

Understanding violence on British university campuses through the lens of the deviant leisure perspective.

Abstract

This paper examines how the deviant leisure perspective plays a role in explaining encounters of violence across British University Campuses within which a University campus in the Midlands Region will be applied as a case study. The deviant leisure framework will be broken down into its ultra-realist, cultural criminological, and zemiological underpinnings, through which violence will be contextualised under the backdrop of neoliberal capitalism. Through primary-based qualitative semi-structured interviews and surveys, two key arguments are made. Firstly, British university campuses are brand-driven spaces whereby under neoliberal capitalism, success is predicated upon excessive acts of consumption, that are capable of transcending into expressive and acquisitive modes of violence to achieve 'success'. Secondly, consumer holidays are precipitators of violence rather than dark nights. It is argued that whilst dark nights serve as a catalyst for violence, it is instead the surge of consumer holidays including the Black Friday Sales and Christmas that drives violence. This research offers a fresh approach to understanding the correlation between violence and consumer culture. Forward-thinking, it is urged that the harmful subjectivities that are cultivated under liberal capitalism are considered when contesting violence within education settings for future practice.

Introduction: Contextual background

The rationale for this research emerged through initial engagement with official data and interactions with university members who collectively identified violence as problematic across the Midlands. Through exploring Official UK Police statistics and media articles (See Tyler, 2017; Paxton, 2018; Baloo, 2020), it is observed that since 2017, violence across British University campuses has risen (See Chrisafis, 2000; Fazackerley, 2020; Zagnat, 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the drivers of violence across campuses and strategies for solutions. The Midlands Region is home to numerous university campuses and subsequently there lies an abundance of opportunities for acquisitive criminals. Here, the actuality of violence is not framed as a problem isolated to the Midlands but instead serves as a timely case study that reveals the realities of urban violence. Despite the rising streams of evidence that campus-based violence is driven by the acquisition of money and consumer items, there are copious quantities of research that interlink poverty with crime causation (See Short, 1997; Crutchfield & Wadsworth, 2003; Dong et al, 2020), considering this, it is argued that whilst poverty can be a factor, there are more complex forces at play. New forms of subjectivity that have been cultivated under neoliberal capitalism, which includes the acquiring of consumer goods for an elevated social status that is driven by a symbolic attachment held between consumption, self-actualisation, and ontological insecurity will constitute much of the basis for discussion. Following a critical review of existing research-based literature on violence, it is argued there lies a gap in understanding the violence that takes place on British university campuses from a social harm perspective. This gap will be addressed by bridging accounts of campus-based violence and the deviant leisure perspective (Raymen & Smith, 2019), which is underpinned by ultra-realism, cultural criminology, and zemiology. The theoretical stagnation of orthodox criminology that is premised on individualisation is rejected and alternatively, the gaze is reoriented toward bridging accounts of human subjectivity under neoliberal capitalism (Hillyard & Tombs, 2017). Moreover, violence will be discussed as a multi-dimensional concept that transcends beyond the physical (See Galtung, 1969) to contribute a new understanding of campus-based violence through a social harm perspective.

What is the Deviant Leisure Perspective? A new paradigm in understanding social harm:

The propagation of social harms within commodified leisure pursuits such as street racing that under neoliberal capitalism has eroded the symbolic order is core to the inquiry of deviant leisure thinkers (Raymen & Smith, 2019). The symbolic order derives from Lacanian psychoanalysis, which is where much of ultra-realism's theoretical basis is underpinned. Lacan (1992) argued that people are inherently social actors who depend on one another through establishing customs and symbols that are used to navigate the social world. Within deviant leisure, there are four key categories of harm that are argued by Smith (2016) to contribute to the weakening of the symbolic order. These are subjective, environmental, socially corrosive, and embedded. Also, according to Smith (2016), subjective harm is committed by an identifiable perpetrator against a known victim. Environmental harms are acts of eco-destruction. Socially corrosive harms constitute the erosion of the solidified social collective and the replacement of the pursuit of individual interests. Lastly, embedded harms involve the pursuit of harmful leisure practices that under consumer capitalism have become commodified and celebrated. Combined, these harms are given attention within ultra-realism, cultural criminology, and zemiology that constitute the deviant leisure perspective.

Ultra-realism transcends orthodox criminology, which is argued to be ontologically flawed (Winlow, 2019). Ultra-realists critique traditional approaches such as sociological positivism and right realism, whereby crime is understood as an act whose culpability sits alone with the offender (Hall, 2012). So too the traditional approaches contained within social learning theory (See Becker, 1963), sub-cultural theory, and radical feminism are limited as they offer little conceptual relevance that is reflective of modern social conditions (Hall & Winlow, 2018). Ultra-realists seek to go further by bridging the drivers, emotions, and subjective accounts of crime under neoliberal capitalism (Lloyd, 2018; Winlow & Hall 2019). Ultra-realists reject essentialist causative theories of crime and alternatively work within a probabilistic framework to understand why some individuals pursue risky behaviours to satisfy their desires, rather than to work mutually to advance the interests of the social collective (Hall & Winlow, 2018). Exploring criminal subjectivity through a political economy-based framework partly aligns with left-realists such as Young (1997) who sought to understand crime beyond social constructionism. Left-realists however theorise crime and harm under legal parameters, whilst ultra-realists transcended beyond legal perspectives. Although much of ultra-realist inquiry stemmed from left-

realist thought (See Young, 1975), a different trajectory was taken. Left realists situate the individual as a rational actor who is capable of identifying sources of oppression and who reacts through socio-political movements. Meanwhile, right realists situate the discontented individual as an irrational actor who needs to be controlled (Hirschi, 1969). Whilst acknowledging their contrasts, ultra-realists argue that left and right realist accounts over-rely on causative factors and alternatively work within a probabilistic tendency framework (Winlow, 2019). Neoliberal capitalism is situated as problematic within ultra-realist accounts however, it is not placed as the sole driver to explain crime and harm (Raymen & Kuldova, 2020). Political economy is removed as a causative factor and alternatively placed as a leading contextual back-drop whereby two key theories have emerged. These are Special Liberty and Pseudo-pacification. Hall's (2012a) concept of 'Special Liberty' arose through observing a lack of true social democracy, under which a 'master-slave' dynamic has been reproduced. Those with socioeconomic power exercise their 'special liberty' by embodying a sense of entitlement that is practiced through the pursuit of gross profiteering that cultivates socio-symbolic success (Hall & Winlow, 2018). Moreover, these pursuits are knowingly undertaken as harmful practices against others (Smith, 2016). As people exercise their special liberty, social inequality becomes exacerbated as those without socioeconomic capital become further disempowered. For example, special liberty is located within acts of violence whereby the perpetrator knowingly inflicts harm on others but does so in the pursuit of profit. Special liberty separates the 'haves' and 'have nots', which contains capabilities to transgress into direct modes of violence as people strive to achieve such symbols of success.

Similarly, zemiology is a study of social harms. Under neoliberalism, such acts of harm have become embedded, celebrated, and culturally normalised. Zemiology refers back to the Greek term 'zemia' that translates to 'harm' and arose from a meeting of social researchers in 1999 at Bristol University (Presser, 2017). Zemiology positions itself as a movement that transcends beyond criminology through the assertion that criminology is ontologically flawed as crime as a concept is taken for granted and the scarce attempt within criminology to deconstruct its relational mechanism of social control and hierarchy (Hillyard & Tombs, 2017). The legal code under which crime and harm are categorised has produced a vacuum

whereby some categorical harms are excluded (Kotze, 2019). This negation of harm is core to zemiological inquiry. Hillyard and Tombs (2017) call for criminologists to break themselves away from the positivistic chains and join a new study of social harm. Whilst criminologists largely rely on state funding for extensive research into areas of criminal justice (Caulfield & Hill 2014), it is argued by Hillyard and Tombs (2017), that such a reliance on funding has created an unbalanced nexus between criminology and the state. This nexus arguably limits the research potential for understanding the parallels between crime and society and unearthing the roles performed by the state within such a criminal manifestation. In defending this premise, Hillyard and Tombs (2017), outline nine key criticisms of criminology, three of which will be discussed that can assist in understanding campus-based violence through a lens of social harm. Firstly, 'Crime has no ontological reality'. Crime and criminals are socially constructed and are therefore a myth of everyday life. Therefore, the traditional paradigms under which violence has commonly been researched (biological and psychological) construct violent offenders collectively as pathologically inept. Within zemiology and indeed deviant leisure, violence is placed under socio-economic conditions that have driven harmful and violent subjectivities for personal gain. Secondly, 'criminology perpetuates the myth of crime'. Hillyard and Tombs argue that criminologists have failed to deconstruct crime beyond its rigid legal parameters. This failure to deconstruct has enabled the negation of harms that sits outside of criminal categorisation to be proliferated. An example is the Black Friday Sales that are discussed later. Thirdly, 'crime excludes many serious harms. To reiterate, many harmful acts that rampage through society are excluded from scrutiny, particularly among criminologists, policymakers, and the criminal justice system. Another key pioneering figure within the field of zemiology is Jock Young who explored the myriad of social harms within late capitalist societies. The deviant leisure perspective that is rooted in zemiology is a synthesising of the two theoretically separate yet methodologically similar approaches that are cultural criminology and ultra-realism. Young (1999) argued that the rise of consumerism has played a role in the changing landscape of late modern society. This argument is agreed with and will go forth in intertwining the contributions of ultra-realism in which alternative modes of violence can be critically examined.

The third key strand of the deviant leisure perspective is Cultural Criminology which understands identities, collective symbolism, and the nature of social discourse to be

a product of cultural meaning (Ferrell et al, 2013). Cultural criminologists such as Ferrell, Hayward, and Young (2013), seek to understand the overlaps between criminality and wider society. They argue that crime does not occur in a vacuum that is separate from the mainstream. Through a study of interactions, symbolisms, and micro accounts of subjectivity, cultural criminologists argue that crime has become embedded through the socio-political discourse of neoliberal capitalism (Ferrell et al., 2013). A cultural criminological framework analyses micro and everyday experiences of reality that through a positivistic lens would remain unnoticed (Ferrell et al; 2013). A core contribution from cultural criminology that explores consumerism and the cultivation of new subjectivities that are predicated upon individual desire is the 'Crime-consumerism nexus' (See Hayward & Kindynis 2013). The four characteristics contained within the crime consumerism nexus that will be discussed in the following section are 'instant gratification', 'insatiability of desire', 'engagement with risks', and 'hyper-strain' (See Hayward & Smith, 2017; Raymen & Smith, 2017 & Kindynis, 2019). Firstly, the breakdown of the social fabric that was once predicated upon collectivism and community has been replaced with individualism and hedonistic excess underpinned by consumerism. The essence of gradual gratification has been replaced by actions seeking instant gratification. For example, the 'consume now, pay later deals that are commonly found across shopping arenas. Secondly, an insatiability of desire refers to a state of perpetual dissatisfaction through which consumption is reproduced by these feelings of lack and dissatisfaction. An example is the continuing feeling of lack of mobile phone technology, as there are always new models being produced. Thirdly, an 'engagement with risks' refers to a process of escape from the seemingly mundane dimensions of life. An example is traveling to a party holiday abroad to engage in drugs and excessive alcohol consumption to escape the drudgery of work. Lastly, Hayward and Smith (2017) develop Merton's 1938 Strain Theory towards a new hyper-strain by adding a qualitative dimension reflective of contemporary conditions. It is argued that a sense of lack is produced not by the physical properties of consumer items, but rather by the socio-symbolic attachments of self-worth and self-actualisation. These characteristics will significantly assist in making sense of accounts of campus-based violence under a consumer culture. This section has identified a significant gap in the literature that explores violence on university campuses through a social harm perspective. To address this gap, the analysis of

primary data that explores student and staff-based encounters of violence on university campuses will be explored through the lens of deviant leisure. Through this, violence will be understood as a multi-dimensional topic. Combined, these theoretical reasonings will be contextualised under the backdrop of neoliberal capitalism to understand the drivers of violence across British university campuses.

Methodology

This research used a purposive sampling approach to collect data through two channels. One involved ten semi-structured interviews with University and Student Union staff. The second was Qualtrics surveys for students of which 54 responded. Purposive sampling was used for two key reasons. Firstly, staff members have collectively worked at the campus for years and as such, possess numerous perspectives and insights towards campus-based violence. Secondly, purposive sampling is a post-positivistic approach (Patton, 2002). There were no exclusion criteria. As all Students were invited to participate in the surveys. Interviews were used to gain a deeper understanding of participant subjectivity that can be placed within wider social contexts (Fenwick & Somerville, 2006). Verbal exchanges can also enable a more informal dialogue which Clifford et al, (2016) argue can enhance the mental well-being of the participant. Furthermore, interviews enable digressions towards themes that are considered to be relevant by the participant (Wincup, 2017). There are however two key limitations to semi-structured interviews that were identified and mitigated. Firstly, time and financial constraints (Wincup, 2017). This was mitigated as the interviews occurred during the lockdown periods of the Covid-19 Pandemic, thus moving all meetings online. Costs such as incentivisation were mitigated as all interviews occurred within the working hours of Staff. Secondly, digital interviewing is commonly framed as a missed opportunity to build rapport with participants for the purposes of conducting an open dialogue (Newburn 2017). The researcher has an existing rapport with staff members. The interviews were transcribed through a naturalist approach that captured micro-expressions, responses, and verbal cues (Oliver et al, 2005). Interviews were thematically analysed and inductively coded for the purpose of unearthing new themes that contribute to the literature gaps. Lastly, it is acknowledged that within ultra-realist frameworks, it is common practice for networked ethnographies to be applied (Hall & Winlow, 2015). However, the chosen approaches are defended as necessary due to

the time constraints put on this research. The ethical issues and barriers that would arise from an ethnographic approach would significantly hinder the research findings and outcome.

A brand-driven campus

The first theme that arose from the data is that the university is a 'brand-driven campus' that reflects the neoliberalisation of higher education in Britain (Troiani & Carless, 2021). This is particularly through the erosion of student activism and the intensification of marketisation and commodification. Most participants identified occasions whereby they witnessed students demonstrating their consumption of branded items. This indicates a significant emphasis on the performative nature of consumption, whereby it is a symbol of success to possess items of elevated social status. Within the crime consumerism nexus, it is argued by Hayward and Kindynis (2013) that under neoliberalism, values found upon collectivism have eroded and have been replaced with divisive socialisation that is practiced through competitive individualism, hedonism, desire, and impulsivity. Additionally, numerous participants alluded that to own such items stood as a symbol of affluence. Many participants argued this assumption can heighten vulnerabilities to being targeted by robbers. For example, one participant said:

“Branded items on show such as clothing and Air Pods etc indicates wealth and makes people targets”.

This quote demonstrates that the campus is a space whereby students display their items. There is also an awareness of increased vulnerability to crime through displaying these goods. However, the necessity to display these goods is driven by the subconscious intention of proving the ability to consume and to stand out from the crowd as a 'cool individual'. These acts reinforce the neoliberal values of competitive individualism and hedonistic excess. Hall et al (2013) argues that there is a societal desire to brandish goods that are measured as symbols of success that through doing so, serves to temporarily pacify ontological insecurity. This is called 'ornamental consumerism' which is inherently found in consumer logic whereby success is predicated on consumption (Raymen & Smith 2016). However, pacification is only temporary, as consumers quickly find themselves in a state of

'lack' as the socio-symbolic magnitude possessed within the item becomes evaporated. This demonstrates consumer capitalism's role in cultivating a perpetual sense of lack and dissatisfaction (McGowan 2004).

Hayward and Kindynis's (2013) arguments surrounding competitive individualism and Hall et al's (2013) ornamental consumption were arguably observed when a participant highlighted the feeling of urgency to possess brands:

"I think looking around at the campus now, I think there are a huge number of students, who are from a background where it's felt to be a necessity to have those brands."

The word 'necessity' arguably demonstrates the extent to which consumerism has infiltrated higher education. Following the advent of neoliberalism, British universities have been transformed into hubs of consumption that have become driven by the logic of marketisation, consumer capitalism, competition, and profiteering (Carella & Ljungberg, 2017). Furthermore, universities once stood as institutions that actively challenged the injustices and exploitations perpetrated under free-market capitalism (Blackstone & Hadley, 1971). Arguably, they now stand as conformers to the logic of consumer capitalism. This conformity has produced collective sentiments of ontological insecurity within the campus space. The culpability of these sentiments lies in an absence of unifying politics (Treadwell et al 2012), whereby students have transitioned from political allies to social competitors. This post-political landscape (Winlow & Hall, 2019) has emerged under neoliberalism which was characterised by de-industrialisation, free-market economics, and an emphasis on mass consumption (Harvey, 2005). These characteristics have cultivated atomised and competitive individuals whose political discontent is expressed through excessive and narcissistic acts of consumption. Numerous participants identified items such as laptops and mobiles as the most frequently brandished items. Several media reports (See Tyler, 2017 & Baloo, 2020) highlighted that violent robbery occurring within city campuses were driven by the necessity of obtaining items. Hall et al (2013) argue the physical properties contained within goods are less symbolically relevant than the 'success symbol' it represents. Additionally, Hayward and Kindynis (2013) argue the individual seeks socio-symbolic capital, through performative acts such as brandishing consumer goods, to stand out as a 'cool individual' from the crowd.

These performative acts are argued to be drivers in which individuals commit violence both as a performance and to gain socio-symbolic success.

Challenging the narratives of 'darker nights' as precipitators of violence

When asked: 'Do you think that violent crime increases during particular times of the year?' most participants argued that the darker months between September and December were periods within which violence on campus accelerated.

When questioned 'why', participants argued the darker nights were precipitators for violence. For example, one participant said:

"It's likely they'll {students} have crimes committed to them on the darker months".

Although it is agreed darker nights serve as a catalyst for violence, it is argued there are deeper forces at play. Firstly, dark nights as a causative factor for violence is found within Cohen and Felson's (1979) 'routine activity theory' that argues crime is enabled through a motivated offender, an ideal victim, and a lack of guardianship. This theory was developed by environmental criminologists who argued crime can be predicted through patterns (Wortley & Mazerolle, 2009). In this context, darker nights are the pattern in which crime occurs. Arguably, these assumptions reproduce right realist theorisation which informs policy (Rock, 2007; Newburn, 2017). Right realists argue that offenders commit crimes based on free will and rational choice. Alternatively, it is argued that to situate acquisitive and violent crime as a rational choice is myopic in approach. Under consumer capitalism, people commit harm in the pursuit of fulfilling their desires, which through a probabilistic casual tendency approach, Hall and Winlow (2015) argue is a necessary characteristic for consumer capitalism to flourish. Moreover, it is argued that consumer holidays are instead precipitators of violence. The 'darker' months fall at the height of major consumer events including Black Friday sales, Bullring student lock-in nights, and Christmas markets (See Hurrell, 2020; Bentley, 2020, & Visit Birmingham, N.D.). Hayward and Young (2004) argue that crime does not occur in a separate vacuum from society and instead, crime and society intertwine with one another. Consumer items such as branded clothing and technology are centre stage for advertisements that promotes

these events (Hayward & Hobbes, 2007; Raymen & Smith, 2019). All these events occur within Birmingham city centre and are commonly consumed by students. Atkinson (2020) argues that the socio-cultural processes contained within the urban landscape have changed to align with the perpetual pursuit of profit under capitalism. In the city centre, numerous symbols of economic and cultural capital are displayed. Meanwhile, surrounding neighbourhoods remain disinvested and disenfranchised thus exacerbating deprivation. For example, one participant said:

“These fantastic buildings like shopping centres and upmarket retail outlets that are popping up and people seem reasonably affluent in town. But you then see homeless people sleeping in doors and asking for money. You’ve got that mixture of wealth, but the reality underneath it is that there’s a subgroup of people who don’t have any part in this”.

Consumerism has produced a fallacy whereby it portrays urban space as affluent by pushing highly branded consumer products to the foresight of the public consciousness. Meanwhile, rampant poverty is transpiring within the surrounding areas. This reality is disavowed through consumerism (Zizek, 2009) and represents the bleak picture of capitalist realism (Fisher, 2009). Free market capitalism has encroached on all dimensions of cultural and economic life. Universities that once stood as anti-capitalist resistors now stand as consumer hubs whereby attempts to resist capitalism’s logic are halted, commodified, and repackaged by the very logic that is supposedly being resisted (Moran 2014). Former politically conscious student activists have now become dull conformers, (Raymen & Smith 2016) whereby there lies a failure in recognising that capitalism has marketed and depoliticised counter-cultural rebellions. In responding to the depoliticization of counter-culture and the transcendence of violent subjectivities, Hayward and Kindynis’s (2013) ‘Crime, Consumer Nexus’ will be discussed. The four components of the nexus are predicated upon actions undertaken to immediately gratify the individual such as engagement with thrill-seeking behaviour. All of these are argued by Hayward and Smith (2017) to possess capabilities to transgress into expressive and acquisitive acts of crime, such as mugging.

First, is the insatiability of desire. To ascertain a sense of cultural relevance, economic capital, and ontological security, some people engage with both licit and illicit modes of consumption. For example, one participant said:

“I feel people are targeted purely because of their possessions and money. I know a few people who when it was dark have been robbed for mobiles, laptops, and money. I feel many students are an easy target!”

This quote demonstrates that there have been several incidents of a violent robbery that were driven by the accumulation of consumer goods. Most participants argued that these offenses were driven solely by poverty. For example, one participant said:

“Those in poverty need money to survive so they may commit more crimes.”

Poverty is a common explanation for violence. However, as argued by Hayward and Smith (2017), violence cannot be exclusively explained as being driven by poverty, nor as an act of resistance. Alternatively, violence represents an insatiable need to conform to consumer capitalism, through obtaining goods and filling the gaps of a ‘consumer deficit’ (Hayward, 2004:5). An insatiability of desire is therefore normalised and celebrated and serves to preserve the socio-economic order. Put simply, in the absence of a narcissistic, competitive, and ontologically insecure subjectivity, consumer capitalism cannot flourish (Hall & Winlow 2012). The second theme is instant gratification. Hayward and Kindynis (2013) argue that the values of gradual gratification, working to achieve, and living within one’s means have become eroded, and have been replaced by values surrounding ‘instant gratification. For example, an individual might become exposed to a trending item that they desire yet is difficult to obtain due to its high economic cost that is set against wage stagnation and employment precarity. Despite this, however, the need to gratify one’s desire remains intact. Therefore, the individual may choose to engage in illegitimate and irresponsible acts to possess the item. For example, one participant said:

“They are walking out with that MacBook worth about two or three grand, which they have brought with the best part of their student loan, so they are a perfect target”.

Arguably, this quote illustrates the abandonment of gradual gratification within the student identity (Boukli & Kotze, 2018). It is argued by White (2019) that this abandonment is symbolic of an infantilised culture, whereby people separate themselves from social and economic responsibilities such as monetary preservation. These changing values are contained within liberal capitalism and act as precipitators for violence (Ayres, 2019). Another participant said:

“There is a high demand for and pressure to own expensive branded items”.

Whilst the participant acknowledged the pressure to consume, there was a lack of identifying some of the driving forces behind such feelings of pressure. Arguably, this reveals consumerism’s unconscious nature that is embedded within everyday life (Hall & Winlow, 2015). Crimes such as robberies are argued by Hayward and Smith (2017) to represent the Global North’s pressure to conform to consumerism. Whilst some liberal criminologists such as Lippens (2012) position people as rational actors who are driven by their conscious ego, Hall and Winlow (2015) alternatively apply a post-Freudian perspective to argue that potent libidinal energies that are characterised by the ‘id’ undertake a role as an unconscious driver that seeks immediate gratification. If contained, the id serves as beneficial for survival and reproduction. If uncontained, they hold significant potential to transcend into harmful acts including violence. In pursuit of immediate gratification, consumers exercise their special liberty (Hall 2012b) that are argued to possess values that enable the dispossessed robber to meet the material possessing student. The third characteristic of the nexus is hyper strain. In 1968, sociologist Robert Merton published his thesis titled ‘anomie and strain’. Merton theorised that structural barriers and poverty produced a strain in society whereby people engage in crime to lift themselves out of poverty (Featherstone & Deflem 2003). The prevalence of the ‘American Dream was a catalyst on which economic and material success has been predicated (Ozbay 2003). Classical strain theory is critiqued by Hayward and Smith (2017) who argue that Merton failed to effectively capture the qualitative nuances that are contained within subjective accounts of reality, many of which constitute acts of crime such as robbery. In support of this critique and to offer some qualitative depth toward understanding social strain, the following quotes from participants were unearthed

- *“I think in terms of expensive items if you are more likely to have expensive items, you are more at risk of being mugged or targeted in a financial manner to get money out of you.”*
- *“if you have luxury brand items then more likely to be victim to a violent crime”.*
- *“One of the main reasons I think people turning to crime is mostly for economic reasons.”.*
- *“Many people suffer from relative deprivation and as a consequence commit a crime.”*
- *“I think most people want the branded products. Latest I Phones and gadgets. It is just about access to money that goes into funding these products.”*

Looking beyond these classical conceptions, it is argued that social symbols should alternatively be considered. By using an enhanced qualitative approach, Hayward and Smith (2017) argue that material items that are sought by the individual symbolise the seeking of enhanced social status and a sense of self-worth. Winlow and Hall (2017) further this stance by arguing that collective feelings of lack signify an absence. This absence is not steered by our conscious psyche, but through the infiltration of free market ideology into everyday life, which is constituted by a bombardment of media advertisements. Obtaining materialism is socially symbolic as it enables the individual to elevate themselves and stand out as unique amongst a crowd of equally competitive individuals (Winlow & Hall 2013).

This sentiment of lack can be observed through the marketisation of British universities that constantly engage in efforts to stand apart from rival institutions (Chapleo, 2011). The neoliberalisation of universities is arguably re-produced amongst student identities that compels the performance of individuality (Austin, 1962). Furthermore, it is argued that campuses are now hubs of ‘hyper-consumption’ of whose socially competitive

characteristics perpetuate socially corrosive harms (Smith, 2016). There contains a hyper-strain between those who live within socio-economically deprived communities, whose ability to obtain such material goods is limited, and between the affluent campuses, which in the public's foresight appears as brand-driven.

There lies a hyper strain between those living within deprived socio-economic communities who cannot obtain such goods and lifestyles and between the campus which in foresight appears brand-driven. These consumer hubs can become attractive places in which others commit acquisitive crimes such as robbery against students who embody the very items that others are lacking (Hall et al 2008). Fourth, is engagement with risks. Hayward and Smith (2017) argue that there lies friction between the individual's desire for excitement and adventure amidst a life that is mundane, repetitive, and dull. An example of such friction is articulated through the phenomenon of 'street racing. In identifying street racing as a common occurrence within the campus space, one participant said:

"People racing cars and speeding down past the SU pub. It does make me feel a bit worried, like, just in case someone's walking past or crossing the road or, obviously next to a pub as well so, if someone I don't know is drunk and just slightly goes off the pathway, they're going to get hit by a car, you don't know."

The Midlands contains numerous disinvested post-industrial zones (Hudson 1986; Hall 2012a). One nearby zone is a park that which sits close to the campus. This park is a space that frequently oversees graffiti, skaters, drug dealers, and street racers. This section will focus on street racers for two key reasons. Firstly, it was overwhelmingly drawn upon by participants. Secondly, a harmful act that is committed by an identifiable perpetrator is categorised under the umbrella of subjective violence (Zizek, 2009). Traditionally, street racers have been understood as a folk devil; subcultural phenomenon and moral panic (Lumsden 2013). A moral panic is an event that transgresses against societal norms and of whose actions threaten the preservation of normality (Cohen 1972). Throughout media discourse, street racers have been painted as deviant resistors attempting to sculpt their own sense of individuality and uniqueness (See BBC News 2017;2019). It is argued that street racers are not acting in resistance to the mainstream, rather they are

conforming (Veblen, 2009). Other acts of conformity to liberal capitalism that have been observed as taking place nearby the campus are skateboarders, drug dealers, and grime music producers. The conformity lies within materialism and financial investment for functionality (See Raymen 2019; Kindynis 2019; Lynes *et al* 2020). The propagation of these acts as 'deviant' and 'resistant' renders a moral panic (Rogers & Coaffee 2005) and becomes a consumer-capitalist venture whereby the media profits (Kelly *et al* 2020). In his paper titled 'forget moral panics', Horsley (2017) examines the relationship between moral panics and justifying punitive Governance and reactionary social policy. He argues 'crime', 'deviance' and 'harm' have no ontological reality and are socially constructed concepts that are used by policymakers who target groups whose actions often contain little to no measurable harm. These groups are labelled as transgressive subcultural resisters who embody the public's panic and who in response call for punitive action to be taken by governments. Raymen and Smith (2019) argue moral panics strengthen neoliberal administrative criminology that is rejected within deviant leisure because of the close relationship between criminology and powerful actors, whose ontological perspective is flawed at its core. Taking these critiques of the moral panic thesis into account, it is argued that Hayward and Kindynis's (2013) 'engagement with risks' serves as a useful framework in which to examine the drivers for subjective acts of violence such as street racing. Hayward and Smith (2017) argue consumer capitalism has subjectivised its ideology through the infiltration and reprogramming of individual subjectivities for the endorsement of qualities surrounding competitive individualism, hedonism, and impulsivity. Metaphorically speaking, these characteristics enable street racers to obtain a sense of socio-symbolic capital, thus securing a sense of worth and ontological security. The quest for cultural relevance is arguably articulated through engaging with the commodified and glamorised world of street racing, thus making street racing a mode of expressive criminality (Lumsden 2013). Additionally, Hayward and Smith (2017) take a material critique of consumer capitalism through which they argue that there is a contradiction of street racers who are frequently labelled as 'deviant' within legal and orthodox criminological frameworks, yet are so heavily marketed by consumer corporations and social media sites. This is an example of 'marketing transgression' (Hayward & Turner 2019:115) whereby products are marketed as 'cool', 'authentic', and 'individual' through applying criminal acts to convey that message. Street racing within 'fast and furious'

is an example of marketing transgression. Furthermore, it is argued that street racing is an exercise of 'special liberty' (Hall 2012a) and 'hedonistic indulgence' (Lumsden 2013). Considering the theoretical underpinnings of the deviant leisure perspective that have been drawn upon, it is argued that attempting to rationalise why people participate in harmful and criminal behaviours cannot be undertaken through simplistic arguments such as moral panics that frame such subjectivity as a mode of resistance. Alternatively, these are acts of conformity to mainstream neoliberalism and whose values have infiltrated people's desires, dreams, and ambitions (Winlow & Hall, 2017). The perpetual desire to escape the mundane and to retreat to a 'fast and furious world is expressed both on and beyond the campus.

Conclusion

This paper offers an alternative lens to examining campus-based violence across Britain. This is through a nuanced approach that examines violence beyond the physical and as an embedded manifestation that is contained under the logic of neoliberal capitalism (Raymen & Smith, 2019). The four harms discussed by Smith (2016) are subjective, environmental, socially corrosive, and embedded. All of these have been utilised to understand the unconscious drivers of violence pertaining to campuses in the Midlands. This was followed by zooming out and examining violence within the context of political economy. Through these approaches, the following two conclusions have been drawn. First, university spaces are 'brand-driven' and reflects the wider neoliberal marketisation that is entrenched within higher education. This logic is reproduced in the student identity, such as the erosion of collective activism in place of competitive individualism and depoliticised dull conformity (Hall 2012b). This is illustrated by unearthing the indicators of socio-symbolic success that are attached to consumer items, rather than the physical properties contained within the item itself (Hall et al, 2013). Secondly, consumer holidays are drivers for violence rather than 'darker nights. The months between September to December contain statistically higher reported acts of violence around the campus (See Police.UK 2021) and overwhelmingly, participants argued that dark nights drive violence. This narrative approach is challenged by exploring the annual emergence of key consumer-oriented events including the German Christmas Market, Christmas, and Black Friday sales. All these events are argued to be precipitators for violence that spills onto nearby campuses. These events are

enablers for people to commit criminal and harmful acts in the pursuit of fulfilling their desires, all of which are characteristics founded under the umbrella of consumer capitalism, whose flourishing relies on people's excessive and narcissistic acts of consumption (Hall & Winlow 2015). The four components of Hayward and Kindynis's (2013) 'crime and consumer nexus have been drawn upon to illustrate these links. The first of the four components are 'Insatiability of desire' whereby to seek cultural relevance, economic gain, and ontological security, many people engage in licit and illicit acts of consumption. The second is instant gratification. The sentiments of gradual gratification and socio-economic responsibility have been eroded and have been replaced with infantile subjectivities that are predicated upon instant gratification, many of which are argued to be re-produced through acts of violence. Third, is hyper strain, whereby consumption is examined beyond the physical material properties contained within the consumer item and alternatively towards the social symbols of success that are contained within the items. Fourth, is engagement with risks within which escaping the mundane is articulated through expressive criminalities such as street racing. Despite widespread sentiments that street racers are resisters to mainstream society, this paper alternatively argues that such acts conform to liberal capitalism that advocates individual indulgence in desires. A limitation of this study is that it was researched during the pandemic that required participants to remember events from over a year ago. Forward-thinking, two recommendations are offered. Firstly, to conduct additional research on this topic that is reflective of a post-pandemic society. Secondly, when campus-based violence is approached by interventionists, they do so whilst considering the effects of a consumer-oriented society. particularly across a breadth of consumer-oriented thinkers. Transcending beyond criminological orthodoxies that examine violence within physical forms is paramount and alternatively, to align towards a deviant leisure framework that challenges normality under neoliberal capitalism (Hall et al, 2013). Otherwise, violence will remain a 'dark matter (Zizek, 2009). As said by Zizek:

“We need to perceive the contours of the background which generates such outbursts. A step back enables us to identify a violence that sustains our very efforts to fight violence and to promote tolerance”.

(Zizek, 2009:1).

Looking beyond the horizons will enable a more nuanced understanding of the emotional drives and subjectivities behind acts of violence, that orthodox criminology has failed to unearth and accurately represent.

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