Favorable Outcomes: How Outcomes Can Make Space for Multimodal Composition Curricula

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While some composition programs have done the important work of integrating multimodality into their curricula, there still exists a disconnect between the scholarship of writing studies, which seems to suggest the presence and success of a multimodal turn, and the day-to-day work of individual programs, which still focus overwhelmingly on alphabetic writing. In this article, I perform and detail an analysis of a collection of twenty-five outcomes statements to determine what those programs value at the curricular level. Outcomes yield rich insights in this regard because of the ways in which they outline definitions of and orientations to the work of composition. This analysis suggests that certain outcomes allow for a multimodal composition curriculum while others leave little space for such content. With this information, writing program administrators who want to include multimodality at the programmatic level can use outcomes to (re)examine their values, to initiate conversations about the possibility of aligning those values with disciplinary research, and to take the first steps in that process.

Introduction

Scholarship on multimodality emphasizes the need not just for a multimodal focus in individual classrooms but an integration of multimodality into curricula at the programmatic level (Cope and Kalantzis; Kress, "Gains and Losses"; Lee and Khadka; Selfe; Shipka). In examining this scholarship alone, which so often demonstrates multimodal pedagogies at work, we might assume the existence of a multimodal turn in composition (Mueller; Schiavone), or what Jason Palmeri terms "multimodal curricular transformation" (149). However, empirical research suggests we have yet to accomplish this. In 2006, for example, Anderson et al. presented data collected in a national survey that suggest: (1) although most respondents

articulated a robust theory of multimodality, most of the assignments given to students focused on the visual-as-multimodality, proving the prevalence of a limited multimodal curriculum; (2) 84% replied that teaching multimodality took place at the grassroots level instead of the programmatic; and (3) only 24% of the responses indicated that multimodality was an integral part of the composition program's overall curriculum (69). Similarly, after an examination of multimodal assignments in various textbooks, Aubrey Schiavone contends our "theories posit the importance of teaching students to produce visual and multimodal compositions, while the practices encapsulated in textbook prompts tend to promote *the consumption* of multimodal compositions more so than their production" (359, emphasis added). While the data Anderson et al. offer are now over a decade out of date, Schiavone reveals that there is still much work to be done.

Throughout this article, I will define multimodal composing as the making and sharing of meaning with multiple semiotic resources (Kress, *Multimodality*). It is not just visual nor just digital. It includes a materially expansive repertoire of meaning-making potentialities. With this definition, we can see that composition as a literate practice is and always has been multimodal (Faigley), even if our composition programs have not treated it as such.[1] We have attempted to do better about this. The CWPA's *WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition* (*WPA OS*), which "attempts to both represent and regularize writing programs' priorities for first-year composition" by articulating "what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory" (*WPA Outcomes* 144), has been twice revised to do just that: first in 2008 to include digital technology initiatives and again in 2014 to include multimodal literacies (Dryer et al.). Additionally, as I mentioned above, our scholarship provides models of what such curricula and programs would look like (Graban, Charlton, and Charlton; Kress, *Multimodality*; Sheridan, Ridolfo, and Michel; Sheridan and Rowsell; Shipka; Sheppard). Collectively, these models present a curriculum that is radically different from the first two versions of the *WPA OS*, which "focused unapologetically on traditional academic writing and relegated digital technology to a brief addendum" (Leverenz 34). They present a new version of and vision for composition curricula.

Nevertheless, the disconnect between the scholarship of the discipline reflected in the most current iteration of the *WPA OS* (and in the conversations outlined above) and the reality of composition curricula persists. There are several possible reasons for this. First, too often we conflate multimodal with digital (Alexander and Rhodes; Baldwin), which can cause resistance from administrators and instructional staff who feel they lack expertise with the digital. Second, if multimodality is a grassroots endeavor,

those instructors who do choose to take it up eventually graduate, retire, accept a different position, or otherwise move on taking their pedagogies with them. And third, we often treat multimodality as ancillary, relegating it to the end of the semester, making it worth a small percentage of a student's final grades when we and our students are already overburdened. In so doing, we reinforce the privileged position of print (Whithaus). WPAs who want to create truly multimodal curricula must confront and work against these issues and initiate (difficult) conversations that will move us in the direction of multimodal curricular transformation.

I contend that outcomes statements can be a possible first step in that process. Outcomes statements articulate a programmatic orientation to and curricular definition of "composition" (Burnham; Ewell; Yancey). They delineate curricular values and cohere programs around those values. In this article, I perform and detail an analysis of a collection of outcomes statements with the goal of examining those programmatic values at the time of data collection. This analysis reveals three findings: (1) there is a positive correlation between the presence of outcomes that focus on multimodal composing and outcomes that focus on rhetoric; (2) programs whose outcome statements define composition as the rhetorical construction of texts can and do invite multimodal composing while programs whose outcome statements define composition as alphabetic writing leave less space for such content; and (3) there is little consensus in the version of multimodality delivered to students in our composition curricula. These findings reveal a correlation between the values reflected in outcomes statements and the presence or absence of certain kinds of curricular content (like multimodality). This is not to say that outcomes statements can be the sole source of transformation for programs—one document alone cannot do that. However, curricular transformation does take place via documents where disciplinary knowledge and local practices intersect. According to Tarez Samra Graban and Kathleen J. Ryan, "the (re)production of curricular documents provides a space for initiating and sustaining high-stakes topics such as curriculum . . . and it also promotes reform by reconstructing programs they represent" (89–90). Outcomes, rather than being the solution or sole means by which multimodal curricular transformation is achieved, can (re)start conversations about programmatic values. This article both examines what a selection of outcomes suggests our programs currently value and then discusses specific kinds of outcomes that can initiate the arduous process of multimodal curricular transformation. In the following section, I detail my methods of data collection and the coding scheme I utilized to analyze the statements before moving into my analysis. After that, I present the analysis of this coding, which demonstrates the positive correlation

between rhetoric and multimodality and the negative correlation between outcomes focused on alphabetic writing and multimodality. Then, I examine in detail how outcomes coded as related to multimodality offer various definitions of that concept, outlining which of those most accurately reflects the scholarship outlined above. I end with practical considerations for WPAs who are interested in initiating multimodal curricular transformation at their own institutions.

Coding

Here, I will discuss the methods by which I first collected and then coded the twenty-five outcomes statements comprising the data set I discuss in this article. This data set comes from a larger, mixed-methods study concerning the integration of multimodality into composition curricula at the programmatic level. One of the study's methods was a survey that asked respondents (WPAs) the following:

- demographic information about their programs;
- if the program had outcomes, and if so, to attach them to the survey;
- about the relationship of those local outcomes to the *WPA OS*;
- if their program had undergone curricular revision in recent history; and
- whether the program included multimodal composing as a part of its content.

The survey was distributed in two ways: on a relevant professional listserv, the WPA-L, and selective invitation. Selective invitations were determined: (1) if the program had a program website and (2) if the program had clearly articulated outcomes. I determined this by searching each program's website and for the following terms: *learning outcomes*, *outcomes*, *mission statement*, and *program goals*. Using these criteria, I located a total of forty possible programs. I invited the directors of those programs to participate in the survey via an email that included a brief description of the project and a link to the survey.

The survey received forty-eight responses. In response to question one, which asked about the kind of institution at which the respondent worked, 91% (41) reported that they worked at a four-year institution and the others reported working at a community college. The analysis that I present in this article is admittedly skewed toward four-year institutions. The sample size is small, and it's quite a convenient and self-selective sample—the data and the analysis cannot be generalizable. What I am attempting to outline here is not generalizable, but it is illuminating: a snapshot in time of

twenty-five programs and what those programs claimed to value. Those values, even in such a small sample size, yield interesting insights, as I will demonstrate below.

Question 6 of the survey asked respondents whether their program had an outcomes statement, and if so, to attach that statement to the survey. Twenty-eight programs attached qualitative data in the box available for the statements. Three of those twenty-eight wrote in to say that they used the *WPA OS* verbatim without actually attaching those statements. I did not include those three statements/programs in the corpus coded for the purposes of this article because I was more interested in how local programs were defining composition and how those local statements compared to the national, regularized composition values outlined in the *WPA OS*. Additionally, the survey revealed that those remaining 25 were indeed informed or influenced by the *WPA OS*. Thirty-seven program directors responded to question 11, which inquired about the relationship between the *WPA OS* and the respondent's program's outcomes. Seventeen (46%) reported that their programs utilized the *WPA OS* as a flexible guideline in the creation of their own contextually-specific outcomes. Seven answered that they have completely adopted the WPA outcomes as their own. Only three of the respondents answered that they did not utilize the *WPA OS* at all in the creation of their program's outcomes. Thus, either as inventional material for local outcomes or providing the statement itself for those local programs, the *WPA OS* has definitely influenced the outcomes coded for this project.

To analyze the 442 outcomes collected from the 25 statements, I utilized a deductive coding scheme developed from categories outlined in different iterations of the *WPA OS*. I did so because the *WPA OS* offers definitional categories for different kinds of outcomes, which are useful for examining programmatic values manifested in those statements. The first version of the *WPA OS* introduced four categories considered foundational to composition: rhetorical knowledge; knowledge of conventions; critical thinking, reading, and writing; and processes. In my coding scheme, I retained the titles of three categories of outcomes from *WPA OS* 3.0: rhetorical knowledge, knowledge of conventions, and processes. However, for the purposes of this project, I kept critical thinking, reading, and writing from *WPA OS* 1.0 rather than critical thinking, reading, and composing from *WPA OS* 3.0 (see figure 1). I did so, as I will reference below, because while *WPA OS* 3.0 makes multimodality an integrated part of each category (as evidenced by the use of *composing* rather than *writing*), I wanted to highlight the presence/absence of multimodality with this coding. Keeping the title of this category as critical thinking, reading, and writing allowed me to do so. Following the *WPA OS*, the coding scheme defined rhetorical

knowledge as the ability to respond to different audiences, situations, and contexts. Thus, within this category, I included concepts such as rhetorical situation, rhetorical awareness, rhetorical terms (such as the rhetorical appeals), and appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality. I note here that these outcomes within rhetorical knowledge do not prescribe the materials with which students work, which means these kinds of outcomes do not require students to work within print, unlike other categories within this coding scheme. Critical thinking, reading, and writing describes the kinds of analytical thinking and doing emphasized in certain composition courses, including locating and evaluating sources, reading/analyzing texts, reading for patterns across texts, conducting inquiry/research, synthesizing sources, examining the relationships among language, knowledge, and power, and writing to learn. I defined processes as both the act of engaging in the composing process (drafting, collaboration, revision, etc.) and acts of self-reflection or metacognition. Evidence of a process-based outcome consisted of terms like reflection, collaboration, drafting, and feedback. Knowledge of conventions included structural conventions and issues of formatting. Common terms included here were correctness, documentation/citation, academic discourse, and the common format of texts within disciplines. I should note here that processes and conventions both require students to work with alphabetic writing and critical thinking, reading, and writing, while emphasizing interpretation/analysis, tends to prescribe alphabetic writing as the vehicle for that thinking. In short, and as I will demonstrate later, these leave little space for multimodality because they prescribe the kinds of composing that students do.

Rhetorical Knowledge

- Learning and engaging rhetorical concepts
- Negotiating purposes, audiences, contexts
- Responding to a variety of rhetorical situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, and level of formality
- Composing and reading in several genres
- Understanding how genres shape reading and writing

Processes

- Drafting, editing, and revision
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Collaborating/the social aspects of composing
- Reflection and metacognition

Knowledge of Conventions

- Grammar, structure/organization, tone, mechanics
- Common formats of texts
- Citation, fair use, documentation

Multimodality

- Digital literacy/technological literacy
- Understanding and using a variety of technologies for different purposes
- Matching the capacities of different environments
- Using multiple modes/using modes beyond the written word

Critical Thinking and Writing

- Analyzing, synthesizing, interpreting and evaluating ideas, information, and texts
- Separating assertions from evidence
- Evaluating sources/reading across texts for patterns
- Composing for inquiry/writing to learn
- Locating and evaluating sources
- Analyzing texts using different theoretical lenses

Figure 1. Deductive coding scheme for outcomes statements.

In addition to these four, I created a fifth category for the coding scheme: multimodality. In a detailed description of the drafting of the third iteration of the *WPA OS*, Dryer et al. reference the two modifications to the *WPA OS*: one in 2008 to add a category for composing in electronic environments and another in 2013 (with *WPA OS* 3.0) that did away with that discrete category and made multimodal composition (not just digital) an

integral part of all categories. There are limitations and affordances to both iterations. The 2008 addition of composing in electronic environments was an attempt to emphasize the role that media play in the composing process. However, it focused only on digital media and treated the digital only as a vehicle through which alphabetic text could be realized (Callaway; Selfe and Ericsson). *WPA OS* 3.0 expanded the definition of composition from alphabetic writing to multimodal composition, stating "'composing' refers broadly to complex writing processes that are increasingly reliant on the use of digital technologies. Writers also attend to elements of design, incorporating images and graphical elements into texts intended for screens as well as printed pages" (*WPA Outcomes Statement*). Such a definition is definitely beneficial for theorizing composing processes, but not the best for the purposes of this coding. I chose to keep multimodality as a discrete category not because I believe multimodality to be absent from the current iteration of the *WPA OS* and certainly not because I believe it should be its own category again, but merely to highlight the presence/absence of multimodality within the statements collected from individual programs. This kind of coding inevitably leads to oversimplified definitions and understandings. The skills highlighted and included in these different categories reciprocally and symbiotically influence the composing process. As such, one cannot be truly isolated from another. I created these categories merely to unpack the values of programs according to their outcomes statements. Though I treat these categories discretely throughout the rest of this article, they are always interconnected.

Additionally, I must acknowledge that I have imposed a coding scheme onto a set of data, which is a drawback to this kind of analysis. Had I taken a grounded approach and coded these outcomes inductively (Chiovitti and Piran; Lingard, Albert, and Levinson), different categories might have emerged, ones that might paint a very different picture of the programmatic values within this data set. For instance, I might have coded for student identity solicited by outcome: student as researcher, student as writer, student as composer, etc.; or, I might have coded for consumption/ analysis and production; the category of critical thinking, reading, and writing might have been broken down further into the analysis of literature, issues of social justice/equity, synthesizing secondary sources, etc. While such analysis is beyond the scope of this article, examining what categories emerge from outcomes themselves might be an avenue for future research, especially as we develop our understanding of the ways in which curricular documents make space for or constrain certain kinds of content.

In the following section, I present the analysis of this coding, which I have organized according to the final question of the survey, a question

that asked respondents how they perceived a multimodal composition curriculum would affect their programs. Respondents could select the following answers: including multimodality would constitute a minor revision to the program; multimodality would constitute a substantial revision (i.e., a transformation) to the curriculum of the program; or the program already included multimodality within its outcomes. Arranging the data in this way reveals the positive correlation between outcomes coded as rhetoric and outcomes coded as multimodality, thus presenting a continuum of programs from those that define composition as alphabetic writing only to those that define composition as a rhetorically informed process of making and sharing meaning without prescribing the medium in which those processes are realized. Such a continuum, I argue, reveals that the latter more than the former creates space for multimodal composition in composition curricula. For those of us who work in writing programs, these capacious outcomes might be a starting point for initiating multimodal curricular transformation.

Analysis

The frequencies in the overall corpus (outlined in table 1) reveal an orientation to composition that overwhelmingly values alphabetic writing. This is evidenced by the popularity of outcomes coded as critical thinking, reading, and writing and knowledge of conventions, which prescribe alphabetic writing as the medium through which students demonstrate learning.

Table 1. Survey Totals[2]

Outcome	Number of Outcomes	Average per Statement
Rhetorical Knowledge	87	3.5
Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing	134	5.4
Processes	99	3.9
Knowledge of Conventions	97	3.8
Multimodality	25	1.0

Here are two examples from these categories:

- **Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing.** Analyze and critique sources in their writing (respondent 22)
- **Knowledge of Conventions.** Produce written work that displays adherence to the conventions of academic writing, including control

147

of grammar, spelling, word usage, syntax, and punctuation (respondent 47)

These prescriptive outcomes accounted for just over half of the total corpus, and from these examples, it should be clear that across statements and the following clusters, the definition of composition constructed by programmatic outcomes and delivered to students is still closely connected to the logic of alphabetic writing and textual epistemologies. One cause of this environment could be the value placed on "close reading," which N. Katherine Hayles argues has enjoyed "a preeminent role as the essence of disciplinary identity" (58). The critical consumption and production of print/alphabetic texts is connected with the long history of English studies from which rhetoric and composition emerged, a history, these outcomes reveal, from which composition has difficulty distancing itself. Such an orientation leaves little room for multimodality, which is necessarily capacious, in the curriculum. Indeed, as I will explore below, there is a negative correlation between multimodal outcomes and those coded as knowledge of conventions and critical thinking, reading, and writing in particular. However, the data also display a positive correlation between the presence of outcomes coded as multimodality and those coded as rhetorical knowledge. I contend that this is because rhetorical knowledge does not prescribe the media through which students achieve and demonstrate learning. Indeed, focusing on the capaciousness of rhetoric rather than an alphabetic writing constitutes a different *orientation to* and a *definition of* composition, one that is located in outcomes statements. In the following paragraphs, I will explore these positive and negative correlations among differently coded outcomes in greater detail.

Multimodality as Minor Revision

Seven programs placed themselves in the category of multimodality as minor revision, yielding 164 outcomes. As table 2 illustrates, these statements predominately emphasized critical thinking, reading, and writing: it averaged a higher frequency in this category than in the overall total. Interestingly and correspondingly, multimodality averaged a lower frequency in this category than in the overall corpus totals. This demonstrates negative correlation between that category and multimodality. The majority of outcomes contained under critical thinking, reading, and writing focus on the consumption of and interaction with alphabetic texts—they require students to work with writing and writing only. To illustrate, the following are some examples of those outcomes:

- Develop strategies to understand scholarly source*s* (respondent 6).
- Students will develop their understanding of writing's relationship to academic inquiry (respondent 16).
- Increase abilities to closely and critically read a variety of nonfiction texts, including (but not limited to) argumentative texts, their own writing, and their peers' writing in order to identify rhetorical strategies that they can apply to their writing abilities to create texts that respond to varied rhetorical situations in a range of written genres, to include (but not limited to) US academic argument and research-supported texts (respondent 27).

Table 2. Multimodality as Minor Revision

Outcome	Number of Outcomes	Average per Statement
Rhetorical Knowledge	28	4.0
Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing	56	8.0
Processes	42	6.0
Knowledge of Conventions	33	4.7
Multimodality	5	0.7

Though these are just a few of the fifty-six outcomes categorized as critical thinking, reading, and writing outcomes, they reveal a trend: these kinds of outcomes require that students use alphabetic writing: to learn, to analyze, to synthesize, to research. While the skills that they cultivate differ, the constant is alphabetic, academic writing. There are two issues here. First, these outcomes prescribe the media in which/with which students work. A multimodal composition curriculum, as it has been conceived in our scholarship, only requires that students with multiple modes to achieve their purposes. Indeed, the goal of such a curriculum has been called "rhetorical dexterity," or the ability to cross modes, media, purposes, audiences, and contexts using rhetorical knowledge (Graban, Charlton, and Charlton). Prescribing these choices for students runs counter to this objective. Second, the negative correlation between these critical thinking, reading, and writing and multimodal outcomes suggests that this prescription is what causes there to be little room for multimodality in the curricula of programs dominated by these outcomes. When we prescribe the alphabetic, we preclude the multimodal. In the following subsection, I will explore in greater detail outcomes related to knowledge of conventions and how those too prescribe materials for students and leave little space for multimodality.

149

Multimodality as Substantial Revision

Another seven programs placed themselves in the category of multimodality as substantial revision. Table 3 shows that although the specific frequencies are different, this cluster follows a similar pattern to the previous.

Table 3. Multimodality as Substantial Revision

Outcome	Number of Outcomes	Average per Statement
Rhetorical Knowledge	25	3.5
Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing	35	5.0
Processes	26	3.7
Knowledge of Conventions	34	4.8
Multimodality	3	0.4

Multimodality occurs infrequently, and the most popular category is critical thinking, reading, and writing. However, these programs are also more focused on knowledge of conventions, and multimodality averages an even lower frequency than the previous category. I argue that this is because knowledge of conventions focuses on generating "correct" alphabetic writing which leaves even less space for a multimodal composition curriculum. For example, here is a selection of some of the outcomes I categorized as pertaining to knowledge of conventions in this data cluster:

- Write an essay that is unified around a main claim, proceeds in a logical way, and consists of cohesive paragraphs that separate and connect ideas effectively (respondent 47).
- Produce written work that displays adherence to the conventions of academic writing, including control of grammar, spelling, word usage, syntax, and punctuation; appropriate tone, style, diction, and register (respondent 47).
- Copy-edit at every level (sentence, paragraph, essay) by considering conventional usage alongside your purpose (respondent 28).
- Present sentence structure, tone, voice, and vocabulary appropriate for academic writing (sentence structure/syntax; word choice/vocabulary) (respondent 17).

From these outcomes and the thirty-one others like them, it is clear that the emphasis on conventions is an emphasis on a particular kind of alphabetic writing. Outcomes like this are prescriptive: they prescribe that students

write essays; they prescribe academic writing; they prescribe linear logics. To be sure, such things are important for learning academic, alphabetic writing. That is, however, only one way of learning, one way of making and sharing meaning. Thus, these outcomes leave little space for multimodal composition, which does not prescribe the media, materials, and technologies with which students learn.

Multimodality Already Included

Respondents that claimed their programs already included multimodality included more outcomes coded as rhetorical knowledge than in the previous two data clusters. In other words, there is a positive correlation between the presence of outcomes coded as multimodality and outcomes coded as rhetorical knowledge.

Table 4. Multimodality Already Included

Outcome	Number of Outcomes	Average per Statement
Rhetorical Knowledge	30	3.3
Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing	38	4.2
Processes	27	3.0
Knowledge of Conventions	25	2.8
Multimodality	15	1.6

These programs give much more attention to rhetoric, extending the available means with which students can make and share meaning and knowledge, and thereby making space for multimodality. There were fifteen multimodal outcomes. Some of those outcomes include:

- Adapt their [i.e., students'] writing for multiple genres, styles, and technologies in ways that reflect different rhetorical situations (respondent 25).
- Employ multiple modes of representation rhetorically in their own composing (respondent 22).
- Understand the possibilities of digital media/technologies for composing and publishing texts (respondent 22).
- Use this knowledge to design texts appropriate to the rhetorical situation and genre choice (respondent 18).

These multimodal outcomes emerge out of these program's attention and commitment to rhetoric. In these outcomes, students must be able to

understand the varying rhetorical potentials of different tools, technologies, media, and environments. By using that understanding, students are able to demonstrate an effective rhetorical performance. In this brief selection, we see the interplay of rhetoric and multimodality, and we see an interplay between knowledge and performance. To me, this suggests that rhetorical knowledge, more than just being positively correlated with multimodality in this data set, invites and perhaps requires multimodality in a way that other outcomes do not.

The remaining four categories of outcomes in this data cluster also reveal that the definition of and orientation to the work of composition at these programs is different. Rhetorical knowledge appeared 30 times in this cluster, making it the second most frequent, unlike in the previous two clusters and the overall corpus totals. The most frequent kind of outcome within these statements is still critical thinking, reading, and writing, which appeared thirty-nine times. As I described earlier, these outcomes mostly include using alphabetic writing to learn, reading academic sources critically, and synthesizing academic research. They are outcomes that prescribe the mode in which students work, outcomes that move students inevitably in the direction of alphabetic writing. Additionally, in this cluster, knowledge of conventions only appears twenty-five times. This is particularly significant, because this places it behind both processes (27) and rhetorical knowledge (30)—the only cluster in which this occurs. To compare, for those programs who indicated that multimodality would constitute a substantial transformation to the curriculum, there were an average of 4.8 outcomes connected to knowledge of conventions per statement placing it just behind critical thinking, which averaged 5.0 outcomes per statement (see table 3). These frequencies reveal differing definitions composition: in the substantial revision category, composition means writing and writing only; in the other (multimodality as already included), composition means a rhetorically informed process of making and sharing meaning. The two are not the same.

The frequencies in tables 2–4 yield insights for WPAs who want to incorporate multimodal composition in their programs. These data are clear: overall multimodality is still peripheral to the outcomes, the values, and the curricula of writing programs. I argue that it continues to be peripheral because most of these outcomes require that students work with alphabetic writing rather than with rhetorical concepts and practices that do not prescribe the materials with which students create. Multimodality occurred/occurs considerably less frequently in programs that emphasized critical thinking, reading, and writing and knowledge of conventions. In the minor revision cluster, for example, critical thinking, reading, and

writing outcomes appeared twice as frequently as rhetorical knowledge and over eleven times more frequently than multimodality (see tables 2 and 3). In contrast, rhetorical knowledge is less prescriptive. It invites students not only to understand the different rhetorical capacities of different media, technologies, and contexts but also to perform within those. The outcomes for this particular domain ask students to "focus on a purpose" or to "respond to the needs of different audiences"; they do not prescribe who that audience or what that purpose should be. This is fundamentally at odds with a category like knowledge of conventions (again, as it has been defined here), which is tied to a specific set of materials. In programs where multimodality is already included, rhetorical knowledge is second only to critical thinking, reading, and writing. Rhetoric, these data reveal, makes space for multimodality, because it is an altogether different understanding of composition, one that is not predicated on alphabetic text.[3] If we are to include multimodality as a part of composition curricula, then outcomes with a capacious understanding of rhetoric might be one in a series of considerations within that process, a starting point in the conversation. In the following section, I turn to the twenty-five outcomes from this corpus coded as multimodality, examining what kinds of outcomes value multimodality and outlining the different versions of multimodal curricula at work in these statements.

Multimodal Outcomes

Not all multimodal outcomes accomplish the same goals. According to the data I discuss in this section, there is little consistency in the definition of multimodality delivered to students. In these outcomes, there are four versions of multimodal composition curricula:

1. an undertheorized version that adds modes on top of or alongside writing;

2. a version of multimodality defined as utilizing digital tools without considering the limitations and affordances of those tools;

3. a kind of multimodality that is conflated with the visual; and

4. multimodality as an extension and outgrowth of rhetoric, the most robust understanding.

The curriculum associated with the latter allows students to make rhetorical choices without prescribing the materials with which students can compose. I argue these outcomes make space for a multimodal curriculum informed by the scholarship that I reviewed at the beginning of this article.

First, some multimodal outcomes only work to reinforce the privileged position of alphabetic writing within the academy—these undertheorize multimodal composing as the simple addition of extra modes. For example, one of the respondents' outcomes could technically be coded as multimodal because it included oral communication, which is a mode beyond alphabetic writing. However, this outcome and this program elide the importance of rhetoric in multimodal composing. The outcome reads: "learn oral communication skills for effective participation in discussions as well as for formal presentations" (respondent 34). Oral/aural communication here is not treated as something that needs to be theorized with rhetoric, but as a mere vehicle of communication. Such an outcome prepares students to contribute to in-class discussion and to make formal presentations but does not contribute to their knowledge as rhetoricians. Different modes have different limitations and affordances, different rhetorical possibilities (Jewitt; Kress, "Gains and Losses"). Simply adding an additional mode to writing is not sufficient to convey that knowledge to students.

The second way in which these outcomes statements define multimodality is as technological or digital literacy, but in that literacy, students merely *use* digital tools. The second iteration of the *WPA OS* did something similar to this—emphasizing the importance of digital technologies but only in relationship to the process(es) of alphabetic writing (Callaway). In this approach to multimodal composing, the ability to compose with digital technologies is constructed as a skill that students learn instead of a rhetorical choice informed by a knowledge of the limitations and affordances of those tools. For example, respondent 30's outcome states that students will "use computer technology throughout the research writing process." Use is the operative term here. In this version of multimodality, students do not consider the different rhetorical affordances of the technology, but merely utilize that technology to compose print texts. The use of the technology here does not inform or contextualize the process of composing. Students use these tools for research or to communicate, but not to consider the ways in which technologies have rhetorical impacts. Digital literacy is important, perhaps vital, in the current moment, but that literacy must be informed by rhetoric if it is to deliver to students what we know and believe about multimodality (see Selber, for example).

The third way in which these outcomes statements define multimodality is at the intersection of the visual and the verbal, meaning that students critically and rhetorically combine these two modes in the process of making and sharing meaning. In so doing, these outcomes prescribe the kinds of texts that students compose, constraining their rhetorical possibilities, much like outcomes related to knowledge of conventions. While these out-

comes do have students working at the intersection of multiple modes, it is still not the robust rhetorical understanding for which multimodal theory has advocated. The outcomes at respondent 13's program follow this definition. Those outcomes read that students will be able to "demonstrate an understanding of the basic elements of visual rhetoric" and "be able to read and critique visual designs and formats." At the beginning of this article, I cited the Anderson et al. survey from 2006, which reported that "multimodal composition curriculum" most often means "visual rhetoric." These outcomes do the same thing. Additionally, this particular definition and these particular outcomes always subsume the visual to the alphabetic. To illustrate, respondent 13's other two outcomes that pertain to multimodality state that students should "know how to use commonplace software to create visuals that effectively make or support arguments," and "distinguish between information that is best communicated in visual format and information best communicated in text and make transitions and connections between visual and textual arguments." Both of these outcomes assume that the arguments precede the visuals, as if rhetorical invention were not possible in those spaces. This is quite a limited approach to multimodality. Jody Shipka argues that allowing students to make their own choices about the modes, media, and genres in which they compose assists them in becoming better problem-solvers, critical thinkers, and therefore composers. By prescribing the modes in which students can compose, these outcomes prevent them from developing the thinking and composing valued by a multimodal composition curriculum.

A fourth category of multimodal outcomes does offer a more robustly theorized understanding of multimodality. These outcomes define multimodality as the manifestation of rhetorical knowledge and performance. For example, these have students "understand the differences in the rhetorical strategies afforded by both print and electronic composing processes and texts" (respondent 43), in which students know that there are different logics, affordances, and limitations associated with different media, and "employ multiple modes of representation rhetorically in their own composing" (respondent 22), in which students are expected to put that understanding into practice. Such outcomes make the implicit argument that multimodality is an extension of rhetoric engaging both a knowledge of how multiple modes work and a practice of utilizing them. At respondent 1's program, the relationship between knowledge and performance is articulated in one outcome, which reads, "you will have composed using digital technologies, gaining awareness of the possibilities and constraints of electronic environments." Through the process of using digital composing technologies, students will expand their rhetorical knowledge. The

155

program includes another outcome that echoes this as well: "you will have adapted your writing to distinct rhetorical contexts drawing attention to the way composition transforms *across contexts and forms*" (emphasis added). Knowledge and performance, theory and practice, intersect in these outcomes. Thus, they embody the nuances of multimodal theory and the version of composition that scholarship argues should be the content and focus of our programs. Additionally, as I illustrated in the previous section, rhetoric- and multimodality-focused outcomes do not prescribe the kinds of texts students create or the modes with which they compose. In respondent 25's outcomes statement, the multimodal outcome reads that students will be able to "adapt their writing for multiple genres, styles, and technologies in ways that reflect different rhetorical situations." Others like this ask students to consider "design and/or medium in accordance with the rhetorical situation" (respondent 42), and "use a variety of digital and multimedia sources critically" (respondent 5). These outcomes invite students to develop rhetorical knowledge that they then enact in their composing processes without prescribing the materials with which they compose. Thus, these outcomes allow students to develop more rhetorically informed practices, allowing them to become more flexible, adroit composers in all contexts.

These four different ways of conceiving of multimodality—as the mere inclusion of another mode of communication, as technological/digital literacy, as prescribed visual-verbal rhetoric, or as a (rhetorical) knowledge of and (rhetorical) performance within multiple modes—paint a portrait of where these composition programs are in terms of multimodality. These outcomes do the best work when they draw on principles of rhetoric and define the work of composition as making and sharing meaning with any and all available materials. Those who direct or work with/in writing programs will find this information both illuminating and useful.

Looking Ahead

I noted at the beginning of this article that there remains a disconnect between what scholarship says our composition programs should do and the reality of what actually takes place in those programs. I have attempted to outline how outcomes might assist in remedying this disconnect by examining values manifested by outcomes and how those values can affect the implementation of multimodal composition curricula. Outcomes, of course, cannot achieve multimodal curricular transformation alone. As Jason Palmeri notes, that process involves programmatic revisions that negotiate multiple stakeholders, documents, technologies, and spaces. Such work is difficult. Change, especially within the academy, is always difficult.

However, it is absolutely necessary if composition programs are to remain relevant and viable in the current moment and if we wish to expand our students' composing practices, making them more rhetorically adroit. The findings and insights I present here pose problems and possibilities for those who direct composition programs. First, if our outcomes offer insights into what our programs value, these outcomes suggest that we do not yet value multimodality in the way our published scholarship suggests we should or perhaps in the way that the sheer volume of scholarship on multimodality suggests we already do. This is because we continue to privilege a way of making and sharing meaning tied to print, to alphabetic writing. Programs that want to integrate multimodality into their curricula might use these findings to begin considering the ways in which their current outcomes (de) value certain curricular content. WPAs might engage these conversations in professional development meetings, instructional staff retreats, or during instructor training. Even if those programs do not implement multimodal composition curricula, the conversations about values can be helpful. Second, not all "multimodal" outcomes accomplish the same things. As I have illustrated here, multimodal outcomes achieve what our research suggests they should when those outcomes invite students both to understand the potentialities and drawbacks of different modes and to enact multimodal rhetorical performances using that knowledge. Through this process, they develop the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to compose in and across multiple contexts. Rhetoric is what is necessary here. This demonstrates to me that we do not need a category of outcomes specifically dedicated to multimodality. Rather, we need more outcomes dedicated to cultivating in students a capacious understanding of rhetoric, because those are the outcomes that make space for multimodal composition curricula. WPAs could use this knowledge to return to and re-evaluate their own programs, offering workshops about rhetoric and rhetorical concepts to help instructors strengthen their proficiency with the concept as a way to make space for multimodality. These efforts will provide those of us who work in composition programs a way forward at the intersection of national documents, disciplinary practices, and local values, ensuring that the definition of, orientation to, and vision for composition that we present to students is truly indicative of what we know about this work.

Notes

1. In *Remixing Composition*, Jason Palmeri works to recover moments in the history of composition when multimodal pedagogies and curricula existed. In so doing, he shows that "compositionists have a rich multimodal heritage that we can build upon in order to reimagine contemporary practices" (149). While this

may be the case, I would argue that that heritage does not inform most composition programs.

2. Four programs selected "Not Sure." The totals from those coded statements are included in table 1, even if they are not addressed individually in this article.

3. *WPA OS* 3.0 does offer a more capacious definition, as "critical thinking, reading, and composing," in which one of the outcomes reads "use composing and reading for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical contexts" ("WPA Outcomes"). Here, the outcome does not prescribe writing as the vehicle in/through which inquiry and learning occur. However, the *WPA OS* is slow to have effect on local programs (Isaacs and Knight). It is unlikely that this revision could have had the intended influence on curriculum at the time of this data collection. Thus, while these outcomes do good work emphasizing the importance of research and writing to learn, they continue to perpetuate the privileged position of print in the academy and leave little space to value multimodality.

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