the ongoing activities of teachers and students, "activity is a mere unavoidable means to something else; it is not significant or important on its own account" ("Chapter 8: Aims in Education" *Democracy*). This separation of ends and means, according to Dewey, leads to fixity and rigidity in the formulation of the ends; diversion of attention away from the existing conditions for teaching and learning; narrow fixation on singular results rather than openness to emergent consequences (some of which might turn out to be more significant for the learner than the specified, anticipated results); and imposition on students and sometimes on teachers as well (*Democracy*).

My experience as a writing program administrator (WPA) and an assessment consultant for several English departments and writing programs suggests that OA harbors each of the tendencies Dewey mentions. In many programs, outcomes become isolated, over time, from the ongoing activities of teachers and students. Whether administrators and faculty begin with great enthusiasm or great skepticism (or, most likely, a mix), outcomes, once expressed, often stay in place for years, even as programs change. Teachers may dutifully reproduce those outcomes on a syllabus or assignment, and students may dutifully provide evidence that they've achieved them in their work products, but rarely do the outcomes become a meaningful and intimate part of teachers' and students' experiences. In these programs, outcomes—whether the hard-won result of intense consensus building or an administrative hand-down—tend to become enshrined in the bureaucratic machinery. Though some proponents of OA are careful to suggest that outcomes be revisited and perhaps revised regularly, many institutions and programs—whether out of ennui, conflict aversion, or a less than fully developed assessment process—ignore this recommendation. Rather, outcomes statements take on an aura of finality, of achieved and unimpeachable institutional authority. Thus, the outcomes on the books remain the central focus of assessment and documentation efforts, with little attention paid either to the always-evolving context in which those aims are pursued (shifts in student demographics, staffing policies, institutional resources, and the like: what OA enthusiasts sometimes derogatorily identify as "inputs") or to unforeseen and unexpected results of unfolding educational experiences.[4] Under these conditions, teachers and students merely *receive* the outcomes; they experience them as imposed, whether they were formulated by a distant regulatory body, a professional group, or some earlier incarnation of the local faculty.

There are, of course, institutions in which OA does not look like this—where, for instance, outcomes are drawn from and become an important component of the shared experiences of teachers and students and are continually revisited and revised. Some readers, I'm certain, have had such positive experiences with outcomes. But again, mine is not an essentialist argument; I'm not claiming that outcomes, owing to some inherent property, always and only have the negative consequences I describe. I do suggest, however, that where outcomes are having positive effects on teaching

and learning, assessment participants are taking care to counter consequences toward which outcomes *tend*. That's because OA operates within institutional and ideological logics that produce these tendencies. Measuring, documenting, and reporting outcomes—pegged to bureaucratically defined units (courses, programs, courses of study)—serves prevailing academic management priorities such as accreditation reporting and other forms of public accountability, strategic planning, and the identification of "programs of excellence." As Shari Stenberg and Darby Arant Whealy suggest, outcomes function within an "efficiency model" that privileges measurement for institutional purposes, often at the expense of inquiry for pedagogical purposes (684). Moreover, the insistence among proponents of OA that we shift our attention from "inputs" to "outputs" clearly serves the interests of academic management.[5]

Indeed, OA greases the wheels of technical rationality in the "managed university" (on the latter term, see Martin; Rhoades; or, closer to our disciplinary home, see Bousquet; Chaput; Downing, Hurlbert, and Mathieu; Gallagher; Nelson; Strickland). It may begin at the end—with the specification of hoped-for results—but it is resolutely linear and teleological. Certain about its ends, it provides instrumentation (outcomes statements, rubrics, and the like) to measure the distance between where students are (Point A) and where we want them to be (Point B). Diverting attention from contextual variables—students' preparation, faculty working conditions, available resources, and so on—it encourages single-minded focus on certain expected results. As such, it is highly amenable to simple-form documentation and reporting, providing nice, clean numbers for university administrators' spreadsheets.

Teachers, program administrators, and department chairs thus become "instrumental problem-solvers" (Schön)—in a word, technicians. Technicians deploy their technical knowledge to solve problems that hinder smooth operations. Their job is to reduce uncertainty and avoid unforeseen consequences. In this way, technical rationality doesn't so much divert our attention from consequences other than our articulated outcomes, as Dewey worried, as it encourages us to suppress those consequences. In outcomes assessment of student writing, for instance, we norm ourselves to read student writing "against" (read: through) the outcomes. In so doing, we close our reading selves off from what is surprising or excessive or eccentric about the writing. In our narrow focus on whether outcomes have been met, we also suppress our sense of the singularity and potentiality (to borrow key terms from Janis Haswell and Richard Haswell) of the writer or the writing. Our reading starts not with the student's text, but with the outcome, or the rubric, which conditions what we are able (and unable) to see in the text. And that is the point: in order for a scoring session to run smoothly, unpredictability—surprising writings, rogue readings—must be minimized or removed. Potentiality is a problem for OA, not only because it cannot be measured—as much of what we most care about in writing cannot be measured—but also because it disrupts OA's linear, delineable telos. After

all, potentiality "points to the future, but it exists now" (Haswell and Haswell 41). Potentiality reminds us that it is no use evaluating the acorn as an oak, nor as not an oak; it is both and neither, at once.[6]

One way to bring potentiality back into focus is to shift our thinking from outcomes to consequences. This is not, I admit, an easy task; although assessment theorists have developed a theoretical model of validity in which the consequences of an assessment are a (indeed, *the*) central consideration (see Huot; Cronbach), we are not accustomed to thinking or talking about educational aims in these terms. If we did think and talk this way, for one thing, we would need to be attentive both to the intended and unintended results of our interactions with students. This is an important difference between outcomes and consequences: in OA, there is no such thing as an unintended outcome—but in programs and classrooms, unintended consequences are commonplace.

Consequences can be anticipated and hoped for, of course; thinking assessment in terms of consequences does not require us to eschew the setting of educational aims altogether. Rather, the issue, as Stenberg and Whealy contend, is how educational aims function:

> As John Dewey argues, if ends or aims function as a final goal, a point at which activity and questions cease, they hinder both reflection and action. But if ends or outcomes are conceived not as fixed, but as ends-in-view, then these goals or aims function as "redirecting pivots in action"; they are a point at which to stop and reflect, but not to cease activity (72). While an outcome as an end-in-view serves as a guide or stimulus for present activity, it also leaves open the possibility for new goals and objectives to ensue. It allows that there are moments of learning that will exceed outcomes, which are as valuable as the end itself. (684)

My suggestion here is that educational aims we dub "outcomes" are unlikely to function as ends-in-view, given the appropriation of that term by the ideology of technical rationality and the efficiency model of institutional management. As we have seen, outcomes are conceived within OA as fixed at the end of an educational experience—they issue (it is hoped) from it at its conclusion. By contrast, consequences, as ends-in-view, are always emergent within educational experiences; they cannot be fixed beyond or outside those experiences. Consider, for instance, how consequences function in Dewey's notion of Pragmatic inquiry. Such inquiry, according to Dewey, is "directed by understanding of conditions and their consequences" because "standards and tests of validity are found in the consequences of overt activity, not in what is fixed prior to it and independently of it" (*Quest* 66, 59). For Dewey, then, consequences are not (or not only) subsequent to the activity, but (also) part of it; otherwise, the activity could not be "directed" by understanding of them. Attention to consequences as they unfold is part of—indeed, is constitutive of—the Pragmatic method.