and outside the classroom
- Develop meta-cognitive strategies for comprehending, interpreting, analyzing, and applying a text
- Be aware of the different strategies needed for reading in Web environments, especially identification, selection, and evaluation
- Understand how to read diverse genres, including Web-based texts, for a wide range of purposes
- Develop strategies for inter-textual reading in order to integrate, synthesize, challenge, and contest others’ ideas

We can help students become better readers by remembering reading’s essential role in gaining access to academic, civic, professional, and personal spheres of knowledge and communication, and thus integrate it into our everyday instructional practices. More specifically, we can explicitly address

the learning outcomes of developing habits of mind and strategies for reading rhetorically and critically across purposes, genres, media and disciplines. Looking forward, we can research and reflect on the implications of the new economy of attention not only for how we learn to read, read to learn, and teach reading, but also for how we deal with the quickening avalanche of electronic information transforming twenty-first century life.

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Reading Matters: Thoughts on Revising the CWPA Outcomes Statement

Cynthia R. Haller

The revision of the CWPA Outcomes Statement affords the opportunity to address an ongoing issue in composition instruction: the neglect of reading pedagogy. Currently, the Statement pays inadequate attention to reading, contributing to potential misapprehensions about how reading and writing function in contexts of human activity. Here, I am taking "writing" to be the production of text and "reading" to be the interpretation of text, with text taken in its broadest sense (e.g., image, sound, alphanumeric characters, gestures, structures, etc.). If first-year composition courses fail to ground reading and writing together within a broad perspective on meaning-making, students may perceive writing erroneously as the end goal of reading, rather than a partner process. A more balanced Outcomes Statement would resituate reading less as something subsidiary to, supportive of, and temporally prior to writing, and more as a complementary process

that, like writing, facilitates meaning-making through use of specific media embedded within the material and social world.

Rethinking the treatment of reading in the Outcomes, though not a simple task, would help align the pedagogy of composition more squarely with its current theories. Composition scholars and instructors do understand the inextricability of reading, writing, and context. We know texts are *loci* for both interpreting and returning meaning to the world. We know they motivate people to think and act in ways that maintain and/or alter the state of the world—ways that may include, but are not limited to, the production of new text. How odd, then, that many first-year composition courses still treat reading as an origin point in a temporally sequenced movement from reading to writing. Though we emphasize to students that reading and writing are recursive throughout the writing process, privileging this temporal movement presents reading as if it were anchored to a linear line of rhetorical production. In truth, reading and writing are used variously (and sometimes chaotically) to connect nodes of meaning in dynamic networks of human activity.

As genre studies have amply demonstrated, the use of texts matters as much as their production. Pedagogies that situate reading as primarily instrumental to writing, however, may present genre as “merely a finite product that writers produce” rather than “an ongoing process in which writers take part” (Liu 73–4). Such approaches risk fetishizing written text, reducing it to a product rather than a force within the world. Even a “genre process approach” to writing instruction can fall prey to this problem, if it treats reading and genre analysis simply as processes that enable the production of text. Locating reading as subsidiary to writing makes texts themselves, not their effects in the world, the end goals of rhetorical production.

Granted, the Statement’s tendency to treat reading primarily as it occurs in concert with rhetorical production is understandable. Professors and students spend proportionately larger amounts of time than most people reading texts as sources for writing; and, after all, we are in the business of teaching writing. The production of text, however, is not always a teleological goal of reading; it is simply one way humans act on the meanings they construct from texts. I read a cookbook and make a meal. I read a poem and feel pleasure. I hear a speech at a community meeting and cast a vote. I read a story aloud to my child and create a shared experience, strengthening our emotional bond. I read a newspaper article and do—nothing. Does my failure to use my reading of these texts to produce another text indicate I haven’t “made meaning”? Even if I never write a response letter to the editor of the newspaper, use the article in a research paper, or bring the article up in conversation, my thinking, my identity, and my future poten-

tial actions have been altered, however incrementally, by what I've read. The polysemous, often chaotic cycling of rhetorical reception and production through human activity can and should be better represented in the Outcomes Statement.

The Statement, of course, already does include references to reading; but the proportion of reading-related outcomes is small. Too, reading outcomes are concentrated in the "Critical Reading, Writing, and Thinking" category. In the "Rhetorical Knowledge" category, for example, only one of the seven outcomes ("Understand how genres shape reading and writing") explicitly mentions reading (Council of Writing Program Administrators). Assuming these outcomes and the category itself are retained in the next revision (all bets are still off), these outcomes could be redesigned to emphasize that rhetorical knowledge applies to reading as well as writing. For example:

By the end of first-year composition, students should:

- Identify the purposes of texts they read and develop clearly ascertainable, focused purposes in the texts they write.
- Adopt an open stance and multiple audience perspectives to interpret texts, and respond to the needs of different audiences when writing texts.
- Respond appropriately, through rhetorical reception and production, to different kinds of rhetorical situations.
- Identify and use textual conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation.
- Identify and use voice, tone, and level of formality appropriately in the texts they read and write.
- Articulate how genres shape reading, writing, and action.
- Use genre as a resource for reading and writing texts.

Even in the "Critical Reading, Writing, and Thinking" category, more explicit and developed reading outcomes would be helpful. Adler-Kassner and Estrem have already elaborated a critical reading pedagogy that fleshes out multiple ways students should learn to read texts. Equally as useful is their offering of the phrase "grappling with ideas" as a way to think about what we want students to do with texts (61). The word "grapple" comes from the Middle English "grapel," a derivative of an Old Provençal word for "hook." In its literal meaning, a grapple is an anchor with hooks, used especially for "drawing and holding an enemy ship alongside" ("Grapple"). Through metaphorical extension, a "grapple" has come to mean a clutch, or

grasp, or grip, of any kind, but particularly as it occurs in a contest, such as wrestling. The verb form, too, conveys the sense of gripping or clutching an irreducible “other.” When we “grapple,” we engage with and/or against something that is not passive, but also acts on us. “Grappling” captures the recalcitrance of texts. Texts are not simply effete collections of symbols, but have consequences, especially as they are taken up in various contexts of use (Blair). They do not surrender meekly to us. They argue back, altering our thinking and actions, constraining us to take them up in ways consistent with their own material existence. The popular catchphrase “critical reading, writing, and thinking” suggests that meaning-making is a one-way, cognitive action performed on an object; by contrast, the word “grappling” captures the two-way, absorbed engagement we (and we hope our students) experience when reading texts.

To discern further possibilities for enhancing the profile of reading in the Outcomes, we can start with extant empirical and theoretical work on reading. Such studies, for one thing, confirm the need for greater attention to reading pedagogy in first-year writing courses. Research by Howard, Serviss, and Rodrigue, for instance, calls into question whether first-year composition students really understand the texts they read (189)—a question that, among others, is currently being explored in *The Citation Project*. Jolliffe advocates that we consider and communicate why and how students should read in our courses, since reading strategies vary greatly by purpose (474). Ideas for reading pedagogies are already out there. Horning, for example, suggests we foster three “meta-awarenesses” experts use when reading, and assign course activities that demand analysis, synthesis, application, and evaluation of texts. Helmers’ edited collection, *Intertexts: Reading Pedagogy in College Writing Classrooms* likewise provides innovative approaches to teaching reading in composition classrooms. This list of resources is partial, not exhaustive; many scholars have contributed to a growing body of literature on reading.

We can also look to genre studies, which provide guidance on helping students understand reading and writing as situated activities. Freadman’s work on genre uptake provides an understanding of rhetorical reception that touches on the material consequences of texts, complicating an overly simplistic link of reading to writing. Bawarshi outlines a genre approach to invention rich in its attention to the connections between rhetorical reception and production. Rhetorical scholars’ recent considerations of silence (Glenn) and rhetorical listening (Ratcliffe) may seem far afield from composition pedagogy to some, but they open up important questions about the nature of rhetorical reception, speaking to reading in its broadest sense. Finally, we need to engage the literature on information literacy. Librar-

ians traffic in both memory and delivery, two rhetorical canons sometimes downplayed in composition classrooms. As Norgaard points out, an appreciation for how human knowledge is organized, stored, disseminated, and accessed can prevent students from viewing their own rhetorical production as isolated from other texts.

The place of reading pedagogy in composition instruction is but one of many issues to be considered as the CWPA re-crafts the Outcomes Statement. Adequate attention to reading, however, is necessary to a balanced Statement. Neglecting rhetorical reception implies that rhetorical production is possible in its absence. That scenario, if it could exist, would be the end of rhetoric: a solipsistic world full of people who talk but cannot listen.

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Engaging Queerness and Contact Zones, Reimagining Writing Difference

Martha Marinara

Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that differences do not exist.

Audre Lorde, *The Master's Tools*

If you close your eyes, you could just as well imagine me to be vintage Ali MacGraw, circa 1968.

Sandra Bernhard, *Without You, I'm Nothing*

When I agreed to write a short piece about revising the WPA Outcomes Statement with an "eye to queering FYC," I had not imagined how difficult it would be to describe the performance of, rather than the state of being queer. We are used to the liberal multicultural show and tell, the this is what it means to be gay or a woman or Latina. We know the issue of silencing and making safe classroom spaces. However, the next step, engaging that otherness in the classroom, is a wicked problem¹; wicked because it is resistant to resolution; wicked because there are numerous perspectives; wicked because the complex interdependencies and multiple, often ambiguous causes mean that solutions will reveal more problems, and wicked because those trying to solve the problem are also causing it.

It isn't an easy task to perform queer in the classroom. At many different moments, queerness erupts to trouble normalcy, legitimacy and significance. Queerness skews, bends, or queers the realities we construct around ourselves, and the realities that have been constructed for us to induce a heteronormative sense of stability and progress through the replication of particular kinds of people in particular kinds of families. And it isn't only

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the heteronormative that needs to be bent; all of our centers of *status quo* stability—our notions of race, class, gender, ethnicity, as well as our cultural assumptions about who owns ideas, the relationship of writers to texts, what counts as evidence, how we explain ideas to others—need to be refracted, redirected in their transparency to a burst of their colorful parts. Queering first-year writing would make it possible to question how language shapes and legitimizes communities, knowledge, and writing, to question how language defends privilege. In other words, queerness ruffles or disturbs the boundaries and borders of knowledge and practice already in place in the academy.

*

Berkeley Breathed ended his celebrated critique of politics and American culture, the comic strip *Bloom County* in 1989. The very last strip published on August 6th of that year showed Opus the penguin packing for Antarctica to find his mother. For those of you who don't remember or never read *Bloom County*, the character Opus was known for his hopeless naïveté, delightful optimism, and red bow tie. His most salient feature was his large nose which grew larger as the comic strip progressed. In this last strip, all of the other characters have left Bloom County, and Opus is intent on finding his mother. Rather than disappointing Opus (and in effect his readers), Breathed leaves us with a scene in which Opus cuddles in his mother's lap, their noses tenderly touching, an ecstatic state of *jouissance*, a happily ever after on an ice floe. We know this other penguin is his mother because their noses are drawn *exactly the same*.

*

The phrase “exactly the same” is kind of fairy tale, aesthetically beautiful and narratively pleasing; however, sameness reinforces Western assumptions about family, happiness, and other cultural narratives.

*

When Mary Louise Pratt gave her keynote address at the MLA Annual Conference in 1990, an address that was later published in *Profiles 91*, writing instructors and composition theorists latched onto her concept of “contact zones” as a way to explain the competing differences, the identity politics in writing classrooms. Writing instructors have effectively made “contact zones” a pedagogical metaphor for the past two decades, even asking students to read the article and write their own contact zone essays. In fact “Arts of the Contact Zone” has been cited over one thousand times and reprinted in many composition readers and textbooks. All of the citations and reprints serve to highlight our anxieties about institutionalizing the *sta-*

tus quo and eradicating individuality, and we use this metaphor to explain almost everything from library science to writing across the curriculum, museums to politics to students' coping strategies.

One goal of contact-zone pedagogies has been to help students to write about their experiences with an empowering authority that would valorize their experiences and cultures of origin. We soon found, however, that constructing any pedagogy against the background of academic culture and underlying ideological assumptions about knowledge, language, and discourse, and Western notions of literacy, argument, and research often results in mimicry, resistance, irritation, and anger from the students. As Victor Villanueva, Helen Fox and others have pointed out, this approach can lead to students whose ability to accept and use academic language conventions conflicts with their underlying cultural assumptions, assumptions that may be at odds with these conventions (Fox; Villanueva; Smitherman; hooks; Jordan). And so we recognized our students' discomfort, and then (if we are brutally honest about it) many of us did nothing to alleviate their distress and irritation except to affirm their difference, to fall back on the comfortable and declare the writing classroom a safe and tolerant space, a space that merely afforded a simple reaffirmation of existence. The difficulty with tolerance, beyond civil behavior or good manners, is that it strives for sameness, erases difference and negates the act of questioning because sameness makes it easy for us "all to get along."

Falling into the comfort of "sameness" with its cultural and political capital is not an option if we really want to engage diversity.

Pratt's article, however, does not discuss safety or tolerance; instead, she asks her readers to consider a 17th century writer, Guaman Poma and his text, *New Chronicles* as an example of an autoethnographic text "in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them" (35). In other words, a conflicted space where the subaltern "talks back" to the empire. Pratt describes these texts as "contact zones," as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often *in context of highly asymmetrical relations of power*" (emphasis mine 34).

Somehow while trying to be tolerant, we have managed to overlook the very real issue of conflict, of asymmetrical relations of power, and as Gary Olson describes it, this benign forgetfulness has "paper[ed] over difference since we're all the same inside" (48). Contact zones were appropriated by an uncritical, liberal multiculturalist movement and became apolitical, a safe kind of melting pot, a chicken soup for the classroom. The result was that the dominant culture took center stage, difference lived in the mostly

exotic margins, and writing classrooms became a third space of pluralistic tolerance.²

*

About 40 miles north of where I live, a 17 year old African American man, Trayvon Martin was shot and killed by a member of a neighborhood watch committee. Somewhere in his life, George Zimmerman learned a method of racial profiling, wherein young black men in hoodies are probably up to no good. And like the game of rock-paper-scissors, in the contact zone of this gated, suburban community sidewalk, gun beats fist every time.

This is a contact zone where a 17 year old died because the color of his skin and his gray hoodie made him “other,” and yet the community and the media are scrambling to make this incident less about difference, and more about private property³, stand your ground laws, vigilantes and gun control, even questioning the appearance of Reverend Al Sharpton and the NAACP because they historicized the event, reminded citizens of other racial injustices. The FBI interview of Zimmerman came to the conclusion that he was not a racist, and the shooting was not a hate crime because Zimmerman had responded to the *hoodie*, not Martin’s skin color. This legal conclusion furthers the *status quo* of a color-blind America and accepts that the public sphere, the language of law is neutral and inclusive. As Phyllis Mentzell Ryder so clearly notes, an uncritical acceptance of this desire to be neutral and inclusive, “leads to a particular version of multiculturalism . . . that ignores issues of power and the institutionalization of oppression” (517).

Performing queerness carries the uncomfortableness and all the ambiguity surrounding Trayvon Martin’s death, but performing queerness also carries an inherent responsibility to question who benefits from how the story of difference is told, why some interpretations are more valid than others, and why some writers (and some audiences) are more valid than others. Performing queer strips off all the layers that have been papered over by teaching practices, which, yes, should interrogate the neutrality of rhetorical concepts such as audience, writer, and process, and most certainly should question writing conventions, appropriate responses, and acceptable formats. However, what is missing from most teaching performances is its queerness, its praxis, its interrogation of the performance itself. The contrariness of queer theory, the wickedness of a performance that knows it is a performance not only questions the normal that masquerades as truth but questions the very concepts of difference and diversity making tolerance and inclusivity untenable. After the balloons and other artifacts from Trayvon Martin’s roadside memorial are taken down, the pain doesn’t go away.

Queering or questioning the WPA Outcomes Statement leads me to consider that a list of student learning outcomes, while important to the literacy practices that will be expected of our students in their public and professional lives, hinges on a particular kind of literacy that focuses on diversity as one objective among many, the “something extra” promise of liberal humanism. What the list does not do and needs to do is question how the process of teaching and learning—the wicked problem of our teaching practices—supports and maintains the role of difference as a definition, rather than a critical process that promotes a fuller notion of literacy.

NOTES

1. Horst Rittel and Melvin M. Webber formally described the concept of wicked problems in a 1973 treatise, contrasting “wicked” problems with relatively “tame,” soluble problems in mathematics, chess or puzzle solving. (See Rittel, Horst, and Melvin Webber. “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning.” *Policy Sciences* 4 Amsterdam: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, Inc., 1973: 155–69.)

2. I am not trying to denigrate a compassionate notion of tolerance, and I applaud the work of Teaching Tolerance, a program started by the Southern Poverty Law Center, but I do want to challenge us to deconstruct tolerance as a pedagogical strategy and as a learning objective.

3. No one has publically questioned that private property only matters if you are of a certain class and own land and/or a house.

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Queering Outcomes: Hacking the Source Code of the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition

William P. Banks

Recent media coverage of Steven Soderbergh's new film, *Magic Mike*, which showcases actor Channing Tatum's early career as a male stripper, has been plentiful. Facebook chatter and copious memes have suggested that after *Fifty Shades of Grey* worked women up, *Magic Mike* came along for a much needed release. *Variety* reviewer Peter Debruge enthuses, "Ladies are going to love 'Magic Mike' . . ." While this sort of gender-based buzz is common in popular culture, what has interested me most has been the stories about how the film was marketed: the *New York Times* recently reported that the producers and others involved in marketing initially considered only heterosexual women as the audience, and were surprised to find that gay men were interested in the film. But once that demographic became obvious, Sue Kroll of Warner Brothers notes that "the studio coordinated a 'well-concentrated and tailored' campaign intended to capture gay moviegoers' attention." Warner Brothers even hired NYC marketing agency Karpel Group to generate buzz and energy around the film, specifically in cities with heavy gay concentrations.

Now, why in the world open an essay on the WPA's Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition with a tale about a summer stripper film? Because for me, watching this unfold, I couldn't help but be reminded of classroom discussions of *audience* in my FYC courses over the years. Here is a very successful movie company and many very successful, very experienced film makers putting together a film about half-naked men, and their assumptions about *audience* seem terribly small . . . at least, until Sue Kroll has a chat with a gay male friend. Even the singular assumption about "women" or "ladies" seems highly suspect these days. Do lesbians even exist for Hollywood, or are they not *women*? This is something I've seen for years in my composition courses when students try to figure out who their audience is for a particular piece; they use large, amorphous groupings, usually starting with "everyone" and finally winding down a bit to "men" or "women" after we look at different magazines and their varied marketing strategies. It takes an entire semester (or longer) to get students to think of words and ideas as being targeted in particular ways to very particular audiences, or not being, as the case may be. And about how language and intention misfire as often as they hit their mark. In the Outcomes Statement, we say we expect students to "respond to the needs of different audiences," but what do we mean by that? What level of sophistication or nuance regard-

ing *audience* should students have at the end of FYC? Merely that “teacher” is not an audience, though “teacher” may be reader or evaluator? The idea that *audience* does not equate to “person assigning grade”?

One of the things I have appreciated about the Outcomes Statement, and the countless hours of work that smart people have put into it, is the recognition that as a national body representing writing programs administrators at a host of varied and different programs, the WPA Council really cannot create “standards” or “precise levels of achievement” for these outcomes, that such things should be worked out locally, where writing professionals and other stakeholders can scaffold student learning. At the same time, I cannot help but think that WPAs really do have more of an expectation than merely the awareness that there are different audiences for writers to work with.

The thing is, critiquing the WPA Outcomes Statement seems both overly simple and overly vexed: we’ve all got something we think should be there that is not, something that is really important to us, but when does that one-more-thing stop? Just recently, in this interchange section of the *WPA Journal*, Paul Kei Matsuda noted his frustration with thinking about some of the areas that the journal covers with an eye to “fixing” something missing: “It took me a while to understand why I was having such a hard time choosing a few areas of interest or suggesting additional items, but it finally dawned on me: issues surrounding linguistic diversity in the writing program permeate all of these categories” (169). So much of what we do isn’t about tacking on something extra to a list of outcomes, but about how those outcomes reflect deep, significant issues, theories, and concerns. When queer colleagues and I have chatted about the OS, a question that eventually arises is: “How can we make this work–queerness, LGBT awareness–inextricable and essential rather than optional?” But I’m not sure the OS is the place to do that, or rather, that the outcomes themselves are the place. And yet I see everywhere the need for change.

So where does this change belong? I think it’s in the foundations, the ideological and theoretical underpinnings of the OS document, what’s hidden in the framing paragraphs, and by how what’s hidden becomes visible. I’d like to devote my space on this topic, then, to asking questions about those framing paragraphs and exploring how a different set of questions or assumptions can change significantly what we come to *mean* by those fairly open-ended, hard-to-miss outcomes themselves.

The OS begins with an introduction which notes the dispositional setting for the outcomes themselves, not only the knowledge and skills but also the *attitudes* that WPAs and FYC instructors seek. And yet reading the outcomes, I begin to wonder, “What are these attitudes? Toward what

or whom?” Are these attitudes toward language, toward the acts of writing/composing, toward writers/composers? All of the above? And whose attitudes? As an organization, do we consider the attitudes of queer writers and thinkers? Writers and thinkers of color? What is different when we do? Or when we foreground that awareness rather than come to it at the end as a “revision consideration”? My fear is that very little of the research and theory that most informs my sense of self and other, my sense of writing and composing, my sense of how language works in the world, is actually in these outcomes, or that other WPAs concern themselves very deeply with them.

When Jonathan Alexander, Martha Marinara, Samantha Blackmon and I got the reviewers’ comments back on our 2009 *CCC* article, “Cruising Composition Textbooks,” I was both shocked and not shocked by the very different reviews. One reviewer seemed embarrassed by the essay, surprised that she had not considered the representations of sexuality in the composition texts she chose; she said the essay was a wake-up call to review the books on her shelf and ask a different set of questions about them. The other reviewer didn’t really see the big deal, suggesting our mountain was at best a mole hill. To me, these teachers are not going to read the same Outcomes Statement, are not going to value the same theories of teaching, writing, and communication, so in a sense, they are not going to use the same Outcomes Statement.

Others writing for this symposium have offered “provocations” for their readers, and I feel somewhat compelled to do the same thing. But my provocation isn’t the one I thought I might write when I said yes to the invitation—though if WPA wants to add something specific to the OS in order to acknowledge that rhetoric and discourse are inherently cultural practices and that race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality, region, class, etc. are inextricable from them, not merely something “added on” as part of audience awareness in the revision stage, but something that permeates the rhetorical canons, well, that would make me very happy as well.

But, if we as WPAs have an interest in *queering* the Outcomes Statement, then I would argue that we need to reclaim and remediate the document with the goal of putting back in what is omitted or glossed over. A hypertextual, visual, auditory project, this new OS, this OS 2.0, would crowd source its content; the diversity among rhetoric and composition researchers and teachers could help us make visible the complexities that the OS-as-written currently makes far too simple, far too quick. I can envision a web-based text or tablet app which lets users click or tap on concepts from the OS and head down the Rhet-Comp rabbit hole in search of “what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research,

and theory.” Such a space would not stop at the “intro” figures—important scholar-teachers like Murray, Elbow, Emig, Berthoff, Berlin, Lunsford, et al—but would put those figures into conversation with recent emerging work on queer rhetorics, ethnic rhetorics, cultural rhetorics, feminist rhetorics, as well as work from neurosciences, communication, visual studies, new media studies, and other theoretical and applied disciplines which have something to say about how writing and composing happen. While I have no idea how to do this, necessarily, I can imagine that the WPA Outcomes Statement-as-portal would be a way to rethink these initial outcomes and to refigure them as growing, shifting, mutable.

While the WPA Outcomes Statement may have been very much about solidifying the field and demonstrating internal validity for writing studies, for declaring to ourselves and our various stakeholders that we are a rich and complex field steeped in a long history of research and theory—a laudable goal—I would like to see a space where emerging scholars, as well as seasoned professionals, can contribute to the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of the OS itself. Opening up the document in this way helps move it from something merely “received” toward something that we collaboratively build together and which we revise as new ideas and theories come forward. The outcomes themselves are baseline; I don’t know that they’d change that dramatically *as stated*. What *would* change, I hope, is how we as WPAs and writing teachers understand the complexities embedded in those statements.

For me, *queering* the WPA Outcomes Statement is as much about disrupting the theories and practices that inform the outcomes themselves as it is about asking for different or differently articulated outcomes. Both are important, both have value, but the practice of remixing the OS is really one for all of us (and our students, perhaps), one that we should all be able to participate in and learn from. Queering the WPA OS is ultimately about hacking into the code that has built the document /* and annotating it in ways that will be useful for future coders */.

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