ROCZNIKI NAUK SPOŁECZNYCH
Tom 17(53), numer 4 – 2025
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18290/rns2025.0046

PAWEŁ KUCZYŃSKI

POSTMODERN YOUTH AND THE NEW LEISURE CULTURE

A b s t r a c t . This article examines new leisure practices among contemporary youth in the Global North, with particular attention to Generation Alpha, born in the 21st century. It argues for a radical rethinking of how researchers conceptualize leisure, as the traditional contrast between work or school duties and relaxation no longer applies. Today's young people, inseparable from their smartphones, are adapting to a digitalized world where the absence of work may become as significant a problem as excessive free time. Postmodern tendencies already blur the boundary between obligation and leisure, challenging the long-standing norm of "duty before pleasure." Of special research interest are digital creators – no longer a narrow elite of artists or professionals, but vast communities of online users continuously producing images, videos, music, and texts.

Keywords: postmodern youth; entertainment; technological experience community; alpha generation; new leisure culture

INTRODUCTION

In everyday language, terms such as entertainment, leisure, fun, relaxation, and recreation are often used interchangeably, although in academic discourse they carry distinct meanings. Among them, leisure is the broadest concept, encompassing various forms of voluntary activity undertaken during free time – periods of relative autonomy outside paid work, childcare, or education. Scholars have long emphasized that leisure is not merely the absence of work but a complex, culturally mediated sphere of human activity (Roberts, 1999). The sociology of leisure emerged as a distinct subfield in the latter half of the 20th century, responding to changes in work patterns, consumer culture, and the growing role of leisure in post-industrial societies (Parker, 1971). Early

Dr PAWEŁ KUCZYŃSKI – Civitas University, Institute of Sociology; correspondence address: pl. Defilad 1, 00-901 Warszawa; e-mail: pawel.kuczynski@civitas.edu.pl; ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3819-2346.

research, including that of Joffre Dumazedier, argued that leisure supports personal development, democratization, and social integration. Dumazedier defined it as "a set of activities in which an individual is free to engage" (Dumazedier, 1967, p. 25).

Early sociological studies often examined how leisure's relationship to work evolved in capitalist contexts. Stanley Parker (1971) explored how occupational roles influenced leisure activities, suggesting continuity between work and leisure. Chris Rojek (2000) analyzed how leisure was shaped by class, gender, and ethnicity, showing it to be deeply embedded in social inequalities rather than a neutral or universally available domain.

Subsequent research connected leisure to family life, consumerism, and popular culture. Stephen Edgell (2006) noted its entanglement with domestic responsibilities and social reproduction, especially for women. Robert Stebbins (2007) introduced the concept of "serious leisure," emphasizing engagement, skill, and identity formation rather than mere relaxation.

In late modernity, leisure increasingly reflects broader transformations in capitalist societies. The rise of the "consumer society" has blurred the line between leisure and shopping. Shopping, once primarily utilitarian, has become a central leisure pursuit. According to Bauman (2007), in liquid modernity shopping becomes a cultural and existential project through which individuals construct and express identity.

The digital culture of the 21st century has intensified this convergence. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok present leisure as curated performances of consumption. The "experience economy" (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) emphasizes staging memorable, marketable moments – travel, food, and entertainment – shared and validated via social media. Even immaterial practices like hiking or reading are commodified through apps, wearable devices, and influencers. Sociologists continue to examine how these patterns shape social relations and everyday experience.

As noted by Polish sociologists studying lifestyles and leisure, the field requires an objectivized perspective alongside the critical one:

> Consumer culture is the subject of constant criticism from intellectuals. Even the least informed reader will notice that renowned thinkers – sociologists, philosophers, political scientists, and psychologists – display a highly negative attitude toward shoppertainment societies. Works on late-modern 'hedonistic capitalism' rarely offer balanced analyses that acknowledge, alongside its flaws, the advantages of life in Western society at its current stage of development (Szlendak and Pietrowicz, 2005, p. 85).

The 21st century brought radical changes as the technological revolution reshaped key aspects of Western life, including work and the related understanding of free time. This article explores how leisure culture among young people has evolved and the directions of these transformations.

1. GENERATION ALFA AS A COMMUNITY OF TECHNOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE

There is no doubt that in the 20st century, at the height of industrial society, work was the basis of all the activities that underpinned the most important social institutions. It was performed in physical locations – mines, factories, offices, shops, airplanes, ships, warehouses, and schools – and its nature evolved primarily under the influence of technology. Work has changed in many ways in the 21st century, from the emergence of new professions and new forms of digital work to the transformation of professional identities and roles. In education, the use of digital tools for experimentation and learning has increased dramatically at all levels, as have new social practices that are often more readily adopted by younger generations. The same is true for the leisure practices that are the subject of this article. Mobile devices now allow entertainment to take place alongside work or study, 24 hours a day. All that is needed is access to social media platforms, video games, or streaming services. According to a study conducted in Poland by NASK in 2022, among students of the 7th and 8th grades of primary schools and the 1st and 2nd grades of secondary schools, every fourth teenager has from 5 to 8 social media accounts, and one third has more than 8 such accounts (NASK, 2023).

An Internet user can communicate and publish content from anywhere. This parallel activity often takes the form of entertainment, but it can also be parallel work. For example, a student might simultaneously attend a class and review economic news, look up definitions of terms, invest in the stock market – all while the lecture is going on.

Our analysis focuses on youth. Scholars often use the term “generation” in a sociocultural sense, rather than a demographic one. In 1928, Karl Mannheim defined a generation as a community of shared historical experiences. In other words, generational identity is shaped by historically significant events experienced during the same phase of a person’s life cycle, precisely during youth. Sociological generational labels and even journalistic commentary reflect Mannheim’s approach. The Silent Generation is said to carry the trauma of

the Great Depression and World War II. The later Baby Boomers were born into families of survivors, in the context of hope for peace and normality. Teenagers in the third decade of the 21st century are often referred to as Generation Alpha. Paraphrasing Mannheim, they can be seen as a community of shared technological experience.

In the article, we adopt Erik Erikson's definition of the generation as "individuals situated in an institutionalized transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, during which the final structure of identity is shaped" (Erikson, 1997, p.70).

2. BETWEEN WORK AND REST

In the societies of the global North, in the third decade of the 21st century, leisure is increasingly difficult to define in contrast to the time devoted to performing school or professional duties. Until now, the guardians of the disappearing industrial order were direct supervisors, teachers, foremen, controllers and countless procedures and regulations, secured rather by punishments than rewards. The decline of industrial society was slow, and the COVID-19 pandemic unleashed new work-related practices and accelerated the mutual interpenetration of work and leisure. It turned out that "being at work but at home" was possible – in parallel with professional (or school) duties – to do housework, relax or have fun.

The Internet and digitization have fundamentally transformed work, with changes emerging daily that far exceed simple examples like running an online store while cooking dinner. More and more applications and technical devices are being created that allow online activities that do not require physical presence at the place of action to be performed. Such achievements in the third decade of the 21st century include bioprinting, which provides prostheses, implants, and even tissues. Also printing parts for jet aircraft (GE Aviation) or a stainless steel bridge built in Amsterdam. No one is surprised anymore by a complex surgical operation performed by a multi-person team of specialists scattered around the world.

Since separating free time from the stream of everyday events and duties to address the topic of leisure has become increasingly difficult, it is worth noting what we will not deal with. First, in the article we omit the issue of the disappearance of jobs in Western societies, which leads to a surplus of free time in the socio-economic system. In a 2023 poll of a representative sample

of 8-25-year-olds in England (N=4,000), over half (54%) of young people surveyed agreed with the statement that they feared AI would replace jobs in the future, with almost a fifth (18%) of respondents expressing a strong belief. (*Digital Youth Index*, 2023).

To test such future solutions to job loss as a universal basic income, small-scale trials are being conducted, such as Basic Income Guaranteed, launched in Los Angeles in 2021. Yuval Harari (2018) titled one of the chapters of his book: "From Exploitation to Irrelevance". David Graeber (2019), in turn, described examples of "bullshit" jobs, in Polish translation referred to as "work without meaning". We leave these issues outside the subject of the article, but they point to the problem of excess free time, i.e. doing nothing. Additionally, even though the West is neither the only nor the most populous part of the world of work, it sets a trend that allows us to look to the future. Automation, robotization and the use of artificial intelligence mainly serve the West and do not fundamentally improve the position of the proletariat of the global South, which must not be forgotten. We know that hundreds of millions of people work for starvation wages without social rights, in conditions reminiscent of the 19st century. The 21st century proletariat is people who perform various types of physical work and have no problem distinguishing between work and leisure time.

Research confirms the trend that characterizes the richest countries. The technologically forced process of blurring the line between leisure and work has created a new norm. As a result, in the countries of the global North, more and more employees may have a problem answering the question of when they are definitely not working. So, is it possible to define time off work in a way that will be true in the future? One can also ask to what extent employees agree with employers on such a matter as the inalienable right to leisure that is not interrupted by work?

3. FIRST, THE DUTY

We are dealing with free time that invades work time. For lack of a better term, we will call this phenomenon "non-mandatory activities" that are undertaken outside the control of the supervisors, who are superiors at work, teachers, and parents. There is no shortage of examples of situations where, while performing school or professional duties, Internet users perform difficult-to-detect activities other than mandatory. From the perspective of supervision, they are increasingly difficult to detect and exclude, when almost everyone has a smartphone

in their pocket or under a countertop and wireless headphones are getting smaller. These are new conditions that disrupt the process of work or learning, which to a small extent resemble situations from the beginnings of mobile telephone, when attention was paid not to use work phones for private conversations, especially during working hours.

A distinguishing feature of "non-mandatory" activities is the violation of unwritten rules, which of course vary depending on the social context, i.e. the framework of acceptable behavior adopted in a given environment. These rules and regulations, although different, share a common global cultural matrix, which is best described by the saying: "first duty, then pleasure".

In European culture, the norm of absolute priority of duty and obligation has strong roots. Although it is most easily identified in the foundations of Protestant ascetic ethics, as Max Weber has shown, the belief that work is more important than pleasure is embedded in several traditions. The Stoics, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius promoted self-discipline and control over one's desires. They believed that a person should fulfill his duties before indulging in pleasures that could lead to laziness and weakening of character. In ancient Rome, duty to the state and family was considered the foundation of civic virtue. Latin maxims such as "Labor omnia vincit" (Work conquers all) or "Per aspera ad astra" (Through hardship to the stars) have accompanied generations into the modern period.

The medieval monastic system, such as that of the Benedictines, and the Catholic work ethic, put the principle of "Ora et labora" (pray and work) into practice. The Rule of St. Benedict emphasized the importance of work as a sacred duty that took precedence over rest. Puritan ethics, so insightfully described by Max Weber, emphasized asceticism and work for the glory of God. "Waste of time is therefore the first and essentially the most serious of sins. The time of human life is infinitely short and precious, given in order to 'secure' one's own vocation. Wasting time on social life, 'idle chatter,' luxury, and even on sleeping longer than is necessary for health – at most 6 to 8 hours – is morally absolutely reprehensible" (Weber, 2018, p. 25).

Modernity and capitalism of the 19st and 20st centuries were built on the indisputable principle that work precedes rest. This is a principle shared by employers and employees. The saying "duty first, pleasure afterwards" had a strong basis, especially in English Puritanism: "The impulsive enjoyment of life, which draws men away from professional work as much as from religious life, was as such the enemy of rational asceticism, whether it took the form of 'grand sports' or the entertainments of the 'common man' in dance halls and taverns." (Weber, 2018, p. 33).

4. WHAT IS ENTERTAINMENT?

The social practices of contemporary entertainment are so diverse that their systematization alone deserves a separate analysis. To outline such a typology, one can consider for the history of literature and ask how entertainment was understood in different eras? How did the literature of the Baroque, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Decadentism and our times reflect entertainment? It was sometimes understood as an illusion, delusion and vanity. Also as a tool of education and criticism with an emphasis on humor, as in Molière's plays. It was synonymous with falsehood and denial of the highest values, which in Romanticism meant betrayal of one's own nation. It could be an escape from existential emptiness, which brings us closer to modernity, when we understand entertainment as mass consumption.

The sale of products such as concerts, games, films, sports competitions, fashion shows and many others allows us to talk about a gigantic entertainment market. Although the "entertainment-consumption" dyad well defines the direction of collective consumer behavior in societies of the global North, it is worth delving deeper.

Michel Maffesoli explores the area of collective phantasmagoria in the fields of the unconscious. As he wrote in 2004:

> [the human individual] <falls apart> and experiences various small stories that make him participate in all those collective fantasies that are constitutive of human history. We find traces of these fantasies in the fairy tales and legends of our childhood, but they are at the very foundation of the feeling of belonging to a given place and community. We can find these same fantasies in electronic games and other roles that the Internet makes possible. Similarly, in the case of extreme virtual or real situations that in various areas of life – erotic, musical, festive, ludic – connect the everyday lives of an increasing number of people. Fiction is not the privilege of the happy few. Phantasmagoria is not reduced to the life of a bohemian who feels a lack of strong experiences. Micro-informatics, video clips, PlayStations, the abundance of television channels, like advertising or specialist magazines, are illustrations of a fertile collective unconsciousness that is regaining strength and vigor (Maffesoli, 2012, p. 71).

The futuristic implications of contemporary social change lie not only in the prospect of structural unemployment but in the possibility of a post-work society shaped by robotization and artificial intelligence. As Rifkin (1995) argued in *The End of Work*, automation is likely to generate vast amounts of free time while simultaneously displacing the central role of wage labor. This transformation, however, risks replacing the compulsion to work with an equally

pervasive compulsion to consume, a theme that Bauman (2007) captured in his analysis of "consuming life." For today's adolescents, this shift is already perceptible: their everyday experiences are increasingly entangled with others through digitally mediated phantasmagorias, a dynamic reflected in the cultural centrality of the fantasy genre. Intensive internet users, in particular, inhabit what Fisher (2020) described as the cultural logic of capitalist realism – a postmodern imagination structured around the consumption, remixing, and creation of digitalized, networked forms of entertainment. These practices foreshadow the cultural horizon of a society in which work recedes and leisure, in both its liberating and compulsive dimensions, becomes the dominant mode of existence.

Youth practice and perfect their time-filling activities at school, at home, in meeting places, emphasizing the rapid communication of all the content circulating on the web: memes, photos, videos. Young people, although not only they, find time for this in any conditions, because during "compulsory classes" you can communicate with whomever you want and "spread" any content. In this way, some progress is made in acquiring technical competencies and social skills that allow you to ignore the strict rules of forced labor. Talking about such competences of the future is a hypothesis here, but it shows the problem that parents and educators, who want young people to learn to "have a good profession" have to face. However, when a young person shaped in this way finds himself in a work environment, the troublesome problem of supervision will be taken over by managers.

The demand for content that fills every moment, i.e. work time, study time and free time considered together, has been stimulated by big tech companies, for which is the most important the fight for attention and increased activity of Internet users on the web. TikTok platform's favorite customer turned out to be younger youth who do not have money to buy things but have time. Mobile devices, always ready to use, have given young people previously unknown opportunities to free themselves from the supervision of parents and educators. In the meantime, the parents who were taken away from them, to the delight of children and perhaps some parents, were taken over by large technology companies. Alphabet, Meta, X, TikTok satisfied the need that has accompanied young people for generations and freed them from the troublesome supervision of parents and opened up tight digital spaces for young people that protect them from intruders. The problem is that when this breakthrough occurred, in place of personal guardians, a "system" appeared, which has many "caring" tasks. They can be compared to censorship, although it is also, and perhaps above all, about something completely different. The algorithms built into YouTube

or Instagram follow the individual needs of users to provide them with content tailored to them, most often entertainment, with a guarantee of continuous access to it 24 hours a day. This type of hidden surveillance is not questioned by teenagers, who choose convenience and comfort.

5.SOCIAL PRACTICES OF LEISURE

"The internet and the personal computer were both born in the 1970s, but they grew up apart. This was strange, especially given that they developed along separate paths for more than a decade. This divergence stemmed from their orientation: one group took joy in networking, while the other was excited by the idea of owning a personal computer" (Isaacson, 2014, p. 383). If we accept this observation from Steve Jobs' biographer, we may recognize that pleasure and play were inherent to the internet from its inception.

Young people have long developed their own distinct leisure, recreation, and entertainment practices, shaped in part by class divisions and subcultural affiliations. Both younger and older youth form hermetic groups – extreme examples of which include fanatical football supporters, whose cohesion makes them resistant not only to police intervention but also to more casual "picnic fans." These groups cultivate their own "leisure culture," often marked by elements of aggression and territorialism, a phenomenon observable both in Poland and Serbia, where fanatical supporters conduct tribal-style wars and communicate in language that is unrepeatable here – competing, perhaps, only with rappers in their expressive brutality.

One slogan from Polish football ultras illustrates this ethos: "...won't let anyone ruin our fun." For such groups, "doing sports" is not about physical fitness or competition in any conventional sense; rather, it involves organizing arenas of confrontation – battlegrounds where they set the rules and engage in violent clashes with police or rival fans (Kuczyński, 2022).

Urban middle-class, though not only that group, may spend its leisure time in diverse ways, sometimes even overlapping with the subcultural practices described above. Excluding travel in all its forms and purposes, a general typology of leisure practices includes the following categories:

– Domestic time, typically spent with family in the home, where leisure overlaps with work.

– Face-to-face socializing, especially with peers, especially in "third places" – those situated outside the home, school, or workplace (Oldenburg, 1999).

– Screen time, serving both entertainment and communication purposes via smartphones, tablets, computers, and, more traditionally, television sets or e-readers like the Kindle. It can also include self-education or activities such as viewing pornography.

– Physically demanding activities, broadly defined as sports, are practiced in open spaces or gyms.

– Participation in criminal groups, including gangs engaged in extortion, smuggling, prostitution, illegal gambling, burglary, theft, or fencing.

– Participation in offline cultural events, whether mainstream or niche – concerts, performances, or exhibitions – often requires admission fees and access to specialized venues such as cinemas or galleries in larger urban centers.

– Substance use, undertaken by young people as a form of "experimentation," often influenced by peer pressure, fashion trends, or personal challenges such as social exclusion or misunderstanding.

– Civic engagement, encompassing participation in social movements, local or national elections, and grassroots organizing.

– Online and offline shopping practices, such as visiting malls, boutiques, and specialty shops, involve either actual purchasing or browsing for promotions and deals.

These areas of activity often overlap. Both cultural patterns and access to specific spaces, devices, and financial resources were differentiated by class. A hypothesis worth exploring is that a shift is occurring, one in which digital fast food is becoming more egalitarian and weakening, if not eliminating, the influence of class on social practices of leisure.

6. DIGITAL FAST FOOD

The consumption of online entertainment bears many similarities to the intake of candy bars, energy drinks, and various fast foods, which are readily available at every turn. Similarly, digital entertainment content satisfies a "first hunger": it is accessible on demand, easily digestible, and comes in multiple formats – audio, visual, or textual. Furthermore, algorithms ensure that the composition, dosage, and flavor of this content are tailored to individual preferences. The regular rewarding of habits related to consuming such content gradually displaces traditional forms of leisure that require more time and concentration, such as reading books.

For centuries, literature nourished the imagination and stimulated reflective thought – arguably a form of rich and flavorful slow food. While film also

transports audiences into fictional worlds and can elicit experiences comparable to reading – sometimes even inspiring new literary works – TikTok-style short clips, consisting of fragmented scenes measured in mere seconds, represent an entirely different category of content, more akin to chips and candy.

The dominance of the visual does not entirely eliminate written culture, but it undeniably weakens it. Writers of literary fiction express concern that the era of the written word may be drawing to a close. As Olga Tokarczuk observes:

> Humanity has come a long way in its ways of communicating and sharing personal experience, from orality, relying on the living word and human memory, through the Gutenberg Revolution, when stories began to be widely mediated by writing and in this way fixed and codified as well as possible to reproduce without alteration. The major attainment of this change was that we came to identify thinking with language, with writing. Today we are facing a revolution on a similar scale, when experience can be transmitted directly, without recourse to the printed word (Tokarczuk, 2018).

According to the data from the NASK national survey, quoted earlier: "There has been another increase in the amount of time teenagers spend online on weekdays. It is currently 5 hours 36 minutes (vs. 2020 – 4 hours 50 minutes). Teenagers' activity on days off from school is mainly focused on cyberspace (an average of 6 hours 16 minutes). More than half of teenagers (54.9%) often or very often perform other tasks or activities while using the internet or smartphone" (2023).

A systematic and deep empirical study conducted in Poland in 2017–2018 provided data on the digital time-use patterns of Polish teenagers during school days. An overwhelming 73% of respondents reported spending up to 60 minutes per school day publishing content online, while 15% spent between 60 and 120 minutes on this activity. Teenagers listed "liking" their friends' photos and content as one of their favorite online activities: 94% declared engaging in this behavior. Similarly, 90% of respondents reported sharing or forwarding content created by peers, with nearly 44% doing so multiple times a day, and 18% engaging in it more than a dozen times daily (Jarczyńska, 2021, p. 319).

Traditional-minded parents and educators increasingly observe how easily digestible and superficial content prevails over more nourishing, thought-provoking materials. Youth readily select such content to share ("reshare") and mark their preferences by liking or commenting. Over time, this often leads to a new type of engagement that aspires to the status of creativity. Mass participation in online content production now challenges traditional creators and established opinion leaders in virtually every domain – not only fashion, travel, or parenting, but also music, literature, science, and even medicine (Abidin, 2020;

Duffy et al., 2019). Another issue is how valuable or true the content produced by home-grown artists. and home-based experts is. The phenomenon of pseudoscience is particularly noteworthy in this context. Homegrown authors, posing as "experts," publishing online, gain significant reach thanks to unsubstantiated anti-system concepts that smack of conspiracy and sensationalism.

7. DIGITAL CREATORS

The first step toward becoming an influencer, TikTokker or Youtuber often begins with publishing activity in a chosen thematic niche using social media platforms. If a creator manages to capture the attention of an audience, the expansion of reach opens the door to monetization through advertising contracts. In today's digital ecosystem, anyone can become a partner for advertisers, since producing digital content fast food requires only a smartphone, a computer, a webcam and an app. What is needed above all is time – ample time – not necessarily spent on audience targeting. It is enough to believe in one's own creativity and a stroke of luck.

TikTok's surprising success rests partly on the fact that moving images have proven to be a far more universal language than any alphabet-based one, including English. Furthermore, video creation and editing techniques have become so easy to master that TikTok effectively functions as a platform of amateur creativity – one that has dramatically lowered the minimum age of digital content creators.

Of course, the financial or reputational success associated with broad reach is reserved for a relatively small number of creators. What matters, however, is that the means of production in Marx's sense are now extraordinarily cheap and accessible to everyone. Research conducted in 2023 by IMKER revealed that building an online audience is rarely instantaneous. A majority of respondents (59%) reported needing at least two years to attract a returning audience numbering in the thousands – or even hundreds of thousands (Bartnik, 2023).

These findings align with a growing body of literature examining the platformization of labor and the rise of "aspirational work" within the digital creator economy. Participation in this economy is driven not only by the promise of visibility or wealth but also by the hope of transforming personal passion into a form of legitimate employment. However, this labor is precarious and often unpaid for long periods (Abidin, 2020).

In this light, the smartphone becomes not just a leisure device but also a portable tool or personal factory. Every moment of disengagement from formal responsibilities may serve as an opportunity to post, film, edit, and distribute. The social media feed becomes both stage and marketplace, where success is measured by reach, virality, and personal brand creation. Online production, unconstrained by time or location, offers the digital creator a pathway to the aspirational triad of success: popularity, financial gain, and social influence. For many young people – especially those who find themselves bored or unmotivated during traditional school or work activities – this dual engagement allows participation in their own better world.

Young internet users tend not to believe in universal basic income, nor do they place much faith in public pension systems or long-term state welfare. They are adept at reading the signs of a fading belief in linear progress or the arrival of better times. The visibility of transnational crises – ranging from climate anxiety to geopolitical conflict – has only deepened this disillusionment. Protest movements such as *Last Generation* exemplify this widespread generational unrest.

At the same time, data on the rising prevalence of mental health issues – including depression, anxiety, and burnout – underscore the psychological costs of navigating this uncertain world (Shannon et al., 2022; Stransky, 2024). Generation Alpha remains broadly driven by the desire to succeed, which is the dream of every digital creator. The illusion that "everyone has a chance" breeds innovators who create new technologies, online services, and applications. The majority of young internet users still devote their time online primarily to communication and entertainment – both of which are pursued across multiple settings: in school, at the office, or even in transit. This phenomenon may be understood as a form of *informal leisure*, invested in a speculative future where traditional occupational roles and known vocational skillsets may prove obsolete. Young people appear to have drawn their own conclusions from Bourdieu's theory of capital. Many deliberately seek to enhance their digital skills, expand their social networks, and diversify their cultural competencies. For a select few, the reward will be what resembles a lottery "jackpot" – a sudden and exponential accumulation of economic capital (Bourdieu, 2005).

CONCLUSION

The leisure culture of postmodern youth is inextricably linked to the transformations brought about by digital technologies. What earlier generations

understood as "leisure" has been redefined: instead of existing outside of work or school, it now overlaps with informal work, self-branding, and online creativity. Platforms like TikTok illustrate this dual logic particularly starkly. On the one hand, they lower the threshold of participation, allowing almost anyone to engage in cultural production. On the other hand, they reproduce patterns of inequality and precarity, ensuring that only a small minority transforms visibility into lasting forms of economic capital. As numerous researchers of digital labor suggest (Abidin, 2020; Gandini, 2016), the distinction between consumption and production is becoming increasingly blurred, and with it, the very meaning of leisure is changing.

A generation is emerging whose engagement with digital platforms is not merely for fun or recreation, but deeply ambitious and future-oriented. The smartphone, functioning simultaneously as an entertainment device and a "personal factory," embodies this ambivalence: it allows moments of boredom to become opportunities for creativity, while simultaneously linking individual well-being to the shifting dynamics of algorithms and audiences. In this context, mental health issues are not aberrations but symptoms of the pressures of innovation, productivity, and success in an environment of constant visibility. The challenge for educators, policymakers, and cultural managers is therefore twofold. First, it must recognize that youth leisure is no longer adequately captured within traditional sociological categories of entertainment, hobby, or consumption. Second, it must develop a framework that recognizes the hybrid nature of leisure, which is simultaneously affective investment and speculative labor. Without such a rethinking, any empirical research or practical intervention risks misunderstanding the realities of today's youth and young adults. Research on postmodern youth and their ways of spending their free time must therefore continue to be situated at the intersection of sociology, media studies, and cultural theory – disciplines that are able to capture both the emancipatory and exploitative potential of digital culture.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abidin C. (2020), *Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok: Exploring Attention Economies and Visibility Labours*, Cultural Science Journal 12, no. 1, pp. 77-103. https://doi.org/10.5334/csci.140

Bartnik K. (2023), *Analiza rynku ekonomii twórców*, IMKER.pl, https://imker.pl/raporty/raport-2023/

Bauman Z. (2007), *Consuming Life*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu P. (2005), *Dystynkcja. Społeczna krytyka władzy sądzenia*, trans. P. Biłos, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

Digital Youth Index 2023, Digitalyouthindex.uk, https://digitalyouthindex.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Digital-Youth-Index-2023-report.pdf.

Duffy B.E., Poell T., and Nieborg D.B. (2019), *Platform Practices in the Cultural Industries: Creativity, Labor, and Citizenship*, Social Media + Society 5, no. 4. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119879672

Dumazedier J. (1967), *Toward a Society of Leisure*, New York: Free Press.

Edgell S. (2006), *The Sociology of Work: Continuity and Change in Paid and Unpaid Work*, London: Sage.

Erikson E.H. (1997), *Dzieciństwo i społeczeństwo*, trans. P. Hejmej, Poznań: Rebis.

Fisher M. (2020), *Realizm kapitalistyczny. Czy nie ma alternatywy?*, trans. A. Karalus, Instytut Wydawniczy Książka i Prasa.

Gandini A. (2016), *The Reputation Economy: Understanding Knowledge Work in Digital Society*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Graeber D. (2019), *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*, London: Penguin Books.

Harari Y.N. (2018), *21 Lekcji na XXI wiek*, trans. M. Romanek, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.

Isaacson W. (2014), *The Innovators*, London: Simon & Schuster.

Jarczyńska J. (2021), *Tożsamość młodzieży w świecie mediów cyfrowych*, Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego.

Kuczyński P. (2022), *Toxic Masculinity – Polish Football Fans as a Far-Right Political Actor*, [in:] P. Kuczyński (Ed.), *The Virus of Radicalization*, Warszawa: Collegium Civitas Press, pp. 189-208.

Maffesoli M. (2012), *Rytm życia. Wariacje na temat świata wyobraźni ponowoczesne*j, trans. A. Karpowicz, Kraków: NOMOS.

Mannheim K. (1928), *Das Problem der Generationen*, München: Duncker & Humblot.

NASK (2023), *Nastolatki 3.0. Raport z ogólnopolskiego badania uczniów i rodziców*, NASK.pl, https://www.nask.pl/magazyn/nastolatki-3-0-raport-z-ogolnopolskiego-badania-uczniow-i-rodzicow.

Oldenburg R. (1999), *The Great Good Place. Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community*, New York: Marlowe.

Parker S. (1971), *The Future of Work and Leisure*, London: MacGibbon & Kee.

Pine B. J. and Gilmore J. H. (1999), *The Experience Economy*, Brighton, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

Rifkin J. (1995), *The End of Work*, New York: Putnam Book.

Roberts K. (1999), *Leisure in Contemporary Society*. Wallingford: CABI.

Rojek C. (2000), *Leisure and Culture*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shannon H., Bush K., Villeneuve P.J., Hellemans K.G.C., and Guimond S. (2022), *Problematic Social Media Use in Adolescents and Young Adults*, JMIR Mental Health 9, no. 4, e33450. https://doi.org/10.2196/33450

Stebbins R.A. (2007), *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Stransky M.J. (2024), *The Rise and Fall of the Human Mind*, Prague: Improovio.

Szlendak T. and Pietrowicz K. (2005), *Kultura konsumpcji jako kultura wyzwolenia? Między krytyką konsumeryzmu a społeczeństwem opartym na modzie*, Kultura i Społeczeństwo 49, no. 3, pp. 85-108. https://doi.org/10.35757/KiS.2005.49.3.5

Tokarczuk O. (2018), *The Tender Narrator*, Nobelprize.org, https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2018/tokarczuk/lecture.

Weber M. (2018), *Szkice z socjologii religii*, trans. J. Propkopiuk, H. Wandowski, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Vis-à-vis Etiuda.

MŁODZIEŻ PONOWOCZESNOŚCI I NOWA KULTURA CZASU WOLNEGO

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Artykuł analizuje nowe praktyki spędzania czasu wolnego wśród współczesnej młodzieży z globalnej Północy, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem pokolenia Alfa, urodzonego w XXI wieku. Wskazuje na potrzebę radykalnej rewizji sposobu, w jaki badacze konceptualizują czas wolny, ponieważ tradycyjny podział między obowiązkami zawodowymi lub szkolnymi a relaksem przestaje mieć zastosowanie. Współczesna młodzież, nierozstająca się ze smartfonem, dostosowuje się do zdigitalizowanego świata, w którym brak pracy może stać się równie poważnym problemem jak nadmiar czasu wolnego. Tendencje ponowoczesne już dziś zacierają granicę między obowiązkiem a przyjemnością, kwestionując utrwaloną zasadę „najpierw obowiązek, potem przyjemność". Szczególnego zainteresowania badawczego wymagają tzw. twórcy cyfrowi – niegdyś wąska elita artystów i specjalistów, dziś rozległe społeczności aktywnych użytkowników Internetu, nieustannie produkujących obrazy, filmy, muzykę i teksty.

Słowa kluczowe: młodzież ponowoczesności; rozrywka; wspólnota doświadczenia technologicznego; pokolenie Alfa; nowa kultura czasu wolnego