

Jackson, E. L., & Burton, T. L. (1999). *Leisure studies: Prospects for the twenty-first century*. State College, PA: Venture.

Reviewed By

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Biographical Information

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This book is a long-awaited offering in our field. It is not really a second edition, but more of a philosophical descendant of Jackson and Burton's 1989 text, Understanding leisure and recreation: Mapping the past, charting the future. The 1999 book, which in reality is just hitting the streets in 2000, is complete with a new size, look, and 28 "entirely fresh" chapters. I say "long-awaited" because after ten years, the first book had served the field well but was long past the peak of its currency. I used the old book extensively in an undergraduate capstone course I taught at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. A funny memory always returns when I think about that book. Used copies of the original, which had a moon and stars jacket design with the tagline Mapping the past, charting the future superimposed on it, sometimes turned up in the occult section of local Greensboro bookstores. Our students often benefited from bargain purchases of these used texts if they knew where to find them! Occult does mean hidden.

So while this is a new book in a very real sense, it is the intellectual heir to another. This being true, comparisons are inevitable; so I will make several throughout this review. The new book ably carries on the spirit of the original tradition (excepting the cover art). It is visually appealing and well-constructed. It has a nice heft; you feel as if you are reading an important text when you take it up. The 32 chapters include subheadings and an index, which are not found in the older book; these make the text much more reader-friendly than its predecessor. The editors clearly did their jobs well with the various authors' manuscripts. Unlike a number of other texts I have inspected recently, the book appears to be mostly free of distracting typographical and mechanical errors. The impressive lineup of contributors have their works arranged into six sections (actually five, with a short one-chapter postscript section). A preface and introduction by the editors serve their purpose well in orienting the reader to the main body of what follows.

The first section is a prerequisite visiting of definitions, concepts, and foundations. One of the stellar pieces in the manuscript is found here. Chris Rojek's Chapter 6,

“Deviant leisure: The dark side of free-time activity,” goes well beyond the standard fare about taboos, crime, and “purple leisure.” Rojek may surprise some readers with what he offers up: a strong conceptual challenge to some of the most basic grounding assumptions about our field and the revealed potential for inquiry and scholarship that are possible if a richer understanding of the importance of deviance during leisure time is accepted.

The second section is an epistemological and methodological tour of the field of leisure studies. Some of the material here is exciting; some seems to be included in an obligatory kind of way. Bryan Smale’s chapter “Spatial analysis of leisure and recreation” stands out as it explains a theoretical framework for understanding leisure that is not given as much attention as it probably deserves. Guy Swinnerton’s “Recreation and conservation: Issues and prospects” is a chapter that looks at first glance to be an update of his contribution to the 1989 text, but a thorough reading reveals that it is much more - a contemporary discussion of issues that includes a concern for the nature of inquiry.

Section three is entitled “Experiencing Leisure” and includes chapters on satisfaction; leisure and the life course; ethnicity, race, and leisure; gender and leisure; a survey of constraints (not barriers anymore) research; crowding and carrying capacity; and user conflicts. The chapter “Gender and leisure” by Susan Shaw stood out as generally well-written and informative, but seemed to rely heavily on somewhat dated references - a point to which I shall return later.

The fourth section is the practical stuff: “Delivering Leisure.” Tim Burton and Troy Glover contribute an interesting chapter on the reemergence of the enabling authority of government in the era of privatization and alternative service delivery models. Dattillo and Williams’ “Inclusion and leisure service delivery” is one of several chapters that make a contribution not specifically found in the first book. The chapter on the benefits approach to leisure by Bev Driver and Don Bruns now seems *de rigueur*, but it is also new to the 1999 text. Marketing public services, forecasting and planning, new management trends, and a review of challenges facing the natural resource manager also are included here.

The fifth section, “Debating Leisure,” is a four-chapter discussion on the evolution of thought regarding leisure during the past few decades. There are two standout chapters. John Hemingway provides one of our field’s rare perspectives on leisure through the lens of political philosophy in Chapter 30, probing the assumptions that underlie the concept of freedom in leisure. Fred Coalter provides both a lucid explanation of the differences between British leisure studies and North American leisure sciences and a model for how the convergence of these two theoretical orientations may be being “pushed” by other scholarly trends.

The text concludes with a retrospective on leisure studies by Bev Driver that is counted as both a chapter and a section. This seems like an ambitious assignment for a short (12 page) piece, but Driver pulls it off well (of course) and his closing thoughts prove that great value can lie in concision.

This is a good book, but I do have a couple of distinct criticisms. The first is the age of many of the references. While the book refers to the twenty-first century in its title, and the promotional flyer from Venture Publishing touts it as “the only comprehensive statement of what is known about recreation and leisure as the twenty-first century begins” (taken from Geoff Godbey’s foreword in the text), I found that in many chapters there was a dearth of recent information and a heavy utilization of fairly old references. Susan Shaw’s chapter “Gender and Leisure” is a good example. Of the 70 listed references, the mean age of these resources is about 10 years. And this is not just a function of having the mean “dragged down” by a few older seminal pieces; in fact, the newest reference is from 1997, with only two from 1996. Further, this chapter is not an isolated case in the book. Given the nature of the research and publication process, that is to say that a 1991 article may in fact be based upon a study initiated in 1988 or 1989, a mean of 10 years charitably situates the currency of much of the information in this book somewhere in the late eighties or early nineties. However, to be fair, I am not sure whether my criticism says more about this book or our field.

There is also an element of “predictability” present in the book. Some chapters are well-written but have the feel of being “tacked-on” because of the obligation to include them somewhere. Not surprisingly there are other topics, such as how religion and spirituality interface with leisure experience and meaning, that are treated only in passing. Sylvester’s brief discussion of the historical influence of the Judeo-Christian view (there is only one?) in Chapter 2 is superficial and apparently represents the only nod in the text to this burgeoning area of research interest. The text also does not hide its own biases well, with ample time given throughout the text to tout the “powerful” challenges of feminist, postmodern, and critical theory perspectives to a series of positivist strawmen without seriously entertaining many of the contemporary responses to these challenges widely encountered in the greater world (the one outside of leisure scholarship).

Still, despite its several shortcomings, this is a welcome addition to the field. It may not represent “the only comprehensive statement...as the twenty-first century begins,” but it does represent something. That something is a new and well-constructed text that covers a lot of important ground; a text that has no current rival for its niche. It is very appropriate for upper-level undergraduate or graduate students. I intend to put it to use myself; and I look forward to discussing, and challenging, this text with my students.