

As with some other complex ideas having currency in today's world, that of leisure suffers at the level of commonsense from a combination of oversimplification, moral depreciation, and in some quarters, even lack of recognition. Many people outside the comparatively small circle of leisure theorists, researchers, and practitioners – this indictment includes other scholars and university administrators on the outside – might well greet this claim with: “who cares?” But leisure's modern legacy is both profound and immense, a product of approximately 45 years of steady research, application, and theory development. In other words, there is plenty of evidence to justify the central proposal in this book that the commonsense view of free-time activities can and should be challenged.

The following chapters will show what this popular outlook is lacking and why it is important that it be confronted. In general, the reasons for confrontation are the following. 1) Gatekeepers informed only by the commonsense definitions of leisure while working in the institutions of higher education and funding agencies for research and teaching often fail to give research and education in leisure science its due. 2) The general population guided by certain commonsense definitions suffers with its ignorance of how it could benefit from an informed view of free time. 3) Some practitioners in fields where leisure has been shown to benefit clients still refuse to accept this approach. Certain commonsense definitions are presumed to be behind such thinking. 4) Leisure science's weak reception in many of the mainstream social sciences (e.g., economics, political science) suggests a similar warped understanding of how people use their free time, why they do this, and why it is important to have such knowledge.

All this might seem like sour grapes: a-nobody-likes-me-but-they-should kind of argument. This retort might have more credibility were it based on a scientific understanding of leisure rather than a commonsensical one. In other words, the most sophisticated response would be to disprove the four points in the preceding paragraph. Meanwhile, this book contains evidence supporting them.