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# Deviant Leisure: A Critical Criminological Perspective for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Thomas Raymen and Oliver Smith

## Abstract

This article argues that the time has arrived for leisure and consumerism to become key objects of study for a 21<sup>st</sup> century critical criminology. As global capitalism struggles to sustain itself it is creating myriad crises in areas such as employment, personal debt, mental health issues and climate change. Using a zemiological lens, we argue that it is on the field of commodified leisure and consumerism that criminologists can see these meta-crises of liberal capitalism unfold. Therefore, this article positions the burgeoning deviant leisure perspective as a new and distinct form of 21<sup>st</sup> century critical criminology that departs from traditional criminological approaches to leisure rooted in the sociology of deviance in favour of critical criminology's recent zemiological turn to social harm. In doing so, this article outlines how the deviant leisure perspective's emergence at the intersection of zemiology, green criminology and ultra-realist criminological theory enables it to address some of the realities of our times, and begin to explain the normalised harms that emanate from the relationship between commodified leisure and consumer capitalism.

## Introduction

In the last decade, criminology has taken a turn toward a critical appraisal of the relationship between consumerism and identity. The dominance of consumer culture has dictated a competitive drive toward social distinction and individual identity, underpinned by a prevailing sense of anxiety, premised on the desire to avoid cultural humiliation and irrelevance. The harmful subjectivities that are engendered by consumerism have been attributed to interpersonal violence (Ellis, 2016), acquisitive forms of entrepreneurial criminality (Treadwell, 2011) and a range of legal harms associated with a pervasive consumer culture (Smith 2014). Concurrently, *leisure* has come to mean far more than simply what we do in our 'spare time' or activities that are 'not work'. Today, our engagement with commodified leisure is one of the key ways in which we communicate distinction, status and position ourselves as cool individuals able to differentiate ourselves from the herd. Until recently, leisure remained at the margins of criminological thought, taking centre stage only when leisure behaviours transgressed legal boundaries, or where scholars falsely identified proto-political resistance in leisure and consumerism (see Hall et al, 2008; Raymen, 2018; Smith, 2014; Medley 2019 for more detailed critiques of 'resistance'). The nascent 'deviant leisure' perspective however, represents a coherent project which has begun to unpick the range of harms associated with legal, often

culturally approved and economically important forms of leisure (Smith and Raymen, 2016).

Deviant leisure, at its most basic, is a theoretical perspective which attempts to critically explore the myriad interpersonal, psychological, financial, environmental and socially corrosive harms that emerge at the intersection of consumer capitalism and some of the most mundane and culturally celebrated forms of commodified leisure<sup>1</sup>. This article positions 'deviant leisure' as a distinct form of 21<sup>st</sup> century critical criminology, which, along with other recent advances in critical thought across the social sciences, has the potential to provide an authentic alternative to mainstream criminological theory. In doing so, we claim that the deviant leisure perspective can make a meaningful contribution not only to the discipline of criminology, but to our understanding of the many significant global challenges that we currently face. This is a grand claim for a criminological perspective whose focus appears to be on the relatively benign concept of leisure. It is our contention, however, that contemporary leisure constitutes the cultural embodiment of our dominant political-economic order of neoliberal capitalism, which, as many critical scholars have argued, underpin many of the global crises and harms facing society today. Consequently, it is with respect to leisure, and its processes of production, consumption, built-in obsolescence and inevitable disposal, that we see the meta-crises of liberal capitalism unfold. As we intend to show throughout this article, critical criminology's stubborn insistence on broadening the scope of criminological enquiry can bring a lot to bear on our contemporary condition.

In the coming pages, we will show how the deviant leisure perspective draws upon three of the most important developments within late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century criminology. First, the growing 'zemiological turn' within criminology argues persuasively that the discipline needs to move beyond socially constructed categories of crime and deviance to focus upon the more ontologically rigorous (although no less elusive) concept of social harm (Boukli and Kotzé, 2018; Hillyard and Tombs, 2004; 2017; Lasslett, 2010; Pemberton, 2015; Raymen, forthcoming; Yar, 2012). Second, the associated development of a 'green criminology' has shifted criminologists' attention to the increasingly destructive events and problems generated by liberal capitalism, and their impacts upon the environment, human and non-human populations (Brisman and South, 2015, 2017; South, 1998; White, 2013; see also Davies et al., this issue). Third, ultra-realist criminological theory has provided critical scholars with new ways of conceptualising and explaining the motivations of harmful behaviour. Its injection of an original account of contemporary subjectivity and how it operates within its socio-

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<sup>1</sup> To name only a few examples, deviant leisure scholars have published on everything ranging from the night-time economy (Smith, 2014), gambling (Raymen and Smith, 2017), freerunning and urban exploration (Kindynis, 2016; Raymen, 2018), volunteer tourism (Large, 2019), the cosmetics industry (Hall, 2019), sports and gym culture (Van de Ven and Mulrooney, 2019), and pornography (Medley 2019).

economic context draws upon radical developments in continental philosophy and psychoanalysis that, while hitherto unfamiliar to the existing criminological canon, significantly enhance its explanatory potential (Hall, 2012a; 2012b; Hall and Winlow, 2015; Hall et al., 2008; Winlow and Hall, this issue). The deviant leisure perspective exists at the point of collision of all three of these elements, exploring and explaining the normalised harms of commodified leisure in consumer capitalism, and in doing so, expanding the topics and fields that can legitimately be justified as 'critical criminology'.

The article will progress by first outlining the deviant leisure perspective and how it relates to these key developments within contemporary critical criminology. It will then examine tourism as a field of deviant leisure and illustrate how deviant leisure perspectives are distinct from other criminological work that has explored similar fields of leisure and consumerism. The article will conclude by considering the potential for deviant leisure to contribute to consolidating a usable understanding of the concept of harm before questioning whether it is possible to rehabilitate leisure through engaging with the teleological ethics and the concept of the good.

### **The Tyranny of Negative Liberty: Deviant Leisure and Zemiology**

The deviant leisure perspective explores the *normalised harms* that emerge at the intersection of leisure and consumer capitalism. Our use of the term 'deviant leisure' is quite distinct from its existing use within both the field of leisure studies (Franklin-Reible, 2006; Rojek, 1999; Stebbins, 1996; Williams and Walker, 2006) and previous criminological explorations of leisure and youth cultures from the 1970s and the cultural criminological work of the late 1990s and early 2000s (Alvelos, 2004; Cohen, 1972; Downes and Davies, 1976; Ferrell, 1996; 2001; Lyng, 1990; 2005; Vaaranen, 2004). Cultural criminology's heady theoretical fusion of Mertonian strain theories, symbolic interactionism, Katzian phenomenology and a concern with power and the policing of cultural meaning naturally led its followers to the field of leisure and culture. For example, cultural criminologists have long taken an interest in spatial power relations—particularly in urban contexts—and how certain leisure practices are legitimised while others become transgressive of the hyper-regulatory rules of privatised cities. Therefore, cultural criminologists such as Ferrell (2001) have been concerned with how such spatial relations cast skateboarders, graffiti writers and buskers into an alleged role of urban 'outlaw'. Similarly, their interest in the emotional foreground of crime, transgression, identity and risk led ethnographers to attempt to understand illicit forms of voluntary risk-taking as 'edgework'. These early cultural criminologists were interested in understanding these forms of edgework as the subject's attempt to kick back against the monotony of capitalist labour markets and generate authentic meaning and identity in the realms of transgression and law-breaking (Lyng, 1990; 2005).

Overall, this work has tended to coalesce around leisure activities which, if not always illegal, appear close enough to the boundary between legality and illegality to invoke discussions about its legitimacy, police and policy responses, anti-social behavior and crime prevention. Moreover, having emerged from the symbolic interactionism and labelling theories of the mid-to-late twentieth century, such work is often limited to examining how certain leisure practices come to be *understood*, labelled and represented as 'deviant' or deserving of moral opprobrium. For cultural criminologists, these 'transgressive' forms of leisure and culture were the battlefields in which the struggle for individual freedom, identity and self-expression against an allegedly oppressive moral culture would be fought. While exploring the cultural meanings ascribed to certain leisure practices is undeniably important, the deviant leisure perspective suggests that to use this as a starting point is a flawed approach that actively *obscures* the real and normalised harms occurring within the wider field of commodified leisure. It does not invite us to ask questions as to whether such a focus upon individual 'freedom' is a particularly healthy pursuit in contemporary society; whether such actions are transgressive or conformist to the logic of consumer capitalism; and whether what is being sought or achieved is really 'freedom' at all. Moreover, by approaching leisure as a story of plucky underdogs fighting for their right to individual self-expression against allegedly tyrannical forces of police and State, what is often brushed over is the genuinely harmful subjectivities generated within the most normalised and familiar leisure cultures.

Of course, this traditional criminological approach to leisure is a product of our disciplinary preoccupation with the concept of social deviance, the utility of which has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years (Hall et al, 2008; Smith and Raymen, 2016; Sumner, 1994; Green and Ward 2000). As Hillyard and Tombs (2004; 2017), Hall and Winlow (2018) and many others have been at pains to stress, the concepts of crime and social deviance are socio-legal and cultural constructs which are inextricably tied to the values of liberal capitalism, thereby precluding us from tackling, at the deepest systemic levels, some of the most pressing social problems facing contemporary society. With regards to leisure, concepts of crime and social deviance exclude many of the most normalized, accepted and culturally celebrated forms of commodified leisure which, in conforming to the central values of liberal capitalism, generate significant levels of environmental, interpersonal, parasuicidal and, socially corrosive forms of social harm (Smith and Raymen, 2016). These harms have been largely downplayed or obscured from view because of their demand-side value to post-industrial economies of consumer capitalism. Accordingly, this brings phenomena such as mass tourism (Large, 2019), the growth of gyms and fitness cultures (Van de Ven and Mulrooney, 2019), the cosmetics industry

(Hall, 2019), or the 'everyday harms of social media'<sup>2</sup> and Instagram culture within the purview of the criminological gaze. The difference between earlier criminological work on leisure and the deviant leisure perspective's more zemiological focus can be seen when comparing the work of both approaches on topics such as the night-time economy or gambling. While earlier criminological work focused upon the stigmatisation and vindictive representation of binge drinkers or gamblers as feckless deviants in comparison to mainstream society, the deviant leisure perspective is concerned more with the harms intrinsic to these leisure practices and industries within the context of consumer capitalism (Raymen and Smith, 2017; Smith, 2014). In an era of liberalism and consumer capitalism, which emphasises individual choice and autonomy, hedonistic enjoyment, 'cool individualism' and the self-expression of a unique cultural identity that is 'distinct' from the herd, these leisure activities can no longer be conceptualised as transgressing a conservative moral order or set of social values that has been vanishing since the 1950s, and by now is largely deceased. On the contrary, as we and other scholars have stated elsewhere, these harmful leisure practices are *hyper-conformist* to the hedonistic individualism of consumer capitalism (Hall et al, 2008; Raymen and Smith, 2016). Arguably, true deviance in contemporary society would be an outright rejection of such social activities.

However, if critical criminology is about challenging traditional understandings of crime and harm and the dominant structures and institutions that cause them, then a critique of late-modern political economies oriented around an ever-intensifying consumer culture is only half the battle. Rather than simply describing the harms that consumer capitalism and commodified leisure inflict upon individuals, communities, culture and the environment, we must pay equal attention to the more fundamental problematic of the dominant political and moral philosophy of *liberalism* (by which we mean the political doctrine that views the protection of the individual to be the central concern of politics; see below); particularly with regards to both the individualistic subjectivities it generates and how it shapes our understandings of social harm (Raymen, forthcoming). This means questioning our fetishization of the highly seductive ideals of autonomy, freedom of self-expression, and freedom from political or moral intervention in our choices, tastes and desires. This is much dicier terrain. After all, who could be against individual freedom? The centuries-long primacy of liberalism (Deneen, 2018; Slobodian, 2018) as the dominant political and moral philosophy of Western societies prompts a reflex-response

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<sup>2</sup> By 'everyday harms of social media', we are referring to the underlying competitive individualism of consumer culture and the display of cultural competence among users on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. This is distinguished from the more traditional criminological focus, which looks at trends of abuse and hate crimes on social media (Salter, 2016). The everyday competitiveness of social media is designed to cultivate envy and a sense of lack in 'friends' and 'followers'; a reflection of what Hall et al (2008) describe as *amour-propre*—a particular form of contemporary egoism in which the elevation of the self is contingent upon the denigration or cultivation of envy in others.

of scepticism and revulsion as soon as we begin to question whether individual freedoms, choices, and tastes should be curtailed. This is terrain that must be traversed, however, primarily for three reasons.

First, liberalism's foundations in *negative liberty* and the concentration of freedom within the autonomous sovereign individual fundamentally precludes our ability to arrive at a collective understanding of what constitutes social harm. Second, and along the lines of our first contention, while the economic logic of consumer capitalism is guilty for the perpetuation of many harms of deviant leisure, it is liberalism that provides the moral philosophical *justification* for the harmful leisure behaviours with which the deviant leisure perspective is concerned. Working in conjunction with capitalism, liberalism has helped to cultivate the intensely individualistic subjectivities that enable individuals to commit harm to others and the environment (Hall, 2012a). Third, the absence of any positive content of freedom in liberal philosophy similarly precludes us from conceptualising what we might *want* from leisure, the function or role of leisure in society, and imagining *pro-social* leisure futures beyond its commodified horizons of individualistic consumerism.

Milbank and Pabst (2016) have argued that the past fifty years of contemporary capitalism have been the story of an unspoken collusion of two liberalisms. For liberalism, in all its various guises, freedom is the right to pursue one's privately defined notion of the good life unimpeded by intrusive moral or political authorities (MacIntyre, 2011). Classical liberals and contemporary neoliberals of the political right have espoused principles of liberty in their efforts to curtail the scope of government's intervention in private property rights or imposition of regulations upon business, and various strands of critical criminology have been relatively successful at understanding the problems of liberalism in this economic sphere. Indeed, there are innumerable criminological accounts of the issues that arise from neoliberalism's pursuit of untrammelled economic freedom, facilitated by a strong authoritarian state and supranational economic organisations and unions. Due to the influence of left-liberalism within 'radical' strands of criminology, however, which date back to the left idealism of the 1960s, criminology has experienced greater difficulty with a 'progressive' socio-cultural liberalism that has advocated individual rights and freedom of self-expression of tastes and desires with respect to consumption, culture, identity, and sexuality. For the liberal left, government intervention into these areas is permitted only insofar as it protects those basic liberties and ensures the avoidance of any mistreatment of the individual. This is the basic principle of *negative liberty*—or John Stuart Mill's 'harm principle'—that serves as the central ideological tenet of perspectives across the broad liberal spectrum. Under liberalism, the concept of freedom is actually a *void*, bereft of any positive content. In characterizing freedom as the mere *absence* of control, and in concentrating freedom and moral authority within the pluralistic desires of the sovereign individual, we are left with only a minimalistic series of

rights and protections from abuse and mistreatment acting as a vague boundary for the milieu of free wills in permanent competition.

Of course, as Raymen (forthcoming) has observed, the dominance of liberalism in everyday moral thought and discourse renders the issue of defining and understanding social harm extremely problematic, particularly with regards to leisure in a liberalized consumer culture. The excess of negative liberties eventually come into conflict with one another. As a result, we try to implement a series of rules and laws that simply attempt to *stem*, rather than *resolve*, the corrosive influence of liberal individualism's underlying logic and deter sovereign individuals from exerting their desires too forcefully and with too much extremity upon vulnerable others. Therefore, as Raymen (forthcoming) argues, social harm as a concept is caught in a state of pseudo-paralysis, uncertain of itself when it comes to deciding which social practices should be considered genuinely harmful or only 'mildly injurious' outcomes that are to be tolerated as the 'price of freedom' (Hall and Winlow, 2018). As Lloyd (2018: 21) has written,

unless freedom is accompanied by a positive set of universal ethics to ground the individual in the social, more freedom will be interpreted in accordance with market principles and the ideological circuits of consumer capitalism. This freedom will continue to manifest as self-interest, as social relations and competition.

Consequently, it is precisely within these environs of commodified leisure and consumer capitalism that social harm is most uncertain of itself. It is through leisure that we are culturally, economically and even politically represented as existing in a state of voluntarism. Indeed, in enacting our individual freedom and leisure choices, we see how leisure has not just been elevated to a social good but a *moral right* (Raymen, 2018). Rojek (2010: 1) has written that within a society which places a primacy upon the liberty of the individual, "one may hardly dare speak of leisure in anything other than celebratory or triumphalist tones". At the same time, in an era of post-industrial consumer capitalism in which leisure markets are increasingly cultivated and deregulated due to their demand-side value to the global economy, it is within these arenas of commodified leisure that some of the most normalised harms unfold (see Smith and Raymen, 2016; Hayward and Smith, 2017). It is here that we witness the emergence of subjectivities that reveal the dark side of liberal individualism—what ultra-realists describe as *special liberty* (Hall, 2012a). Here, often mediated by unequal economic power relations, the desires of the sovereign individual burst through the flimsy protections afforded by negative liberty. The desire of hard-working consumer citizens to travel abroad and 'blow off some steam' in tourist destinations around the world collides with, and ultimately trumps, the local population's desire to live in affordable, peaceful cities whose everyday community life is not subordinated to the needs of the tourist economy. This is the extent of social relations

in late-capitalism's culture of liberal individualism: floating, contractual and constantly renegotiated social relationships rather than real mutuality. Moreover, in a post-political world in which we are told with increasing fervour that all alternatives to liberal-capitalism lead to the gas chamber or the gulag (see Winlow et al, 2015), all alternative modes of existence are seen to be inevitable totalitarian disasters. Liberal-capitalism is deemed the least-worst of all systems. Working in conjunction with an individualistic consumerism, our present political-economic and cultural order is allowed to fully realise its core drive of intense competitive individualism. Liberalism's intense protection of the sovereignty of individual desire has denied the possibility of a fully functioning symbolic authority to contradict the late-modern consumer and whisper in his or her ear that a particular desire or leisure practice is harmful or illegitimate. Winlow and Hall (2013: 157) sum it up nicely: "if nothing is sacred there is nothing that cannot be enjoyed, and nothing that cannot be sold on commercial markets".

Building upon existing zemiological work which frames social harm as the compromising of 'human flourishing' (Pemberton, 2007; 2015), Raymen (forthcoming) suggests that we must abandon attempts to define social harm as an *a priori* concept or the transgression of already-existing 'negative liberties' or 'human rights'. Instead, we must pursue a notion of 'the Good' from which an understanding of social harm can be derived. Other zemiological thinkers have similarly advocated this notion of 'the Good' or 'human flourishing' as a basis for social harm (Pemberton, 2015), however, they have offered little practical or philosophical basis upon which such an imagination can begin (see Copson, 2013). Raymen, in contrast, suggests that we return to the *teleological* ethics of MacIntyre and the field of social practices for guidance. For deviant leisure scholars, this involves a consideration of the *telos* or the goods *internal* to the social practices of leisure. While we will explore this in more depth later, this involves acknowledging what Raymen and Smith (2019) outline as *pro-social leisure*.

It is the deviant leisure perspective's zemiological emphasis that, alongside its theoretical foundations in ultra-realism, gives deviant leisure its 21<sup>st</sup> century distinction as a critical criminological perspective. Social harm certainly has earlier historical roots within criminology that can be traced as far back as Edwin Sutherland's (1945) discussions of the social injury generated by white-collar and corporate activities. As suggested above, however, the growth and popularity of social harm within the criminological sphere has certainly been a post-millennium enterprise. Focus upon social harm now features frequently within criminology's journals, textbooks and conference programmes, and this 'zemiological turn' constitutes a significant development for critical criminology in a number of respects, and also connects it to the other contemporary critical criminological perspectives mentioned in the introduction and elsewhere in this issue.

While there have been numerous useful approaches to social harm (see Lasslett, 2010; Yar, 2012; Ward and Green 2000), they fail to connect the issue of social harm to the question of *motivation* and *subjectivity*. The deviant leisure perspective's roots in ultra-realist criminological theory (see Winlow and Hall, this issue), on the other hand, allows scholars in this field to bring together these hitherto separate dimensions. Ultra-realism is a theoretical framework that offers a penetrative analysis of the realities of contemporary society, through attempting to uncover the unconscious drives that underpin and perpetuate the dominant social order. Its utility to deviant leisure perspectives is in the capacity of ultra-realist concepts such as *special liberty* and *objectless anxiety* to allow us to examine the motivations of individuals and groups who through their commitment to commodified leisure identities cause harm to themselves, others or the environment. As Anthony Lloyd (2018: 24) has written, "where social harm theorists suggest that harm is a result of widening inequality, ultra-realism argues that *inequality stems from a willingness to inflict harm on others*" (original emphasis). That is, the harms that we are witnessing are certainly a product of political-economic structures and global social forces that create inequalities. These political economic structures do not function, and their subsequent harms do not occur independently of human intervention, however. They require individual actors at all levels of society who have developed subjectivities that are willing to perpetuate such systems and inflict these harms knowingly and intentionally.

We would venture a step further, however, in connecting understandings of social harm with motivations and subjectivities. Consistent with ultra-realism's roots in critical realist thought and its focus upon absence, we would suggest that the *absence* of a shared conception of 'the Good', engendered by the plural individualism of liberalism, provokes three simultaneous problems. First, and as alluded to above, the lack of a shared concept of 'the Good' prevents us from establishing a clear conception of harm that extends beyond negative liberty. Second, the pluralistic individualism of the autonomous subject, protected by negative liberty, combines with the competitive individualism of consumer capitalism to cultivate subjectivities willing to harm others in the pursuit of their own desires. Finally, and this is the crucial point, in the absence of a shared notion of social harm and the presence of a relativist or 'emotivist' ethical culture (MacIntyre, 2011), the liberal individualist perpetrator of harmful actions *does not experience her actions as harmful*, or is able to negate or fetishistically disavow such harms based upon the narratives provided by liberal individualism.

Of course, in order to explain these real harms, we also require updated and innovative accounts of both ideology and contemporary subjectivity, so that we can address criminology's 'aetiological crisis' (Young, 1987) and explain how and why individuals are willing to inflict harm on others and the environment in order to benefit the self (Hall, 2012a). This is where the recent development of ultra-realist criminological theory makes

its most crucial contribution (Hall and Winlow, 2015). In the following section, we discuss its theoretical advances for contemporary critical criminology and how it has been deployed to explore the nexus of commodified leisure and social harm (see Winlow, 2019 for more).

### **Environmental Melancholia: Deviant Leisure and Ultra-Realism**

As we have stated elsewhere (Smith and Raymen, 2016), the deviant leisure perspective is rooted in ultra-realist criminological theory's updated accounts of contemporary subjectivity and ideology. This is an important consideration, as ultra-realism constitutes a significant departure from many of the key theoretical paradigms upon which 20<sup>th</sup> century criminology is based. The harms that emanate from commodified forms of leisure are often complex and feed into an array of global problems experienced by diverse populations and the natural world. Navigating this terrain requires a conceptual map that is fit for purpose, with waypoints and co-ordinates that reflect the challenges that are specific to this point in time. The earth sciences have come to recognize that we live in a distinct era—the Anthropocene—and it is necessary for social scientists to do the same (see Holley and Shearing, 2018). For example, perhaps one of the most pressing issues of interest to deviant leisure scholars is the environmental harm that emerges from commodified leisure in its various forms. Despite evidence of the environmental consequences of leisure and its associated industries, such as global tourism (Smith 2019, Medley and Smith, 2019) or fast fashion (the mass production of cheaply made clothing), individuals persist in behaviours that are linked to a range of environmental harms. To suggest that meaningful change in consumer behavior could be achieved through education, and the nudge theories of behavioural economics (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008) is to underestimate the thrall of a consumer culture underpinned by competitive individualism, and the precarity and anxiety that consumer culture engenders. As such, it is important that we look beyond using criminological theory born out of an era in which climate change, species destruction, global economic crises and technological advances simply did not feature within the array of analytic frameworks available to the criminologist.

To this end, the deviant leisure perspective engages with developments at the forefront of the discipline. While the vast majority of criminological theory has, for the most part, tended to remain faithful to a Cartesian subjectivity in which we are knowing, consciously reasoning subjects with the capability to act rationally, ultra-realists argue that this Cartesian approach underestimates the true complexity of subjectivity. It fails to get to the heart of why we remain so entrenched within a consumer culture that demonstrably harms ourselves, other people and the environment. In contrast, ultra-realism is indebted heavily to Lacanian psychoanalysis, transcendental materialist ontology and philosophy, and an incorporation of the *unconscious* in the formation of subjectivity, motivations, and

explaining how we respond in apparently irrational ways to various threats or harms. Lacan's Real, Imaginary and Symbolic 'orders' situate subjectivity within interrelated systems of perception (rather than rigid mental structures à la Freud) in order to conceptualise subjectivity as an immanent process of *becoming*. Lacan (1997) suggests that all subjects are in a process of aspiring to wholeness and coherence, attempting to pass through the Real and the Imaginary so as to be socialised into stability and coherence through the Symbolic order.

Therefore, contrary to theoretical perspectives that try to convince us that we enter the world and develop quite quickly into fully-constituted, autonomous individuals who contractually choose to enter society, ultra-realists suggest that at the core of the Lacanian subject lies a *void*. This is the Lacanian Real—the first of Lacan's three orders. The Real is a pre-symbolic and pre-discursive realm of the human psyche filled with conflicting stimuli and perpetually disorienting drives and primal needs. It exists beneath and prior to all the symbolism and processes of socialisation that permeate social and cultural life that act as the organising structures and systems which make coherent sense of our world. In the Lacanian Real, the subject is inflicted with unrelenting feelings of anxiety, conflict, danger, tension and most of all an urgent sense of *lack* or absence. As Badiou (2007) and Smith (2014) explain, the closest we can get to understanding or attempting to symbolise the Real is through imagining the feelings of a baby who is besieged by raw stimuli that it does not understand fully, if at all, as well as needs and desires which it cannot articulate or put into words. In the Lacanian Real, meaningful subjectivity cannot exist as such. Desperate to escape the terror of the Real, the subject must *actively solicit* a pre-existing Symbolic order—a social reality defined and understood by a shared acceptance of symbolic meaning achieved through language and other communicative forms—to establish any sense of coherence or ontological security (Hall, 2012b). For Žižek, and contrary to Hobbes and his notion of 'natural man', identifying with such an order of symbols is not something to which the autonomous individual can contractually agree. *It is a fundamentally necessary part of the formation of identity and subjectivity*. The subject must submit to the rule of the 'Big Other' – Lacan's term for the web of social institutions, laws and customs into which the individual is socialised that, in Žižek's philosophy, constitutes the quasi-anthropomorphic and therefore comprehensible politico-cultural embodiment of the Symbolic order. It is only in this transition from the Real to the Symbolic order that subjectivity can begin to constitute itself. The Symbolic order provides the cultural substance that can 'fill up' the void of subjectivity. We are encouraged to seek and find meaning in communities, government, politics, religion, and tradition—and the purposeful social roles and functions they demand—all of which are imbued with symbolic meaning, values and ethics.

Therefore, for ultra-realists, the subject is *always* a subject of ideology. Following Žižek (1989), and contradicting Marxian notions of ‘false consciousness’, ideology is not seen as something that distorts reality and prevents us from grasping it as such. This is, according to ultra-realists, a common mistake perpetrated by social scientists, who view ideology as fundamentally oppressive (Copson, 2016). Rather, as ultra-realists contend, it is the *collective belief and submission* to the ideology of the Symbolic order and the Big Other—be it utopian or regressive—that allows us to structure reality. Without the shared ideological illusion of the Symbolic order—embodied by the Big Other’s network of institutions—we are left without any meaningful substance through which to construct reality and confront the trauma of the void that exists at the core of the subject.

This is precisely why we are witnessing in our mass-mediated culture the constant and fervent reproduction of commitment to a liberal-capitalist system which is increasingly failing the majority, harming the environment, and persisting far past its sell-by date. Consider, for example, the report released in October 2018 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) describing the immediate consequences of climate if the current rate of greenhouse gas emissions continues. The report is unequivocal in its claim that time is running out to limit global warming to a maximum of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) in order to avoid *inter alia* inundated coastlines, intensifying droughts, worsening wildfires and food shortages, and a mass die-off of coral reefs (IPCC, 2018). The extreme weather events of 2017 and 2018, such as hurricanes across the United States, severe water shortages in Cape Town, South Africa, and unprecedented forest fires in both California and the Arctic Circle, are, the report states, evidence that climate change is already happening, and the effects are likely to worsen with every fraction of a degree. Averting climate catastrophe not only requires extraordinary political will—from the global to the local—to effect change, but commitment on the part of consumers and corporations. In short, fossil fuels need to stay in the ground, our cars need to stay off the road, and planes remain on the tarmac. Entire industries need to undertake radical reconfigurations of their methods and means of production—or cease to exist in entirety. Global tourism represents one such industry for it is a major contributor to a range of environmental harms that have been linked to global warming and sea-level rise (White, 2019; Smith, 2019; Large, 2019). Unfortunately, despite professing a love for the environment and displaying environmentally-friendly behaviours in some other aspects of their lives (see Alcock et al. 2017), the year-on-year growth of the tourist industry, not to mention air travel, more generally, is the proof that meaningful change is desperately unlikely to come through coaxing behavioural change from consumers. Instead, what we see is an industry hell-bent on *expansion*—and on investing heavily in crafting lavish, luxurious experiences—that cannot possibly form any part of a solution to issues of climate change or environmental harm.

## **Luxury tourism – Travel in the wrong direction**

The fastest growing sector within the tourist industry is the luxury sector (Dykins, 2016). While often a slippery term to define, 'luxury' is characterized by superfluity and lavish wastefulness (see Smith, 2019). In relation to tourism, we can be certain that we know luxury when we see it, while various indices abound, from the Michelin guide to the hotel star rating system. Almost without exception, however, the introduction and subsequent normalization of luxury with tourism serves to exacerbate existing harms. Consider, for example, the key markers of luxury within alpine skiing holidays. As with all forms of luxury, the exclusivity of the experience is paramount. Chalets require steam rooms, hot tubs and direct access to the ski slopes. Luxury resorts are likely to have swimming pools and even water parks in order to cater for a range of leisure-based desires. Perpetual programmes of building works push hotels and chalets higher up the mountainside in search of improved access to slopes. The profitability of the contemporary ski resort relies on maximizing the carrying capacity of the skiable area in order to recoup the investment in the intricate network of lifts and cable cars that scar the landscape. This means that much of the mountain is subjected to the creation of wide, flat pistes, fastidiously maintained through the use of heavy equipment, such as bulldozers and earth moving equipment. This process has devastating consequences for the delicate plant and soil cover. Trees and root systems are often removed, damaging not only the natural habitat of flora and fauna, but destabilizing the integrity of the soil itself, making landslides more likely. The artificial seeding put in place to try and counter these effects are only ever partially successful according to Rolando and colleagues (2007: 217), who argue that the impact of the removal of natural habitats alongside the other effects of ski-resort development represents 'the most detrimental present-day anthropological threat to bird communities of these habitats'.

Essentially, the pressures that alpine ski resorts place on mountain ecosystems are being exacerbated by the effects of climate change. The irregularity of natural snow cover in many resorts can be linked with certainty to the effects of global warming, which has been linked in alpine regions to increased night time temperatures, as well as a decline in precipitation (OCDE, 2007). Were one to consider these data and apply the precautionary principal, the solution might be to reduce the length of the ski season, develop alternate markets in summer activities, or even close some resorts to give them time to recover—much the way farmers sometimes leave portions of their land untilled. These potential responses are conspicuous by their absence. Instead, the resorts, many of which are in the control of private companies, have doubled down on their existing business models, employing technological solutions to paper over the cracks that are rapidly widening as the pressures on the environment increase. The problems around snow cover are countered by what can be understood only as the archetype of 'short-termism'—the increasing reliance on artificial snow canons. Not only are these machines energy

inefficient, placing demands on local water resources, but it is also common practice to use biological additives to optimize the freezing of the water (Lagriffoul et al. 2010). Aside from the potential detriment to human health, evidence suggests that these additives can upset the natural ecosystem (Rixen et al., 2004).

Could this simply be a case of not enough awareness around the environmental issues associated with such leisure pursuits? Would affluent consumers change their holiday and vacationing preferences if they only knew the impacts of their behaviours and hobbies? This seems highly unlikely. Today, claims of ignorance regarding the environmental impact of Western lifestyles are unlikely to convince. Investigative journalism and recent television documentaries on the environmentally destructive impact of fast fashion and the unsustainable role of plastics, as evidenced, in part, by the unanticipated and impressive viewing figures for the BBCs 'Blue Planet' series, suggest that we understand how capitalism works and its environmental effects. We are aware that our recent purchase of a smart phone is only incrementally different from the last one we bought, and lies in perfect working order in a kitchen draw due to its planned obsolescence (Brisman and South 2013). We know that there is a direct relationship between our consumption and travel patterns and ecological harm. Surely, once armed with the knowledge of the harms associated with our consumer practices, the rebellious spirit of the autonomous individuals portrayed by a slew of criminology inspired by the Birmingham school, and extended further by cultural criminology should come to the fore! Moreover, to return to the aforementioned example of ski resorts, the harms associated with the rapid recent growth of the ski industry are not hidden from view. The network of pistes carve great gouges out of the mountainside, while the mechanical hum of the cable cars are punctuated by thunderous explosions as avalanches are purposefully set off. Resorts creep irresistibly up the mountain—a rising tide of construction—a concrete reflection of the surging sea levels that threaten ecosystems at lower altitudes.

What we are witnessing in the continued participation in such leisure industries is something more fundamental and resistant to change than mere apathy. Rather, to return to ultra-realism's conceptualisation of subjectivity, it is the late-capitalist subjects' perpetual avoidance of any traumatic encounter with the Real. The changes required to tackle on-going environmental crises require fundamental structural and systemic changes at the levels of both industry and individual consumers. Consumerism, as a set of customs and practices, meanings and values, shapes our daily identities, friendship groups and lives. Our lives, meanwhile, are mediated by the symbolic value of consumer commodities, experiences and lifestyles. To engage in meaningful environmental change would be to risk exposing oneself to the internal reprimand of a reoriented super-ego geared toward the cultural injunction to enjoy (Žižek, 2002). Here, the super-ego is not the prohibitive paternal superego that actively attempts to temper our enjoyment, but one

that compels us to enjoy, indulge, and express our 'true' selves. The reoriented superego inflicts an intense paranoia and objectless anxiety on the subject. This reorientation of the super-ego is clearly represented in popular culture through the widely used acronym 'FOMO', or 'fear of missing out'. In a society in which 'the good life' is organised around having a clear identity, expressing that identity, having fun, and being happy, the contemporary subject is assuaged by constant nagging feelings of doubt and lack. He or she worries that others are living fuller, happier lives, enjoying and travelling more, or have a better sense of who they are and where they are going.

This perpetual avoidance of the Real and the continued engagement with environmentally harmful forms of leisure is achieved through a process of 'fetishistic disavowal' (Žižek, 2008). This is a psychosocial process that is far more complex than the time-honoured criminological concept of 'techniques of neutralisation' (Sykes and Matza, 1957). Fetishistic disavowal is a psychosocial process in which we effectively choose to repress those truths or bits of knowledge that are too traumatic to confront fully and incorporate completely into our reality. We know these truths, but we do not *want* to know. By choosing to forget, we can act as *if* we do not know.

Of course, the subject is permitted within the system to express these concerns and channel his or her anxiety and discomfort into consumer processes that absolve us of the necessity to change. Take TripAdvisor, Inc., with its website <https://www.tripadvisor.com>, for example. Here, consumers are able to leave negative reviews for operators within the tourist industry, and similarly to make their decisions about where to go on holiday based on others' reviews. This critique of the system within the system allows the cynical subject to think of himself or herself as ethical and contributing to reforming the system from the inside; and, in this sense, resistance to capital and environmental destruction becomes part of the market, along the lines of the aforementioned notion of the *reversal of ideology*. Consequently, we see hotels and resorts being decried for their commercialism, greed and complicity in environmental harm, enabling consumers to select more ethical destinations, or engage with one of the plethora of types of 'responsible' tourism (see Large, 2019) that negate the ethical demand to forgo foreign holidays. The way in which we navigate these various market places is redolent of Fisher's (2009) notion of 'capitalist realism', whereby the inability to see beyond the horizon of existing forms of capitalism, the lingering *objectless anxiety* (Hall, 2012a) that keeps us immersed within consumer markets, and the unerring sense that attempting to instigate real change will only make things worse.

This, as Lertzman (2015) and others have suggested, is more than just environmental apathy, but is characterised by an environmental *melancholia*. As Freud has taught us, *mourning* and *melancholia* are fundamentally different forms of loss. While *mourning* is

the grief experienced at the loss of a specific person or object of love and affection, *melancholia* is more insidious: it is a grieving for a loss that is more ineffable and amorphous. This brings us back full-circle to our original critique of liberalism's preclusion of the Good and the imagination of a *positive* future rather than the mere *absence* of control. In the absence of the Good, we are perhaps experiencing the environmentally melancholic loss that comes from what Mark Fisher (2014) describes as the slow cancellation of the future. In many regards, we can witness forms of leisure which reflect this melancholic attitude—what Fisher (2009) describes as 'depressive hedonia'—when observing the practice of extinction tourism. Here, companies arrange trips to see certain places, populations or species that are on the edge of extinction. Meekly submitting to the inevitability of such environmental degradation, consumers and companies perpetuate the same environmental harms that have driven these places and populations to near-extinction in the name of 'seeing it before its gone'.

## **Conclusion**

Our society is facing a number of unprecedented challenges. The reality of human induced climate change is becoming increasingly visible, not least through the proliferation of extreme weather events (Brisman, 2018a). These weather events are compounded by other ecological crises, such as the destruction of our marine environments through a societal habituation to single-use plastics, irreversible deforestation, catastrophic species depletion and so on. The solutions to these problems are for the most part posed as a question of public awareness, and consumer behaviour management. However, as the deviant leisure perspective illustrates through its utilisation of the burgeoning body of work emerging from zemiology and the critical projects of green criminology and ultra-realism, consumer behaviour exists within a social order that is, simply put, characterised by a fragmented society—one hampered by a capitalist realism that fails to formulate any progressive future beyond an atomised self-interest bound up within cultural narcissism and a vague and pervasive anxiety.

Negotiating the complex landscape of contemporary society necessitates a recalibration of the criminological project to place more emphasis on the concept of *harm*. The rapid development of zemiology (Kotze, 2018; Hillyard and Tombs, 2004) into a coherent project takes steps towards achieving this, as does ultra-realism's theoretical emphasis upon a 'return to motivation' (Hall et al, 2008). While zemiologists have adequately understood that social harm stems from structural inequalities, ultra-realism provides a reminder that those structural inequalities stem from the creation of subjectivities willing to inflict harm directly on the other in order to benefit the self, or tacitly condone harmful industries and social practices in the pursuit of consumer desires. Similarly, green criminology brings together an interdisciplinary focus on environmental issues, which demonstrates consistently the destructive harms associated with a global commitment to

liberal capitalism (see Davies et al., this issue). As we have illustrated with an examination of the tourist industry, the deviant leisure perspective draws on all of these powerful influences, raising pressing questions, not just in relation to consumer culture, but with respect to moral philosophy and how liberalism shapes harmful subjectivities, thereby requiring us to revisit our understanding of social harm. To do this, deviant leisure engages with the notion of the good, through the teleological ethics of MacIntyre (1981), discussed earlier in this article. To rehabilitate leisure, then, it is necessary to disconnect commodified forms of leisure from the profit motive—and from the harmful subjectivities engendered by an aggressively competitive consumer capitalism. In this sense, we assert that prosocial forms of leisure are possible, and can be identified through examining the goods *internal* to the social practices of leisure. The development of a more useful understanding of harm that is possible through engaging a deviant leisure perspective benefits the critical criminological project by harnessing it to a more robust framework that allows us to push beyond the intuitive categorisation of harmful practices.

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