

Measuring the Impact on the Volunteer

By Virgil Peterson

Citing the work of an array of theorists, a service-learning educator reviews approaches to assessing students' growth.

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How can we measure impact on the volunteer? The question is clearly one of growing importance because of the expanding efforts to integrate service and learning, both in secondary and university education, throughout the world.

What follows is a listing of some approaches to the questions, some sources of information which might be

useful to those who face the problem or who simply are interested in recent thinking in America on the subject, and some analysis which should be useful in deciding which kind of evaluation or measurement is most appropriate to particular situations.

The American organization which has devoted the most thought and energy to resolving the measurement problem is the Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL). CAEL consists of a cooperating group of colleges and universities working closely with Educational Testing Service, which is based in Princeton. For the past four years they have energetically gathered information about measurement schemes, sur-

veyed existing programs which mix work (not exclusively service) and learning, and published their findings in a series of working papers available at the Educational Testing Service. Their first book, *Experiential Learning* (Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1976), summarizes their work to date.

Their thinking has led their president, Morris Keeton, to the conclusion

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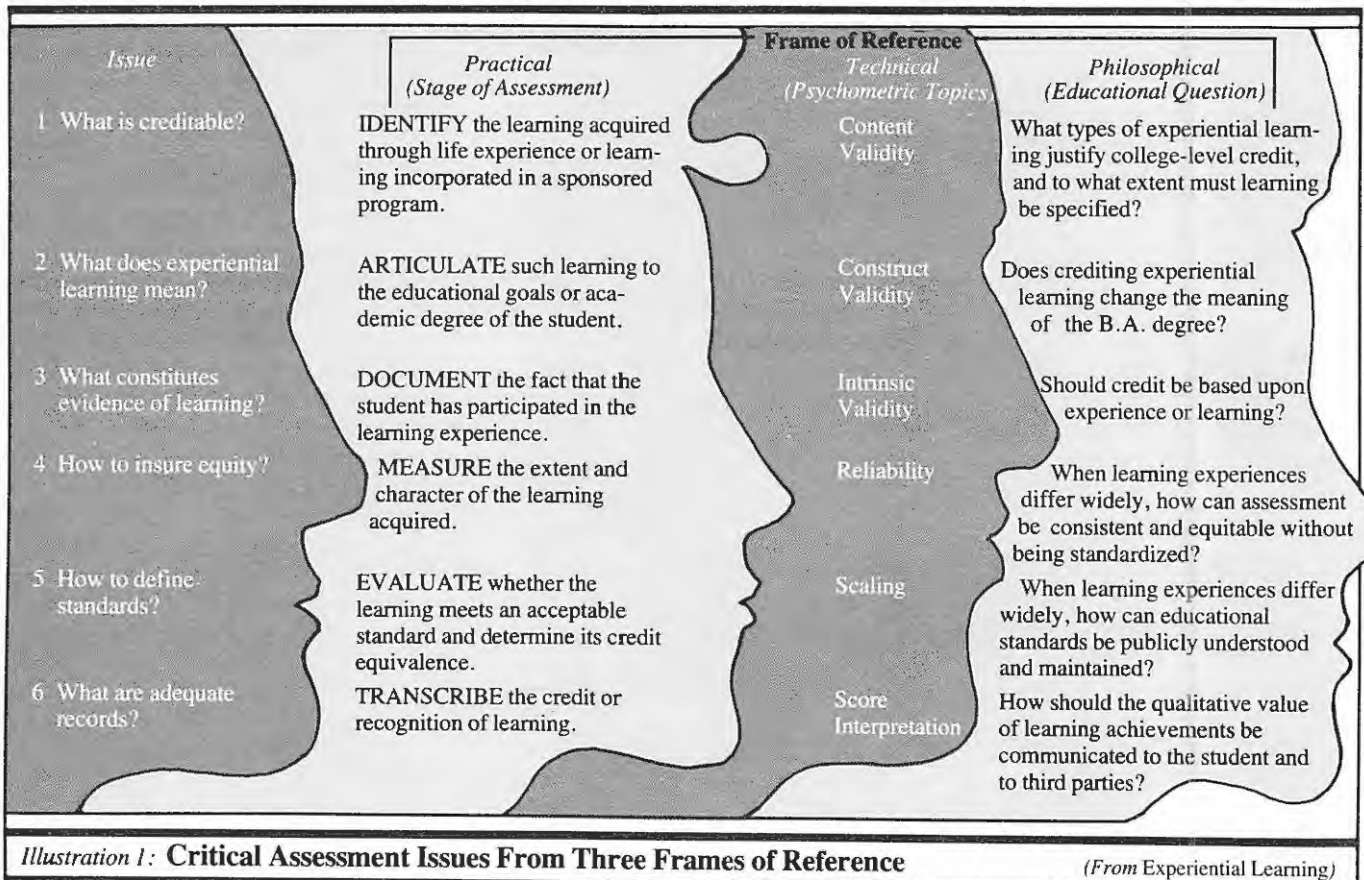


Illustration 1: Critical Assessment Issues From Three Frames of Reference

(From *Experiential Learning*)

that a new definition of education is needed. In the past, he believes, we have thought of education largely as an accumulation of knowledge. Now we must conceive of education as "the transformation of experience into ever more maturing insights and the development of self into an ever more responsive and responsible participant in a mutually fulfilling society."

A table in *Experiential Learning* (see Illustration 1) graphically represents the key issues which derive from Keeton's new definition of education.

Several measurement techniques are recommended in *Experiential Learning*: product assessment, performance tests, simulations, essay examinations, and interviews.

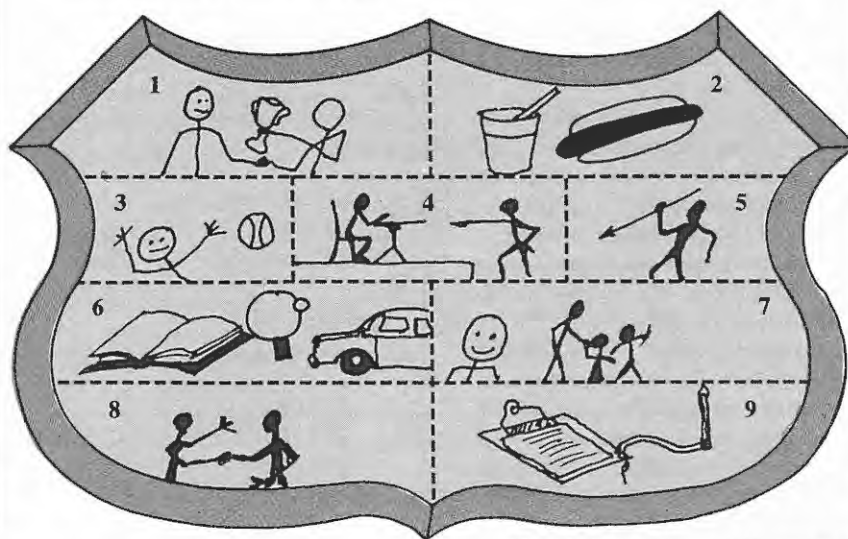
Product assessment consists of an expert examining something the volunteer has done. If, for instance, a volunteer has been working in the field of literacy, the expert might examine a person trained by the volunteer. *Performance tests* consist of observing what the volunteer does with an assigned problem. *Simulations* are similar except in that the problem is not real, and they have the advantage of permitting the observer to see how the student would react to a situation which is not immediately available. They can also be used to assess complex qualities such as analytical thinking, setting goals, making decisions, and planning. The last two techniques, *examination* and *interviews*, need no elaboration.

The results of the evaluation would, in this CAEL scheme, be part of a portfolio, a folder where the volunteer accumulates a record of his experiences. This record might be used to document a request from a student volunteer for academic credit or an application for a job. CAEL recommends that the portfolio contain the following sections, but it might be adapted to the needs of any institution or educational system:

- a resumé listing the student's education, employment, community or volunteer experience and other pertinent data; a narrative that is usually biographical in tone and contains the student's implicit or explicit claim to learning; a statement requesting credit in a specific subject area or recognition of one of several competencies; and a set of documents, such as letters of verification and job descriptions, that provide

Complete each of the following instructions by drawing a picture, design or symbol in the appropriate area on your coat of arms. The art work should be simple. The important thing is that you know what each symbol expresses. All drawings for a given area are discussed before proceeding to the next area.

1. Identify the personal accomplishment that you are proudest of in your volunteer assignment.
2. Identify your greatest failure in your assignment.
3. Identify your happiest moment in your assignment.
4. Identify your saddest moment in your assignment.
5. Identify your angriest moment in your assignment.
6. Identify three opportunities that your assignment offers to you and that you consider important.
7. Identify three ways that your assignment is important to others.
8. What would you change about yourself to make your volunteer experience more valuable to you?
9. What would you change about your assignment that would make the experience more valuable to you and/or others?



(From Synergist, Winter 1977; reprint 90)

Illustration 2: Coat of Arms Exercise

evidence that the experience emphasized by the student in the narrative did indeed take place.

Educational Debriefing. One of the peculiarities of a work or service assignment is that the learning is embedded in the total experience rather than being labeled "this is what you learned" as it is in an academic course. If the student is to obtain the maximum educational benefit, he must somehow realize what he has learned.

To help in his realization, some groups have been experimenting with *educational debriefing*, a concept originated by Roger Carstensen, president of Christian College of Georgia, Athens. Debriefing is a procedure which follows a work or service assignment. In that procedure, the volunteer or student participates in a pro-

cess designed to help him express and synthesize what he has learned and to organize the data which should be preserved about the experience.

Educational debriefing can take a number of different forms. It can be as informal as a chat with a knowledgeable mentor or as formal as the process developed at Berea (Kentucky) College. Sometimes it happens accidentally as it did when a friend of mine was involved in a research project that involved interviewing groups of young volunteers. Occasionally during the interviews, the attitude of the interviewee would suddenly shift as insights into the experience deepened. In one case, a young man who had become despondent about his volunteering and who had been on the verge of discontinuing, realized how much he had been learning and perceived new ways

that he could function in his volunteer role. The questions of the interviewer served the catalytic function of an effective debriefing session.

As developed at Berea College (see "Educational Debriefing: A Learning Tool," by William A. Laramée, *Synergist*, Volume 5, Number 3, Winter 1977; reprint 90), debriefing consists of three sessions held about a week apart at or near the end of the student's work experience. A debriefer conducts two small-group (six to 10 students) sessions and one final interview of about half an hour with each of the students. Originally the purpose of the group meetings was expediency—the debriefer saved time by meeting with groups rather than individuals. It soon became clear, however, that the group method was better: The students also learned from each other.

In the first session, most of the time is spent in what is known as the "Coat of Arms" exercise (see Illustration 2). Each student draws his own coat of arms by filling in the (nine) spaces with something representing an aspect of his work. Then each explains his coat of arms to the others.

The second session centers around examining the learning that has occurred in the following areas: 1) responsibility, knowledge, and skill development; 2) awareness and creativity; 3) understanding and commitment; and 4) leadership and autonomy. The students also complete a self-evaluation of certain attitudes towards their work such as initiative, use of time, concern for quality (see Illustrations 3 and 4).

The third session consists of an interview in which the purpose is to clarify the student's learning and to relate the material developed during the first two sessions to the student's portfolio.

Educational debriefing represents a radical departure from conventional means of measuring, but it has distinct advantages. First and most important, the process is a learning experience. The individual not only learns through articulating personal experiences, but learns from hearing the experiences of others. Secondly, debriefers need not be experts in the field in which the student worked. In fact some would argue that it is better if the debriefer is naive about the work experience because the student is then forced to explain in simple, straightforward lan-

Responsibility, Knowledge and Skill Development

- Relate personal skill, talents, knowledge, interests, and limitations to volunteer situations.
- Relate current volunteer assignment to ongoing procedures necessary to agency functioning.
- Initiate activities to learn additional specific content skills and information appropriate to this assignment.
- Initiate activities to increase knowledge and develop new skills.

Awareness and Creativity

- Independently identify needs and problems in volunteer assignment.
- Demonstrate analytical approach in effectively meeting needs and solving problems.
- Explain basic needs and procedures to others.
- Suggest or demonstrate new procedures to increase effectiveness or efficiency.

Understanding and Commitment

- Relate personal skills, knowledge, values and goals to goals, policies, and other realities of the agency situation.
- Articulate and interpret observations, experiences, and understandings to others as appropriate.
- Demonstrate commitment to serving others.
- Plan and organize volunteer assignments for others.
- Make constructive suggestions to others.

Leadership and Autonomy

- Define or modify program goals.
- Identify and acquire existing resources necessary to goal achievement.
- Initiate and maintain activities necessary to goal achievement.
- Periodically appraise goal achievement progress, and modify goal materials and/or activities as necessary.
- Communicate personal value commitments and interpret them to co-workers.
- Communicate confidence in self-knowledge and value commitments.
- Accomplish the above in ways that are consistent with own welfare and welfare of others.
- Accomplish the above with minimal supervision.

(From *Synergist*, Winter 1977; reprint 90)

Mark with a + sign the five items which you consider *most learned* in your current assignment. Mark with a - sign the five items that you consider *least learned*. When everyone has finished, tabulate responses on black board or newsprint, identify and analyze patterns (if any), and discuss reasons for individual choices.

Illustration 3: Rank Order of Learning Objectives Exercise

guage. The only special quality necessary to a debriefer is the ability to create an atmosphere that encourages honest sharing.

Using the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. Another procedure for measuring experiential learning involves using the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, a publication developed by the U.S. Department of Labor. This *Dictionary* lists more than 35,000 jobs and classifies them in an interesting way. It assumes that any job to be done requires one or more of three families of skills. Those families

are: skill in the handling of data, such as would be required for a researcher or a teacher; skill in working with people, such as would be necessary to a receptionist or a psychiatrist; or skill in working with things, such as would be necessary to drive a truck, build a wall, or perform surgery on the brain. Illustration 5 gives a one-word description for levels of skill within each family. Classifying a job consists of giving three digits which indicate the level of skill needed in each of the categories; for instance, assembly line inspector, 6-8-4, which indicates the

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
 Little apparent interest in assigned tasks Eager to complete assigned tasks
 Comments:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
 Little communication beyond minimum required Communicate openly and effectively
 Comments:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
 Interested in just finishing the assignment or 'putting in time' Much concerned about quality of work
 Comments:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
 Frequent laziness and/or tardiness Use time efficiently
 Comments:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
 Resist supervision, uncooperative and unconcerned about others Willingly accept supervision, cooperative and concerned for others
 Comments:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
 Usually a follower Frequently initiate leadership activities
 Comments:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
 Do only what supervisor requires Eager to learn skills and knowledge
 Comments:

1. For each item, rate yourself on a scale of 1 through 9. Justify your ratings by briefly describing *what you would see if you were observing yourself* in your off-campus assignment. Consider numbers 1 and 9 to represent extremes, 5 as average, and other numbers to represent gradations of the items identified. Feel free to add other items that would help to describe your performance.

2. Describe different behaviors that you would prefer to see if you were observing yourself in your off-campus assignment.

3. How could you make these behaviors possible.

Illustration 4: Self-Evaluation of Performance Exercise

need for high level skill in working with things, and lower level skills in working with data and people. Although the technique is used to classify jobs it can also be used to categorize the effectiveness of workers.

To assist in measuring skill in working with people, CAEL commissioned a study, "The Learning and Assessment of Interpersonal Skills: Guidelines for Administrators and Faculty" (CAEL Working Paper, Number 4, Educational Testing Service, Princeton), which describes behavior representing each level of skill that can be

applied to the measurement of students' experiences.

Measuring personal growth. The approach of two groups of psychologists, who have been labeled humanistic and developmental, is based on the hypothesis that education is a preparation for life. Thus they see learning within the context of total human experience rather than as acquisition of knowledge or skills. These psychologists, though they differ in emphases, share common views on several matters. First, they believe that development involves the *whole* being, includ-

ing both thought and logic processes as well as emotional and aesthetic attributes. Second, they believe that growth and development occur as the result of a favorable relationship between an individual and the environment. In an article called "Voluntary Action and Experiential Education" (*Journal of Voluntary Action Research*, Volume 2, Number 4, Fall 1973), Richard Graham describes these growth-producing situations as "manageable encounters with novel responsibility." The challenge of novelty is there, but the challenge is manageable. Finally, these psychologists are optimists about humanity. They believe that all of us instinctively prefer levels of existence that involve us in a fulfilling way with our surroundings. In the words of Abraham Maslow in *Toward a Psychology of Being*, it is an "empirical fact" that "self-actualizing people are altruistic, dedicated, self-transcending, social, etc."

Maslow is best known for his *hierarchy of human needs*. Maslow believes that needs are hierarchical in the sense that we cannot fully realize our "human-ness" until we have satisfied an ascending order of requirements. At the low end of his scale are physiological needs—air, food, shelter, water, sleep, sex—while at the highest levels are such values as richness, self-sufficiency, beauty, meaningfulness, playfulness (see illustration 6).

A psychologist with similar views is Carl Rogers, who holds the radical view that most of what is learned in school is insignificant. Rogers, author of *On Becoming a Person* (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1961), believes that if educators wish to have an impact on students, they should attempt to do those things which cause a person to:

- Accept himself and his feelings more fully;
- Become more self-confident and self-directing;
- Become more the person he wants to be;
- Become more flexible, less rigid in his perceptions;
- Become more accepting of others;
- Become more open to the evidence, both to what is going on outside himself and to what is going on inside himself.

To *measure growth* according to the values which Maslow and Rogers represent is more of a challenge than to *test knowledge*. But some measures,

DATA	PEOPLE	THINGS
0 Synthesizing	0 Mentoring	0 Setting Up
1 Coordinating	1 Negotiating	1 Precision Working
2 Analyzing	2 Instructing	2 Operating—Controlling
3 Compiling	3 Supervising	3 Driving—Operating
4 Computing	4 Diverting	4 Manipulating
5 Copying	5 Persuading	5 Tending
6 Comparing	6 Speaking—Signaling	6 Feeding—Offbearing
7) No significant	7 Serving	7 Handling
8) relationship	8 No significant relationship	8 No significant relationship

Illustration 5: Occupational Codes *Source: U.S. Department of Labor*

such as those developed by the California Psychological Inventory (Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto) assess some of the values which Rogers and Maslow hold to be important. They include measures of self-assurance, self-acceptance, self-control, independence, and tolerance. If such tests are applied before and after a volunteer experience, they provide a measure of the impact of the experience, provided a control group is tested whose experiences are similar except for the volunteering.

In attempting to discover where student volunteers are on the Maslow scale, I have simply read what they have written in journals and field reports, and searched for statements that reflect Maslow's values. The student who wrote, for instance, that while working in a tutoring program "I got to know some beautiful kids and became more confident as a teacher and as a person" clearly experienced love and self-esteem, and this places him on Maslow's hierarchy.

The concerns of another of these psychologists are more precise than those of Rogers and Maslow. Lawrence Kohlberg has, for the past twenty years, been researching *moral development*. He has isolated six levels of moral development, and his research in the United Kingdom, Turkey, Taiwan, and Mexico suggests that these stages are universal. Further, they are sequential: To arrive at any stage it is necessary for a person to live through each of the previous stages. (Refer to "Stages of Moral Development as a Basis for Moral Education" in *Moral Education*, Toronto, 1971.)

Illustration 7 shows Kohlberg's stages, and an excellent discussion of the relationship between these stages and volunteer work can be found in Richard Graham's "*Voluntary Action and Experiential Education*."

Jane Loevinger concentrates her interest in ego development, which in *Measuring Ego Development* (Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1970) she de-

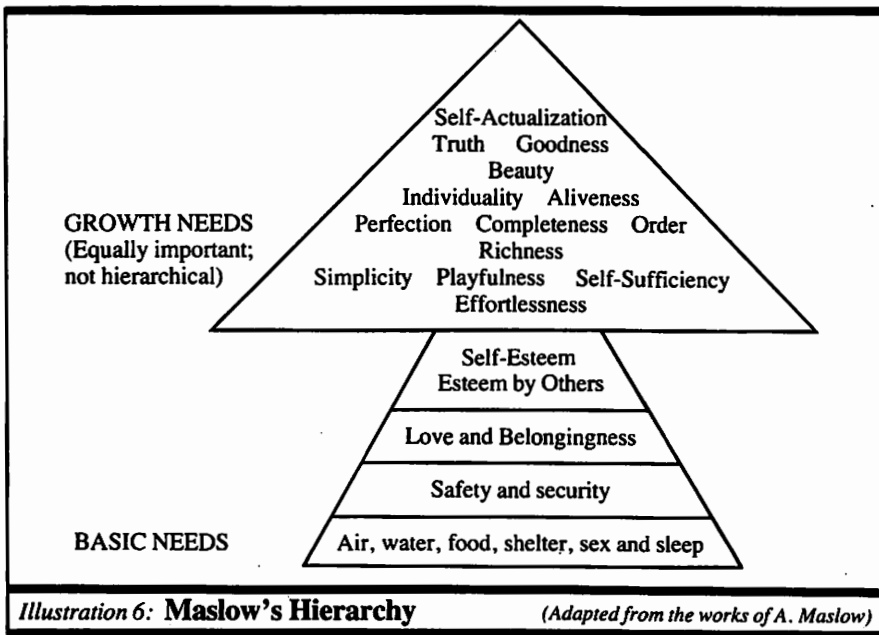
fines as "the unity of personality, individuality, the method of facing problems of life and the whole attitude toward life." For her, as for Kohlberg, human development consists of a sequence of stages (shown also in Illustration 7), each of which has certain qualities distinguishing it from the stages which precede and follow it and each of which must be experienced before going on to a subsequent one. As in travelling you must pass through the territory between to get from one place to another.

William Perry's *Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1970) is based on research done mainly with Harvard undergraduate students during the 1950s and 1960s. He also observed stages (see Illustration 7), but he makes no claim to their universality. His work is probably culture bound, but to the degree that other institutions share the academic culture of an American elitist institution, the work will apply.

Perry is able to delineate nine positions which fall into three general patterns of thought. The beginning college student generally sees the world in polarized terms: right or wrong; good or bad; black or white (positions 1, 2, and 3). During the middle positions, students come to recognize that life has more diversity and ambiguity in it than they had previously realized. They see more complexity in moral issues and more tentativeness in scientific conclusions. They tend to become relativistic on issues where they had previously been absolutist (positions 4, 5, and 6). In their final stages, they develop the capacity for personal commitment despite the relativism and the ambiguity of the world around them (positions 7, 8, and 9).

Perry himself has not written about the educational applications of his ideas or developed the means of measurement, but others have. Lee Kneflekamp, at the University of Maryland, College Park, has a procedure which can be administered quickly. She also has trained students to score it.

Both Kohlberg and Perry have developed means to measure development on their scales, but the procedures are complex and require special training to become a competent scorer. The Center for Moral Education at Harvard provides a scoring service.



	(Kohlberg)	(Perry)	(Loevinger)
Amoral	Egocentric	Basic duality	Stereotypy, conceptual confusion
Fearful – dependent	Obedience – punishment oriented	Multiplicity prelegitimate	
Opportunistic	Instrumental egoism and exchange	Multiplicity subordinate	
Conforming to persons	Good-boy, approval oriented	Multiplicity correlate or relativism subordinate	Conceptual simplicity, stereotypes and cliches
Conforming to rule	Authority, rule, and social order oriented	Relativism correlate, competing or diffuse	Conceptual complexity, idea of patterning
Principled autonomous	Social contracts, legalistic oriented	Commitment foreseen	Increased conceptual complexity, complex patterns, toleration for ambiguity, broad scope, objectivity.
	Moral principle orientation	Initial commitment, implications of commitments, developing commitments.	

Illustration 7: Stages of Ego, Moral, and Ethical Development

(From Experiential Learning)

Only a handful of individuals have been trained to score Loevinger's ego development. They could best be contacted by writing to her through her publisher.

Other schemes for measuring personal growth have been developed in other universities in the United States. Robert Sexton, University of Kentucky, Lexington, headed a study ("Exploring the Psycho-Political Development of Liberal Arts Interns," Educational Testing Service, Princeton, 1976) which explored the psychological and political development of students participating in internships. The study isolated seven dimensions of growth and measured them with interviews and tests. Among these dimensions were change from "the autonomous self to the social self; from the strict pursuit of technical expertise to the quest for a synthesis of competences; from belief in moral absolutism (or nihilism) to acceptance of moral complexity and the struggle to achieve synergy."

Some further considerations. The array of measurements above may seem confusing because it ignores a question which should come first: "What do you need to measure?" If you need to measure any of the values

related to the above, then the material may be useful to you. But if your concerns are other than those above, and they might well be, then what is needed is some very careful thinking about what is important to you, the students and volunteers you work with, or the system you work within—hopefully *all three*. Once you have determined the goals—what you need to measure—then you are ready to seek the means of measurement.

My final plea is that you measure only what is *important* to measure. This caution may seem paradoxical at the end of a discussion of measurement, but it is based on the belief that measurement is often abused. Too often it is used for negative rather than positive goals, to destroy rather than create, to impose categories and classifications which distort reality.

According to Bob Samples (*the Metaphoric Mind*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Reading, Massachusetts, 1976) measurement is already the greatest industry in the world. "Humans spend as much as half of our resources keeping records about other humans." Unless measurement serves a good and positive purpose, the resources it requires are better spent in other ways, for no mat-

ter what you choose to measure, something else is happening to the human being you are measuring. Perhaps the "else" is more important than what you choose to examine. Perhaps your measuring interferes with the realization of more important values. It is useful to remember that if astronomers had continued to look only at the light in the sky, as they did for centuries, they never would have discovered neutron stars and black holes.

It may be that the most important impact of voluntarism is not on service delivered or the growth of the volunteer but that voluntarism helps humankind towards the next stage of its development, which is, in the words of Maslow, "a new philosophy of life, a new conception of man . . . not only for the person himself within his own psyche, but also for the same person as a social being, a member of society. As a matter of fact [humanistic psychology] helps us realize how interrelated these two aspects really are."

So it may be that the most important impact of voluntarism is that, by bringing men, women, and their society into mutually enhancing relationships, it speeds humankind toward the realization of a world community of creativity and compassion. □