

Nazareth, L. (2007). *The Leisure Economy: How Changing Demographics, Economics and Generational Attitudes Will Reshape Our Lives and Our Industries*. Mississauga, Ontario: John Wiley and Sons Canada, Ltd. 240 pages, ISBN 978-0-470-84034-4

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Author Linda Nazareth draws on research from a variety of disciplines, contexts and eras to make a case that largely unnoticed changes are taking place. The thesis of this book is that subtle but powerful changes will result in a qualitatively different world for most North Americans. As the title indicates, key forces include changing demographics, interrelated generational attitudes about leisure, work and material goods and economies that makes those goods available.

The first part of the book traces the complex history of work and leisure in North America. Although replete with starts and stops, the supremacy of work in colonial America has begrudgingly given way to recognition of the value of leisure. The historic tension between Americans' commitment to work and the growing realization that leisure ought to be a part of life has led to a current "time crunch economy". Time crunched Americans lament that there is simply no time left for relaxing or doing leisure activities after meeting the demands of the workplace and home. Ironically, much of what is cluttering up our lives is our own participation in leisure activities. But the author consoles us that these temporary birthing pains are merely a prerequisite for a new era in which the proper balance of work and leisure will be achieved. Baby boomers will serve as midwives for this golden era of leisure. Later, Generations X, Y and Z will act as nannies to make sure that this long awaited movement will indeed develop into a sustainable social order.

In the process of building a foundation for her thesis, Nazareth comprehensively addresses history and the continuing reality of a society consisting of those who have and those who do not have. Groups in the leisure economy may be defined even more sharply than they are today. One group will have time but no money; another will have money but no time. The really unfortunate will lack time and money. In the future these clusters will likely be smaller, but for some leisure will continue to be elusive. There will be however, a group she terms the "Golden Leisurites" consisting of early Boomers with the enviable combination of time and money. That combination, according to the author, translates into leisure and the subsequent position of leisure trendsetter.

Predicting the future, especially the future of *leisure*, is a daunting task, not to be undertaken by the feint of heart. If nothing else, Nazareth must be given credit for the courage to put her ideas on paper for all to see now and more importantly, for all of us to evaluate in the future. This particular book review is merely a foreshadowing of the factual review (aided immeasurably by 20-20 hindsight) that will take place ten or twenty years from now when social analysts dissect the state of the economy.

But the book is more than a courageous projection. For example, Nazareth demonstrates a solid understanding of the threat of consumer debt for the emerging leisure economy. For many Americans the market will provide a seductive illusion of leisure opportunity. But growing consumer debt will cause real leisure, freedom from the demands of work and survival, to drift even farther away. (Keep in mind that the book was written two years before the recent “economic reset”.) The author deals not only with economic and social generalities but tackles the future of specific activities as wide ranging as volunteerism, education, sports, fitness, tourism and gambling.

One of the more problematic aspects of the book is Nazareth’s simplistic equation of free time with leisure. While the relationship cannot be denied, using the concepts interchangeably significantly weakens her argument for a coming leisure economy. Nor does the author fully accept the global interrelatedness of the economy. We can no longer live as if what happens in other parts of the world does not affect us. Nor will we be able to ignore that what we do here will drastically effect other economies. Finally, the author bases her theory too heavily on the predicted behaviors of baby boomers. Up to this point, forecasting Baby Boomer behavior has proven risky. Boomers could indeed retire and create a leisure economy as the author suggests. On the other hand, they could continue to live their work centered lives with only minor changes; thus, once again delaying the arrival of the leisure economy.

This is a good book with much to be gained from its reading. However, it is not a great book. *The leisure economy: how changing demographics, economics and generational attitudes will reshape our lives and our industries* lacks the vision of De Grazia’s *Of Time, Work and Leisure* (1962), nor does it have the convincing detail of *Time for Life: The Surprising Ways Americans Use Their Time* (1997) by Robinson and Godbey. The book does not shock the reader like Juliet Schor’s *Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (1992). Nevertheless, educators and students will benefit from Nazareth’s treatment of the work/leisure dilemma and her informed and thoughtful perspective on the future of leisure in North America.