The trouble with safety: Fear of crime, pollution and subjectification in public space

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Abstract

This article examines how fear of crime and safekeeping are constituted as part of the same dispositif of control which subjectifies (produces a specific form of self) and which perpetrates spatial and social injustice. Problematizing how imperatives for safekeeping are constituted, this article outlines the role of the abject and anxiety about pollution and disorder in the production of knowledge about public spaces, of the self, and of the other. I draw on data collected from qualitative interviews with young women aged 17 in the UK about their experiences of fear of crime, safety, belonging, exclusion and well-being in public spaces. By conducting discourse analysis on their talk, this article posits that exclusionary notions of class, race and gender construct part of how some young women produce knowledge about fear of crime and safety. This research has implications for better understanding the social cost of contemporary knowledge about what is safe and what is fearsome in public space.

Keywords

Abjection, dispositif, fear of crime, safety, subjectification

Introduction

This article examines how fear of crime and safekeeping are constituted as part of the same dispositif of control which subjectifies (produces a specific form of self and other) and which reproduces spatial and social injustice. It calls into question contemporary attachment to safety and to safekeeping practices in public spaces by illustrating how these are, in part, constituted through reliance on construction of the self and the abjection of the other through anxiety about pollution. This article intervenes in contemporary thought about fear of crime in public spaces by calling attention to how knowledge about what is considered to be safe (safe places, safe practices, safe people) is implicated in a specific form of subjectification which is invested in privilege, positionality and neo-liberal self-determination. I suggest that this can be as troublesome for the fostering of social justice as the fear of crime it seeks to attenuate.

Anxiety about fear of crime saturates debates about how public spaces and personal safety are understood. The difficulty of defining and measuring fear of crime is well recognized. Murray Lee (2007a), among others, argues that what we call fear of crime might better be understood as a socio-cultural construct which describes malaise, unease or other dissatisfaction of the self with public space as much as anxiety about imminent crime per se. Indeed, it has been suggested that sometimes it will be evidence of dirt and disorder, rather than evidence of crime, which will be commonly elided with, and expressed as, fear of crime (Beckett and Herbert, 2008; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). Despite this ambiguity, moves to reduce feelings of fear of crime and the desire to produce safety remain compelling organizers of social life, public space and subjectivity (or what Garland (2001) calls the 'criminology of the self') within a broader neo-liberal agenda of

responsibilization, risk calculation and risk avoidance (Lee, 2007b; O'Malley, 1992). In this article I examine some of the ways in which these fold into a project of the self through the construction and deployment of specific forms of femininity, class and 'race' through the abjection of the other.

In order to do this I examine how young women—the group most commonly targeted by street crime prevention advice (Stanko, 1996)—talk about their experiences of, and responses to, what they identify as their own fear of crime in public, everyday space (streets, parks, modes of public transport and so on) and quasi-public spaces (leisure complexes, pubs, shopping malls and so on).

Public space is regulated in multiple, subtle ways which uphold and reflect conflicting, sometimes exclusionary, social relationships and ethics (Massey, 2005: 152). Public space, and people in it, is always-already criss-crossed with lines of (dis)orderly, intersectional, exclusion (see Fanghanel, 2014). These disorderly lines have implications for what Lefebvre (1996: 150) calls the 'rights to the city', or the 'right to urban life'. That is, the notion that all inhabitants of a city should have the right to use the resources of the city in everyday life. If, as Massey (2005) suggests, public space is constituted by, in part, the need to negotiate unequal power relations, what does this mean for these rights? If, as Lee (2007b) suggests, fear of crime is a cultural invention which facilitates modes of governmentality, self-policing and control among a risk-averse population, how does this play out in the way in which young women speak about fear of crime and safety? What are the implications of this for social justice more broadly?

Fragile boundaries of belonging/exclusion, insider/outsider or of order/disorder saturate many accounts of how safety and fear of crime in public space are spoken about (Ahmed, 2004a; England, 2008a, 2008b; Sibley, 1995). In the context of fear of crime, the inherent instability of these binaries which establish difference is reaffirmed, in part, by the need continually to articulate discursive and affective lines of exclusion. Binarized concepts such as safety/fear, order/disorder suggest a rigidity to these categories which belies their fragility. Indeed, as Levi-Strauss (1958) might attest, these binaries oppose each other, but in order to be sustained, need endless (re)affirmation. Thus, when these dualisms appear in contemporary ways of talking about social justice, it is the fragility, rather than the strength of this structure which is salient. This fragility is precisely what promotes such anxiety about fear of crime and desire for safety in the first place.

Figuratively echoing this instability, or fragility, is the way in which fear of crime becomes conflated with, or merged into, a dislike of disorder in contemporary discourses about public spaces. Beckett and Herbert (2008) note how 'broken windows' policing is enacted in some parts of the United States against people who have become indices of disorder (beggars, drunks, loiterers) in the name of promoting a safer city. These approaches to policing public spaces are also echoed in individuals' everyday experiences of and knowledge about public space (Van Eijk, 2010).

While much analysis on the policing of disorderly people in public spaces examines how the law has been used to criminalize specific behaviours when they occur in public spaces (sleeping, drinking alcohol or urinating, for instance), analysis of the data I present here illustrates how this dislike of disorder spills over into anxiety and fear about self and other based on privilege positionality and classist, racist or sexist expressions. These anxieties are disguised as a dislike of disorder, which are rearticulated, perhaps problematically, through the short-hand of fear of crime (Farrall et al., 2009; Lee, 2007a).

The first part of this article establishes how these theoretical approaches speak to each other. The second part of the article examines how the operation of dispositifs and of abjection promotes subjectification through exclusion and inclusion of the self and the other along gendered, raced and

classed lines. The final part of this article proposes a politics of reconciliation to problematize what it means to be fearful and to seek safety in public spaces.

The dispositif of safety, fear of crime and of gendered subjects

Adopting a Foucauldian framework, Lee (2007b: 150) has suggested that contemporary attitudes to fear of crime and risk avoidance are tools of 'governance' which construct gendered subjects. In this discussion, I suggest that what is at play in the production and deployment of safety and fear of crime at this individual level is the construction of the self and the construction of the other in public space through the operation of dispositifs. Social life is modulated by dispositifs to promote a specific form of desire and productive subjugation. Resonant with many of Foucault's (1978, 1982, 1984) analyses of how knowledge is constructed, the dispositif is understood here as a system which 'orients' specific 'behaviours' in public space, which produces a specific mode of knowledge about public space, and a particular way of being subject within that space. Dispositifs operate to produce something active, even if it is an active practice of submission to discourse (Deleuze, 1992: 4). According to Foucault (1980: 196), dispositifs operate in conjunction with each other through discourse. Here, they produce knowledge about public space. The operation of a dispositif of safety and fear of crime makes safekeeping and risk avoidance a moral obligation, a desirable object, one which helps to construct productive, sanitized and orderly public space by determining which activities, practices, people are discursively safe, and which are not (cf. Douglas, 1966; Lee, 2007b; O'Malley, 1992).

Where there is anxiety about the fear of crime and a desire for safety, concerns about the 'badness' of fear and the 'urgent need' for safety emerge (see Beck, 1992 [1986]; Boutellier, 2004; Ditton and Farrall, 2000; Farrall et al., 2009). Foucault (1980) suggests that the pervasive power of the dispositif (here of safekeeping and fear of crime) lies in the fact that it is bought into gladly; people willingly desire their own subjugation to the comfort of safety, and they are happy because they are safe. Such desire is what operates in what Boutellier (2004) describes as the 'safety utopia'. As a project of the self, therefore, this desire can be understood as part of a broader neo-liberalized discourse of care for, and management of, the self in public space (see Garland, 2001; Lee, 2007b; O'Malley, 1992). The evidence that I draw on in the second part of this article shows how this desire for safety operates with exclusionary effects in its production of deviant and normative subjectivities of self and other.

The focus of my work here is on young women's experiences of fear of crime in public space. The construction of women as inherently more fearful than men in public space saturates fear of crime debates (Goodey, 1997; Koskela, 1997; Moore and Breeze, 2010; Stanko, 1990). These discourses, which can also be understood as operating through dispositifs, are tied to normative constructions and performances of masculinity and femininity (Day, 2001; Hollander, 2001). Indeed, Campbell's (2005) examination of gender and safety advice demonstrates how idealized, appropriate notions of femininity and masculinity are constructed through such advice. Safekeeping itself becomes, in this context, a constituent feature of feminine subjectivity. Sutton et al. (2011: 423–424) argue that some men and women are themselves invested in these discourses to such an extent that they express internalized 'traditional gender ideologies' of masculinity and femininity (Hollander, 2001). A double standard appears to be operating in how these discourses are interpreted; while female fear is fetishized in the popular imaginary as indicative of female frailty—of the damsel in distress—and of an inherently feminine trait, male fear is largely overlooked (cf. Goodey, 1997; Moore and Breeze, 2010). When it is recognized, men's fear of crime is less likely to be expressed as affective fear and rather is constructed as a masculinist, rational, response to a calculated, masculinized risk (see O'Malley, 1992; Walklate, 1997). As the work of Cops and Pleysier (2011) and Gilchrist et al. (1998)

demonstrates, men are not inherently fearless and women are not inherently fearful of crime in public space; fearlessness and fearfulness are as contextual and relational as constructions of femininity and masculinity. Day et al.'s (2003) study demonstrates how men too, feel fear of the other in their interactions with public space. Fear of crime and concerns about safety are thus, not static, gendered tropes, but become associated with a particular practice of femininity, masculinity and selfhood in public space.

Given the heterogeneity of ways in which the phenomenon of fear of crime is expressed, what can we make of the fact that traditional and stereotypical constructions of masculinity and femininity dominate public discourse? If, as Cops and Pleysier (2011) suggest, women are not inherently more frightened of crime than men, why, as Sutton et al. (2011) demonstrate, do they present as more vulnerable than men in their accounts of fear of crime? What might this particular presentation of the self tell us about the production of subjectivity and desire through safety? What does it tell us about how the dispositif or fear of crime and safekeeping operates and how it interlocks with a dispositif of gendered subjectification, here?

One of the ways in which this dispositif might be said to subjectify along these rigid gendered lines is through the mobilization of the neo-liberalized imperative to make the self safe—to promote well-being—through normative auto-policing and self-disciplining practices (see Beck, 1992 [1986]; Boutellier, 2004). In public discourse, safekeeping advice (not walking alone in public spaces, avoiding known danger spots) usually singles out women space-users as vulnerable and precarious in public space. Stanko (1996), among others, presents a scathing and sustained critique of this advice which situates the feminine body not only as the always-already victim of fear, whose subjectivity becomes constituted though this vulnerability (implicitly vulnerability to inherently dangerous men) but also as the steward of her own safety; who is to blame for when things go wrong; when she is attacked, molested, cat-called or raped.

Throughout these accounts, the notion that to neglect this form of self-care is to fail to protect the self—to fail to become a proper feminine subject—still dominates, despite feminist critiques (see Gardner, 1990). It leaves the so-called 'risky' and the 'reckless'—the woman who is drunk, the woman who walks home from the club alone and in high heels—liable to becoming discursively improper (Campbell, 2005). Within this dispositif, discursive knowledge about appropriate and inappropriate femininity circulates. The feminine self who-fears-crime becomes a performance of appropriate and 'good' femininity, and concurrently, fearlessness and chivalry are associated with 'good' masculinity (see Day, 2001).

Through this auto-policing of appropriate, proper or 'good' subjectivity, and the menace of the consequence of its violation, what is also at stake for the women to whom I spoke in this study is the integrity of that femininity itself. As Lawler (2005: 433) notes, the sexed, classed and raced implications of failing idealized forms of femininity are of becoming 'disgusting'. Most of the women in this study were white, middle class young women. I have suggested that none of these positionalities are stable; femininity, whiteness, middle-classness, are all emergent, contingent categories which must be continuously iterated (Fanghanel, 2014). The dispositif of safety and fear of crime is one way of practising this iteration and stabilizing these fragile positionalities.

Because they are unstable, these subjectivities can always fail, so they remain in constant tension with the threat of failure. The subjectifying boundaries between the self and the other that are erected in the service of safekeeping produce a contest(able) territory through which a latent desire for a specific form of productive orderliness in public space emerges. But such orderliness comes at a cost. The boundary between the self and the other is necessarily exclusionary (Anzaldúa, 1987;

Sibley, 1995). Affective, psychoanalytically inclined understandings of boundary erection and anxiety about pollution might shed some light on how knowledge about public space is constituted and how they produce the self and the other under the guise of safekeeping against fear of crime.

Affects, pollution and the abject

Fear is cultivated in the anticipation that the self might be polluted by the impure other (Sibley, 1995). According to Ahmed (2004a), the affective economy of fear that circulates between indices of fearsomeness produces the perpetual menace of pollution, which can then be warded off by safekeeping practices (such as avoidance, safety in numbers, etc.) to restore orderly and ordered subjectivities. The precarity of the subject produced through these practices, discourses and affects reminds of how the dispositif produces such impossible desire for orderliness. The fear is fear of the abject, which slides into anxiety about disorderliness (or out-of-placeness) and in this context, fear of crime. It is this threat of pollution, when the fragile boundaries which include and exclude dissolve—as, in their contingency, they inevitably must—that they become a source of anxiety expressed as fear of crime, and desire for safety, with implications for social, spatial justice (see England, 2008b).

Anxiety about pollution, as it is framed by both Ahmed (2004a, 2004b) and Kristeva (1982 [1980]), is a crucial part of this subjectification and knowledge about safety and fear of crime in public space. For Kristeva, the abject is a relational category. It is outside the subject but crucially tied to the subject in the formation of the 'I': '[the abject] lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree with the latter's rules of the game. And yet, from its place of banishment the abject does not cease challenging its master' (Kristeva, 1982 [1980]: 2). And because subjectification is never fixed, but is always precarious, that which threatens the integrity of the self must also be continually negotiated. Following Kristeva, in this context, we can understand practices of abjection as necessary to the construction of selfhood. The abject may be outside the subject but it crucially, continually haunts the subject and requires it to remain constantly vigilant; maintaining distance, but also defining the 'self' in terms of what it is not, in order to prevent its own defilement and in order to stay safe, integral, coherent, happy. This anxiety about pollution and disorder become one of the mechanism through which the dispositifs of fear of crime and safety operate.

Kristevian accounts of abjection and Foucauldian constructions of the dispositif may be uncommon bedfellows. Here, however, I argue they can be brought into a sympathetic dialogue with each other to explain how knowledge about what is safe and what is fearsome is constructed and deployed; Kristeva's (1982 [1980]) theory of abjection accounts for the non-discursive and affective of how fear circulates, and how it becomes known. This addresses the non-social of how a dispositif which organizes, orders and compels works to crystallize understanding and knowledge about specific public spaces. Foucault's (1980) approach to the dispositif, as it is developed by Agamben (2009 [2006]) on the other hand, provides a context through which we can understand why abjection and affect have such significance for people's own understandings of their social reality; how affect organizes, what role the non-discursive plays in understanding orderliness in the everyday and how the dispositif works to order and control public space through the cultivation of self-governance and subjectification. Together, these two approaches (the dispositif which organizes social life and the abject which marks the porous and precarious boundary between self and other), enable knowledge about safety and fear of crime (in this context) to circulate. The dispositif itself is, according to Foucault (1980: 196) a condition of knowledge which emerges, in part, through the operation of discourse. The affective quality of abjection, on the other hand, fosters knowledge production about what is safe, for instance, or what is unsafe through an affective economy; where affects acquire meaning by circulating between objects and signs of fearsomeness or safety (Ahmed, 2004a: 120).

Through this circulation, subjects become 'aligned with or against other others' in an attempt to organize understanding about public space, subjectivity or the self and other, and who belongs and who does not (Ahmed, 2004b: 32). In the context of safety and fear of crime here, who or what is safe and who or what is fearsome becomes knowable through the circulation of these affects and discourses. As this article demonstrates, knowledge about safety and fear of crime is rarely experienced or expressed straightforwardly but it does form a significant way in which the young women to whom I spoke in this study understand public space and, importantly, their place in it. The conjunction of these two theoretical approaches helps to elucidate how this works in the constitution of knowledge about subjectivity, safety and fear of crime.

Researching safety and fear of crime

Between 2009 and 2011, I interviewed 45 seventeen-year-old women from three sites in the south-east of England about their knowledge and experience of belonging and exclusion in public spaces in their home towns. Here, I focus on a few of these interviews in depth. In interviews the participants whose words I present in this article identified themselves as white, middle class, heterosexual and cis-gendered. The methodology and analytical strategy is more fully outlined elsewhere (Fanghanel, 2014). Using an inductive approach to the question of how knowledge about public spaces emerged, was constructed and diffused, I asked participants about their impressions of the public spaces with which they were familiar. The method involved participants annotating a map—known as emotion-mapping (see Matthews et al., 1997; Nold, 2009)—of their home towns with markers of their experiences, of significant events or places, and their sentiments and affective expressions when in those places. Participants described how they were annotating their maps as they did so. I then asked them to speak to me about what those place were like, what their experiences of them were, how far rumours or experiences of crime or other anti-social behaviours informed their knowledge about those spaces and how they accounted for what they knew about those spaces. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for discourse analysis (Hook, 2001; Waitt, 2010). Significantly, when fear of crime was mentioned, it was the positionalities of the young women that became salient in their own accounts of how they negotiated their way around the spectre of fear, imperatives to stay safe in these public spaces and their understandings of themselves within these discourses.

Practices of subjectification

Though there is nothing inherently fearful about women (Gilchrist et al., 1998; Koskela, 1997; Panelli et al., 2004), in both feminine and masculine imaginaries, fearfulness is often attributed to idealized constructions of femininity which centre on vulnerability, delicateness and femininity-in-need-of-protection, particularly in public spaces (see Campbell, 2005; Day, 2001; Day et al., 2003; Lee, 2007b; Wilson, 1991). When thinking about the subjectifying potentialities of the dispositif, and how it is tied to abjection, the supposed fearfulness of women might be understood as part of becoming 'properly' feminine. Being fearful and becoming safe are part of a neoliberal project of the construction of selfhood and of self-securitization (Boutellier, 2004; Lee, 2007b). Alongside this, for the young women to whom I spoke, anxiety about maintaining a privileged positionality afforded through whiteness, middle-classness and 'proper' femininity, for instance, also precipitated the desire of safety based on an ethic of exclusion.

The significance of securitizing 'proper' femininity emerges in how one participant creates knowledge about a public space in which she experiences fear of crime and the mode through which she expresses her sentiments about this place:

Interviewer: Tell me about this place [indicating a place on the map].

Eve1:   It is really scary. My mum works on a personal education project here and all her students live round there and that why I know it's bad, 'cause, like, they are pretty scary people.

Interviewer: Why are they scary?

Eve: Well one guy she teaches fractured his teacher's skull.

Interviewer: Oh!

Eve: So it's ... that kind of kids, like kids that have real issues and they're, usually their parents are just ... so it's very dangerous. And it's an estate which has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the whole of Europe or something. They know you're not one of them 'cause you don't have a baby. Haha! So you get like shouted at, and stuff.

Interviewer: Really? Have you ever been there?

Eve: Once with my mum and she was all right 'cause, like, some of her students live there, so it was ok, but I would never go there like on my own. Especially not in the dark.

(Eve, White-British, middle class)

Eve is talking about a place that she is describes as 'scary'. While she is describing an area that is 'bad', Eve attributes this to the disorderly young people in this area whom we are told are violent and 'have real issues', and which make the space 'dangerous'. Yet, in this account, it is also the teenage pregnancy which contributes to the dangerousness of the area. Teenage pregnancy is not a crime, though it is demonized in everyday discourses (Hyams, 2000), as it is here in Eve's own account. Eve mentions the high rate of teen pregnancy as a marker of difference, where this difference is related to deviant 'hypersexuality'. She is not 'one of them' because she is not a teenage mother; they are 'one of them' because they do 'have a baby', it is 'what makes [them] together' (Ahmed, 2004a: 118). Marcia England (2008b) has noted how territorial questions about who belongs in, and who should be excluded from, public space emerge in some of the ways that local safety initiatives organize themselves in Seattle, USA. Here, we can see similar discourses saturate the way in which this estate is known by Eve, who firmly distinguishes herself from those who do belong to the estate; who are 'one of them'.

Identifying this estate as somewhere she avoids because she is fearful, and attributing this dislike, in part, to the 'hypersexualized' reputation of the teenagers (given her mention of pregnancy we can suggest female as opposed to male), Eve begins to set up how anxiety about preserving the self (here in the context of the appropriately sexualized feminine self) folds into fear of crime and safekeeping practices. After all, this is a space that she considers to be dangerous and that she would never enter alone, especially at night, and which she only knows through her experience of being there once with her mother. We know that fear of crime is amorphous and affective. It is also difficult to identify (Lee, 2007a) because, as Hollander (2001) and Sutton et al. (2011) demonstrate, many things are being expressed when women's fear of crime is spoken about, not least a specific form of femininity. What is interesting then is the way that fear of crime and desire for safety forms part of an expression of appropriate selfhood and femininity, here. For Eve, the dispositif of safety and fear of crime works to construct the 'hypersexualized' flawed femininity of the 'other' to enable her to define herself against who or what she is 'not', through the production of knowledge about this public space and through the adoption of established safety practices such as avoiding this 'bad' place (Koskela, 1997; Pain, 2000, 2001). Indeed, the polluting potential of the 'hypersexualized'

young women is rendered as an abject foil to Eve's own construction of her self in her account. So what does it tell us about safety and fear of crime? Why does the making-abject of some young women by other young women matter? It matters because it shows us the enchanting effect of the abject; that Eve cultivates this boundary and, to borrow from Hollway and Jefferson (1997), becomes invested in doing so to preserve the integrity of her subjectivity, and mobilizes normative fear of crime scripts to explain how this works. It matters because it begins to demonstrate which bodies are made to bear the brunt of the burden for producing fear and imperilling safety. It also matters because through this analysis we can see how crucial a kernel the 'perpetual danger' of abjection is to the production and reproduction of ordered politics of subjectification, exclusion and privilege (Kristeva, 1982 [1980]: 9). It is not just the abjection of the other which emerges here, but also the way in which this abjection becomes a project of selfhood, for Eve. The work that this enchantment does is also illustrated in another account by Edith. Describing a place that she disliked, she explained:

Edith: I would never go there, even if you paid me.

Interviewer: So that's especially bad?

Edith: It's terrifying; it's like a whole other world.

Interviewer: Really, why? What's it like?

Edith: It's just, it's like, you know the seventies tower blocks? It's all like that, and it's all horrible and it ... they know that you're not ... (this sounds really bad doesn't it?) ... like them, they know you're not one of them. It's not the place itself, it's the people there. They are not very friendly.

Interviewer: What are they like?

Edith: They don't like you if you appear to be … like they … I don't know … you just know. 'Cause I don't wear like, I wouldn't run around in like trackies2 all the time and I don't like pit-bulls and things [laughs] so I am not, I am not with them, it's kind of like outsiders.

Interviewer: And so do they have trackies and pit-bulls?

Edith: Yes. They are horrible and scary.

(Edith, White-British, middle class)

This account is given by Edith as she annotates a map of her home town. She is explaining why she has singled out a specific area to mark as a place she dislikes; indeed, she finds it 'terrifying'. Fear of crime and dislike of abject disorder become interchangeable in this account too. They also form part of Edith's project of selfhood. The socio-cultural implications of this account in contrast with Edith's own positionality are also important here. The 'seventies tower blocks', the 'trackies' and the 'pit-bulls' as Hayward and Yar (2006) might attest, come to stand in for a socially immobile, underclassed other. This informs Edith's subject formation because she sees herself as 'not one of them'—and maybe she is not—but importantly she needs to be other to them because to be 'one of them', would be 'horrible' and would menace her sense of self; she is not 'with them' because she has not adopted the accoutrements of the folk devil of the classed 'other'. Here, Edith mobilizes the fear (a 'terrifying' place with 'scary' people) and the exclusionary safekeeping (not going there 'even if you paid her') in order to distance herself from that which is abject. Edith suggests that the conjunction between her self and these others is 'like outsiders'. Ambiguously, she might mean that they are outsiders to her, or that she is an outsider to them, or both. Less ambiguously, maintaining the distance between these two groups becomes one of the ways in which the dispositif of safety and

fear of crime and the relationship of the self to the abject establish subjectivity. As with Eve's account above, this operates in conjunction with dispositifs of idealized femininity, and in doing so, maintains exclusionary social forms.

In designating this as a 'whole other world', the classed othering that Edith invokes to account for her fear of crime is mobilized to preserve a social form where poorer, non-middle class people occupy marginalized social positions compared to middle class people like Edith, and become indices of fearsomeness (England, 2008a, 2008b). However, because this construction of class is precarious and relational, in order for this dynamic of otherness between Edith and those who are the object of her fear to be sustained, the haunting fear of the other must emerge to situate some semblance of order and of otherness of the abject to her self. As with Eve above, she does not go there because she is not 'one of them' she maintains this distinction in order to preserve the privilege of her own classed, raced, supposedly properly feminine, positionality. Ambiguous knowledge about public spaces which are considered not to be safe is also evidenced elsewhere:

Interviewer: Are there any places you avoid [on the map] here?

Cecily: Brumal Park.

Interviewer: Brumal Park?

Cecily: I don't know where it is [on the map].

Interviewer: I don't know where it is either.

Cecily: I would never … I wouldn't ever go down there. Yeah, I wouldn't ever go there on my own ever.

Interviewer: Why not?

Cecily: Um … it's going to sound really racist but I don't know anyone down there and they all hang out in huge groups. It's intimidating. I remember when we were younger and we didn't have ID [proof of age of majority] or anything, everyone always used to get alcohol from all the shops down there 'cause they never ask for ID or anything, but I just … we didn't used to go unless there was about ten of us 'cause it's just so … oh it's horrible. Like people get stabbed there and stuff.

Interviewer: Really?

Cecily: And that road as well [indicates a road on the map]

Interviewer: Is that the same sort of area?

Cecily: Yeah there's some people in a gang living there, and um … I just would never walk down that way, especially at night.

Interviewer: Ok. Have you ever been there?

Cecily: No. I have been to Brumal Park. Like you get some like, urgh … me and my friend, she is driving now, so we drove down … I think it was down here [indicates area on the map] somewhere … for the day and um, we like got blocked in with these cars, and these men were like shouting and stuff and pretty … I think they were just drugged up or something. I was scared.

(Cecily, White-European, lower middle class)

Cecily elided the fact that she did not 'know anyone' in Brumal Park with a racist sentiment, despite the fact that she did not express an openly racist opinion, indicating the silent grounds upon which her knowledge about the place rested. The unnamed 'they' hang out in 'huge groups' but remain unnamed. Instead this comment's coherence rests on the implicit assumption of a whiteness which phenomenologically experiences black bodies as a numerically excessive swarm who want to 'possess … and take our place' (Fanon, 1961: 6). Fear of crime of the 'raced' other is a frequently mobilized trope. Black bodies which are constructed as intimidating—especially masculine, black bodies—discursively become a signifier of fearsomeness of 'absolute evil' (Fanon, 1961: 7; see also Day et al., 2003; Lorde, 1982; Staples, 1986) and associated with dirt and pollution (Douglas, 1966; see also Krysan and Bader, 2009). Though the subjectivity of the 'other' is erased in her account, it is acutely present in Cecily's own understanding and knowledge of what this public space means and her ambiguous place within it; black bodies which encroach, which are 'out of place', which are not an obvious minority in public space come to stand in for the fearsome potentiality of the space (Fanghanel, 2014), it thus acquires orderly meaning through the articulation circulation of this fearsome affect. For, as Fanon (1961: 8) reminds us, there is, of course, an 'order' to racism; an order which establishes fragile power dynamics. Racist affects reinforce order, but that order can only be imposed as long as affective fear—and knowledge about what is fearsome in relation to fear of crime—circulates to sustain it. These affects 'produce and delimit' the subjectivity of the 'raced', other (Chrisman, 2011: 26), but they also unfold in the production of self and of other, through the operation of dispositifs and disdain for the abject other.

Yet, this is not an unambiguously straightforward fear. The role of the dispositif and the abject play an intriguing role here in the way that Cecily understands her self and others in this space. Cecily has benefited from this place that she find horrible and in which people are 'drugged up' and 'get stabbed' as a place which enables her to buy alcohol illegally under the age of majority. While this permissiveness might fold into broader constructs of the moral lassitude of the deviant other, it also demonstrates that though fear of crime is pervasive in Cecily's account, it is not expressed or experienced straightforwardly, which captures the complexity of how abjection works. Brumal Park may be 'horrible' but it is a place that affords the possibility of thrill and excitement. Drinking alcohol underage is potentially dangerous—like the place in which she buys the alcohol—but Cecily and her friends want to do it. Being scared in Brumal Park is a risk that Cecily is prepared to run. She experiences fear of crime here (where people get stabbed), she would only go in a group of 10 people, and yet still she goes. Her relationship with the place is not one which is straightforward even if she does rely on the fear/safety dualism to account for it. Instead, her account enacts the crucial tie between the self and the other that Kristeva's analysis of abjection suggests. In order to forge her selfhood she needs to visit Brumal Park yet she needs to maintain her distance from her self and the horrible place; she is tied to Brumal Park, but not part of Brumal Park. Elsewhere, similar anxieties are at play:

Vera: Sometimes I feel unsafe when I am walking to the station, 'cause I never really go there, and it's like different community as well. Like, in the people.

Interview: In what way is it different?

Vera: Like racially different and I know that sounds kind of racist … but I am scared, but yeah sometimes it makes you feel intimidated, like if there's a large group of Asian men, like walking, if I am on my own, then it's scary.

(Vera, White-British, middle class)

Describing a similar place to Cecily, Vera also explains that 'large groups of Asian men' who occupy public space are 'scary'. The difference that she emphasizes between herself and the men who are different to her is cut along explicitly raced and gendered lines of exclusion. Not walking around on one's one is stereotypical safety advice to women (Gardner, 1990), and is a practice also employed by Cecily and Eve above. Vera's account illustrates how she has internalized this imperative as a component of her subject-formation. She explains that she feels unsafe by the station because of the community and the 'people', which becomes the 'men'. Where people stand in for 'men' and community stands in for 'Asians' the excessiveness of indices of fear emerges. It is also an excessiveness which exceeds her when, according to her own account, she is walking on her own. As Fanon (1961: 6) , might suggest, her account relies on the 'dehumanization' of the other. As with Cecily's account above, Eve's words evoke anxiety about the potential pollution of this excessiveness, figuratively turning the other into a figure of pollution; an 'animal wallowing in the mire' (Fanon, 1961: 9). Indeed, the pronouns of her account shift from 'I am scared' to 'you feel intimidated' which signals not only the discursive move from the singular to the many who feel fear in this public space, but which also illustrates how the pollution creeps beyond the border. Racist fear swarms everyone who is caught in the 'you' (presumably not the Asian men, who are not part of the collective who fears). These elisions (community–Asians, people–men, I–you) evoke the polluting potential of the proximity of her self to the other. They also mark how she understands her fear of crime and her imperilled safety. This is how Vera's knowledge about this space is constructed and circulates. The internalization of these discourses of indices of fear and of safekeeping practices reproduces public spaces as places of menace to women, where unchaperoned women discursively do not belong (Wilson, 1991). Here, we can see how this dispositif fosters fear which is based on exclusionary—here racist and sexist—'othering' to determine the self—her self—against these potentially polluting 'other' bodies.

Though Vera, Eve, Cecily and Edith may be structurally disadvantaged in public space in some way (because of age, or gender), in others they are afforded a relatively privileged positionality (Fanghanel, 2014). These accounts mark not only who or what the indices of fear or disgust are for them, but also, how, relationally, as white, predominantly middle class, relatively privileged young women they need to be aware of, and linked to, this difference in order to perpetuate and to preserve a sense of self which recognizes these other bodies as menacing bodies. In all these accounts, the temporary proximity to the pollution of the classed, 'raced', sexualized other opens the possibility that these indices of disgust and fear might transcend the borders of the body and might pollute the self. In the context of understanding the relationship between safety, fear of crime and subjectivity, this dispositif has the effect of perpetuating exclusionary discourses about who may or may not have a proper place in public space in the service of promoting social order, establishing and maintaining appropriate subjectivity, and promoting the possibility of 'banal happiness' because things are 'proper' (Boutellier, 2004). This highlights the extent to which anxiety about pollution and the fragility of subjectification are figured in the service of fostering productive and orderly social spaces. The social implications of this have to be taken seriously when we think about how fear of crime is understood as a considerable social problem, how safety is essentialized as a social good and when we consider what social problems this social problem itself can perpetuate (Beckett and Herbert, 2008).

Onto a politics of reconciliation?

Contemporary Manichean notions of safety as good and fear as bad—discursively repeated by the participants I spoke to—fuel the perceived need for psychic and social boundaries to be erected, and indeed, become figured as discursively fundamental to the construction and preservation of the

subject (Sibley, 1995: 45). Recall the fragility of the femininity in the account by Eve of the 'hypersexualized' teenage pregnancies in the estate that she understood as a site of fearfulness. The construction of her own subjectivity as 'proper' in contrast to these flawed 'others' needs to be protected though gendered acts of safekeeping, and this necessitates, in part, reliance on the production of difference between her self and others who are abject. Recall also the conundrum I set out above; if women are not inherently fearful, and men are not inherently fearless (Cops and Pleysier, 2011; Gilchrist et al., 1998), why do some present as such when asked (Sutton et al., 2011)? Dispositifs, as modes of organizing social life, have a part to play in this need to preserve and present the self as a 'proper' neo-liberal subject properly consuming public space; the properly safe and properly fearful feminine subject is part of this.

Certainly, as Koskela (1997) and Panelli et al. (2004) have demonstrated, there are many ways in which women resist the inhibiting effect of fear of crime in public spaces. There are, however, fewer examples of how safety and fear of crime as organizing dispositifs themselves might be contested. The politics of consuming space relies on including some bodies in public space, eliminating so-called 'dangerous' others and delimiting who may have 'rights to the city' (Beckett and Herbert, 2008; England, 2008a, 2008b; Lefebvre, 1996). Transforming how these categories come to acquire meaning transforms what those categories do. The politics of contesting power relations in public space might offer some inroads here.

Rooted in Marxian constructions of the communitas, Lefebvre imagines the city as an 'experimental utopia', where all inhabitants have the right to participate in the public sphere, transform power relations and to shape the form and spatialities in which diverse groups can dwell. Acquiring the 'right' to the 'ideal city' is, according to Lefebvre (1996: 173), an oeuvre; meaning a work of art, but also the act of work itself. Thus, building a right to the city would be an ongoing practice, or praxis. Of course, who counts as an 'inhabitant' in Lefebvre's vision is still a potentially controversial question. Here, grounds and rights do not exist a priori, but rather are produced through practices and iterations of making and taking claim to public space, through discourses of belonging and the implicit knowledge of self and 'other' that is required to forge these claims and discourses. Critiquing safety and fear of crime and the way they work as an organizing modulation, as I have attempted here, provides the context for understanding the political stakes in these discourses and opens up the potential for different grounds and rights to emerge.

As we have also seen from the accounts above, expressions of fear and the pursuit of safety can be exclusionary and can be laced with racist, classist and sexist affect. When such sentiments produce the grounds upon which commonality and difference are based, they have a detrimental impact on both the fearful (whose fragile subjectivity is dependent on the perpetuation of othering; whose movements are curtailed) and the feared, who are cast as endlessly other. In contrast to the precarious self, they are fixedly over-determined by feared signifiers. Thus, when fear of crime and attachment to safekeeping are understood as a mode of organizing and ordering social life—as a dispositif—blended as these concepts can be with disorder and pollution, we can see how they are reliant on, and perpetuate, exclusion and social, spatial injustice. This clearly has broader manifestation in policy and policing (especially, for instance, in localized street safety campaigns, urban planning policy or when dealing with so-called anti-social behaviours, see England, 2008b), but also has implications for the subjective pursuit of the rights to the city, or what we might consider to be social justice (Lefebvre, 1996).

What can we do with these insights if we want to understand better what safety and fear of crime produce? If we want to promote a form of social life which is less exclusionary, but which also resists neo-liberal imperatives to consume public space 'properly', what do we do about the apparent need

for security and well-being? Might we construct a sense of self beyond this attachment to borders and abjection? I suggest that in order to challenge the exclusions of social life and the socially marginal in public space, the terrain upon which the dispositif of safety and fear of crime operates might be refigured. Rather than crystallizing difference by holding it up as an insurmountable foe in the everyday negotiation of the social world, I suggest that by opening up to the possibility of pollution, we open up to a politics of reconciliation in respect of public space:

Living with the other, with the foreigner, confronts us with the possibilities, or not, of being an other. It is not simply—humanistically—a matter of being able to accept the other but of being in his place, and this means to imagine and make oneself other for oneself.

(Kristeva, 1994 [1991]: 13, emphases added)

Thus, for Kristeva it will be through a form of sublimation, by transforming 'self' into 'other' that we might affectively, psychically reject the boundaries and the exclusions of sanitized space (Wilson, 1991). Such an ethic is echoed in Connolly's (2005: 4) call for 'respect for the persistent diversity of the human condition', however, rather than blithely repeating a call for the respect of difference—an uncontroversial value which many, including the participants to this study would no doubt endorse—the notion of making oneself 'other' transforms the way in which knowledge and discourses about the self, fear of crime and safety in public space might be constituted and circulated. Indeed, such an approach modifies the role that abjection plays in subjectification practices and in the operation of the dispositif of safety and fear of crime.

I return to the dialogism of Fanon (1952, 1961), who in the context of violence and anti-colonial protest, offers a politics which seeks to transform the very structures of socio-economic dominance, not merely by rejecting them, but by reconceptualizing what it is to live with these and to construct a self, perhaps, Lefebrve (1996) might suggest, as an oeuvre. It might be possible to imagine a transformative politics which rejects dominant ways of knowing about fear and safety and instead transforms what it is, subjectively, to live with and through fear of crime, concern about safety and anxiety about the abject in the first place.

Altering the terrain of how this dispositif operates—this 'becoming-other'—opens up the potentiality for a politics which is reconciled with pollution, less anxious about defilement, more accommodating of the possibility of 'improper' subjectivity and which holds less store in being safe at all times whatever the price. Such a move also opens up the possibility of broader resistance to neo-liberal imperatives which pervade all spheres of contemporary social life in post-industrial contexts and securitization discourses in particular. Understanding and transforming how likeness, otherness, disorder and abjection inform how public spaces are subjectively known to be safe or not, harbours the potential to critique dominant modes of dealing with safety and fear of crime and also to work against—to contest—the marginalizing practice of being and becoming safe, being and becoming fearsome; being and becoming subject in public space.

Notes

1.   All names are pseudonyms.

2.   Tracksuit pants.

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