Over the last thirty years practitioners of service-learning have struggled to canonize the definitions, language and methods of a burgeoning field. This text, accurately titled, serves to move us past adolescence toward more mature engagement by providing grounded, straightforward reflection and critique. By including the work of several colleagues, the editors outline best practices that will ensure the field’s growth and success. Practitioners have long struggled with teaching pedagogy and foundational definitions, yet to continue focusing solely on those topics is to risk stagnation. These authors embrace the foundational work and herald a specific call for deeper and sustainable growth in our partnerships and methods.

Divided into three sections, this text reads as an enlightened “how to” guide highlighting popular pitfalls of the last thirty years as well as common misconceptions. Most importantly, the book boldly details challenges that are not often discussed. In the first section, Strait and Lima weave various chapters together to move fluidly through the nuts and bolts of location, institutionalization, reporting charts and how they affect buy-in. The second section is focused on infrastructure issues including conversations on promotion and tenure, reflection on who is doing service-learning and how they are being affected, and even includes conversations on funding plans and procedures. The text concludes with case studies on new models including...
international forms of engaged learning, practical engaged citizenship, virtual service-learning courses, re-visioning assessment, and reflections on how the change in our classrooms offers a broader opportunity for change.

In the first section, the editors’ introduction sets the context and points out the timeliness of conversation for a nation called to service. Three subsequent chapters focus on the impact of campus location of service-learning offices, the interdependent nature of partnerships between campus and community, and finally, the importance of going beyond funding and mission to a “widely understood tool that has beneficial impacts on campus-wide institutional and community goals” (Furco and Holland, 2009, p. 57). Each of these chapters are essential for establishing institutional memory; they also serve as a solid base for reflection on any campus. However, the chapter that asks the most of practitioners and community members alike centers on creating interdependent relationships. Calling for an end of the separation between campus and community, chapter authors refocus our thinking on the commonality of our problems, their effects, and their solutions. Gilbert, Johnson and Plaut (2009) boldly argue that all societal members are responsible for change and institutions must be freed from the strict confines of theory (p.37).

The editors use the second section as a place to explore various types of infrastructure necessary to ensure the productive development of service-learning practices. Topics covered in four chapters include promotion and tenure policies that either facilitate or hinder growth, institutionalization that derails social justice missions,, critical contact theory-based practices that bring results, and foundational building blocks necessary to secure funding. While the editors provide solid footing and models for sustaining and motivating growth, they also include a firm critique of methods. The authors promote a return to the foundations of crucial contact theory as an ultimate measure of program effectiveness. Joseph Erickson (2009) confidently points out that if our activities continue to ignore the findings of social psychologists, we risk more than just poor outcomes, we also risk worsening student attitudes. (p.115) He claims that if we neglect to focus on anxiety and personal and political identity, for instance, service-learning experiences can reinforce the stereotypes we aim to dismiss.

The final section of the text pushes readers to consider new models that challenge the status quo. Through five well-defined chapters, authors offer case studies on international engaged learning models, service-learning in the virtual classroom, ways to confront stereotypes in our classrooms, models of transformative assessment and a case study of engaged citizenship at the high school level. All chapters fulfill unique goals, but the chapter most useful to the practitioner considers how service-learning must evolve beyond bringing privileged students out of the ivory tower into diverse communities. Mitchell and Donahue (2009) site the work of Boyle-Baise and Butin (1998 & 2005) to remind us that “the deficits that service-learning reinforces are frequently race-based” (p.172). They cite cases of frustration from students of color when confronted with differing viewpoints than their fellow students. Erickson is clear: if we have created models where our privileged students own the power to “help” and “fix” and do so from a place of fear, we have fallen short of our goals.
This book is for any service-learning director who has lain awake at night exhausted by the politics of location, worried about accessibility and uncertain of their program’s actual impact on communities. Practitioners- ranging from those who struggle with nuts and bolts to those considering the meaning of what they do to those convinced they have found the definitive model- can all use these chapters to navigate the ever-changing future of service-learning. This text asks difficult questions that ground us squarely in our rightful place as educators with and for our communities.

These authors place process critique, foundational knowledge about results and approaches, and reflection on deeper questions into one seamless conversation. There are many resources that fulfill one or a few of these purposes, but very few create spaces for real conversations about logistics that also include theory and purpose. Somewhat miraculously, these authors have given voice to many hallway conversations or gut feelings. The content leads us to look deeper into our partnerships and the approach places these learnings in a format that our institutions can more easily digest. These chapters are living testament to the progress that can be made when we share our challenges along with our best practices.

My only disappointment in this book is that while the editors and authors routinely call practitioners of service-learning into more interdependent partnerships, this text does not include the voice of the community partner. If our partnerships need to exemplify more equality, then we must model partnerships through co-teaching and joint publications.

The authors understand that our field has endured multiple revolutions so another call for complete metamorphosis would again focus our conversations around entry level topics. By weaving in careful reflections and guidance of experienced practitioners, the editors create a compelling book that outlines the necessary next steps to our future. As a result, we are led into mature considerations of whether our programs and actions are filling the hunger of students as well as that of community leaders who are eager to create change.