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De Graff, J. (2003). *Take back your time: Fighting overwork and time poverty in America*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., San Francisco, ISBN 1-57675-245-3.

Reviewed by

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*Take Back Your Time: Fighting Overwork and Time Poverty in America* is a book of invited essays which collectively contends that in America we are overworked, under-leisured, and generally at odds with a simpler, more meaningful way of life. The book is arranged in a compilation format which features several different groups of essays including "Overwork in America," "The Cost to Civil Society," "Historical and Cultural Perspectives," and "Workplace Solutions." Within these essays is information on how this apparent time poverty came about and what some possible solutions might be. These essays also explore how overwork can be linked to several social factors including the decline of leisure time, hazards to personal health, lack of family unity and cohesion, environmental concerns and a host of other social maladies.

The book's editor is John de Graaf, a noted documentary television producer and an advocate for simple living. In this role he employs authors from a wide range of fields—including Dr. Benjamin Hunnicutt from leisure studies—in order to thoroughly examine time poverty in America. From the very first chapter on, the book's central theme emerges: the notion that in America, we are suffering from a lack of time and have fallen into the more-is-better trap. Each chapter is a short treatise containing useful suggestion on how to take back our time. Throughout, the book is full of historical facts, statistics, and other useful information relating to time use in America. While the authors do not suggest that we all quit working, they do suggest that we seriously rethink our work habits and the impacts that our work habits may be having on us physically, socially and the environment where we live.

While it is believed by many leisure researches that we have more free time now that we have ever had, this book presents data that is a direct antithesis to this notion, with the only mention of research that points to more leisure time being quickly discounted. Several essays suggest that we are consumed by our need for material things and that we are confused with quality of leisure and quantity of items. The chapter, "Enough—The Time Cost of Stuff" provides useful information regarding the real costs of items purchased, not only in monetary expenses but also time expenses.

Not only does the book present practical remedies to the situation, but also provides a historical context and international perspectives that enable the reader to draw his or her own conclusions regarding time use. The layout of the book makes it easy for the reader to choose a topic of interest and read any one of the essays, as each stands alone quite well. While intended to serve as the “official handbook” for *Take Back Your Time Day*, the book does provide useful information for general readers and has its host of information tends to back up the book’s theme. In the final section, appendices which instruct readers on the proper steps and techniques for putting on a “Take Back You Time Day” in the local community are detailed.

Overall, *Take Back Your Time* is easy to read, and the diversity of the authors provides a fresh perspective—although there is a bit of redundancy as some of the material is repeated elsewhere in the book. Additionally, each chapter is prefaced with a short introduction by the editor enabling the reader to scan the contents of the essay and place it into context. And although the book is full of data suggesting that Americans are overworking, ultimately the conclusions to be drawn from the book are left to the reader.

The book consistently presents information suggesting that we do not have as much time or leisure time as we might believe, and although many may dispute this central thesis, the information should prove very useful for leisure educators. The book’s extensive examination of time usage in America should provide fodder for discussion with students, as well as between among academicians themselves. At a minimum, this book should provoke readers to reevaluate their own time use, work and leisure behaviors.